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## Huge support for Jeremy Corbyn

# Now build austerity fightback

The result of the Labour leadership election has not been announced. But one thing is clear, the wave of support for Jeremy Corbyn marks a pivotal change in British politics.

For years the establishment parties, including Labour, have spoken with one voice: 'there is no alternative to austerity.' But the voice of those who have suffered attacks on their living standards in order to boost the wealth of the super-rich has not been heard in the main political arena.

## Wealth

The richest 1,000 families have doubled their wealth since 2009, while millions of families have ballooning debt because they can't afford to live on their incomes.

Tony Blair, architect of 'New Labour', says he doesn't understand what is happening. The likes of him, Baron Kinnock and Peter "Intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich" Mandelson are totally removed from the lives of working class people.

They have all intervened to try to stop Jeremy Corbyn, but it is their policies of cuts and privatisation that have been rejected. Cameron only built on and extended these when he came to power. Blair's imperialist wars are also seen to bear a big responsibility for the growth of Isis and instability in the Middle East, leading to the horrors of the refugee crisis today.

## Movement

Whatever happens in the Labour election vote, an opportunity for a real fightback against austerity now exists. We need to build a mass movement for change and create an organised voice for the working class.

On Saturday 12 September, after this issue of the Socialist goes to print, the Labour leadership winner will be declared. Jeremy Corbyn has been predicted as winner by the polls. But whatever the result, his huge support and the surge in people signing up to vote reflect a mood of opposition to austerity.

The wide support that anti-austerity ideas can get was shown by the interactive poll involving 10,000 people held during Sky TV's leadership debate. Jeremy Corbyn began with 66% support and by the end was on 81%. His nearest rival, Liz Kendall, finished on a mere 8%!

Before his entry into the contest, the other three candidates were claiming Labour lost the general election because it was too left wing or insufficiently pro-big business. The opposite is true. New Labour, with its neoliberal policies, lost five million votes between 1997 and 2010, most of which never returned.

The Socialist has pointed out that there have been a number of glimpses over the last year of the massive desire for an alternative to the austerity consensus. This mood was expressed during and after the Scottish independence referendum campaign. It is the reason for the virtual wipeout of Labour in Scotland during the subsequent general election. We also saw it in the growth of the Green Party and, in a distorted way, in some of the protest votes obtained by Ukip.

## Massive battles ahead

Unintended consequences play a big part in politics. Jeremy Corbyn only scraped on to the ballot because some MPs, while not supporting him, wanted to give the impression of a wide choice. But once on, he caught the anti-austerity mood. The voting method, designed by the right-wing leadership to prevent trade union and left-wing influence, actually provided an opportunity for this mood to be expressed.

The same mood has been demonstrated internationally. In a number of cases new anti-austerity forces have been created such as Podemos in Spain and Die Linke in Germany. Syriza in Greece for example was elected on an anti-austerity programme but betrayed the hopes of the Greek people and could now pay for it in the general election as it may not get a majority. This is a warning to all similar movements against remaining in the framework of capitalism, including to the forces around Corbyn.

If Jeremy Corbyn wins it will be a big step forward in the battle against austerity and, by implication, capitalism. It will also be despite the purge of recently signed up voters (likely to be Corbyn supporters) deemed by the right as not having Labour "values", or even for not being on the electoral register. This is a taste of what is to come.

He, and the forces around him, will face a massive battle inside the Labour Party. Much, perhaps the majority, of his support will have come from the 'outside' - new members and registered supporters who were attracted by the hope of something new. This is a new party in the process of formation. Many of those are a new generation of young people, alongside some returning former members.

But he has only 20 real supporters among Labour's right-wing dominated group of MPs, and faces a Labour machine that has been divorced from democratic working class influence for many years.

Some of the right considered splitting away, but former members of the Social Democratic Party, who split from Labour in the 1980s, advised against it because they fear it couldn't be immediately successful in the current situation. It seems unlikely at this stage.

The suggestion has been made that there could be a legal challenge on the basis of insufficient checks on so called "infiltration" by voters from other parties, perhaps if it is a close vote.

An immediate attempt to unseat him cannot be ruled out, but the most likely tactic of the right will be a scorched earth policy of trying to 'contain' Corbyn, attempt to discredit him and move to replace him at a later date - particularly if he wins by a large margin. Chuka Umuna for example, after organising a right-wing group of MPs to counter Corbyn, is now saying the party should unite around the new leader.

Others have been less conciliatory, like the MP quoted in the Guardian saying Corbyn supporters are "moving through the party like Isis in their jeeps in Iraq."

Tom Baldwin, former aide to Ed Miliband, bemoaned the influx saying "Labour is not the Party it was ten years ago, or even a few weeks ago." A new party is indeed needed - but of a different kind, and it remains to be seen if it is realised by this route. But it will have to be fought for.

Significantly, during the election campaign proposals were made to reinstate the election of the shadow cabinet by the big majority of right-wing Labour MPs, although they haven't yet been acted on. This was designed to imprison Jeremy Corbyn. They will not give in without a fight, with the ruling class behind them. Making the Labour Party a secure and thoroughly capitalist party was a historic gain for the ruling class. After all, Margaret Thatcher bragged that her biggest achievement was the creation of New Labour.

## **Reverse the cuts**

If Corbyn wins, the wider working class will be looking for a clear reversal of pro-austerity policies and a fighting strategy. Any hint of a retreat or any pro-capitalist collaboration would be fatal. Anti-austerity policies will need to be elaborated: a bold programme of improving the living standards of working class people linked to clear socialist policies such as the nationalisation of the banks and failing companies.

Jeremy Corbyn will need to build on his base of support. He said that any attempt by MPs to refuse to support party policies would be met with a "revolt from below." But this will also need to be organised.

Up to 50,000 people will have attended his rallies in the run up to the election. 15,000 signed up to his contact list. Activating those can then draw thousands more into the fight. The party should be opened up. Invite back in those who have been forced out or expelled in the past for fighting cuts and the Poll Tax and for socialist ideas.

Bringing back the idea of automatic reselection of MPs to allow democratic accountability of candidates would be an important step, although some of Jeremy Corbyn's backers are saying that this is not his intention.

## **Activists' conference**

The Socialist Party has raised the idea that Jeremy could, win or lose, call a conference of all his supporters inside and outside the Labour Party to build the anti-austerity movement. He could invite trade unions, including those not Labour affiliated to take part. We would get involved and encourage others in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) to do the same.

The immediate tests will include the fight against the new wave of cuts being proposed by the Tories in their November spending review. One of the sharpest attacks is on local council spending. Local councils are soon to begin their budget setting process. Jeremy has called on Labour councils to "stand together against the cuts." The Socialist Party and TUSC believe this means each authority refusing to pass on government cuts, setting budgets based on the needs of the area and then building a movement in support locally. Labour councils across the country carrying this through would be a powerful challenge to the government.

If Jeremy Corbyn is elected leader of the Labour Party then it would be a tremendous platform to begin this fight. However if the right succeed in their plan of containing him and the fight is not successful then the danger is that those drawn around Corbyn's campaign will become disillusioned and leave. If he is removed at any stage it is vital that all the conclusions are drawn about the viability of Labour as a vehicle to continue the struggle against austerity.

A new mass working class party will need to be created. The route to this is not straightforward. But the support for Jeremy Corbyn and the blows to the establishment's austerity mantra in this election show that the process has begun!

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## **TUSC writing to Labour councillors**

**Dave Nellist, Chair, Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition**

People have been looking for something to latch onto to lead a fight against austerity, and Jeremy became that something. He represents a challenge to the establishment.

Austerity has meant wages have stagnated, pension costs have gone up, and essential services are disappearing. Labour, and many trade union leaders as well, have been completely absent in trying to resist it.

In November, Osborne will demand tens of billions of pounds of cuts. We need to begin the fightback against austerity. If Jeremy wins I hope he will call together Labour authorities from all round the country and make an immediate national response - no more cuts in services. If he did this he will inspire millions of people to join the battle.

TUSC aims to write to every Labour councillor and candidate standing in the elections in May 2016 to invite them to meet local trade unionists and campaigners to establish a no cuts budget approach. We want to base council budgets on what people need and involve local communities in the battle. If Labour councillors pledge to vote against cuts we will back them, but if they don't, we will aim to stand a TUSC candidate against them. We will be putting Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity pledge into practice.

## **TUSC conference 2015**

**Saturday 26 September, 11am-4-30pm**

**Student Central, Malet Street, London, WC1E**

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is an electoral alliance involving the RMT union, the Socialist Party and other socialist groups and leading trade unionists.

Visit the TUSC website [www.tusc.org.uk](http://www.tusc.org.uk)

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## **Solidarity with refugees - Defend the right to asylum**

### **Unite to fight austerity**

**Hannah Sell, Socialist Party deputy general secretary**

The contrast between the callous cruelty of Cameron and the support for refugees shown by ordinary people could not be starker. Hundreds of thousands, across the length and breadth of Britain, are not only signing petitions but also giving food, clothes, toys and money in order to help the refugees fleeing the world's war zones.

Understandable fears about how public services that have been cut to the bone would cope with extra people have overwhelmingly been thrust aside in the desire to help fellow human beings whose lives are at risk. The same story of human solidarity has been repeated across Europe.

Meanwhile, Cameron and his government, backed to the hilt by the right-wing press, have continued throughout the summer to try to whip up anti-migrant feeling, dismissing the desperate refugees at Calais as a 'swarm' there to 'seek a better life'.

Cameron ignored the truth: that the majority of those risking their lives to reach Europe, including those camped at Calais, are refugees fleeing conflict.

Of those who arrive first in Greece (about half of the total) more than 85% have come from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia. All of these are countries where Western military intervention has helped to create the nightmare situations from which people are now being forced to run.

### **Tory cynicism**

Only the publication of the heart-rending pictures of a drowned toddler - first on social media and then in the capitalist press - has forced Cameron and the government to start crying a few crocodile tears for refugees. This is a cynical adaption to the huge wave of support for refugees since the photographs were published.

One charity which provides rescue boats in the Mediterranean reported a 15-fold increase in donations in the course of 24 hours. However, while the population's sympathy is genuine, Cameron is only trying to make up the political ground he lost over the issue. Up until the last few days the government asylum system had only allowed a tiny 216 refugees from Syria to claim asylum in Britain.

Under enormous public pressure, Cameron has now said he'd allow in up to 20,000 Syrian refugees over five years - six per constituency each year!

Moreover, he has still refused to take any refugees that are already in Europe, on the spurious grounds that this would encourage more people to risk their lives crossing the Mediterranean.

Yet the nightmare that has developed over the last few years proves beyond doubt that, so desperate is the situation in Syria, Iraq and other war-torn countries, no punitive measure will stop people risking their lives to try and reach safety.

Control of decisions whether to grant asylum cannot be left in the hands of this callous government. We demand that elected committees of ordinary working people, including representatives of migrants' organisations, have the right to review asylum cases and grant asylum.

Not only the British government, but the whole of the bosses' club that is Fortress Europe, have created what they hoped were insurmountable barriers to keep refugees out of Europe.

The building of huge walls, guarded by armed soldiers, stopped people crossing into Europe by land, so they took to the sea. The capitalist politicians of Europe, including the British government, responded by cutting back the rescue boats.

The barbaric logic of the argument was that if more refugees drowned, it would convince others not to come. This unbelievable cruelty didn't work of course. Instead, the numbers drowning increased exponentially.

In April 2015, 1,308 migrants are believed to have drowned compared to 42 in the previous April when the Mare Nostrum rescue boats were still in operation.

As the photographs of the last week have driven home to millions of people, many of the dead were women, the elderly and small children.

Public pressure has forced Cameron and Co. to drop their crude anti-migrant propaganda. It would be naïve, however, to imagine that the government and the right-wing tabloids will cease trying to falsely offload responsibility for endless austerity onto refugees and migrants.

As the Tories try and justify further savage cuts to public services, there is no question that they will once again try to distract working class people from the real causes of falling living standards by 'playing the migrant card'.

## **Blame game**

However, it is not migration but austerity that is responsible for the strain on our public services. Under the previous Con-Dem government £80 billion was cut from public spending, coincidentally the same amount as the bankers have received in bonuses since the economic crisis began.

If the government is allowed to falsely lay the blame for austerity on migrants, instead of the crisis-ridden capitalist system and the bankers and billionaires who benefit from it, then the Tories will succeed in grinding our living conditions into the dirt.

There is an urgent need for a united struggle of all workers against austerity and public sector cuts. This includes demanding resources in order to meet the needs of refugees without detriment to the existing population. The trade union movement needs to urgently mobilise both in defence of the refugees and against austerity.

Yvette Cooper, one of Labour's right-wing leadership candidates, has called on councils to volunteer to take refugees and many have volunteered to do so. Yet Cooper, for all she is now doing to try and lean left to take votes from Jeremy Corbyn, has consistently supported both councils carrying out austerity and the curtailing of migrants and refugees' rights.

All Labour councils, backed up by the shadow cabinet, have loyally implemented Tory cuts for the last five years, resulting in a 37% cut in council services.

As well as banding together to take refugees, councils should also be refusing to implement any more cuts in their

public services, and demanding the extra money needed to meet the needs of their populations.

It is a lie that there are no resources available. British governments have spent vast sums on going to war. The costs of renewing Trident are estimated at up to £130 billion. The wars and occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan have cost £30 billion, £1,000 for every taxpayer in Britain.

But while vast sums can be found for war, there are barely pennies for asylum seekers fleeing the consequences of those wars. Now, to pay for the Syrian refugees, Tory Chancellor George Osborne will raid the International Development Fund coffers - in other words 'robbing Peter to pay for Paul'.

The money to help refugees is not only an issue in Britain, but internationally. Most of the refugees are fleeing from the Middle East but not one EU government has demanded that the hugely rich feudal elites ruling most Middle East countries use their immense wealth to help the refugees.

It was left to Abdullah Kurdi, the bereaved father of the drowned Syrian toddlers, to point out that many regimes of the Middle East are doing nothing to help, not even recognising the right to asylum in their countries.

## **Billionaire elites**

Vast sums owned by these billionaire elites are salted away in Britain and other European countries.

Meanwhile the military forces of the UAE and Saudi Arabia regimes continue to bomb civilian areas in neighbouring Yemen in order to pursue their sectarian geo-political ambitions - bringing death, destruction and refugees on a huge scale.

The Middle East elites' wealth in Europe should be seized to pay for looking after the refugees from their regimes and wars, which Western imperialism also bears heavy responsibility for.

The only way to permanently end the refugee crisis is to fight for a democratic socialist world. On the basis of capitalism, there will always be people forced to flee their country, not by choice, but out of desperation as a result of war, environmental catastrophe and starvation.

A socialist society would harness the wealth, science and technique created by capitalism in order to meet the needs of the majority worldwide. Only on that basis would it be possible to have a world where people are free to move if they wish to, but are not forced to do so by the nightmare conditions they face at home.

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**See also an article on the CWI website:**

[\*\*Defend the right to asylum - Unite against austerity and struggle for a better life for all\*\*](#)

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This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 8 September 2015 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

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# **125,000 renters abused by idle parasite landlords**

**Charlie Hendren, private tenant**

According to housing charity Shelter, over 125,000 renters suffered harassment, threats or assault by a landlord in the last year. And these are just one charity's figures.

The scarcity of affordable housing means more and more landlords get away with exploitation and abuse of their tenants.

Any private renter will tell you 'rogue' landlords - who take our cash but neglect their duties - are normal. As if our unrelenting, ever-rising rent costs are not enough!

Shelter also reports over 17,000 helpline calls from tenants reporting "chaotic" problems with their landlords. Too many tenants suffer landlords intimidating them by cutting off utilities or worse.

I, along with many friends, have experienced similar scenarios. My previous house had countless problems: dangerous electrics, broken floors, two mattresses in the garden, a broken oven and more.

The landlord was mystifyingly negligent, despite numerous complaints, and took no interest in our living standards whatsoever. When we withheld our rent in protest we were hypocritically threatened with legal action!

At my current flat, I have been given two months' notice to vacate and find a new home. My housemates and I weren't given any reason. As we have a rolling contract, we have no legal ground to stand on.

## **Idle**

Many landlords are parasites who own multiple properties and do as little work as possible. Our hard graft pays for their idle lives.

The Socialist Party supports tenants who organise rent strikes, and demands compulsory registration of all landlords. We fight for rent controls in line with social housing. And we campaign for a mass programme of quality council home building to end the housing crisis.

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Tony Saunois @chetony

## **On the housing crisis**

"Housing crisis. In EU there are 11m empty homes. In Spain 3.4m, 2m in France and Italy - and 700k in UK. Speculation. Take them over. Crisis solved!"

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# **Heartless Tories chop funds for life-extending cancer drugs**

Alison Hill, cancer survivor

NHS England has stopped supplying at least 17 life-extending medications from its 'Cancer Drugs Fund' to save money.

When I was being treated for cancer, I had plenty of things to worry about. Thankfully, whether the NHS would fund the drugs I needed was not one. But some cancer patients now face this terrible situation.

Medications from the Cancer Drugs Fund are usually those which aren't routinely available, but can prolong your life significantly. And NHS England is apparently negotiating with pharmaceutical companies to work out which drugs offer 'value for money'.

What a scandal in the 21st century! Instead of 'negotiating' with drug companies, the Socialist Party says we should be nationalising them.

What if these giant, super-profitable companies were part of a democratically planned economy? All the expertise built up by research workers in that industry could be made available for anyone who needs it.

Karl Claxton is a health economist at York University. He commented that the Cancer Drugs Fund has "put the interests of manufacturers ahead of patients - and it is time for the political will to be found to address the underlying problem of the price being charged for drugs."

Who can put a price on a few more months or years with your family and friends? It looks like the Tories, NHS England and pharmaceutical bosses can.

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## **Tories allow bosses to keep exploiting workers at below the minimum wage**

**Will Hornett, low-paid worker**

The Tories have announced new measures to supposedly combat companies paying below the new £7.20 minimum wage.

This sounds like a great idea. But Cameron and co have no interest in hitting the profits of their business pals. In reality the measures are paltry.

The key issue is that there are not enough resources to assess whether an employer is paying the minimum wage or not. And even if illegal pay is identified, the maximum fine is £20,000 - peanuts to many bosses.

I used to work in a café where, if you were over 21, your wage was only £6 an hour. That was a whole 50p less than the legal minimum. But the real wage would have been obscured on the company's books. As we were on zero-hour contracts, the hours on our rota were almost never the hours we were paid for.

Tory measures also do not go far enough to help many migrant workers who are often exploited at far below the minimum wage. Language barriers, visa rules and attacks by the state and media make their employment especially precarious. Unregulated low pay drives many into poverty, and is in turn used to hold down all wages through competition for jobs.

### **Unions**

Passing laws to protect workers is one thing, enforcement is another. From health and safety to proper pay, it's trade unions which effectively protect workers.

If you're exploited at work, the best thing you can do is join a union. The Socialist Party campaigns to help workers organise together and combat exploitation on our own terms. Then we can take the fight to the bosses together, rather than being individually bullied and manipulated.

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## **Them & Us**

**It's one law for them...**



Rebekah Brooks, the hack 'cleared' of hacking phones, has been restored to her gutter-press throne. She was reinstated this month as chief exec of News UK, home to Tory rags the Sun and the Times.

Brooks, protege of arch-conservative media thug Rupert Murdoch, managed News of the World journos who tapped private messages for stories. This included the voicemail of a murdered child and relatives of dead soldiers.

She squirmed free of criminal charges last year. And it only cost £7 million in legal fees, and £11 million to Brooks when she resigned. Small change for Murdoch, who has a net worth of £8 billion - more than the gross domestic product of Mongolia.

Meanwhile, innocent working class people are being encouraged to plead guilty by vindictive court charges. Tory 'reforms' mean pleading guilty incurs a smaller cost than pleading not guilty and losing before magistrates.

Already the Magistrates Association reports a number of senior justices of the peace have resigned. They say most offenders can never afford vengeful fees of up to £1,200. Worse, blameless defendants who can't afford them may falsely own up to reduce risk.

85% of people tried by magistrates are benefit claimants.

**£7,000,000**

Amount it cost to get Rebekah Brooks off

**£1,200**

Court charge encouraging innocent workers to plead guilty

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## Taking the pee

As if train ticket profiteering wasn't bad enough, it now turns out even station loos are part of the racket.

Investigation by the Liverpool Echo has found the 30p-a-pee facilities make millions a year. And at least one keeps over half as pure profit!

The highest grossing convenience was London Victoria - an astonishing £2.3 million raked in for a basic human need. Liverpool Lime Street reports more than half its £400,000 haul is for profit, rather than for maintenance costs as advertised.

All toilets should be free for all. Nationalise the railways, and abolish lavatory fees and profiteering private train operators.

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## What we saw

**Paul Callanan**

Like most of us, London's leading free right-wing daily, the Evening Standard, has been moved by the refugee crisis. Last week's front page headline really captured the mood of solidarity with refugees, declaring: "Eurostar delays: passengers tell of 13-hour ordeal". This was due to desperate people at Calais trespassing on the track, trying to get to Britain. Passengers the Standard quoted seemed to disagree with its totally insensitive stance, instead expressing

sympathy with refugees enduring squalid conditions. Since then, the Standard, Sun and all the Tory rags have made a complete u-turn. They now pretend to take a rather more humane stance on the crisis.

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**£9,000**

Cut British Airways is demanding from some senior cabin crew's pay - or else they can take redundancy.

**£1,500,000,000**

British Airways' projected profits this year. The airline is also handing its multimillionaire boss a 30% pay rise.

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## **Bromyard Community Hospital victory**

**Sean McCauley, Worcester Socialist Party**

The in-patient unit at Bromyard Community Hospital, which was set to close, has been saved after the Wye Valley NHS Trust board backed down due to pressure from staff and the local community.

A 250-strong public meeting last week was enough to show people's anger at the action of the Trust board. Richard Beeken, the Chief Executive has been humbled and made to backtrack at an incredible speed.

At the meeting he was regularly shown up for what he is; an apologist for the Tory cuts agenda.

Decisions not to use bank and agency staff to cover absence on the ward were as a result of the pressure to make "savings" ie cuts within the Wye Valley NHS Trust.

The parlous state of the finances within the Trust is because of the disastrous Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract with Mercia Healthcare, which has crippled the NHS here.

Staff once more have stepped in to save services. The reorganisation of rotas and leave have figured highly in the proposals made by staff to management as a way of solving the problem.

The campaign is keen to ensure that any solutions which involve staff should not involve any deterioration in pay and conditions, even in the short term.

This is not over though. Senior management statements have made it clear that they see this only as a temporary fix. They give no guarantees that similar announcements will not be made in the future.

We need to stay vigilant and will continue to ensure that Bromyard Hospital's in-patient ward is kept open and fully staffed for its intended capacity - and for staff to be paid appropriate trade union negotiated compensation for any extra services offered.

We also demand that the Wye Valley NHS Trust's books are opened up to trade union and community campaigners' scrutiny and the PFI contract with Mercia Healthcare is cancelled.

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## **Cuba at a crossroads**

# Gains of the revolution of Che Guevara and Fidel Castro under threat

Tony Saunois, Committee for a Workers' International (CWI)

The Financial Times (FT) boasted in June: "There is a new entry among Cuba's roll of important dates. Alongside Fidel Castro's 26 July movement and the 1 January 1959 'triumph of the revolution', there is now 17 December 2014."

The FT is confusing revolution with counter revolution. 17 December 2014 was when US President Obama and Cuba's Raul Castro announced a series of historic agreements to restore diplomatic relations between the two countries.

They agreed a relaxation of travel restrictions and the first tentative steps signalling the easing of the trade embargo which has been imposed since the revolution in 1959. Since then the US has re-opened its embassy in Havana.

These developments represent a decisive shift in the policy of US imperialism towards Cuba. It also signifies a further step by the Cuban regime towards capitalist restoration.

Obama made these announcements, recognising that "You cannot keep doing the same thing and expect a different result". He has now embraced the different approach taken by the European ruling classes, the Canadian and much of Latin American capitalism.

## Embargo

Since the Cuban revolution US imperialism has enacted a strict embargo and undertaken various attempts - including armed intervention in 1961 - to overthrow the Cuban regime and restore capitalism. Despite the crippling consequences of the embargo - estimated to have cost the Cuban economy US\$1 trillion - this policy has failed. This was mainly due to the deep social roots of the revolution and support for it which has lasted for decades.

US imperialism is adopting a new policy of moving towards lifting the embargo. The threat of capitalist restoration to an isolated workers' state can come not only from military intervention.

As Trotsky warned in relation to the former Soviet Union, it can come in the form of "cheap goods in the baggage train of imperialism". The objective of US imperialism is the same but now they hope to reach it by a different route. They want to flood the Cuban economy with goods and investment with the aim of fully restoring capitalism and exploiting Cuba's resources for themselves.

The devastating economic situation in Cuba means many Cubans are dependent on remittances they receive from families in the USA. An estimated 62% of Cuban households now receive support from abroad. According to some economic estimates, they sustain an incredible 90% of the retail market.

The dire economic situation in Cuba has been disastrous for the masses. The massive social gains conquered as a result of the revolution and overthrow of capitalism have been eroded, particularly since the collapse of the former USSR. Wages in Cuba today are estimated to be worth only 28% of what they were then.

Yet support for the revolution and opposition to capitalism meant that the Cuban regime, incredibly, was able to maintain the planned economy and bureaucratic regime throughout the 1990s and into the early part of the 21st century. Cuba defied the laws of political gravity, despite the tidal wave of free market capitalism which dominated the world economy.

## Regime

The regime was also able to sustain itself politically using the US embargo which fuelled hostility to US imperialism. The arrival of Hugo Chavez to power in Venezuela also brought it breathing space through its supply of cheap petrol and oil.

The lack of genuine workers' control and democracy further aggravated the economic and social crisis caused by the embargo and isolation.

The revolutionary convulsions which swept Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador at the beginning of the century offered the prospect of Cuba breaking out of its isolation. A genuine workers' democracy would have seized this opportunity and taken the steps necessary to try and form a socialist federation of these countries.

This would have allowed economic co-operation and planning between them and could have begun to appeal to the working class of the whole of Latin America by offering an alternative to capitalism.

However, unfortunately, neither the Cuban regime nor the reformist leaderships of Chavez (Venezuela), Morales (Bolivia) and Correa (Ecuador) were prepared to do this.

The Cuban regime, on the other hand, has continued to introduce a series of incremental steps beginning the process of capitalist restoration.

Although the easing of travel restrictions will be welcomed, other measures represent a threat to the remaining gains conquered by the revolution. These were already being eroded and dismantled.

The government has established a target of removing over one million workers from the state sector and allowing the establishment of thousands of small and medium sized businesses; 500,000 licenses have already been issued to 'cuentapropistas'.

A bridgehead for capitalist restoration has been developed in the tourist sector which has been the centre thus far of foreign investment from Europe, Canada, Brazil and more recently Chinese enterprises.

While the Cuban regime still uses some socialist rhetoric, reflecting the support which still exists for the revolution, especially amongst the older generation, it increasingly refers to Jose Marti, the leader of the independence movement against the Spanish colonisers.

## **Younger generation**

The younger generation, desperate to enjoy new freedoms - use of the internet and international travel amongst others - have experienced not the gains but the regression of the revolution, economic and social crisis and the stifling dead hand of the bureaucracy.

The arrival of "cheap goods in the baggage train of imperialism" may hold an initial attraction until the reality of life in capitalist society becomes apparent.

These developments clearly represent an important move towards the re-introduction of capitalism.

The state still maintains powerful control and could choke off these steps at a certain stage and the decisive sectors of the economy have still not been privatised.

Even US capitalists, eager to take back what they lost in the revolution, are treading cautiously. As one investor was quoted as saying, "It makes sense. Start small, learn how the system works and then see how it goes".

For socialists and the working class the moves towards capitalist restoration represent a backward step. They will signify the erosion of the gains of the Cuban revolution for the masses and also will be used by the ruling class, especially in Latin America, to try again to discredit the idea of socialism as an alternative to capitalism.

However, this will not have the same effect as the ideological offensive against the idea of socialism which was unleashed following the collapse of the former Stalinist regimes after 1989. The working class and the masses have experienced twenty five years of the 'supremacy of the free market' and is struggling against it. In Brazil, Argentina, Chile and other countries a new cycle of workers' struggle has begun.

The lifting of the embargo would represent a defeat for the past policy of US imperialism and its attempt to overthrow the Cuban regime. But a state monopoly of foreign trade, controlled democratically by a genuine regime of workers' democracy is essential to help prevent the increasing threat of capitalist restoration.

The transition to capitalism in Cuba will not be a straightforward, uninterrupted process. Sections of the regime do not seem to want to go in this direction. Significantly Mairela Castro, daughter of Raul, firmly stated as this deal was announced that: "The people of Cuba don't want to return to capitalism".

## **Obstacles**

There are many obstacles still to be overcome before the lifting of the trade embargo. Not least opposition by far right Republicans in US congress over the question of US\$7 billion claims for compensation by former owners of companies nationalised at the time of the revolution.

Countering, Fidel Castro on his 89th birthday in August raised the question of "numerous millions of dollars" being paid in damages to Cuba by the USA as compensation for the embargo.

Some resistance is likely as the reality of capitalist restoration becomes apparent. Sections of the population are already fearful of losing the gains of the revolution and of Cuba being turned into another Puerto Rico.

The need to build resistance to the developing pace of capitalist restoration, and struggle for genuine workers' democracy and a nationalised planned economy in Cuba is more urgent than ever.

Such a movement could link together with the working class and youth throughout Latin America, who are increasingly moving into battle to defend their interests, and begin to offer a real socialist alternative to capitalism. A movement that has fully learnt the lessons of the Cuban revolution.

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## **The Cuban revolution**

### **Extracts from Cuba: analysis of the revolution, Peter Taaffe, 1978.**

Cuba, before the revolution, was a paradise for the rich but a nightmare of poverty for the workers and peasants. Under the Batista dictatorship, tens of thousands had died at the hands of the military.

Proportionately fewer children went to school in the 1950s than in the 1920s, yet Havana in 1954 had more Cadillacs than any other city in the world! Land was concentrated in a few hands and the economy dominated by the giant American monopolies.

A heroic three-year guerrilla struggle, with the support of the peasantry, led by Fidel Castro, his brother Raúl and Che Guevara finally defeated Batista in 1959. This was greeted with a general strike when the guerrillas entered Havana.

Castro, faced with a life and death struggle against American imperialism, started speaking of the socialist revolution as the process developed. He relied on the peasants and the rural population, which shaped the character of the movement.

There was colossal pressure from an aroused peasantry and the working class. With the defeat of Batista, the peasants moved to occupy the land and the working class clamoured for wage increases.

US companies refused to refine Russian oil imported into Cuba and the US government stopped the import of Cuban sugar, aiming to bring the Castro regime to its knees. In response over the next few months, all Cuban and American big business was taken over.

By the end of 1960 capitalism had been eliminated in Cuba. US imperialism retaliated by declaring a complete trade

embargo and preparing for a military intervention to crush the Cuban Revolution.

A workers' state was established - but with power concentrated in the hands of a layer of privileged officials, rather than through workers' and peasants' councils.

## **Workers' control**

There was undoubtedly an element of workers' control in the factories in the first period of the revolution and every neighbourhood and street had a 'Committee for the Defence of the Revolution'.

An indication of the widespread support for the regime is demonstrated by the enormous crowds which gathered in Havana to listen to Castro's speeches.

But at the same time the masses had no control or management of the state machine. This was concentrated in the hands of Castro and his supporters, the governing party and the army.

The enormous aid extended by the Soviet Union together with the advantages which flow from a planned economy meant a gigantic development of Cuban society. There were huge steps forward in areas such as life expectancy, health and education.

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## **International news in brief**

### **Malaysia: Opposition mounting against Najib's government**

In the wake of the stock market crisis in China and a dip in commodity prices, Malaysia saw a mass gathering in the streets of Kuala Lumpur, the capital city, lasting for two days over the last weekend in August.

This is the fourth instalment of the Bersih (Clean) protests that started in 2007 as a democratic movement to reform the parliamentary electoral system, which favours the ruling government coalition Barisan Nasional (BN).

In 2007, there were about 30,000 participants but the number has grown on each protest, and this year an estimated 200,000 people turned up wearing yellow t-shirts (the official colour of Bersih).

## Stormont Executive plunged into crisis

Once again the Northern Ireland Executive is facing a real risk of a collapse. A crisis erupted in the aftermath of the killing of Kevin McGuigan in the Short Strand area of Belfast on 13 August.

Whatever happens next, the latest crisis only serves to underline the plain fact that the peace process has not delivered on any of its promises.

The establishment of a new political party, which seeks to unite Catholics and Protestants in a common struggle for a better life, would undermine support for the sectarian parties.

Full article on [www.socialistpartyni.net](http://www.socialistpartyni.net)

## India: 150 million workers strike

"It is no exaggeration to say that the nation-wide strike on 2 September was the biggest ever that India has seen since independence from direct colonial rule."

Jagdish G Chandra, New Socialist Alternative (CWI-India).

See [www.socialistworld.net](http://www.socialistworld.net) for full article

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**The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated.**

The CWI is organised in 45 countries and works to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against global capitalism and to fight for a socialist world.

[www.socialistworld.net](http://www.socialistworld.net)

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## Students under siege

# How students can fight debt, cuts and sell-offs

**Students face massive attacks: on our wallets, on our courses and on our future. Mary Finch, Socialist Students member and Leeds for Free Education organiser, looks at how we can fight back.**

In five years, the 'Con-Dem' coalition government trebled tuition fees, tried to privatise student debt, and scrapped college EMA (Education Maintenance Allowance) grants. So when the Tories narrowly scraped a solo election victory this year, students knew it didn't bode well for us.

Only two days after the Tories won, around 4,000 students and young people were protesting in Westminster against plans for more brutal austerity. Thousands more protested on the day of the state opening of parliament.

The 2015 budget has been an absolute vindication of those fears.

It included a stealth rise in tuition fees. Universities deemed 'good' will be allowed to hike prices with inflation, which

could lead to annual fees of £10,000 or more.

Means-tested maintenance grants, created primarily for the poorest, are being scrapped and replaced with loans. Even the grant and loan system as it existed before was nowhere near sufficient.

Many students are forced to take on long hours of work alongside their degree.

Student poverty is a growing problem. A Guardian study recently found students are left - on average - £265 short every month. Further increasing the sky-high debt students leave university with could have a catastrophic effect on higher education.

This will only be exacerbated by freezing the income threshold for starting to repay student loans at £21,000. Graduates will pay back more each year in real terms.

And if revived plans to privatise student loans go ahead, a private company will be the debt collector. The Tories have no regard for whether students can afford to pay their debt back. A profit-driven business will have even less.

## Cuts

The further education budget is being cut by 24%, meaning redundancies and course closures left, right and centre. When the cost of university education is going up and up, many working class students turn to vocational education. The billions of pounds of cuts being made to further education colleges will drastically limit our access.

Housing benefit has been scrapped for 18 to 21-year-olds, and the new 'living' (minimum) wage doesn't apply if you're under 25. As victims of the crisis in housing, employment, and education, the next five years under the Tories may seem bleak for students.

But we can defeat austerity if we prepare ourselves for struggle. The fact that the Tories are ramping up attacks on students means there's renewed potential for a movement to develop.

Students have already shown we're willing to organise. In Lewisham, secondary school students organised protests and walkouts against their school being turned into an academy (a step towards privatisation). By linking with their teachers in the local branch of teachers' union NUT, they forced the governors back.

We can win similar victories nationwide - if we have the right leadership, with the right strategy.

## NUS

The National Union of Students (NUS) is the biggest national student organisation. It's gained a justified reputation for selling out student struggle.

But this year, four out of the five new vice-presidents - who run the NUS day to day alongside the president - stood for election as left-wingers.

Socialist Students argued the NUS should have called a national demonstration to defend education. It could have used the huge resources, organisational weight and mass platform of the NUS to make it big and bold.

Disappointingly, the outgoing national executive council, the 30-member leadership of the NUS, decided against this. It voted only to support a demonstration called by others.

Nonetheless, the national demonstration in the autumn term is a positive starting point for bringing the movement together nationally. Especially if combined with robust local action from individual student unions and campaign groups. Socialist Students in Leeds helped organise a well-attended free education demo this year through the Leeds for Free Education campaign.



But this starting point has to be just that. Demonstrations alone aren't going to defeat the attacks.

In Quebec, in 2012, a mass movement of students defeated tuition fee rises. They went further than student demonstrations, organising occupations and student strikes, with tens of thousands of workers marching alongside them.

## 2010

In 2010, when 50,000 students marched on parliament on the issue of tuition fees, Socialist Students raised the need for student strikes to take the movement forward.

With mass involvement, those tactics can be hugely successful. If a mass movement of students develops, we would argue for them again.

Our future is at stake here, so the question remains: how are we going to defend it? Whatever reforms we can win under capitalism will always be clawed back by the 1% that rules society. As long as they exist, they will continue to use society's resources for their private profit, not for everyone's needs.

A fundamental break with capitalism is necessary. That means socialism: democratic public ownership of the economy. That would allow us to collectively decide what direction we want society and the economy to take, in the interests of everyone.

We would be putting power in the hands of the ordinary people who make society run.

To achieve that, we need to unite with the workers' movement. The organised working class has immense potential power. As the ones who keep society running, turning out profits for the capitalist class, workers are in the unique position of being able to shut it down.

By linking up with the trade unions, we can build a united mass movement of students and workers. We can win the fight against austerity, privatisation and capitalism.

- 
- Fight for free education: Scrap fees - for education that is fully funded, publicly owned, democratically run and universally free at all levels
  - Defend and extend student grants: Fight to stop the abolition of maintenance grants. No to privatisation of the student loan book. Replace student loans with grants which genuinely reflect the cost of living.
  - Stop all cuts and privatisation: Support trade unions taking action
  - Slash rents: For genuinely affordable university accommodation. Bring privatised halls back 'in-house'. Local authority rent controls to stop spiralling housing costs for all
  - A socialist society for the 99%: free from all exploitation, war and oppression
- 

## Join Socialist Students

We're socialists because we think the problems faced by students, workers and all the oppressed have roots in capitalism. We need to fundamentally transform society so it is run in the interests of the masses.

On most campuses we hold weekly meetings to discuss the politics of changing the world. Join us and get involved!

Text JOIN plus name & uni/college to 0774 937 9010

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## Children suffer as the cuts deepen

**Mike Whale, NUT Hull and Olive Nicholson, Unison**

Are children becoming more naughty and violent? If so, why?

Many teachers have commented recently that there has been a rise in "challenging behaviour" from children they teach in schools in general and in special schools in particular.

The Socialist has explained before that successive governments, Tory and Labour, have turned schools into exam factories. Many schools threatened by Ofsted inspectors and government targets are more concerned with league table performance than an individual pupil's experience at school.

Pupils are increasingly forced to study subjects which might get them a GCSE at A\* to C. In some cases this can mean pupils in secondary schools spending 30% or more of their time studying Maths or English. No wonder some students rebel against school authority.

While the character of schools is a major factor in explaining why some pupils challenge authority, it doesn't give the full picture. The last five years has seen a steady cutting away of funding to children and young people's services.

## **Impact**

These cuts - which politicians of all the main political parties have justified as being to 'non-essential' services - are now impacting in schools themselves.

A whole network of support services which has been mostly run by the social services side of children's services has been cut away. Young people with complex needs previously would have been able to access specialist support and guidance as a right.

Now, their unresolved problems are being increasingly brought into schools. Teachers and school support staff do their best to help but face competing pressure on their time.

Social work experts together with children's charities paint a devastating picture of what life is now like for poor and vulnerable children today. The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) estimates that there are 3.5 million children living in poverty in the UK.

That's 27% of children - more than one-in-four. Statistically the link between poverty and poorer educational attainment is irrefutable.

According to CPAG: "By 16, children receiving free school meals (a key indicator of poverty) achieve 1.7 grades lower at GCSE than their wealthier peers. Leaving school with fewer qualifications translates into lower earnings over the course of a working life".

Low wages and cuts to benefits are institutionalising a cycle of deprivation and lost life chances. The scary thing is that CPAG estimate that the number of children in poverty will rise to 4.7 million by 2020, when the Tory welfare cuts have been implemented.

As the standard of living for many people deteriorates, so the worst aspects of human behaviour can become more apparent. While the overwhelming majority of poor families provide a caring and loving home life, poverty can lead to despair for some.

There has been a rise in alcoholism and drug abuse directly linked to the rise in poverty. This in turn can lead to parents neglecting their children.

The NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) states that: "The number of people calling the NSPCC's helpline to report concerns about children has risen 228% in five years... referrals to social services have increased significantly, and last year saw the highest recorded number of referrals for children in England. The number

of children in the child protection system has increased by 80% since 2002."

## **Unsustainable**

But, while the demand for children's social care has risen, Tory cuts have meant that increasingly heavy loads are becoming unsustainable for those trying to provide that support.

Enver Solomon, director of 'evidence and impact' at the National Children's Bureau, argues that: "Children's social care is under considerable strain as demand increases from families who are struggling to cope and children who are in need of care and protection."

Increasingly, despite the very best efforts of hard pressed care workers, children are not getting the support they need or deserve. Problems which might have been sorted out of school are left unresolved.

A similar picture emerges for those children suffering from mental health issues. As the preventative services in health and local councils are cut, so children are not given the help they need until such time as they have a major breakdown. At this point, the damage can be irreversible.

## **Angry**

Meanwhile, an increasingly disengaged, unwell and angry layer of young people are coming into our schools with fewer and more stretched support services to help them.

They challenge in the mainstream schools until such time as they are moved to a special school. With the best will in the world, teachers - without the necessary resources - will not be able to provide the specialist support these children need and teach normal classes.

At just the worst time, many schools are making teaching assistants and support staff redundant due to budget pressures. There is a danger that schools will become tinder boxes.

The teacher unions need to avoid looking at education just from the standpoint of schools. Increasingly we need to campaign against all the interlinked cuts to children's services. We need to work with colleagues in the support services to fight to defend what is left but as importantly to reverse the cuts that have already been made.

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# **Lobby the trade union leaders this Sunday!**

**NSSN chair Rob Williams**

Just as hundreds of trade union delegates meet in Brighton at this year's TUC Congress, the Tories will be trying to sneak their anti-union Trade Union Bill through another parliamentary stage. This vicious legislation that builds on Thatcher's laws, is designed to shackle the unions just as Osborne unleashes billions of pounds more in Tory austerity.

If passed, their plans would make official strikes much more difficult, give far more advantage to employers while cutting away democratic union rights. One of the most sinister measures involves forcing one picket on strike to give their personal details to the police, opening up the way to arrest and criminal charges!

We should remember that in 1972 when the Tories previously attempted to impose anti-union laws, they nearly provoked a general strike by jailing five London dockers.

**The National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) is lobbying TUC Congress this Sunday, 13th September, to push for the action that is necessary to confront the Tories and their Bill.**

We will be supporting Congress motions such as those from the RMT, FBU, CWU and PCS that between them call for a mass demonstration outside parliament in November when the third and final reading of the Bill is planned; and coordinated strike action if it becomes law; as well as against the cuts and the pay cap. The general secretaries of these unions will be on our platform.

But we're not just waiting until November. The Tories haven't confirmed the day next week when they will go for the second reading but we call on all our supporters and affiliates to organise protests on the day, even if they have to be called at the last minute.

Whether it's your lunch break or after work - get your union banners and flags out with the hashtags #KillTheBill and #RightToStrike.

Then get to Manchester on Sunday 4th October to protest outside the Tory party conference and prepare for November.

---

**Come to the NSSF lobby - tell the TUC it's time to demonstrate and strike together!**

info@shopstewards.net

## **NSSF public rally and lobby of TUC Congress in Brighton**

### **Speakers to include:**

- Mark Serwotka, PCS general secretary
- Mick Cash, RMT general secretary
- Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary
- Ronnie Draper, BFAWU general secretary
- Steve Gillan, POA general secretary
- Dave Ward, CWU general secretary
- Suzanne Muna, Unite executive

### **1pm Sunday 13 September**

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# Nominate a fighting socialist for Unison general secretary

## Interview with Unison general secretary candidate Roger Bannister

**Rank and file socialist Roger Bannister is standing for general secretary of Unison, Britain's largest public sector union. Roger is secretary of Unison's Knowsley branch in Merseyside and has been on Unison's leading national executive committee since the union was formed. The Socialist interviewed Roger about his campaign.**

**Why are you running for general secretary of Unison?**

Unison is in the doldrums. Members are getting hammered with job losses, job insecurity and cuts in services and Unison are doing very little about it.

That is one of the main reasons I am running for general secretary. The second largest union in Britain is punching well below its weight and we need to turn this around.

Some of our members wonder why they pay subscriptions to a union that achieves very little for them.

**What should the response of Unison and the trade union movement be to the new anti-trade union laws?**

The anti-trade union laws as proposed by the Tory government are the biggest threat the trade union movement has faced so far.

These proposals are way below the standards of international labour organisations. They involve attacks on facility time and attacks on a union's ability to collect subscriptions by deducting them directly from salaries.

The bill won't be defeated purely by demonstrations although they are important. These proposals are such a threat that the trade union movement should be prepared to organise industrial action against them, ideally co-ordinated by the Trade Union Congress itself.

It's important that a union as big as Unison takes a lead on this, otherwise our members will suffer accordingly.

**Pay is a big issue for all Unison members, what would you do as general secretary to tackle it?**

Pay is a major issue for all members and one of the main reasons they join and remain in trade unions. Recently, Unison has simply not been delivering the goods as far as pay is concerned. Most of our members are in the public sector and have been hit by government pay freezes.

Local government workers have suffered badly in the current pay settlement. We held a special conference to try and change this but the decisions taken there have not been implemented by the leadership of Unison. Other important sections like health workers and further education are in a similar situation.

We have to break away from this ritualised approach to one day strike action and then settling. If we don't get what we want after one day action we should use the sustained action called for in the ballot. And demonstrate the power of the union is sufficient to break down the resolve of the employers and deliver the goods.

**Unison are affiliated to the Labour Party, what do you think of this and the leadership bid of Jeremy Corbyn?**

I have opposed affiliation ever since the Labour Party shifted to the right and recently this approach has been called into question since the success of Jeremy Corbyn.

I believe that not a penny of Unison money should go to politicians that attack Unison and its members. I don't mind money going to left MPs like Jeremy Corbyn but I object to it going to people like Liz Kendall and Andy Burnham.

I sincerely hope Jeremy Corbyn is successful but he will have his work cut out to make the Labour Party a party worthy of that name.

His support among Labour councillors is quite small and he will have to deal with those entrenched right wingers who see no further than continuing to make Tory cuts.

As someone who works for a Labour council that is going over the heads of the trade union movement, making cuts and attacking Unison members, I still think that there is a question mark over Unison's relationship with the Labour Party.

**What would a socialist like yourself do as general secretary and if elected, would you only take a worker's wage?**

Socialism is a society based on the needs and aspirations of working people and not on the greed of a handful of rich people. Trade unions have an important role to play in this process.

A general secretary who is a socialist has to work out how to use unions to the maximum advantage of members and workers. I would be much closer to the rank and file of the union than the leadership now.

Many union leaders, in smart offices in London, behave more like captains of industry than workers' leaders. This has to be changed. That is why I would take only the average wage of a worker.

I think being a general secretary on a workers wage is the most important part of my campaign pledges. I have been an active trade unionist for 30 years and I've never gained a penny out of it and if elected I still won't. That's not what I'm in it for.

If you agree with Roger that Unison needs a fighting strategy to beat the cuts and win for members, we urge your branch to nominate Socialist Party member Roger Bannister. Nominations are now open. They close at 5pm on 9 October. Join the campaign at

- [www.facebook.com/roger4gensec](http://www.facebook.com/roger4gensec) or email [electrogerbannister@gmail.com](mailto:electrogerbannister@gmail.com)

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## **Most important TUC Congress for decades**

**Rob Williams, Chair, National Shop Stewards Network**

The Trade Union Congress (TUC) meets in Brighton from 13-16 September in the most important Congress since 1984. Then thousands of striking miners lobbied the Congress to demand that the TUC come out in solidarity with them and their union, the National Union of Miners.

Thatcher, with her pit closure plan, sought revenge for the earlier defeat inflicted on the Tories and their previous anti-union laws by the working-class and especially the miners.

**Kill the Bill!**

The slogan used by many trade unionists against Heath's Industrial Relations Bill was 'Kill the Bill!' It is being revived by activists now, including the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN), who will be lobbying TUC Congress before it starts on Sunday.

The lobby will be building pressure for the TUC to step up what is an inadequate lobby of Parliament planned for 2 November, when the Bill has its third and final reading.

The NSSN is calling for a mass demonstration to march on parliament on that day, warning Cameron and the Tories that if it is passed, they will be met with mass co-ordinated strike action on the scale of a 24-hour general strike.

Motions from the RMT, FBU and the CWU explicitly call for action on this scale and should be supported individually or if composited.

The link has to be made between the Tory anti-union plans and their new cuts package. PCS's motion on fighting the cuts, including the pay cap with co-ordinated strike action at its centre should be supported.

## **Jeremy Corbyn**

Congress begins the day after the Labour leadership election is announced, with the prospect of Jeremy Corbyn addressing delegates as Labour leader.

His support is a reflection of the real defiant mood that is building in society generally, which is demonstrated by the increasing number of industrial disputes.

Trade unions should put demands on Corbyn on fighting the anti-union proposals and resisting the cuts, in particular Labour councils refusing to implement any more Tory cuts.

NSSN public rally and lobby of TUC Congress in Brighton at 1pm Sunday 13 September at the Charlotte Room in the Grand Hotel, 97-99 King's Road, BN1 2FW (next to the Brighton

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## **Pizza express tips victory**

In a victory for the campaign led by Unite, restaurant chain Pizza Express has announced that it is to drop the 8% admin fee it takes from staff tips. There had been regular protests by campaigners, joined by Socialist Party members, plus fury on social media.

The company has said that credit card tips will all now be distributed among staff.

### **Pizza Express not alone**

Unite have said they will continue to monitor the company to ensure the change takes place. Also Pizza Express is not alone in skimming staff tips. Café Rouge, Belgo, Bella Italia and Las Iguanas do the same.

Las Iguanas demand workers pay them an amount equivalent to 3% of customers' bills, irrespective of what tips they actually get.

The following are comments made by former Las Iguanas employee, Daniel Doran:

"When I worked for Las Iguanas in Bristol, on a typical Saturday shift I'd make £2,000 for the company and they'd charge me £60 for doing so. From such a shift I'd usually end up taking home £20-30 in tips, though many times I'd end up with nothing, and I've known waiters who've had to withdraw money at the end of a shift in order to pay the

company. But Las Iguanas operate a two-month probationary period - you'd obviously be fired if you complained about the 3% policy."

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## Buses fightback works in Sheffield

**Jeremy Short**

Campaigning by Socialist Party members under the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) banner has helped a rethink on some of the cuts proposed by the Sheffield Bus Partnership. In both areas where TUSC has been running local petitions, the Partnership is reported to be considering a partial restoration of services.

Admittedly these are small concessions compared with the overall 10% proposed cut in services. Martin Mayer, the Trades Council and former Unite buses branch secretary, described them as 'the biggest single cut in bus services ever to hit Sheffield'.

It is significant that the cuts been revised only in four areas - the two where TUSC has been campaigning and two other local campaigns. Concessions were made on hospital travel for the elderly follow persistent campaigning by the 'Freedom Riders' campaign.

See issue 867 of the Socialist and elsewhere on the website for a previous report of the campaign.

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## Great support for Cardiff bus strike

### "No more lies - give us a rise"

**Dave Reid and Mariam Kamish**

Hundreds of Cardiff bus drivers converged on Cardiff city centre on 2 September and 5 September in an impressive show of strength as the bus network ground to a virtual halt.

The drivers have taken action after weeks of fruitless negotiations with management at council-owned Cardiff Bus. They have submitted a 4% pay claim after years of below inflation deals and management has responded with a 3% offer with strings attached, nothing like the 5% reported in the media. A further 2% would not be paid until the end of 2016.

And this after years of low rises. In 2012 there was no pay rise; in 2013 the managing director got a £10,000 rise while drivers got below-inflation 2%; and in 2014 there were 70 redundancies.

Marching through the centre of Cardiff with Unite banners streaming behind them, they sang and chanted, their mood high. Strikers are especially angry at the untruths being reported about them - their chants included football-style: "No more lies, give us a rise!"

Rugby crowds seemed happy to do without their buses on a match day. One vendor selling Welsh rugby scarves continuously applauded the march until the last striker had passed.

"There's no way as your elected representatives", Unite branch Secretary Paul O'Hara told the rally, "that we are going to give away terms and conditions that took years to win. It was like being mugged yesterday! They told us that management are only having 2% rise, but 2% for them is £3,000. For us it's pennies!"



Strikers clapped and shouted. They made it clear that they are going to take the fight to victory.

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This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 8 September 2015 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

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## Workplace news in brief

### EDF con

On 2 September Unite members working for EDF Energy took the first day of strike action in what is becoming an increasingly bitter dispute. The strikers included meter readers, meter fixers, debt recovery officers and clerical grades in London, the South East, South West and Eastern regions. The strike came after the employer tried to force changes in working hours. It then revealed proposed pay cuts. Large numbers of workers picketed the Bexleyheath headquarters office ensuring that every worker attempting to cross the picket line was challenged. People wanting to enter the building had to queue, with many waiting in cars. The only disappointment of the day was that Unison members weren't also involved in the action - Unite will be raising this directly with Unison. Unite has made clear that unless the company meets its demands, strike action will be escalated.

### Blue Coat staff see red

On the 3 September members of the NUT went on strike at Blue Coat Academy in Coventry in direct response to the attack on the working conditions of staff imposed by management. The strike is due to changes in performance measuring standards alongside additional significant changes being made with no consultation. Teachers only found out via the school's website! Further strike action is planned on 10 September.

- More at [coventrysocialists.com](http://coventrysocialists.com)

### Camden parking strike

Camden's Parking Officers took strike action on 7 September in response to what pickets described as a "completely useless" latest pay offer from NSL services group. The strike is having an effect but NSL are using delaying tactics to help them manage strike-breaking. The workers and local Unison branch are planning another five days of action.

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## Fight against blacklisting in Liverpool

**Jimmy Tyson, Liverpool Socialist Party**

The construction of the new Royal Liverpool hospital is being undertaken by the blacklist using company Carillion. At the start of the contract Carillion gave reassurances that there would be direct employment, no use of agencies, nationally recognised rates of pay and 60% local labour. Carillion have broken all of these agreements.

A protest took place on 4 September. At 6am over a hundred trade unionists turned up leafleting workers as they arrived for work.

We blocked the road in and out of Liverpool city centre for 3 hours; the only vehicles allowed through were doctors and nurses who work at the hospital. Police arrived at the scene and redirected traffic away from the blockade.

This was an effective protest and I'm pleased to say this is the first of many against blacklists Carillion and Liverpool city council for allowing the exploitation of hundreds of construction workers on this site. Hopefully site workers were encouraged seeing what can be achieved when workers get organised.

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## **Film Review: Stonewall**

### **Rebuild an active LGBT movement**

**Mary Finch, Leeds Socialist Party**

Within a week of the trailer for the film Stonewall being released, 22,000 people signed a petition calling for it to be boycotted. Stonewall purports to tell the history of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans) struggle for equality.

On the night of 27 June 1969 New York police, like they had so many times before across the USA, raided the Stonewall Inn LGBT bar, arresting some of the patrons. The local LGBT community immediately exploded in anger, ejecting the police from the area, and freeing the arrested. These protests sparked massive organisation of LGBT people to fight for their rights.

This new film wrote out some major characters - the people who led the Stonewall riots, and the subsequent movement for liberation and equality, but are less palatable to the whitewashed image Hollywood wants to present.

The film is based around a fictional white, gay man. But Marsha Johnson, a black transgender woman, appears in the film with only a minor role. Historically she is credited with instigating the riots. Sylvia Rivera, a Latina transgender woman and another key figure in the riots, was replaced with a fictional male character.

### **Struggle**

Petitioners say those 'who began the riots do not seem to be credited with such revolutionary acts'. Stonewall was revolutionary. Before the riots, and the mass liberation movement, police raids and arrests in LGBT bars was commonplace, as were attacks and murders that were rarely prosecuted.

After Stonewall the LGBT community demanded the same rights, safety, and freedom from harassment and violence that everyone else enjoys. We should reclaim our history.

Ultimately, the LGBT movement of the 1970s failed to make the necessary conclusions that class society, where a tiny elite hoard wealth at the expense of the rest, will always be one of divide and rule.

Meanwhile, young people kicked out of their homes by homophobic or transphobic parents often have nowhere to go, and end up homeless. Asylum seekers are often deported to their home countries, back to persecution. LGBT people are disproportionately more likely to suffer mental health problems. The working class majority were left to keep suffering capitalism's devastating effects.

We need to rebuild an active movement, demanding whatever steps towards equality we can win under capitalism, but ultimately fighting for a democratic socialist society.

By nationalising the wealth of the 1%, and democratically planning its use, we can harness vast resources to provide jobs, homes and services for LGBT people.

We can render divide and rule tactics obsolete. With no ruling class, there is no longer a need for oppression. Only a decisive break with capitalism can win genuine liberation!

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# Why I joined

**Socialist Party member, Kent**

Five years ago the only mention of the word austerity I'd heard was when Billy Bragg sang about it in 'Between the Wars'. I surmised it was about people being skint.

In the run-up to the 2010 general election austerity became an economic policy based on 'belt tightening'. Labour had apparently been 'too careless with the nation's accounts' and to rectify this, the Tories proposed measures to balance the books.

Having left the Labour Party in my early twenties I was no longer a supporter of their policies or ideology, nonetheless I didn't hold them responsible for the global economic collapse of 2008! I was surprised when others did, as it was the banks and capitalism that were really responsible.

At this time I was employed as a social worker. The forewarnings of what to expect from the austerity agenda began to take shape before a single cut had taken place.

After the 2010 election many of us within social services were braced for the coming onslaught. As workers we were the first to be attacked. Mileage rates were cut, car user allowances were abolished and we were told to expect mandatory evening and weekend working.

During the following five years our caseloads increased fourfold. Arriving home after work I would set up my laptop and continue to work, often until 11pm.

In order to justify and pursue their policy of driving through cuts the local authority employed a private consultancy agency who was paid in the region of £6 million in order to save the council five times as much.

I ended up, before I left, with 120 clients on my caseload. That this is taking place in the welfare state makes me despair. That the Labour Party intended to pursue this process made me seethe. One night I googled 'Socialist Party' and reclaimed my anger, my fight and my sense of what is right.

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## "NHS saved my life"

**Tory Health Minister Jeremy Hunt infuriated health workers by telling medics to 'get real' and deliver a seven-day NHS. A potentially traumatic health crisis recently showed Socialist Party and trade union activist Paul Couchman that the NHS is still functioning well at weekends, thanks to NHS staff, not to Tory cuts.**

On Friday night of the August bank holiday weekend, the NHS saved my life. One minute I thought I was going to die - the worst, most debilitating pain I have ever known exploding in my heart.

A few minutes later, after an emergency call from my wonderful wife Helen, the first responder paramedics arrived, calmed me down, gave me reassurance and pain relief. Five minutes later the ambulance and two more paramedics came to take me into hospital. Helen came with me to hold my hand. Yes it was a heart attack.

Whilst this was happening, a cardiology team of at least six highly trained staff was being called in. Whether they had been sleeping, eating a meal or watching a film, they dropped everything to assemble in the cardiology lab at St Peters Hospital in Chertsey.

They were all there already to greet me off the ambulance with smiles, more reassurances and explanations as to what

they were going to be doing. An hour, one removed clot and three stents later I was in the ward having a cup of tea.

The same consultant who came in to perform the operation on the Friday night was there on Saturday morning to talk me through what happened and what needs to happen next. Take note Jeremy Hunt - they were all still working.

A few days' observation and I can go home to take it easy for a few weeks at least. I have been offered ongoing complementary physio, nutrition and lifestyle advice and counselling.

If we let the politicians carve up, privatise and dismantle our health service, our socialist NHS (in principle), this will be among the greatest betrayals of our children and grandchildren ever.

Thank you to all the staff who saved my life from the people serving the tea and meals, to the cleaners who changed my bed each day. From the radiologists to the nurses, doctors and consultants who worked long hours over the bank holiday weekend to keep me breathing. I will never give up the fight to defend the NHS.

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<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/21381>