

# Jeremy Corbyn under attack but enthusiastic support continues

**The furore over revelations in Lord Ashcroft's biography of David Cameron has temporarily driven attacks on Jeremy Corbyn from the front pages of the mainstream media - though only to the inside pages!**

But accusations about upper class debauchery in Cameron's student life, as well as that he knew about Ashcroft's tax-dodging non-dom status, serve to highlight why so many working class people have rallied behind Corbyn.

He is seen to represent a different kind of politics. And the more the press attack his off-centre ties and his lack of adherence to 'tradition', the more firm his support becomes from those who are sick of establishment drone politicians.

To ensure the anti-austerity politics that have won Corbyn such support are not imprisoned with just a few isolated individuals within the Labour Party leadership, his supporters must get organised.

## **Movement**

This means a movement built in every town and city of the country and both inside and outside the structures of the Labour Party.

Such an approach can appeal to the mass of working class people and take the first steps towards developing a party for the millions, not the millionaires.

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The media's ferocious attacks on Jeremy Corbyn have been unrelenting. The possibility of a left-wing Labour leader becoming prime minister at the next general election has sent many pro-capitalist commentators into a frenzy. Jeremy mustn't retreat in the face of this onslaught but should make a bold appeal to the over 250,000 people who elected him and his supporters beyond them, to ensure he has the necessary back-up to stand firm on his policies.

One of the attacking mantras is that a Corbyn-led Labour Party is unelectable - in a seeming attempt to repeat it enough times to make it a truism. Some even go to the extent of trying to appeal to anti-austerity sentiment by declaring that so unelectable is Corbyn, his presence as Labour leader means that the Tories will have a secure ten year run and will be able to inflict all manner of further attacks on the working class.

When opinion polls showed that Labour had slightly increased its support in the electorate since Corbyn's victory, commentators - after just one week of Corbyn being leader - rushed to trumpet that the increase was too small to win a general election.

But these 'assurances' didn't stop a serving army general from raising the spectre of the army chiefs defying a democratically elected left Labour government. "The general staff just would not allow a prime minister to jeopardise the security of this country and people would use

whatever means possible, fair or foul, to prevent that", he was widely reported as threatening sinisterly.

The class interests behind all the dire warnings were touched on in a relatively hidden inner page of a Financial Times 'money' supplement by Jonathan Eley, where he bluntly wrote that Jeremy Corbyn will be "a disaster for your finances" - ie for the wealthiest in society. While Corbyn advocates Quantitative Easing (QE) for 'the people', Eley sheepishly quoted the chief executive of Legal & General describing the QE that's actually been carried out, as: "a policy by the rich, for the rich".

Far from being unelectable, the anti-austerity and other policies Corbyn puts forward would be massively popular, not just in the working class but also among middle class people whose sons and daughters are struggling to get by faced with the housing crisis, low pay, student debt, etc.

### **Counter-productive?**

It took journalist Ed Vulliamy in the Observer to warn his own editors (who had published a verdict of future failure for Corbyn): "For many of our readers and potential readers, the Labour leadership result was a singular moment of hope, even euphoria. It was the first time many of our young readers felt anything like relevance to, let alone empowerment within, a political system that has alienated them utterly."

He asked: "How much of what Corbyn argues do most voters disagree with, if they stop to think? Do people approve of bewildering, high tariffs set by the cartel of energy companies...? Do students and parents from middle and low-income families want tuition fees? Do people like paying ludicrous fares...? Do people urge tax evasion by multinationals and billionaires...?...who exactly are we supposed to kill en masse with these expensive nuclear missiles?"

### **Anti-war**

Corbyn's longstanding anti-war position is very popular, especially with the catastrophic consequences of the wars on Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya now being clearer than ever. Yet shadow ministers Lord Falconer and Hilary Benn - newly appointed by Corbyn - stated openly that they are seriously considering giving backing to Cameron to bomb Syria. Falconer also threw in a long list of other issues on which he disagrees with Corbyn.

Many Labour MPs either refused to be part of Corbyn's shadow cabinet or made no secret of giving ultimatums that they would only do so on the basis of sticking to previous policy; demands which included campaigning to stay in the EU. Shadow education secretary Lucy Powell has declared that privatised schools in the form of academies and free schools will remain, but with some local accountability added.

Meanwhile, according to the Sunday Times: "senior figures on Corbyn's front bench were phoning each other to discuss who the next leader of the party should be". But they were struggling to think of anyone who isn't too utterly discredited and unpopular!

### **Attacks from all directions**

Attacks on Jeremy Corbyn were also coming from other directions within Labour. When interviewed by Sky News, former Labour home secretary Charles Clarke questioned whether Corbyn will still be Labour leader in 2020 and said the party would be working on "its own proposals to try and ensure that we can contest the Tories effectively at the next election".

Sadiq Khan, Labour's candidate for London mayor, said he will be "the most business-friendly mayor of all time"- no lessons learnt here from 'business-friendly' Andy Burnham's fate in the Labour leadership contest. Khan made a point of opposing any increases in corporation tax, even though the Tories have slashed it; and he called Corbyn - who is a lifelong republican - "disrespectful" for not singing the national anthem.

Huge pressure to water down their pledges is being piled on Corbyn and his shadow chancellor John McDonnell from almost every establishment quarter. To try to beat them down, they're declared to be 'barmy', unrealistic purists, dinosaurs from the past, along with other, more brutal, insults.

Fearing the mass pressure that could be exerted in a left direction on a Corbyn-led government, the City of London finance elite has, according to the FT, "embarked on a charm offensive as concern amounts over the anti-capitalist policies of Jeremy Corbyn's top team ...Policy briefings and one-on-one meetings with City figures have been offered to Mr Corbyn...and John McDonnell...".

In the Guardian, Jonathan Freedland waded in with: "...individual purity is an impossible luxury for a leader. Suddenly you have to speak for everyone, not just yourself". But his term 'everyone' is an attempt to push Corbyn to shift more towards the interests of the ruling class and away from those of the overwhelming majority of people who have an enormous amount to gain from a left-led government standing firm on its policies.

## **Grassroots backing**

Since the start of the leadership election campaign 150,000 new members, enthused by Jeremy Corbyn's policies, have joined the Labour Party. Millions more are talking about what's happening and hoping that parliamentary politics may be changing in their favour.

Unfortunately, under huge pressure from MPs who represent the interests of the capitalist ruling elite, Jeremy has already made some big retreats, including acquiescing to a joint letter with Hilary Benn that asserts that Labour will campaign to stay in the EU.

John McDonnell, having previously argued for a 60% top income tax rate, has for now dropped that to 50% (it went as high as 83% in the 1970s under then Labour chancellor Denis Healey). John has also assured the capitalist class and finance industry that he will uphold the Bank of England's independence.

These kind of changes and Corbyn's decision to wait for the end of rail company franchises before taking them back into public ownership, led the Independent on Sunday (owned by Russian oligarch Alexander Lebedev) to say in hope: "Far from adding to the evidence that Jeremy Corbyn is a wide-eyed anti-capitalist, his new policy suggests an open-minded pragmatism bent on gradual reform."

But the agents of the media barons shouldn't judge prematurely. The tremendous groundswell of anger and disillusionment with capitalist politics that propelled Corbyn into the Labour leadership certainly hasn't evaporated. If Corbyn and McDonnell set about drawing into political activity in a democratic, organised form, the vast force of working class and middle class people who want an end to the austerity attacks, they will have ample backing to push on with anti-cuts, anti-poverty and anti-war policies.

### **The type of 'big tent'**

The Observer reported John McDonnell as saying that he and Corbyn "will not impose their own ideas on the party but will adopt a big tent approach to policymaking". An important question is, who will be in in this tent? John suggested in that same interview that it would be 'all Labour MPs and party members', but then who will have the decisive voice?

The Labour Party was originally created to be a political voice for workers in the trade unions and not as another pro-big business party of capitalism. While the party has always suffered from pro-capitalist individuals and groupings at its top, the Blairites, Brownites and Milibandites carried this hijacking of Labour to a higher stage. The verdict on that process, from the present party grassroots and new influx, was clearly shown in the relatively low leadership contest votes for Kendall, Burnham and Cooper.

Rather than making concessions in the name of 'party unity' (a unity presently impossible) to those who are trying hard to shift them onto a path of accommodation and surrender, it is essential that Corbyn and McDonnell stand firm and rapidly further develop their support base.

Labour is now effectively two parties in one, a scenario that cannot last indefinitely. As the Socialist has argued in previous editorials, a new formation that acts in working class interests can be created out of the present fluid situation. This could be through the small number of genuine left Labour leaders and those who support them in the grassroots of the party - aided by a continued influx of new members - managing to drive out or completely sideline the pro-market right. Or, if that path meets a dead end, it could be by building a new formation that would attract that same layer from Labour, again together with many thousands more who are presently outside Labour.

### **An opposition with teeth**

While most of the career-minded Labour MPs focus on fretting about the 2020 general election and their chances of re-election, there is much work to be done to counter the vicious attacks of the Tory government, including the fast approaching draconian tax credit cuts and the anti-trade union bill.

The Tories don't have to be allowed another five years in power, never mind ten. The combined and organised might of the anti-austerity movement, inspired by the pro-Corbyn surge and given industrial muscle by the six million-strong trade union movement, has the power to force the Tories to backtrack on austerity and even to resign from office, notwithstanding the fixed term parliament act.

Then, Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell - if they have managed to throw off the shackles of Labour's right wing through one path or other - can help bring a left workers' party to

government power. And their genuine desire to place policy decision-making at the level of grassroots democracy and have accountable leaders can be realised, along with concrete steps towards a socialist alternative.

For further analysis on Jeremy Corbyn's victory see [www.socialistparty.org.uk](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk) including 'A Political Earthquake' by Peter Taaffe, written for the October 2015 issue of Socialism Today

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## **TUSC conference 2015**

Saturday 26 September

11am-4.30pm

Student Central, Malet Street, London, WC1E

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## **Cameron must go**

### **Crony PM in donor tax-dodge lies claim**

**James Ivens**

Allegedly, Prime Minister David Cameron fibbed and fibbed about political sugar daddy Lord Ashcroft's filching 'non-dom' tax status.

So says the peer himself. His new book exposes the excess and pettiness of life at the top.

Billionaire Ashcroft came under fire in 2010 for using a loophole to dodge taxes. 'Non-domiciled' status allowed him to only pay the tiny rate charged by tax haven Belize.

Cameron claimed total ignorance till a month before the scandal. And this was only after trying to wriggle out of persistent Freedom of Information requests.

Now the former Conservative treasurer and deputy chair says Cameron knew all about it - the previous year.

### **Donations**

Ashcroft personally donated £8 million to rescue the Tories from financial ruin. This was doubtless unrelated to Cameron's weaselling.

It now seems the peer felt hurt after not being offered a top gig in government.

The book, Call Me Dave, makes lurid accusations about Cameron's personal life ('Moral snoutrage' in this issue's [Them & Us](#)).

But more importantly, it makes serious allegations against the leader who tried to "detoxify" the 'Nasty Party' brand. Lies, incompetence and crony crapulence appear like mould growing back through a fresh coat of paint.

Cameron's governments have slashed billions from jobs and services for working class people. He has condemned the poor and jobless as lazy. He says we need to "balance the books".

## **Chums**

But his chums - with more cash than any of us could ever spend - refuse to chip in.

The Daily Mail, a staunch Tory tabloid, is leading the assault. The drooling reactionaries that run it see even this aristocratic axeman as too 'liberal' on social issues, immigration and the EU. They think Cameron too decadent and militarily inept to lead.

But for us, corrupt establishment politicians are all the same. They - and their grease-spattered paymasters - have got to go.

Close the tax loopholes. Kick out the cuts politicians. Join the Socialist Party to fight for socialism.

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# **Refugees brutalised by thug EU governments**

## **Paula Mitchell**

The refugee crisis has taken an even more harrowing turn. European states have closed their borders to prevent desperate people from entering their countries.

Germany originally took in large numbers of those fleeing wars and terror in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. Now it has brought in border controls.

We have watched the horrific steps of the right-wing Hungarian government. Erecting razor wire. Using tear gas and water cannon, to try to prevent people crossing.

## **Steel**

Refugees are channelled to Serbia, and then Croatia. Hungary put up a steel gate and fence posts at a border crossing with Croatia. After the arrival of 25,000 in a week, Croatia had started sending them on.

At least 15,000 were funnelled from Croatia into Hungary and then onwards to Austria over one weekend. Another 2,500 crossed from Croatia into Slovenia.

But when people are desperate, no barrier can prevent flight. Despite this inhuman suffering, the struggle goes on to find safety.

As the gateways to Europe close, thousands stay put on roadsides and in makeshift shelters. Meanwhile, small groups of young people set out on the risky quest to navigate new routes.

The crisis is another threat to the European Union (EU) itself. Free movement was one of the main planks of its foundation. A senior EU official was quoted saying: "If you don't cope with this crisis, then I think the EU will fall apart."

Europe's bosses are quite happy to use free movement to bring down higher wages and boost their profits. But when it comes to helping those most in need, it becomes inconvenient.

Pressure on Cameron forced him to say he would allow in up to 20,000 refugees. But he still insists he will take them from Middle East camps, not from those already on the way.

The massive outpouring of public sympathy puts Europe's big business governments to shame. The right to asylum is a fundamental human right which the Socialist Party defends.

We need to build a mass anti-austerity movement, to fight to take the wealth from the 1%. Then we can provide jobs, homes and services for all.

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## **Liverpool's Labour mayor took pay for job he no longer did**

**Roger Shrives**

Liverpool mayor Joe Anderson continued to receive thousands from a local school - for two years longer than he worked there.

Anderson, directly elected right-wing Labour mayor since 2010, pocketed £4,500 a year in paid leave from the former part-time job. Chesterfield High School is in nearby Sefton borough.

### **Big sum**

When the school became an academy, it sacked Anderson. By then he was being paid a big sum from the council - which now pays him up to £80,000 a year.

The council has also spent £89,000 of public money on Anderson's private legal case. He has pursued an employment tribunal against Chesterfield High for stopping his £4.5k pocket money.

Liverpool Socialist Party member Audrey O'Keeffe spent months persistently investigating this. She made her first Freedom of Information request in April, but only received confirmation in August.

## **Haemorrhaging**

Audrey thinks Anderson should resign. "The city is haemorrhaging because of his council's cuts. He is cutting another £156 million on top of the £173 million he cut over the last three years.

"Anderson has laid off 18 school lollipop workers, endangering children's lives while saying the council can't afford the service. That £89,000 would have paid their wages for a year."

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# **Prying Conservatives demand yet more powers to invade our privacy**

**Jonny Dickens**

Alarmingly, Tory ministers are preparing to increase their surveillance powers. A new bill would grant near-total access to our private online and electronic communications.

We are told this is in response to terrorists using communication networks the state cannot detect. Even many politicians don't buy this - past attempts at a 'snoopers' charter' failed to get through parliament.

## **Mutiny**

Powers to fight vague terrorist threats are inevitably turned on the workers' movement when we fight the bosses' austerity politics. Recently, army top brass is even reported to have discussed mutiny if left winger Jeremy Corbyn becomes prime minister.

Channel 4's 'real-life thriller' *Hunted* is a timely illustration of how the state keeps tabs on us. The show follows normal people attempting to escape their homes and avoid detection by the surveillance state. Its tools are deployed at frightening strength by experienced detectives.

For such a small country, we are one of the most watched nations in the world. Around five million CCTV cameras are already deployed.

*Hunted* highlights just how easy it is for the state to know our every move. As we rely more and more on mobile phones, the internet and credit cards, the state gathers more private information.

State security agency MI5 is well-known for monitoring trade union and socialist activists.

## **Spies**

Spies insist they are not in the business of "browsing the lives" of the public. But by awarding itself further access to our personal information, the government may as well be taking the keys to our front doors.



The state's own policies - austerity at home and war abroad - threaten its ability to defend the rich. That is why it wants more repressive powers.

The Socialist Party fights for a society owned and run democratically by ordinary people in our own interests. Then there would be no need for state repression of workers.

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## **Them & Us**

### **Moral snoutrage**

David Cameron was made a laughing stock after the latest revelation of the Tories' incredible moral hypocrisy.

His alleged debauched past is back in the press after new claims about a drinking club initiation ceremony. He is said to have performed an intimate act with a dead pig.

Cameron was one of the radically wealthy brats chosen for Oxford University's super-elite 'dining societies'. Toff initiates would reputedly smash, vomit and sexually assault their way through uni.

After trashing and defiling 'lesser' people and their property, they would simply fill out daddy's cheque book.

Everyone makes mistakes when they're young. But if you're young and rich, you can buy your way out of it - and go on to run the country. If you're young and poor, you do time.

A 23-year-old student was sent down for six months after taking £3.50-worth of bottled water during the 2011 riots. Cameron's outrage at the "immoral" rioters was hugely hypocritical.

And how does this compare to desperate media attempts to manufacture a sex scandal around left winger Jeremy Corbyn? Most would see a brief relationship with a colleague after separating from his wife as acceptable.

Repulsive secret pasts are meant to help bind top Tories together through mutually assured destruction. But Cameron could still scrape out of it.

The destruction of capitalism's system of mayhem and inequality can't come soon enough.

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### **'Fit to work'**

A coroner has decided that being wrongly found 'fit to work' directly caused the death of a mentally ill father.

Thousands have died after being declared fit to work and forced off disability benefits. The government claims there is 'no causal link'.

Anyone who knows claimants will tell you this is wrong. It certainly was when this man tragically died by suicide.

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## Crew cut

Heroic British Airways cabin crew saved 170 passengers from an aeroplane inferno in Las Vegas on 9 September.

Senior crew at the airline face a pay cut of up to £9,000 a year. Quite the thank you.

Meanwhile, BA bosses are projecting over a billion in profit this year, with healthy pay-outs to shareholders and executives. Let's see them evacuate a metal tube full of kerosene.

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## What we saw

Rob Williams, chair of the National Shop Stewards Network, got a mention in parliament recently. Tory broadsheet the Daily Telegraph was virtually shaking in panic at trade unionists' response to the latest anti-union bill.

Rob was quoted saying: "The victory yesterday by Jeremy Corbyn has changed everything. The vote we saw yesterday was a political revolution. We must build a mass movement against austerity and the anti-union laws.

"The message must be simple - Cameron: we are going to take you down. Your anti-union bill and your cuts, you're going down because we are mobilising against you.

"If this goes into law, we want mass co-ordinated strike action."

Tory MP John Redwood slammed Rob for daring to stand up to the super-rich. Shortly after, Rob was invited onto the Daily Politics show (above) to defend the unions.

See Rob on the Daily Politics show at <http://bbc.in/1OtIwGc> (around 30 minutes in)

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**£0.47m**

Amount spent by Conservative council in Torbay, Devon, on social housing, 2013 to 2015.

**£2.35m**

Amount that council spent on beach huts in the same period.

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## **Fight for a real living wage for all!**

- £10 an hour minimum wage now
- Defend tax credits
- No youth rates

### **Isai Priya, Usdaw shop steward (personal capacity)**

The seemingly never ending vicious cuts have been hitting us so hard that for many of us survival is a struggle. To make ends meet is an impossible task. We are forced to save every little penny to try and secure a roof over our heads - compromising our basic needs such as food and heating.

But this government is ensuring that working class people and families are punished for a crisis they never caused. Last week, a motion was passed in parliament for a further £4.4 billion of cuts to tax credits - as part of the plan to cut £12 billion worth of welfare and services.

The future looks even more frightening and uncertain. More than three million of the most vulnerable families will lose over a thousand pounds a year and five million of the poorest children will be £750 each year worse off.

The Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) has estimated that 8.4 million households with one paid worker will lose £550 a year. According to IFS, workers on low incomes will be significantly worse off after the change to the minimum wage on top of tax credit and benefit cuts.

The cost of living has skyrocketed while wages have stagnated. Big businesses are making profits from our hard work but are not prepared to pay us a living wage.

Tesco boss Dave Lewis meanwhile was paid £4.1 million in his first six months in the job as well as a £313,000 payment into his pension pot!

### **Pensions**

He has unashamedly refused to give staff a pay rise and has removed some pension benefits.

£11 billion every year is paid to 5.2 million workers in the form of tax credits. This public subsidy enables profitable businesses to get away with paying low wages. Big business is the real beneficiary of government handouts.

A movement at a grassroots level has been taking place to increase the minimum wage to a level that we can at least live on. The mountainous pressure of this campaign has forced some companies to make concessions.

Sainsbury's is to give 137,000 shop-floor staff a 28 pence pay rise to £7.36 but has denied under-18s even this tiny change. Lidl has announced that, from October, its workers will earn a minimum of £8.20 and £9.35 in London - but again, there is more to be done as this change will not be for workers in Northern Ireland.

We have to use this momentum to step up the pressure to win a real living wage for all workers at all companies.

## **Organise**

We must fight to organise unorganised workplaces, expanding the trade unions that can help us all win a better life at work.

We must also campaign within those unions for a fighting strategy, and pressure the TUC for effective, coordinated action. For decent wages and against all austerity - including cuts to tax credits.

But we have to go further.

Lidl has made a record turnover of over £4 billion meaning even the living wage they are going to pay is breadcrumbs compared to the money the company and the bosses are making.

The Socialist Party fights for socialist change and a society where the wealth created by workers is used to ensure decent jobs, wages and services for all rather than siphoned off for the profit of the few.

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## **Grasping bosses steal tips**

**Julian Moore-Cook, restaurant worker**

The boss at one London pub arbitrarily steals tips if his workers do not show "the ability not to piss me off"!

Staff at the Elk in the Woods in Angel, north London, were threatened with these words in writing. This only days after general union Unite pressured Pizza Express into dropping its thieving 8% 'admin fee' on tips.

I work in a restaurant. It is one of the most popular restaurant chains in London. It makes lots of money and it pays us very little of it.

I work late. Usually I finish around 1am, or do double shifts. The customers can be very difficult and the work is hard.

Why? Tips. Ask any waiter and they will say the same thing.

Tips make the job worth it. Say in a night you work for eight hours, and serve maybe five to six tables an hour. You can, on a good day, subsidise your poverty pay and get somewhere close to the London Living Wage.

Managers seem to think the best way to improve performance is to dock tips. But tips are not some sort of bonus owned by the company. They are an exchange between the customer and the waiter.

## **Huge profits**

Management already makes huge profits and pays us next to nothing. It has no right to be getting its sticky fingers in the waiters' honey pot again.

Any tips should go 100% to the workers involved. But ultimately no worker should have to rely on tips - wages should be high enough to live on!

The Socialist Party campaigns to organise all low-paid workers to fight for a minimum wage of £10 an hour. This would be a step towards a real living wage.

When workers stand together in a trade union, we can force the bosses to pay.

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## **Costa coffee claim they will have to raise prices or sack workers to pay for the government's new so-called living wage, pitting workers against customers in attempt to safeguard their massive profits. A low paid fast food workers comments:**

"As a fast food worker on the minimum wage I know as well as anyone that Britain needs a pay rise!

The Tories offer £7.20 an hour by April rising to £9.35 in 2020 but it's not enough or soon enough. Some bosses like Costa have rallied against any talk of raising the minimum wage to a living wage by threatening to raise prices.

I would argue that any big company claiming they can't afford a wage hike while making millions of pounds in profit should open the books and prove it!"

Costa bosses want to turn working class consumers against low-paid retail workers. But the Socialist can think of some other places the money could come from!

Andy Harrison, Whitbread CEO (parent company of Costa) is pocketing £1,000 an hour! He 'earns' £4.5 million in pay and bonuses plus has made £6.9 million selling shares in the company.

In 2014-15 Whitbread's pre-tax profits were £488.1 million - up 18.5% in a year.

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## **Charity work, poverty pay**

### **A charity shop worker**

I work as a charity shop manager in a city centre. The other day a customer asked me if I could recommend a nice place for her and her daughter to go for coffee and cake. I found myself unable to do so, and not just because I can't afford the local cafés. I often don't even get to take a break during my eight hour working day.

I earn ten pence an hour above the minimum wage - well below what is considered to be a living wage. It's a pressurised and stressful job; the shop is run in exactly the same way as major high street retailers operate, with sales targets, mystery shoppers and 'key performance indicators.'

### **'Volunteers'**

But at least I get paid - my co-workers are all volunteers. Most of them are young people who have not managed to find paid work since leaving school. 'Volunteer' is something of a misnomer - each one of them is on a placement from the jobcentre as part of a work experience scheme. They work 30 hours a week while receiving a meagre £57.90 in Jobseekers Allowance, with the threat of having that stopped if they fail to turn up for work.

Unfortunately they often don't show up, leaving me in a difficult position. It's hard to convince someone to work if they're not even being paid! I'm unwilling to complain to the jobcentre if they are unreliable, as I obviously don't want them to have their benefits sanctioned.

The outcome is that I frequently find myself working alone. In addition to the safety concerns that arise from this, my wages actually drop to below minimum wage, as I can't take my allocated unpaid break. Throughout the organisation there is a culture of managers putting in unpaid overtime - it's usually the only way to get through the workload.

### **Big difference**

The work that we do helps to fund a charity that provides care to people with serious illnesses which can make a big difference to their lives, and the lives of their families.

But surely, important social services should be in the public sector.

The spirit of self-sacrifice displayed by the workers isn't reflected by everybody in the organisation however. As with many charities, we have a CEO who earns close to £100,000 a year!

In a time of austerity and cutbacks, charities are called on to provide help to vulnerable people when services are cut.

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**The Socialist Party calls for:**

- A minimum wage of £10 an hour without exemptions as a step towards a real living wage
  - No exemptions, a living wage for all regardless of age
  - For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings
  - No to cuts in tax credits
  - End the pay freeze now!
  - End zero-hour contracts and all forced under-employment
  - Investment in a massive programme to create socially useful jobs
  - 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.
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## **EU referendum: what attitude should socialists take?**

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

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) conference on 26 September will discuss what attitude TUSC should take to a referendum on European Union (EU) membership. The motion being put to the conference by the steering committee states:

"The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition agrees to register with the Electoral Commission as a 'permitted participant' in the EU referendum to enable it to conduct an independent campaign against EU membership.

"We further agree that TUSC should not participate in any officially designated exit campaign that is headed by reactionary racist and pro-austerity politicians but should campaign on the basis of its own core policy platform of opposition to austerity and support for socialist policies, while being prepared to work with other working class and socialist organisations who take a similar stance.

"TUSC recognises that there are participants within our coalition who will want to support EU membership or argue for abstention and, as a coalition, guarantees their right to present their own position publically as TUSC constituent organisations, members and candidates."

As the resolution states there are different views in TUSC on this issue and some participants in the conference will argue for TUSC to call for staying in the EU or abstention.

The Socialist Party, however, will hope to win the conference to an independent TUSC campaign against EU membership linked to a class and internationalist programme - emphasising the common interests of the European working class and rejecting capitalist nationalism.

### **Capitalist agreement**

The EU is, in essence, an agreement between the different national capitalist classes of Europe, with the aim of creating a large arena for big business across Europe to conduct their hunt for profits with as few barriers as possible.

The history of the EU has been a succession of treaties each further enshrining anti-working class laws. The most recent, in 2007, was signed by then Prime Minister Gordon Brown without the referendum that Labour had previously promised for constitutional change. It enshrined in EU law privatisation and deregulation, attacks on workers' rights and public services.

If a Corbyn-led government was to implement some of the policies he was elected as Labour leader on - such as nationalisation of the railways and energy companies - it would immediately face shrieks of outrage from the institutions of the EU that a British government was 'breaking the law'.

## **Nationalisation**

Jeremy Corbyn has it seems, unfortunately partly retreated from his call for renationalisation of the railways - bowing under huge pressure from the right wing parliamentary Labour Party. His new much weaker proposal (to nationalise railway lines only when existing contracts expire) would only lead to a third of the railways coming into public ownership by 2025. Even this modest proposal, however, would be decreed to be breaking EU law.

Of course, the EU would not be able to force a left-led government to bow to its dictats and, by standing firm, it would be possible to win huge popular support from workers not just in Britain but across the whole of Europe.

Nonetheless, the bosses' EU is one more obstacle that any left government will face. For this reason it is a serious mistake for Jeremy Corbyn to have given into to the relentless bullying by the Labour right and agree to argue for a vote to stay in the EU in a referendum.

In the last three decades, the majority of the leadership of Britain's trade unions have also argued for EU membership, claiming that workers could extract benefits from Britain's membership. But that argument has now been completely undermined as the EU becomes more and more a neoliberal tool against workers' organisations and rights.

At this year's TUC conference a resolution was agreed which threatened that the trade union movement could call for Brexit if Cameron was successful in getting further anti-worker 'opt outs' agreed. This is correct but even without anti-worker concessions to Cameron there is no justification for campaigning to remain in the EU. Look at the brutal treatment that the EU has meted out against workers in Greece, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Ireland.

## **'Fortress Europe'**

Some, particularly young people - repelled by the nationalism of Ukip and the Tory right - see the EU as a progressive force. Yet 'Fortress Europe' with its appalling treatment of refugees fleeing for their lives from Syria and elsewhere shows that this is not the case.

While it allows migrants from Syria to drown trying to reach Europe, the EU has allowed free movement of workers within its borders, not for humanitarian reasons but in order to



maximise profits via a 'race to the bottom'. EU measures such as the 'posted workers' directive' are designed specifically in order to drive down wages. The result is an increase of fear and resentment that workers already resident in a country will see their wages and public services threatened by increased migration particularly from the low-wage economies of Eastern Europe.

The only answer to this is to build a united movement to fight for the rights of all workers; for a £10 an hour minimum wage, the rate for the job for all, and for an end to austerity. This must include defending the rights of all workers who have moved across the continent in search of work to remain, if they wish to do so, with full rights in the country where they now live.

Trade union leaders who defend the EU will argue that we should stay in and try to 'reform it from within'.

This is utopian. The EU has almost no mechanism of democratic accountability with central decision making in the hands of the European Council, the heads of government of the 28 different capitalist nations of the EU. The elected European Parliament is almost completely powerless. The EU really is a capitalists' club.

Capitalism is incapable of overcoming national divisions. On the contrary the attempt at 'union from the top' of the EU is leading to increased national tensions, particularly as world capitalism has entered crisis.

TUSC has a vital role to play in fighting for a socialist, internationalist campaign to exit the EU. Without such a campaign the danger is that workers' anti-EU feeling - and very probably anti-government feeling as the referendum could become in effect a referendum on the government - will be channelled by the right wing 'little Englanders' of Farage and co.

Socialists are internationalists; we want the maximum possible unity across Europe, but this is possible only on the basis of democratic socialism, eradicating poisonous divisions through real working class internationalism, leading to a voluntary democratic socialist confederation of the continent.

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## **Greece: Widespread abstention dominates general election**

### **Mass socialist alternative must be built**

On 20 September, Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left) was returned to power in a snap general election and is set to share power again with the right-wing Independent Greeks.

Syriza's leader, Alexis Tsipras, claims he has a mandate to continue with austerity policies in return for the third bailout deal with the Troika (the European Commission, the European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund). Is this true?

Niall Mulholland (CWI) spoke to Andreas Payiatsos, from Xekinima (CWI, Greece) about the election results and what it means for the anti-austerity left in Greece.

### **What is the main feature of the election results?**

The most important aspect of the election was the very high abstention rate. Around 45% did not vote. Before the 'memorandums' (austerity packages agreed by Greek governments with the Troika in return for bailout deals) abstention ranged between 25% and 30%.

All the parties lost votes from the last election in January, even if their percentages increased this time. Syriza got 35.46% (36.34% in January) but actually 320,000 less votes. The traditional party of the ruling class, right wing New Democracy, got around the same percentage as last January (28.10%) but also lost around 200,000 votes.

The neo-Nazi Golden Dawn came third with 6.99%. And although their actual vote fell by 10,000 from January, they remain a potent danger to the working class.

The traditional social-democratic party, Pasok, trailed in behind Golden Dawn. It continued to be punished in the polls after years in government, marked by corruption and austerity measures.

Clearly, huge swathes of the electorate are alienated from the main pro-austerity parties. The election campaign was extremely flat - there has never been such a lack of interest in elections before.

### **How did Syriza win after causing so much disillusionment by their U-turn on austerity?**

Syriza did not win on a wave of genuine enthusiasm from workers, pensioners and youth - as it did last January when it put forward an anti-austerity programme. Workers and middle class people voted for Syriza as the 'lesser evil'.

Despite winning a referendum on 5 July opposing austerity, Alex Tsipras one week later capitulated to the Troika and accepted new harsh bailout conditions.

Tsipras used left rhetoric during the election campaign and some rank and file members of the party still have illusions in him.

He was helped by the fact that the memorandum he signed up to has not yet been carried out and therefore workers have not yet felt the effects of these new cuts.

Tsipras argued that he was blackmailed by the Troika into accepting the memoranda or would have faced expulsion from the Eurozone with catastrophic consequences.

Within the confines of imposed austerity measures, Syriza will try to find the means to help the most vulnerable and attack the rich, Tsipras added.

But most workers who voted for Syriza do not have illusions in the party. They just hope that in government Syriza will not be as cruel and brutal as a New Democracy-led government.

## **How did the anti-austerity Left do in the elections?**

Due to its sectarian and ultra-left posturing, the KKE (Greek communist party) failed to capitalise on Syriza's backsliding. It kept its vote in percentage terms, (5.5%) but actually lost 11% of the votes it had received in the January elections.

The results are also a blow for the rest of the anti-capitalist Left. Antarsya (anti-capitalist left) got just 0.85%. A quarter of its membership had departed to Popular Unity, a new formation that arose from a left split from Syriza.

There were widespread hopes in Popular Unity on the left but it failed to reach the 3% threshold needed to enter parliament. Popular Unity will probably face serious internal problems in the immediate period ahead. Its 25-30 former Syriza MPs have lost their seats and with it considerable parliamentary finances and resources.

It is true that Popular Unity had to fight its first election in difficult circumstances, when there was widespread disillusionment because of the sell-out by Syriza. But the Popular Unity leaders did not help themselves either. At the start of the campaign they treated the rest of the left quite arrogantly and acted in a bureaucratic and undemocratic way. They also overestimated how well they would poll.

As it became clear that Popular Unity faced a struggle to get into parliament, they made a call for others on the left to support them in a 'united front' but, by then, the damage was done.

Popular Unity also failed to inspire workers and youth with a clear anti-austerity, socialist programme. They correctly said 'no to the memoranda' but did not point a way forward, thereby not allaying the fears of many workers about what would happen if Greece was forced out of the eurozone.

We in Xekinima say we must refuse to pay the debt and must nationalise the banking system. This will mean a clash with the EU and exit from the eurozone.

The return to a national currency can provide a basis for the development of the economy and society but only if accompanied by the nationalisation of the key sectors of the economy under workers' control and management.

This way the economy can be democratically planned to serve the interests and the needs of the majority in society, instead of producing huge profits for a handful of ship-owners, bankers and industrialists.

## **What lies ahead for the Left?**

The new Syriza-led government will soon run into big problems. The memorandum has to be imposed, which will lead to further impoverishment of Greek society and growing anger. And the national debt remains unrepayable. Greece will remain mired in a 'Great Depression'.

In this context more splits from Syriza are likely, moving in a left direction. For example, a new left formation stemming from Syriza, called ARC, is discussing the lessons of what went wrong with Syriza in power.

Xekinima takes part in these discussions and we also continue playing an important role in 'July 17', which aims to build a network of local left alliances, on an anti-capitalist programme.

Such initiatives and, crucially, renewed class struggle, which will bring many fresh layers of workers and young people into struggle, can lay the basis for the development of a new mass revolutionary Left, that is organised democratically. This is the only force capable of resolving the deep crisis facing Greek working people, by reorganising society along socialist lines.

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## **Australia: Turnbull deposes Abbot to become Prime Minister**

**Conor Flynn, Socialist Party (CWI Australia)**

Malcolm Turnbull became Australia's fourth prime minister in just over two years after deposing Tony Abbot as leader of the ruling right-wing Liberal Party, this month.

Abbot became prime minister in 2013 but was a divisive figure overseeing a weakening economy. The Liberal-National coalition government has been losing support for months and trails behind the Labour Party.

With their parliamentary seats in jeopardy, Liberal party MPs moved ruthlessly to get rid of Abbot and to put Turnbull in his place.

Much of the media in Australia and internationally welcomed the move and praised the new prime minister. But Turnbull's big business background and right-wing politics shows he is no friend of the Australian working class.

For full article see [www.socialistworld.net](http://www.socialistworld.net)

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## **International news in brief**

### **Ireland: Establishment criminalises protest**

Protests took place at several Irish embassies against the decision of Irish authorities to pursue a political vendetta against anti-water charge protesters.

27 anti-water charges demonstrators have been summonsed to appear in court by the police regarding a peaceful sit-down protest in November 2014 in Jobstown, south Dublin. Then, Joan Burton, the deputy Prime Minister and Labour leader, was temporarily delayed in her car by local people angry about the imposition of iniquitous water charges.

Socialist Party member and Anti-Austerity Alliance TD (MP) Paul Murphy and local councillors are among those charged. If convicted, the charge of 'unlawful detention' carries a heavy sentence.

Paul Murphy defends the protest - see [www.socialistparty.net](http://www.socialistparty.net)

## **Finland: Political strike against government**

CWI members from Sweden participated in a recent 30,000-strong demo in Helsinki, capital of Finland. The demo opposed right-wing government plans to cut workers' allowances and holiday entitlements, and was accompanied by nationwide strikes - the country's first political strikes for generations.

Hundreds of CWI leaflets in Finnish were distributed and 41 Swedish papers were sold.

See article by Jonas Brännberg and Elin Gauffin, Rättvisepartiet Socialisterna (CWI, Sweden) - [www.socialistworld.net](http://www.socialistworld.net)

## **Hong Kong election campaign**

Socialist Action (CWI, Hong Kong) chairperson Sally Tang Mei-ching and supporters leafleting in the Pak Tin ward, Hong Kong.

"Our powerful team gave out leaflets to 7,000 households' letterboxes today at Pak Tin!"

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## **TUC Congress debates action to defeat the anti-trade union bill**

**Iain Dalton, Congress delegate with Usdaw (personal capacity)**

Opening just one day after Jeremy Corbyn's stunning victory in the labour leadership election, this year's TUC Congress in Brighton had a noticeably different mood.

Hundreds of cheering supporters outside greeted Corbyn's arrival to address the conference which was matched by an equally warm reception inside. Delegates enjoyed the refreshing experience of a Labour leader speaking in support of strikes and the vital role trade unions play in defending workers.

### **Pressing issue**

The most pressing issue on the Congress agenda was that of the government's latest anti-union legislation. The main composite motion included references to giving support to any union finding themselves outside this law as well as organising committees to resist this legislation based on trades councils and local anti-cuts groups.

However, the potential difficulty for the TUC in developing a serious strategy to defeat the anti-union bill could be seen by the TUC leaders 'reservations' on a stand-alone RMT motion.

Despite passing a motion two years ago to consider a general strike, they quibbled over the inclusion of references to 'generalised strikes' to defeat the bill. That they didn't formally oppose the motion reflects the huge pressure from below. This was shown by the big turnout to the National Shop Steward's Network pre-Congress rally and lobby as well as a number of general secretaries pledging to go to jail if necessary in defiance of the legislation.

A number of Socialist Party members spoke during Congress, including PCS (civil servants union) vice-president John McNally in the Trade Union Bill debate, to explain how PCS has re-recruited 90% of its members in groups such as the Department for Work and Pensions where check-off has been removed by the Tories. They now intend to roll this out across the public sector.

## **Lobby**

Significantly, the proposed lobby of the third reading of the bill looks set to be a mass protest. Local trades councils should organise transport for any union members and supporters to attend to turn this lobby into a mass demonstration.

The willingness to mobilise significant coordinated industrial action may soon be put to the test as congress pledged to mount a campaign against the public sector pay freeze.

The attacks facing workers since the election mark nothing less than an all-out declaration of war on the working class. It will be vital that pressure is maintained on the trade union leaders to deliver the action necessary to defeat the Tories.

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## **Kill the Bill: defeat the Tories' anti-union plans**

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# **Nominate Roger Bannister for Unison general secretary**

## **Corbyn victory shows councils should refuse to implement cuts**

**Roger Bannister**

Jeremy Corbyn's victory is a tremendous leap forward for the anti-austerity movement in Britain. It has raised the hopes of millions who want to see a society for the 99% and not the 1%. The scale of the victory should give confidence to all those fighting the onslaught of cuts and closures taking place up and down the country.

Many Unison members in Labour-controlled councils will now demand a much tougher line be taken by Labour councillors against Tory cuts. I have always maintained that Unison should campaign vigorously against all cuts, no matter which party puts them through. If I am elected general secretary of our union, Unison will call on Labour councils to unite with council workers and communities and refuse to implement any more cuts.

### **Strike action**

Over 450 councillors have signed up to support Jeremy Corbyn. This is significant, but it is barely 6% of the total number of Labour councillors.

We cannot accept Labour councillors continuing to slash jobs and services. With council budgets being set from November onwards this will become an immediate issue for thousands of our members in local government.

Unison must now say loudly and clearly: no to all cuts. This must be backed up with a credible strategy for sustained industrial action and a political campaign that targets councillors who vote for and implement cuts to Unison members' jobs, pay and services.

I will use the general secretary campaign as a platform to ignite this debate within the union.

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## **Traffic wardens strike for better pay**

**Chris Newby**

Civil enforcement officers (CEOs - previously known as traffic wardens), employed by private service provider NSL in Camden, are to hold a seven day strike starting 23 September. This follows a four-day strike held at the beginning of September.

The Unison members are demanding a pay increase to £9.50 an hour. NSL has offered £9.27.

This is in a central London area where costs are sky-rocketing. It's also despite the fact that the company is known to pay higher wages to its workers in another London borough, Waltham Forest.

The workers are therefore determined that it's both possible and necessary for them to win their demand. They want to show NSL that they can't be pushed around.

## **Enough is enough**

The Socialist Party fully supports the workers in this dispute. This is not the first time that these workers have had to take action.

In 2012, strike action by NSL workers won a 3% increase a year for three years. NSL has contracts with several other London boroughs and councils around the country.

It's not as though NSL can plead poverty. In 2014 they made £18.8 million in profits, and parking tickets handed out by the wardens also generated £24 million for Camden council in the same year.

In an attempt to break the strike earlier this month NSL brought in staff working in other areas, not only paying them £10 an hour - more than the NSL workers in Camden are asking for - but a subsistence allowance too.

NSL management also attempted to intimidate staff at the CCTV depot by implying that if they went on strike they could lose their jobs. Despite all this intimidation NSL workers are determined to see this dispute through.

## **Camden council**

However, Labour-controlled Camden council isn't showing the same determination to support these low paid workers. Camden Unison members appealed to the recent full council meeting but were just met with empty words from the cabinet councillor who oversees the NSL contract.

Camden council workers need councillors that will stand up for their rights, pay and conditions. Camden council should demand that NSL meets the pay demands of its workers.

The election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party has opened up a whole new situation in Britain. NSL workers have been enthused by his election.

Camden Labour councillors should build on this enthusiasm to discuss how they can put into action Jeremy Corbyn's call for councils to stand together and refuse to implement government cuts. This dispute shows why all outsourced services should be brought back under direct council control and run in the interests of the community, not the profiteers.

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## **Workplace news in brief**



## **NSSN public meetings**

The National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) encourages all union branches and trades councils to organise #KillTheBill rallies, public meetings and protests to help build opposition to the Tory Trade Union Bill - email us the details of your events and we'll publicise them online and in the Socialist.

### **Kill the Bill meetings:**

#### **Manchester**

3 November, 7pm, at the Britons Protection, 50 Great Bridgewater Street, M1 5LE

#### **Liverpool**

3 November, 7.30pm, at the Casa pub, 29 Hope Street, Liverpool, L1 9BQ

## **Pay strike first**

900 PCS and Prospect members working at the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) took strike action for the first time ever on 14 September, staging a half day walkout as part of a dispute over pay. Members at the NERC, which funds and carries out impartial environmental science research, have been given the choice of either accepting an inadequate buyout or remaining on their current contract but with no future pay increases. PCS members and their colleagues in Prospect walked out at 17 sites.

## **Open Uni attack**

500 jobs are at risk as Open University plans to close regional centres. The jobs could disappear from seven Open University centres in England under controversial plans described as 'catastrophic' by UCU. Thousands of current and potential students could be affected by the move, which would see the removal of vital services such as careers counselling, study advice and support for disabled students.

## **Reinstate John**

John Vasey, a CWU postal rep in Wakefield, West Yorkshire has been sacked on what his work colleagues recognise as stitched-up charges. The Socialist Party calls on all our members and supporters to join John's campaign for reinstatement:

**Please send messages of protest to Jon Millidge, Royal Mail Group HR Director, c/o Talents House, South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh, EH12 9PB.**

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## **TV Review**

# This is England '90

**Rudi Abdallah, Waltham Forest Socialist Party, reviews the first episode of This is England '90.**

Shane Meadows has produced the final instalment of the riveting drama spin-off from 2006's big screen hit *This is England*. The euphoria coursing through this episode is epitomised by a heady mix of drugs, friendship, political upheaval and music, especially the Stone Roses.

## Optimism

It's the most optimistic offering of the three mini-series. 2010's *This is England '86* kept exploring its big screen cousin's harrowing themes. It showed disaffected kids in a monochrome, hope-starved world of a northern, working-class town. This segued into 2011's equally bleak *This is England '88*, which saw the gang torn apart by treachery and depression.

Now, the scooter boys and skinheads of the previous two series have morphed into (Stone Roses singer) Ian Brown clones clad in baggy regalia and technicolour tops that could give you tinnitus.

Clips of a swaggering Shaun Ryder sit comfortably next to the anti-poll tax riots, embodying perfectly the sense that young people felt empowered, in part by music, to break the Thatcherite shackles of the previous eleven years.

The acting is still impeccable. The impressive Lol (Vicky McClure) jokes alongside fellow dinner lady Kelly (Chanel Cresswell); Gadget (Andrew Ellis) is the same endearing scruff-bag thinking only of his belly ('everybody loves chips!').

Woody (Joe Gilgun), is more relaxed than ever. Only Shaun (Thomas Turgoose) drifts unhappily, making him a lone dark cloud in an otherwise opal sky.

Meadows is a master of conveying mood. The unfamiliar optimism of his new world stems from wider political change, notably Margaret Thatcher's political demise in 1990. Even though the Conservatives retained power until 1997, Meadows wants to show that Thatcher's departure caused a volcanic eruption of joy across northern working-class communities, which sang of new opportunities.

## Thatcher resigns

When the gang dance deliriously to 'Fool's Gold' at the Madchester disco, the music opens up a world they feel they can own, whatever it throws at them.

As in 1990, we now have a Conservative government. Seismic political change has occurred which has energised young people, mainly those on the left. Unlike 1990, there is no evident musical movement absorbing and articulating the fountain of hope.

The episode's success lies primarily in the evergreen attraction of rebelling against the establishment. This includes aggravating your parents with a love of long-haired frontmen,

drug taking and, most importantly, jumping about to some of the greatest music ever written with your friends.

Thanks to the consistently phenomenal acting, these attractions are presented in a completely natural and sympathetic way.

**The three remaining episodes of This is England '90 are shown on Channel 4 at 9pm on Sunday 20 and 27 September and 4 October**

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## **30 years since shooting of Cherry Groce**

# **1985: police murder sparks Brixton riot**

**Steve Nally, Lambeth Socialist Party**

As market stalls were setting up and shops opened for another busy Saturday in Brixton, south London, a nearby police raid was to lead to the riot of 28 September 1985.

This was an unannounced armed raid looking for a suspected robber who wasn't there. It would end in the shooting and permanent disablement of a local mother, Cherry Groce.

Cherry was shot at home, in front of her young children, which caused immediate outrage in the local community. This included local residents in the Socialist Party (then in the Labour Party and known as Militant) who had gone to speak with a crowd that had formed.

The anger was palpable and understandable - an innocent mother had been shot. The Metropolitan Police had well and truly crossed a line.

### **Attack**

Quite quickly this small crowd developed into a growing protest outside Brixton police station, which riot police then attempted to attack. Local youth fought back, and widespread rioting broke out across Brixton. At one stage the police station was set on fire.

Once again, Brixton was witnessing major riots - just four years after the events of 1981. Both were directly caused by the actions of the police.

Just a week after the riots, the Jarrett family from Tottenham, north London, lost their mother, Cynthia, at the hands of the police. This murder led to the Tottenham riots.

In 1981, Militant supporters played a key role in helping to set up the Labour Committee for the Defence of Brixton. In 1985 we played a similar role.

As the riot in Brixton subsided, we met and produced a leaflet overnight. Although Brixton was sealed off by police we got the leaflet out on the streets by Sunday morning.

Our leaflet demanded justice for Cherry Groce, and genuine democratic community control and accountability of the police. We also explained that rioting was not a solution to the problems that faced people in the borough of Lambeth. Margaret Thatcher's Tory government was presiding over unemployment, poverty and cuts.

## **Discussions**

This fast response was widely welcomed and provoked many serious discussions. The next day, over 140 attended a very sombre but focussed Militant public meeting in central Brixton. A defence campaign was set up. It aimed at getting support from the Lambeth workers' movement while engaging lawyers to represent people.

At the same time, young Militant supporters in Vauxhall Labour Party Young Socialists organised another meeting on the Cowley Estate where the shooting had taken place. Over 100 attended this heart-breaking meeting to hear speakers from both the Groce and Jarrett families.

Militant's swift and confident action was crucial, and built up to a later march of nearly 10,000 to central London. Marchers demanded justice for the Groce family - justice that took decades to materialise.

Although the officer who shot Cherry Groce was tried for malicious wounding, he was eventually acquitted. The Metropolitan Police continued to evade responsibility for its brutal actions.

Finally, in March 2014, they apologised. Sadly this was far too late for Cherry, who died before her time in 2011. Just imagine the searing pain of never receiving an apology for police behaviour that had paralysed you for life. Just imagine it.

At her inquest in July 2014, the jury rightly concluded the shooting had contributed to the untimely death of Cherry Groce. Another apology followed. But although some compensation was paid out, the Metropolitan Police has never accepted liability.

Thirty years on, and the same problems that existed in 1985 exist today - only worse. Poverty and despair are rife in Lambeth. This is despite the claims of a vicious, right-wing Labour council more interested in gentrifying Brixton than resolving the enormous difficulties facing the local community. Riots exploded across the capital in 2011, and the conditions which led to them have only gotten worse.

## **Unaccountable**

And thirty years on the police are, if anything, less accountable for their actions and approach to Lambeth's population. This was evidenced by the shooting of the innocent Jean Charles de Menezes at Stockwell tube in 2005. (See [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk), including '2005: Jean Charles de Menezes shooting - still demanding justice'.)

In 1985 we argued that only socialism - ordinary people taking ownership and democratic control of society - can fundamentally alter people's lives and the life of their community. That is even truer today.

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**Below is an edited version of an eyewitness account published in Militant, forerunner of the Socialist, in October 1985.**

The police called it an 'accident'. They raided the home at 7am on Saturday looking for Cherry Groce's son Michael. As she walked down the stairs policemen kicked in the door.

Mrs Groce turned in fright to move back upstairs. She never made it. A trigger-happy policeman shot her in the back, possibly paralysing her for life.

Other police rushed her, demanding to know where her son was. It was obvious that they had come armed intent on shooting the son, but had made a 'mistake'. Even Starsky and Hutch usually warn people before breaking into premises.

The mood of the people in Normandy Road where the Groces lived was of solemn sympathy for the family, but many people thought something should be done. So a crowd marched on the police station armed with bricks.

The police were forced to retreat. It was about that time that shops like Tandy and Burton began to be looted by black and white alike. People threw out clothes and luxury goods to local people who had no other chance of getting them on social security or low wages.

But the police vans were the target, seen as the symbol of repression. One van charged at local people; it was either run or be run over.

One Brixton resident commented: "They want it to be like America or South Africa, where the police can shoot anyone they like."

- No cover up!
- Democratic control over the police - through elected local authority police committees, with control over resources, discipline, training and day-to-day policy
- Kick out the Tories!
- Return a government committed to a socialist programme to solve the problems of poverty and mass unemployment
- Guaranteed jobs for all workers and youth
- A massive programme of public works

---

## **Organise the student fightback!**

- March against the Tories 4 October
- Join the national student demo 4 November
- Fight for student strikes

**Alex Davies, Aberystwyth Socialist Students**

The government is launching another range of attacks on students. Following the devastation caused by £9,000 fees, this new all-Tory government is getting ready for round two.

The 2015 budget includes a rise in tuition fees. Some universities will even be allowed to raise their fees in line with inflation, meaning £10,000 fees are not out of the question!

As well as this, means-tested maintenance grants, created primarily for the poorest, are being scrapped and replaced with loans.

This will be what the next five years looks like if we do not fight back and organise. We should immediately voice our opposition to these attacks on 4 October, at Tory party conference in Manchester.

Thousands of workers and young people will march against austerity in the first national demonstration since the budget and the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader. Jeremy Corbyn stands for free education and against austerity and we should use this as a platform in our campaign.

A national student demonstration has been called on 4 November demanding free education and living grants for all. This will be another fantastic opportunity to show students' anger and power in the face of government attacks.

But as well as taking action on the streets, we need to take action and organise on campus. Some have raised the idea of student strikes.

These were a central tactic in Quebec in 2012 when a mass movement of students defeated tuition fee rises. They organised student demonstrations, organising occupations and strikes, with tens of thousands of workers marching alongside them.

A student strike, alongside action by workers and trade unions who are facing massive attacks of their own, would have a tremendous effect.

For this to be organised by the National Union of Students, 5% of all student unions must support the idea. This means 30 student unions from either colleges or universities need to sign up, which we are campaigning to achieve.

On the streets and on campuses we must fight back to defend our education!

See [www.socialiststudents.org.uk](http://www.socialiststudents.org.uk)

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## **Good response to Nottingham Socialist Students**

Nottingham Socialist Students had a good response at the first freshers fair of the year. Lots of people were enthused by the victory of Jeremy Corbyn and eager to discuss what is needed

now. Around 50 students signed up, with a number buying the Socialist and the Socialist Students magazine, Megaphone.

**Claire Laker-Mansfield, Socialist Students national organiser**

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## **London protesters demand affordable housing**

**Scott Jones, East London Socialist Party**

Chants of "Repopulate, the Carpenters Estate" reverberated around Stratford on 19 September as around three hundred demonstrators marched to mark one year since Focus E15 campaigners occupied four flats on the Carpenters Estate.

At a rally before the march, one heavily pregnant single woman spoke about how she was sent to Southend to view a council house, as none were available in Newham. But Southend is miles from her family and community and when she arrived the house was in a terrible state. When she told the council she didn't want to move to Southend, her benefits were threatened.

On the same day another housing demonstration took place in Haringey. Campaigners explained that the local council is attempting to eradicate all council housing, and to trick tenants into accepting a swap to a private tenancy. Activists and local campaigners marched from one of the local estates to Tottenham Town Hall, where several speakers expressed anger at the local Labour councillors for implementing cuts and policies of social cleansing.

In Newham, Lois Austin, Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate in East Ham at the last general election, spoke on behalf of the 'BoleynDev100' campaign. The group is demanding 100% social housing at West Ham United's Boleyn football ground when it is turned into housing next year.

Lois spoke about how Jeremy Corbyn's election as Labour leader should be used to challenge Labour councillors over the housing crisis in Newham. If Labour councillors at the next election are not prepared to commit to opposing cuts, capping rents and investing in social housing then "we will stand against them and we will run the council."

Both marches were greeted with much support from passers-by.

**There will also be a housing demonstration in Waltham Forest on 21 November at 12pm, Abbots Park, Leyton**

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## **Socialism back on the agenda in Wolverhampton**

**Jarrad Williams, Wolves Socialist Party**

Wolverhampton and Black Country Socialist Party held its first public rally in many years on 17 September after 12 months of building in the area.

With growing interest around socialist ideas and fighting austerity developing during Jeremy Corbyn's leadership victory we spent the last month leafleting shopping centres, colleges and local estates. 31 people came - many of them new, young, and enthused about the fight to make the ideas Corbyn has raised a reality.

Hannah Sell, deputy general secretary of the Socialist Party, spoke highlighting the need for a mass, mobilised, working class party that can provide the change necessary.

And with Corbyn's campaign putting socialism back on the political agenda, there is no better time to capture the interest shown in socialism than right now. Up and down the country these political meetings are essential in maintaining that momentum.

This was a fantastic landmark for the branch and we are continuing to re-establish the Socialist Party as key force in the Wolverhampton and Black Country area.

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## **Tower Hamlets housing campaign lobbies council**

Residents from the Isle of Dogs lobbied Tower Hamlets Council on 16 September asking for support for their campaign against redevelopment plans by One Housing Group (OHG). Residents are determined to make sure councillors deliver on their promises, and that whatever plans OHG has for their homes, they won't be able to do it without residents having the right to a binding vote over the proposals.

**Naomi Byron, Tower Hamlets Socialist Party**

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## **North Kent TUSC meeting**

Around 60 people attended a TUSC rally in Chatham, hot on the heels of Jeremy Corbyn's victory. Giving a glimpse of the potential for joint anti-austerity work, 'Kent For Corbyn' supporter Rachel Garrick described Jeremy's campaign as "a resistance movement". RMT assistant general secretary Steve Hedley warned that "marches round the park" aren't enough to defeat the Tory' offensive and this was taken up by TUSC chair Dave Nellist who said Labour councillors will need to show a willingness to go "all the way" in fighting austerity or we will stand against them.

**Chas Berry, North Kent Socialist Party**



