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Resist the Tories and the Blairites

Organise to fight endless austerity

After making a stand over budget Corbyn must organise supporters

Seeing that a Westminster party has made a 'u-turn' would usually make us sigh and wonder what horrors are in store for the working class. Not so with the new Labour leadership's changed stance on the Tories' 'charter for fiscal responsibility'.

In fact, the majority of ordinary people will have cheered when they saw that shadow chancellor John McDonnell had reversed his position and pledged that Labour will vote against the charter. It would tie all future governments into a 'budget surplus' in normal economic conditions - a recipe for endless austerity.

Jeremy Corbyn

In a letter to Labour MPs explaining the change John correctly said: "As the nature and scale of the cuts Osborne is planning are emerging, there is a growing reaction not just in our communities but even within the Conservative Party..."

"I believe that we need to underline our position as an anti-austerity party by voting against the charter."

To continue this stand against austerity, including the fight against the Blairites, the Socialist Party calls for a mass movement around a fighting programme:

This change of position is a positive sign of resistance from Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters against the Blairite wing of the Labour Party. And the right wing made its contempt for the decision clear immediately.

By all accounts a meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party to discuss the vote descended into chaos. Afterwards right wingers disparaged Corbyn and McDonnell to the press and on social media.

This is a further indication of what the Socialist Party has argued - there is a battle commencing in the Labour Party and the Corbynistas must get organised and engage in it, or lose.

It is a recognition of this need which has led those involved in the Jeremy Corbyn for leadership campaign to launch 'Momentum' - which is open to those in and out of the Labour Party and aims to create a "movement for change". To be effective, it should be developed into a vibrant, democratic, socialist organisation which stands firmly against all cuts.

Corbyn should issue a call to arms to the thousands who voted for and supported him to get active in the fight against the Blairites and the fight against austerity. He should embark on an open, energetic campaign to democratise the structures of the Labour Party to enable these supporters to back him up effectively.

These points have been dealt with extensively in previous articles in the Socialist.

- End all cuts - austerity is a choice - make the 1% pay
 - Defend trade union rights - stop the trade union bill
 - Organise mass coordinated trade union action
 - Build a political voice for the 99% - link up those inside and outside the Labour Party to fight the Blairites and Tories
 - Fight for socialism - for a society that puts the needs of the majority before the profits of the few
-

Tory tax credit thieves take up to £1,700 a year from workers

Jamie Davis, Tax credits recipient

It was with overwhelming shock that I learnt my family stands to lose around £140 a month. Tory cuts to tax credits will hit us hard when implemented in 2016. Some families stand to lose up to £1,700 a year.

I found the figure using my trade union Unison's online tax credits calculator. I knew we were one of the 2.7 million families who would be affected.

But seeing the actual amount we would lose in front of me drove home the reality of Tory plans.

Lifeline

Tax credits are a lifeline for many people. I am one of the vast number of "underemployed" workers in the UK, with a monthly wage that barely covers rent and utilities.

Tax credits are the difference between us having a reasonable standard of living or existing like prisoners in our own home. Without them, we will struggle to have internet access, remain mobile, even eat.

The Tories loudly proclaim themselves "the party of working people". But their actions show the reverse.

They drive workers down into the ground, crushing any aspirations we may have under an iron boot of debt and poverty. They take the food from our children's mouths to feed tax breaks for the rich.

This is a true scandal, with even the likes of the Murdoch press and senior Tory figures regarding it as an unwise move.

And so they should. As the reality of these attacks begins to sink in, this government will find an army of millions of very angry people ready to bring them down.

The Socialist Party fights for a £10 an hour minimum wage with no exceptions, and guaranteed full-time hours for all who want them. Take the wealth off the 1% - reverse all benefit and tax credit cuts.

- You can use Unison's online tax credit calculator at <https://goo.gl/tPum1Q>
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Workers on Tory 'living' wage can't afford Tory

'starter homes'

Megan Ollerhead, Private tenant

David Cameron announced at Conservative Party conference that he is on a "national crusade" to build 200,000 'starter homes'.

This was met with typical adulation from the mainstream capitalist media.

However, research by homelessness charity Shelter reveals they will only be "affordable" for people earning upwards of £50,000 a year - or £77,000 in London.

There are only three places in England the homes would be cheap enough to buy on the new £9 'National Living (minimum) Wage': Barrow-in-Furness, Southport, and Hull.

Poverty

These places may be cheap. But they have some of the highest rates of child poverty and fuel poverty in the country. This is a direct result of cuts which began under Labour and continued under the Tories with gusto.

Cameron's approach will never solve the problem. The tens of thousands who marched against the Tories on 4 October know it. Policies like this only make it more difficult for Generation Rent to continue renting, let alone buy our own homes.

Expanding the private property sector will not solve the affordability crisis. Only rent caps, and a mass programme of council house building, can address extortionate private rents and the demand for really affordable, quality housing.

And social development charity the Joseph Rowntree Foundation estimates a real living wage would already be £9.20 - without taking into account rent increases since 2008. The Socialist Party fights for rent caps, more social homes and a minimum wage of £10 an hour now.

80 ambulance calls in two years for exhausted Sports Direct staff

Daniel Smart

At the headquarters of infamous retailer Sports Direct, ambulances were called more than 80 times over two years.

According to the BBC, 36 calls were for life-threatening illnesses - including chest pains, breathing problems, convulsions and strokes.

Three of the calls to the warehouse in Derbyshire were for women having pregnancy difficulties. One even gave birth in toilets at the site.

Sports Direct is notorious for exploiting zero-hour agency workers - over 90% of the workforce has no guaranteed hours. Workers said many are "too scared" to take sick leave because they fear losing their jobs.

One agency that supplies staff for Sports Direct has a 'six-strike' policy. Offences include: any "period of reported sickness", "excessive chatting", and "excessive or long toilet breaks".

The agency also states assignments can be ended "at any time without reason, notice or liability".

Richest

Mike Ashley, owner of Sports Direct, is among the ten richest people in Britain, according to Forbes magazine. He has an estimated wealth of £3.5 billion. Yet he refuses to pay for the most basic decent working conditions for the workers who make him his millions.

The Socialist Party campaigns to put an end to exploitative, Dickensian working conditions. We demand an end to zero-hour contracts. All workers, including agency staff, must have trade union rates of pay, full employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.

Fat-cat Facebook pays less UK tax than couple earning national average wage

Laurel Fogarty

A couple on average wages would have paid more UK tax than corporate giant Facebook in 2014.

The social media multinational paid just £4,327 in UK corporation tax. This is compared to the total £4,800 income tax paid by a couple each earning the median wage of £22,000.

Facebook declared itself to be working at a loss in Britain, despite making £105 million from UK operations last year.

The firm hid profit by moving takings from the UK to Ireland and the Caymen Islands, and paying out huge bonuses to its 362 UK employees. This allowed it to slash its UK tax bill and pay a meagre few thousand - from massive global profits of £1.9 billion.

Public service union PCS estimates £120 billion is lost through tax avoidance and evasion by big business every year. This money could be used to fund our ailing NHS, build much-needed quality social housing, and provide a well-funded social safety net.

Ordinary people continue to pay for the banking crisis with vicious cuts to welfare and working tax credits. But corporation tax has steadily dropped - from 28% to 21% since George Osborne took over the treasury in 2010.

The Socialist Party says: nationalise the parasitic corporations that dominate our economy under the democratic control of workers and the public. Then we could plan production and service to cater to the needs of ordinary people, not the profits of the wealthiest 1%.

Them & Us

'Work like Chinese'

The bosses' politicians are not content with working us till we drop (see left below). Tory health secretary Jeremy Hunt wants desperate people in Britain driven to the extremes of super-exploited Chinese workers.

He says tax credit cuts (see left above) will make us "work hard in the way that Asian economies are prepared to work hard". So hard, in fact, that Chinese electronics sweatshop Foxconn had to install nets to catch suicidal workers.

Six million workers in Britain earn less than a living wage. Over 200 million workers in China live below the poverty line. Top bankers responsible for tanking the economy in both countries take home billions in bonuses.

When bosses want bankers to work harder, they pay them more. But when they want us to work harder, they pay us less.

Plane unfair

Live near an airport? Fed up with aeroplanes ruining your sleep? There is an easy solution: simply become a royal.

The Department for Transport has imposed a no-fly zone over Prince William and Kate Middleton's home in Norfolk for security reasons. Only emergency services will be allowed to pass over the ten-bedroom mansion, a wedding gift from the queen.

For the rest of us, high noise pollution has been linked to a 10 to 20% higher chance of cardiovascular disease.

And official figures from 2011 say over 1.1 million households have fewer bedrooms than they need. That's to say nothing of unofficial subletting and couch surfing as hard-pressed renters struggle with the housing crisis.

'Sorry no poor people'

Yuppie cafe Brick Lane Coffee was spotted with the above sign on its door. Owner Adrian Jones claims it was "graffitied" by anti-gentrification protesters. But the snobbish java joint has form - an earlier chalkboard read "Please don't feed the crackies". Overpriced luxury businesses aimed at high earners push up prices in newly 'trendy' working class areas, contributing to social cleansing.

Daily Mail cake bake race hate debate

BBC food contest 'Great British Bake Off' grips millions. This year it was won by Nadiya Hussain, who happens to be Muslim.

Right-wing rag the Daily Mail has featured the Bake Off winner on their front page every year since the series began. Until last week.

Why? Columnist Amanda Platell complained Bake Off contestant Flora Shedden, knocked out in the semi-finals, was "too middle class" to win (see below).

The Daily Mail's take: "if she'd made a chocolate mosque, she'd have stood a better chance." This provoked public outraged.

Clearly feeling the flack, the Mail wrote a follow-up - this time celebrating Nadiya's win. The paper did still think it important to mention that Nadiya married her husband the year of the 7 July London bombings, in Leeds, the city three of the culprits were from.

Ian Pattison

Health service: condition critical

Stop the cuts, scrap privatisation

Jon Dale

Our NHS is ill. Its health is worsening. Like someone with cancer, symptoms appear in different parts of its body although it just gets by day to day.

Last year's deficit was £820 million. In just the first three months of this financial year it was £930 million.

"The NHS simply can no longer afford operationally and financially to operate in the way it has been", warned David Bennett, head of Monitor, responsible for overseeing NHS Foundation Trusts.

That means rationing health care with lengthening waiting lists; stopping some treatments altogether; concentrating services into regional centres; and more privatisation. Finally, charges will be put on GP visits and hospital treatment, making private health insurance a necessity (for those who can afford it).

That's all great news for corporations aiming to suck profits out of the NHS budget. It's grim for patients and healthcare workers.

Staff shortages

The cost of hiring temporary staff to cover shortages has escalated. The Department of Health published plans in 2013 to cut the £2.4 billion bill by 25%. Instead it has grown by 25%!

A few very highly paid medical consultants make headlines but agency nurses, midwives, physiotherapists and many others are regularly hired to fill staffing gaps.

Half the 20,000 student nurses completing their training in 2006 could not get NHS jobs due to cuts. Workloads increased, with bullying management under pressure to meet impossible targets, so sickness absence has gone up.

After a 10% cut in real pay and worsening conditions, more staff leave. Many can earn more as agency, with fewer hours and less pressure.

For 30 years Tory and Labour governments claimed 'a competitive market' was the only way to run the NHS instead of 'outdated central planning'. The staffing crisis is one result. Trusts compete to get trained staff who are in limited supply.

"We will have to clamp down on some of these staffing agencies who are frankly ripping off the NHS," claims NHS chief executive, Simon Stevens. But Stevens is one of the architects of this crisis, first as Tony Blair's health adviser, then as a director of US giant corporation, United Health.

Management consultants

Hiring agency staff hits headlines. Hiring management consultants gets less publicity. Trusts spending on them doubled between 2010 and 2014 to £640 million - enough to pay for three medium-sized hospitals or 20,000 nurses.

The largest management consultants have close links with the Department of Health. In 2013 USA company McKinsey invited David Prior - then chair of the Care Quality Commission, which regulates all NHS hospitals - to discuss "building a national health insurer" and "private health insurance growth opportunities... the new frontier."

They put him up in luxury US hotels at a cost of \$3,000. He thanked them afterwards. "I much enjoyed it. It does create the space to think and for ideas to settle... But the biggest message is the scale of likely change - 50% of hospital beds could close."

Lord Prior is now Tory minister responsible for NHS productivity. His replacement at the Care Quality Commission, Michael Mire, is a former McKinsey partner.

Privatisation

In 2014-15 private companies won £3.5 billion of new clinical contracts - up 500% on the previous year. Profit making firms have taken more than 60% of all contracts since 2010.

13 'super-contracts' worth over £100 million each were awarded last year, more than the previous four years added together. Private companies won six. Five were won by consortia of NHS and non-NHS organisations. Only two were won by NHS organisations alone.

'Prime Provider' contracts allow sub-contractors to carry out the work. Virgin Care won a £280 million contract to coordinate care for long-term illness and care of the elderly in East Staffordshire. The companies actually carrying out the work are chosen by Virgin without any further public scrutiny, leading to care workers on zero-hour contracts and the minimum wage.

A voluntary agreement with the pharmaceutical industry in 2013 should have capped NHS spending on branded medicines for two years. But the cost of medicines prescribed by hospitals in England increased by 15% to £5.8 billion in 2013-14.

Partly this is due to new expensive drugs. But older branded drugs are suddenly escalating in price. Turing Pharmaceutical increased the price of a Daraprim tablet (used in the treatment of cancer and HIV) from £8.79 to £488! The medicine was identified 62 years ago. Other less extreme cases are unpublicised.

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has rightly said: "It's our NHS. Let's not just protect it from being further destroyed but let's take it back and ensure it's completely publicly run and publicly accountable. Healthcare is a human right, not a privilege."

The new shadow health secretary, Heidi Alexander, has been less forthright. She told the BBC she was open to a "very, very limited role" for private provision, if it improved the efficiency of services.

There can be no compromise with profit-seeking big business. Its priorities are shareholders' dividends, not patient care.

Corbyn must stick to his guns. That needs a programme to cut out the capitalist cancer of 'the competitive market', renationalising all privatised services, ending the rip-off Private Finance Initiative and nationalising the pharmaceutical and medical supply industries (and appealing to workers internationally to nationalise their health and pharmaceutical industries too).

The 'no choice' NHS

The NHS logo might still fly from hospital roofs but a genuinely integrated national health service barely continues to survive.

My family are witnessing this at first hand. An 84 year old extremely sick relative has been told that she needs to be sent back to a hospital she was brought from, because the brand new Private Finance Initiative build she's currently in doesn't have a bed for her beyond the next 72 hours.

The trouble is, neither does the other hospital, which is at this moment completely full, yet if it fails to locate one within the next three days, it will be heavily fined by the government.

Dedicated staff quietly agree that there is no medical benefit to her being transported 40 miles up the road, yet say they are powerless to contest this insane rule that pits hospital against hospital.

Millionaire health minister Jeremy Hunt, like his New Labour Party counterparts before him, boasts that the creation of an NHS internal market benefits patients and provides them with choice.

One more Tory lie, one more reason to fight like never before to protect our cherished NHS.

Robin Clapp

Doctors fight back!

Upcoming protests:

Back health workers- support the doctors' call for strikes

- Defend unsocial hours
 - End the hiring freeze
 - Reverse all cuts and privatisation in the NHS
 - Free education for all
-
- 2pm, 17 October, Waterloo Place, London
 - 2pm, 17 October, City Hall, Belfast
 - 2pm, 17 October, Brian Clough statue (Market Square) Nottingham
 - 1pm, 24 October, Newcastle upon Tyne
 - 7pm, 28 October, Leeds
 - 4pm, 18 November, City Square, Dundee
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Under-25s: productive, passionate and underpaid

Tory treasury minister Matt Hancock (right) said under-25s are not "productive" enough to

deserve the minimum wage. The government's new 'national living wage' - which is not actually a living wage - is only for workers over 25.

'Becky', Teaching assistant

Since moving to a new city a month ago, I've started working as a teaching assistant on a zero-hour agency contract.

I spend most of my day working one to one with children who have complex learning and behavioural needs. It's usually an uphill battle just to get them to sit down and concentrate for ten minutes.

It can be hard work, but I've really enjoyed working with the children. I've built up a good rapport with them.

But the nature of agency work is that I could be dropped at any time, and will have to move to a new school and begin again. The students will also have to get used to a new member of staff.

No sick pay

Written in to my contract is a paragraph stating I am not entitled to sick pay, and I'm only paid for the hours I work. So the six-week summer holiday might be a stretch when it comes to paying rent and bills.

Young workers feel undervalued when we are treated like this by employers, and told we are unproductive by government ministers.

I don't know how the productivity of the work I do would be measured by Matt Hancock. Does getting a child to reply to a question count as productive? What about getting them to go to their lesson for ten minutes?

Young workers need to organise and fight for a £10 an hour minimum wage for everyone.

'Stan', Bank clerk

In my job at a bank I see the financial hardship faced by ordinary people every day.

I work ten-hour days trying to help people who need more support than I can give them. I deal with more money in a day than I earn in a year!

Once I get paid, I pay my rent and my council tax. The rest of the month I count the pennies. I work as much overtime as I can trying to make ends meet.

No money

People ask me why there's no money left in their accounts. I have to tell them it's because some payday loan shark has taken it all - without telling them.

People in my department pick up the pieces after unscrupulous companies and loan sharks take cash from these people.

They are already struggling because of cuts imposed by people like Matt Hancock.

He might think under-25s are unproductive. But I'd like to see him come to where I work and tell me and my colleagues that!

Selling over £1k a day

Maybe Matt Hancock should visit the call centre where I work. Most of the staff there (including myself) are under 25, paid £6.55 an hour, and each sell over £1,000 worth of products a day. I wonder how management would cope if we all walked off the job one day to demand higher wages?

'Andy', Birmingham

Intern inequality

When I did an internship, I'm pretty sure I was just as productive as an intern over 25 would have been. Maybe people are capable of working harder when they're paid a decent amount and don't have to worry about living through the week.

Kris Statham, London

Modern-day workhouses

Hancock has the cheek to disregard the toil and the hardship of young workers.

How many creative young minds are forced into those appalling, soul-slaughtering, modern-day workhouses like McDonald's and KFC? If we are condemned to low-wage, zero-hour contracts then where is the scope for productivity?

Let's not tolerate these shameless Tory slave drivers!

Saj Attepuram, Hatfield

Profile: Matthew Hancock

Salary: £145,000

Job: 'Paymaster General' - treasury minister - cutting taxes for the rich and jobs for us

CV: private education, Oxford and Cambridge, parents' software company, Bank of England, Conservative Party. Failed to get out of bed to debate Youth Fight for Jobs activist Ian Pattison on live TV in 2013.

#U25productive

Youth Fight for Jobs

@youthfight4jobs

So @MattHancockMP thinks U25s are too unproductive to deserve their 'living wage'. Disgusted? Tell us about your working day #U25productive

Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition @TUSCoalition

How DARE they?! Those reps of idle rich who don't know the meaning of hard work!

@Badassker

So apparently my 60-odd-hour week is unproductive because I'm under 25.

Spend my working life producing teenagers ready programmed for exploitation in the workplace. If that's not #U25productive for them what is?

How about us under-25s don't go to work for a few days? Then they will see how productive we are.

@maryfinch_

The Tory scum calling young people 'unproductive' have never had to work hard a day in their life - because they can afford to!

I got As and Bs in GCSEs and college because I was told that's how you get to uni and a good job. Now being thrown under the bus.

Hard work is when you have to take on a job as well as your degree just to keep your head above water because grant isn't enough.

@beardedactivist

Worked hard for 5 years 17-23 as a carer, zero-hour contract, no sick pay, 13-hour days without a break.

Uni fees, scrapping housing benefit and now a lower minimum wage! This is a war on young people by the Tories!

@ScarfedT

One year on and still have a foot injury from working too many 12+hr shifts with under 30min for breaks waitressing.

Boozers of the world unite! London Marx pub crawl

Even productive under-25s need to take a break! London Socialist Students went on its annual Karl Marx pub crawl on 8 October.

Twenty students from Queen Mary's, Kingston, Imperial and UCL joined in. We saw where Marx used to live, and where he and collaborator Friedrich Engels were commissioned to write the Communist Manifesto.

We also heard some funny stories about Marx's adventures in London. It was a fun evening and a great opportunity to meet Socialist Students members from other universities in the city.

Helen Pattison, London

Reading launches new Socialist Students group

Students at Reading have formed the university's first branch of Socialist Students.

Initially we held a number of highly successful stalls on campus to gauge interest. The latest raised £35 and ran out of leaflets in just over an hour.

Following students' enthusiasm at this traditionally conservative university, we held our first meeting. We examined the threats facing all of humanity, the directionless failings of capitalism and ultimately the solutions socialism puts forward.

This was followed by a wide-ranging discussion where we touched on topics such as the refugee crisis, collectivisation and the ever-present need for solidarity. We intend to build on our initial activities with weekly meetings and campaigns.

Robin Brunsdon, Reading

Syria: Western governments' interventionist strategy in tatters

After four and a half long, bloody years of civil war in Syria - with over a quarter of a million dead and eleven million displaced - there is still no end in sight. On the contrary the entire region faces being drawn into a sectarian civil war.

It now seems to be on the cards that Cameron will put a new vote to parliament, for Britain to join in the airstrikes on Syria as well as continuing them in neighbouring Iraq.

This would do nothing to end the nightmare facing the peoples of Syria and Iraq but will only add to the endless horror that they face. Nor would it do anything to protect people in Britain and elsewhere from terrorist attacks; on the contrary it will make them more likely to occur.

The threat of British airstrikes is already being accompanied by a new wave of warmongering propaganda from the right-wing press.

The Sun even cynically launched a campaign demanding British airstrikes in the name of Aylan, the Syrian refugee toddler who drowned trying to cross the Mediterranean. As if more bombs landing on Syria, with the inevitable resulting civilian casualties, would do anything to decrease the number of Syrians fleeing for their lives.

Anti-war mood

Left Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has made clear his opposition to bombing Syria. If he, as he should, stands firm and opposes the bombing, he will inevitably face yet more vilification from the Tories, the

capitalist press, but also from within his own party.

Cameron hopes that any vote will pass because of the support of a large section of Labour MPs: the Observer (11 October) reports that more than 50 have said they will back him.

However, if Jeremy Corbyn puts a clear case against the bombing he will get widespread support from working and middle class people. While there is a desire to see something done to bring peace to Syria and to defeat the reactionary thugs of Isis, there is also a deep-rooted scepticism over what further military intervention by Britain or other imperialist powers will achieve.

No wonder after the disastrous invasion of Iraq, which laid the basis for the current quagmire, and then the 2012 onslaught on Libya which has led directly to the anarchy which now exists there.

It was the strong anti-war mood in Britain that forced Miliband to oppose bombing Syria in 2013; thereby making Cameron hold back.

The fact that Cameron appears to now be confident to push bombing Syria to a vote is down to a number of factors including the escalating refugee crisis.

One important reason, however, is the role of the warmongers in the Parliamentary Labour Party, giving the Tories an opportunity to split Labour and, Cameron hopes, undermine Corbyn. That this is a factor in Cameron's decision making is an indication of the extreme short-sightedness of today's Tory Party.

In the past, acting on behalf of British capitalism, the Tory leadership thought of foreign policy in terms of decades or even longer. Today they act on an extremely short-term empirical basis.

In reality, of course, whether or not Britain begins to participate in the bombing of Syria will make only a symbolic difference to what happens in the Middle East. Britain's bombers would merely be a small part of the 'coalition of the willing' led by the US. Britain's participation would do nothing to rescue the wreckage of US imperialism's strategy for Syria and Iraq.

As Patrick Cockburn put it in the Independent (3 October): "The US-led air campaign against Isis has not worked. The Islamic militants have not collapsed under the weight of airstrikes, but, across the Syrian and Iraqi Kurdish regions, either hold the same ground or are expanding. There is something ludicrous about the debate in Britain about whether or not to join in an air campaign in Syria without mentioning that it has so far demonstrably failed in its objectives."

After just over a year of airstrikes in Iraq and Syria, at a cost of more than \$2.7 billion and the killing of many civilians, Isis still controls at least half of Syria and a third of Iraq. In May of this year, for example, the Iraqi city of Ramadi fell to Isis. The US air force carried out 165 strikes against Isis positions in the month before it fell, but they did not alter the outcome. At the time of writing, five months on, Isis still holds Ramadi despite a prolonged attempt by the Iraqi government to retake it.

In desperation to retake the city the predominantly Shia Iraqi government has deployed the Shia militias. Given that Ramadi is capital of Anbar province, both predominantly Sunni, this will do nothing to undermine support for Isis among the Sunni population who fear mass reprisals against all Sunnis if Ramadi falls.

These fears are not without foundation; earlier in the year the Shia militia were central to the campaign to retake Tikrit from Isis. After the city's recapture mass executions of Sunnis - wrongly all written off as Isis supporters - forced thousands to flee.

Ramadi is an example of imperialism's utter failure not just because of the events of the last year, but everything that has happened since the 2003 US-led invasion and occupation.

One of the most brutal battles fought by the US army over a decade ago was to capture Ramadi from Sunni insurgents. Yet now it is in the hands of Isis - a more reactionary and barbaric group than the worst of those previously fought by US troops.

It is the role of imperialism in the Middle East which is central to the nightmare that has now developed in the region. Its legacy, with decades of military intervention, divide-and-rule policies, support for brutal dictatorships and flirtations with jihadist forces has left Iraq and Syria in ruins, reflected in a rapid descent into sectarian fragmentation.

Confirmation

The events in Syria confirm the analysis the Socialist made at the start of the conflict. At the time there were widespread predictions, including from the Cameron government in Britain, that President Assad would rapidly be defeated.

We argued that, unlike in Libya, this would not be the case. Assad had greater reserves of support from ethnic and religious minorities within the country; with the increasingly sectarian character of the rebels driving them towards the regime.

At the start the uprising was part of the Arab Spring - and was a genuine popular revolt against the Assad dictatorship. But this changed with the outside intervention of reactionary forces opposed to revolution in the region - in particular the brutal dictatorial regimes of Saudi Arabia and Qatar - backed up by imperialist forces. The result has been the unleashing of a dangerous battle between the Sunnis and the Shias on a regional scale. Isis is the horrendous consequence of this process.

US imperialism initially at least turned a blind eye to the growth of Isis while attempting to create and fund a pro-Western Free Syrian Army (FSA) to fight Assad.

US Senator John McCain was even photographed posing supposedly with the FSA, but in reality with Isis commanders! US weaponry sent into Syria ended up in the hands of Isis.

However, Isis's aggressive and accelerating role in tearing apart Iraq and Syria and its contempt towards the world powers has forced the US to act against it.

Nonetheless, according to Patrick Cockburn (Independent 30 September): "The US is not bombing Isis in Syria in areas the jihadist group is fighting the Syrian army."

Imperialism

In reality US imperialism has no forces it can rely on in Syria. The capitalist press in the US and Britain has expressed outrage at Putin's regime launching airstrikes in Syria. Cameron hypocritically declared that if Russian action was: "against the Free Syrian Army in support of Assad the dictator, then obviously that is a retrograde step". Yet the FSA no longer exists!

As Robert Fisk explained (Independent 4 October): "Washington admitted their disappearance, bemoaned their fate, concluded that new "moderates" were required, persuaded the CIA to arm and train 70 fighters, and this summer packed them off across the Turkish border to fight - whereupon all but ten were captured by Nusrah and at least two of them were executed by their captors."

In reality there are 20 or more opposition groups fighting Assad, funded by Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the UAE all with a sectarian, Sunni Islamist character.

US imperialism remains the most powerful imperialist country on the planet, but it is a declining world power. Its complete inability to 'police the world' as it did in the past is graphically demonstrated in

Syria.

Putin feeling confident to launch airstrikes in support of Assad is only one indication of this.

It is also shown in how US imperialism has been left as 'piggy in the middle' between the Sunni regimes funding the fighters against Assad and Shia Iran which has sent 15,000 troops to back the Assad regime.

British imperialism adding its puny weight as a 'piglet in the middle' would make no difference to the unfolding nightmare.

That is not to suggest Isis cannot be defeated. On the contrary its underlying weakness has been shown by the military successes won by the predominantly Kurdish YPG and YPJ who have established a territorial base in Northern Syria.

Within limits it has shown that when anti-Isis fighters link their military struggles to appeals for national liberations and social change it is possible to win victories.

However, these successes rely on the heroic action of guerrilla units rather than on the democratic, mass, multi-ethnic mobilisation of the people themselves.

There is a danger this can lead to the driving out of non-Kurds in some cases, as has been reported to have taken place by Amnesty International and Patrick Cockburn, although this has been denied by the YPG.

Even if these incidents are rare and not widely endorsed they are a potentially very dangerous development. In addition the political leadership of the YPG/YPJ still express hopes that Western imperialism will act in their interests.

Western imperialism has shown again and again that it has no interest in the genuine aspirations for self-determination for any national or ethnic grouping.

However, it has repeatedly leant on one group to try and defeat another, creating the sectarian nightmare that now exists.

The working class and poor farmers of Iraq and Syria and the Kurdish people can only rely on their own self-organisation to put an end to this nightmare.

United non-sectarian self-defence of threatened communities and minorities is vital, and can be an important lever through which a grass roots movement fighting for socialist change can be rebuilt.

By standing uncompromisingly against all imperialist forces, local reactionary regimes and sectarian death squads, and supporting the rights of self-determination for all communities, such a movement could find mass support among the regional and international working class.

In turn, workers' organisations internationally need to spearhead movements against imperialist intervention in the Middle East.

The Socialist is calling for:

- No to imperialist intervention! The withdrawal of all foreign forces from Syria and from other occupied countries.
- Let the Syrian people themselves decide their fate in open, fair and free elections, supervised by elected, democratic workers' committees.

- For the building of united, non-sectarian defence committees to defend workers, the poor and others against sectarian attacks from all sides.
 - Prepare a movement to fight for a government of representatives of workers and the poor.
 - For a revolutionary constituent assembly in Syria.
 - The implementation of the national and democratic rights of the masses, beginning with the recognition of the right of the Kurdish people to self-determination including, if they so wish, full autonomous democratic rights within the state they live in or the establishment of a common state of the Kurds themselves.
 - Independent trade unions and the building of mass workers' parties with a programme of land to the masses and the factories to the workers, implemented through a programme for a socialist democratic planned economy.
 - A democratic socialist confederation of the Middle East and North Africa.
-

Double bombing at Ankara peace demonstration massacres over 100

Trade unions' 48 hour general strike must be first step to building mass, united movement against murderous regime of Erdoğan

Sosyalist Alternatif (CWI in Turkey)

The horrendous double bombing attack that struck a protest rally for peace organised by several trade unions in Ankara, Turkey's capital city, on Saturday 10 October, led, at the last count, to at least 128 deaths, and hundreds injured.

It is the largest terrorist attack in the country's history. Many victims are still in intensive care units in various hospitals, while a number of bodies, unrecognisable, have not yet been identified.

This attack, by its human and political magnitude, has shaken the country to its foundations.

Saturday's demonstration was organised by the Confederation of Public Sector Trade Unions (KESK), the Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK), the Turkish Medical Association (TTB) and the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (TMMOB).

A few minutes before the start of the protest, a bomb exploded where activists from the left and pro-Kurdish party HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party) had gathered.

A second blast occurred about fifty metres from the first one, bringing more destruction and deaths. Eyewitnesses, including members of Sosyalist Alternatif (CWI) who arrived on the scene just a few minutes after the bombing, reported scenes of unspeakable horror.

Assistance obstructed

They also confirmed other reports of attempts by the police to obstruct help being given to the victims.

Tear gas was fired into crowds of surviving protesters and relatives and ambulances were stopped. Riot police were sent to the scene of the carnage even before the first ambulances arrived.

Huseyin Demirdizen, from the Physicians Association of Turkey (TTB) said: "While the doctors from the health workers' union were calling for blood donations, the government announced there was no need for blood.

"If the health workers were not already at the demonstration the number of deaths and wounded would have been much higher."

Almost immediately after the attack, the regime decided to block Twitter and Facebook accounts, in an obvious attempt to prevent grassroots reports circulating and to give to the media controlled by the AKP (Justice and Development Party, the governing party) the upper hand, which accused left groups or the PKK of being behind the twin bombing.

The first response by state forces has left absolutely no doubt about where the regime stands in relation to what is not just a tragedy, but clearly a politically-orchestrated massacre.

Whatever is the exact role played by the Erdoğan regime in this attack its political responsibility is overwhelming.

This bombing took place in a context of a strategy in recent months of growing escalation and provocation, including physical attacks, by Erdoğan's regime forces and his thugs against the Left and the Kurdish national movement.

A brutal war of aggression is also underway by the Turkish army against the PKK and the Kurdish people in the country's south east, which has killed hundreds.

Even though the PKK said on Saturday that it would hold a ceasefire before Turkey goes to the polls on 1 November, the Turkish army bombed PKK positions in south east Turkey and northern Iraq, killing scores over the weekend.

The "anti-terrorist" drum beat of the regime fools no one. It has been mainly used as a cover to crack down on the Left and against the pro-Kurdish and HDP activist base, which have overwhelmingly been at the receiving end of a campaign of state terror.

Over the last years, ISIS and other jihadist groups have, on the contrary, benefited from the established complicity of the Turkish state in their activities in Syria.

Desolation and rage

Hence the sadness and desolation provoked by Saturday's horrendous bombings rapidly and rightly merged into rage against the AKP government, including internationally.

On Saturday afternoon, tens of thousands of people demonstrated against the government in Istanbul and other cities.

On Sunday, in Ankara, about 10,000 were back on the streets, at the very square near the railway station where the bombings took place the day before.

This shows the mood of defiance and fearlessness that exists. At the burial of some of the victims, the anger of the masses was running deep, and it is very unlikely to evaporate anytime soon.

The four left-wing trade union confederations have called for a 48-hour general strike on Monday 12th and Tuesday 13th October.

This is a very appropriate and welcoming move that needs to be supported by the Left and the labour and trade union movement internationally.

A general strike, by bringing together the Kurdish and Turkish people to fight in a united way, is the best response to Erdoğan and his ruling clique's attempts to use the blood of working people to divide-and-rule and enhance their power, as well as the profits of the rich business tycoons which this power defends.

Seeing the utter failure of the state and police forces to protect the people, Left and union rallies and demonstrations will have to be properly stewarded and protected.

Appropriate self-defence measures, involving all communities, need to be taken in conjunction with trade union organisations.

The CWI wants to bring its full solidarity, sympathy and condolences with all those who have been victims of Saturday's attack, all those who have lost relatives, friends and comrades.

The best way to honour their deaths is by renewing the struggle against the thuggish and dictatorial regime of Erdoğan, against the capitalist system and imperialist powers that stand behind it, and for a socialist and democratic world.

Let us make sure that this strike is only the beginning of the building of a mass and united workers' and youth movement that can put this cynical and murderous regime into the dustbin of history.

Extract from a statement from Day-Mer, Turkish and Kurdish community in London, 10.9.15

Bomb attack on Ankara peace demonstration

A peace and democracy rally in Turkey was targeted this morning, Saturday 10 October 2015, by two suicide bombs.

People were simply exercising their democratic right to peacefully protest when the explosions killed 86 innocent people.

In the elections held on 7th June the ruling AKP lost some of its vote and did not get enough MPs to form a majority government.

The AKP refused to enter into a coalition with the other parties, prevented attempts to set up a government and secured another election to be held on 1st November.

Furthermore, ending its five year negotiations with the Kurdish political establishment, the AKP started terrorising the Kurdish regions with its military and police forces.

Due to the terror politics of the AKP more than 1,000 soldiers, police, guerrillas and civilians (including women, elderly and children) have been killed in the last three months. This approach has inevitably pushed Turkey to the brink of a civil war.

The rally in Turkey was organised by trade unions and NGOs against the ruling AKP's increasing use of violence and war as a means to suppress democratic opposition.

The rally represented hope for a peaceful and stable Turkey in which people of all backgrounds and ethnicities can live together in unity.

It was this dream that was targeted. Hundreds are injured and the death toll is likely to rise in the aftermath of these terrorist attacks which targeted a wholly peaceful rally calling for an end to the

bloodshed in Turkey.

The Turkish state has repeatedly failed to investigate or bring to justice those responsible for attacks against opposition groups.

International solidarity and togetherness in such times plays a key role in the struggle of those demanding freedom and peace.

We therefore call on the public and representatives of organisations to show support and solidarity with the people of Turkey.

We the members of Day-Mer, Turkish and Kurdish community in London, would like to express our condolences and deep sorrow for those who died tragically and their families.

We vow to expose the faces of those who are responsible for this tragedy, namely the government. We also call all communities, democratic organisations and trade unions to voice their concerns on this matter and to join us in protesting both the AKP government who have provoked such attacks since their defeat at the last general election.

As listed below, you can send emails of protests to the government officials in Turkey and we urge you to raise this with the British public through the media, parliament and other means. Please cc info@daymer.org to e-mails sent.

Protest to:

President of Turkey: Mr Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

Email: cumhurbaskanligi@tccb.gov.tr, Fax 0 (312) 470 24 33

Prime Minister of Turkey: PM Ahmet Davutoğlu,

Email: bimer@basbakanlik.gov.tr, Fax: +90 312 422 26 69, +90 312 422 18 99

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 12 October 2015 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Should trade unions be re-affiliating to the Labour Party?

Rob Williams

At the left-wing Labour Representation Committee (LRC) fringe meeting at Labour Party conference, Matt Wrack, Fire Brigades Union (FBU) general secretary, spoke of his expectation that in light of Jeremy Corbyn's victory, the issue of the non-affiliated unions affiliating to Labour is now on the agenda.

Mick Lynch, RMT transport union assistant general secretary, made similar points, but at the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) conference, the union's president Peter Pinkney was clear that the RMT should maintain its policy of supporting TUSC.

Both unions found themselves outside Labour in 2004, a year after the Iraq War, although the RMT was expelled while the FBU disaffiliated.

Background

The RMT was disciplined because five Scottish branches affiliated to the Scottish Socialist Party which was then at a high point of winning six Members of the Scottish Parliament before it subsequently imploded.

It was clear that if such an alternative had existed in the rest of Britain, it would have been attractive to RMT delegates at their special conference in February 2004. Many were repelled by Blairite policies such as rail privatisation and maintenance of Thatcher's anti-union laws.

The FBU disaffiliated in a special conference as a direct consequence of the national dispute on pay in 2002-03 against Blair's Labour government who used the army's Green Goddesses to try and break the strike. The then FBU assistant general secretary told the conference that FBU strikers had been called "criminals, wreckers, fascists and even worse".

After being expelled, the RMT under Bob Crow became a prime mover in building a political alternative to New Labour. In particular it played a central role in launching the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) alongside prominent trade unionists, including some from the FBU, and socialist organisations such as the Socialist Party.

TUSC

TUSC has stood widely in elections over the last five years, with many candidates coming from the unions, including the RMT and FBU.

Actually, this was a major factor in pushing Labour lefts to ensure that the Blairites were challenged in the leadership election by Jeremy Corbyn's candidature.

In the debate on the executive of Unite the Union, general secretary Len McCluskey admitted that if the union didn't support Corbyn, there would be a big possibility that the upcoming rules conference would have supported motions for disaffiliation.

As with many members of these unions, even some who have joined Labour as individual members after Jeremy Corbyn's victory, we believe it is premature to re-affiliate.

Like ourselves, they believe that the left, including in the unions that are at present outside Labour, should not stand aside from this struggle.

We are totally in favour of the non-affiliated unions supporting Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell against the Blairites in the same manner that they supported his election campaign.

We support Jeremy and John calling a conference of all the anti-austerity forces inside and outside Labour, including non-affiliated unions and parties like ourselves, to build a movement to defeat the Blairites. The question is, does re-affiliating help that process?

The party machine is still in the hands of the Blairites. The launching of Momentum is a recognition from Corbyn's supporters that there is a struggle taking place and that the left needs to operate inside and outside the party.

What you get

It is to the current Labour's undemocratic structure that unions would be re-affiliating, where the constitution has been fashioned by the Blairites to maintain their pro-market policies.

They would be spending hundreds of thousands of pounds for a tiny proportion of votes and influence. On the existing basis, the RMT could have to pay £250,000 to affiliate for around 1.8% of the vote at Labour's annual conference which doesn't even decide party policy!

They would also be giving up their independence at this stage where the die hasn't been cast, rather than use the possibility of supporting anti-austerity candidates against the Labour right as an important lever to supplement the struggle against the Blairites from outside.

We think it would be more productive for these unions to use their resources to directly aid Jeremy Corbyn's campaign against the right-wing by, for example, financing organisers. A future discussion on re-affiliation must be linked to the right of the unions to organise collectively within Labour, which was finally ended by the Collins review.

Many RMT activists, while supporting Corbyn, would want clarity on his re-nationalisation proposals which would only mean a third of rail franchises returning to public control by 2025. The RMT will also not be joining Labour in campaigning in support of the capitalist EU in the forthcoming referendum.

Councillors

Many FBU members would want to get a commitment that Labour councillors would vote against fire service cuts where they have a deciding influence, such as in Leicestershire at present, where they are lining up with Tories on the cuts.

Members would also want their unions to get commitments on mandatory reselection to root out the pro-austerity MPs and councillors.

It is inevitable that these debates and discussions are taking place. We welcome the space that has been opened up by Jeremy Corbyn's victory and the potential for a mass movement against Tory austerity and the Trade Union Bill.

But the non-affiliated unions, who have been consistent in their support for the new Labour leader against the right-wing party machine, have a unique position because of their independence. We believe this can assist the movement from outside the current bureaucratised structure of the Labour Party at this stage.

Napo at a crossroads

Probation and family courts workers gathering in Eastbourne for their union, Napo's, AGM, 15-17 October, face an uncertain future as the full scale of government cuts and privatisation comes into view. Chas Berry, Napo national vice chair (personal capacity)

Former justice secretary Chris Grayling's act of vandalism in splitting up and privatising over half of the probation service has predictably led to swingeing job cuts and attacks on terms and conditions in the newly outsourced Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs).

Meanwhile, staff transferred to the National Probation Service (NPS) are struggling to manage high caseloads within a dangerously under resourced and unresponsive management structure. As Napo has warned for some time, the public is at increased risk.

Michael Gove

Anyone hoping for respite after Grayling's brutal regime can be under no illusions that newly appointed justice secretary Michael Gove will provide any relief. He pledged to Tory conference that he would bring "reforming zeal into the dark corners of our prison system" with an "unremitting emphasis" on "reform, rehabilitation and redemption."

But he fails to mention how he will achieve this with budget cuts of £249 million at the Ministry of Justice. There is also no mention of where probation services fit into his plans.

It seems clear we are in for more of the same, with the added bonus of a full frontal attack on our ability to organise as a union. It is no coincidence that Napo was singled out as one of the first to have the system of union deductions from pay (known as check-off) forcibly removed.

Inspire

Our stand in frustrating Grayling's Transforming Rehabilitation agenda (the government's reform programme for rehabilitating offenders) reminded the Tory establishment of what workplace organisation can achieve.

So they are out to destroy us along with every other trade union. This is why it is vital for Napo to join with others in opposing the trade union bill.

Some members are worried about threats facing the union from privatisation and breakup of the service. But Napo can both survive and prosper independently with a fighting strategy.

That starts with improving union density in the CRCs and encouraging NPS members to switch to direct debit. Beyond that, we can inspire a new generation of activists, untainted by the defeats of the past, to revitalise the branches and refresh the union at all levels.

Jeremy Corbyn's victory as Labour leader has shown that, when offered an alternative, young people in particular are not prepared to just sit back and accept more austerity. We have to replicate what Jeremy was able to achieve by offering dynamism and hope to our members, many who witness first hand what cuts to local services really mean to our offender clients and to victims of crime.

Prisons 'reform'

With almost breath-taking hypocrisy coming from a Tory minister, Gove tells us he wants prisons to become places where inmates can undertake meaningful work and education to prepare them for life on the outside. This is rich, when his predecessor closed 15 prisons, cut staff by 41% and watched prisoner numbers soar to dangerous levels

Violence

Outgoing chief inspector Nick Hardwick reported earlier this year that staff shortages, overcrowding and a rising level of violence had brought the system to the edge of collapse. Significantly, he said that training, education and other activity outcomes were 'dismal' - one in five prisoners spent less than two hours a day out of their cells.

Big business

What does Gove's announcement really mean for prison reform? His record as education secretary in

forcing schools to become academies gives us a clue.

In a similar vein he plans to remove central regulation from prisons, allow governors 'freedom' to run their own establishments and pay them based on 'outcomes'.

He wants to see more businesses going into prisons and running them on business lines. This sounds more like a recipe for exploitation of a captive workforce than a progressive plan for rehabilitation.

What price justice in our courts?

Leicester magistrate Nigel Allcoat hit the headlines last month when he was suspended for paying £40 towards the court charge of a destitute asylum seeker. He later resigned his position.

Anyone who pleads guilty at a magistrates court has to pay costs of around £150; if they are found guilty after trial it goes up to £520; if it goes to crown court and they are found guilty it can go up to £1,200 on top of any fine, compensation or other charge. With an estimated 85% of all offenders on benefits or limited means, this is an unjust imposition on the poor, and scores of magistrates are resigning in protest.

Guilty

The criminal court charge, introduced in April, and cuts to legal aid represent further attacks on the poorest in our society. Funding is no longer available for a wide variety of civil cases including family law, and flat rate fees for criminal cases are driving many local law firms to the wall.

Napo members struggling to provide a fair and decent service for criminal and family courts often witness first-hand the impact of Tory enforced austerity. It's one of the reasons why we continue to dedicate ourselves to protecting victims and helping people change their lives.

It's also why many of us are enthused by the new mood of optimism pushing back against austerity and fighting for a fairer society.

Building a mass movement against austerity

Socialist Party fringe meeting

- Chas Berry, Napo national vice chair (personal capacity)
- Rob Williams, chair of National Shop Stewards Network

6pm to 7pm Thursday 15 October Pier Suite 2 (first floor) The View Hotel, Grand Parade, Eastbourne

Junior doctors' dispute

Tory contracts - unsafe and unfair

Tory government plans to increase junior doctors' hours and cut pay - as part of its '24/7' NHS service - have incensed staff who already work long hours, including weekends. So much so that protests are planned (see back page) and strike action is being contemplated, with the BMA doctors' union

balloting its members.

Junior doctors insist that this is not simply about their pay - for some it could mean a 40% cut. By redefining 'unsocial hours', the government's new contracts could lead to unsafe conditions for NHS patients as a result of being treated by exhausted staff.

An NHS junior doctor (below) describes a typical stressful day and explains why the new contracts must be opposed.

"It's 4.45pm on a Friday and I'm just about to start my fifth shift of the week in the emergency department. The waiting room is heaving and the wait to be seen is approaching the four-hour target. The bed managers are hovering to push patients through faster and avoid the financial penalties of breaches.

Like most health trusts ours is feeling the squeeze of public sector spending cuts. Every patient that waits more than four hours to be seen and moved through the department costs the trust £250. That's £250 less for staff, equipment and patients.

My first patient is an elderly gentleman in his 90s. He had a fall at home and has been brought in by his neighbour. Luckily he hasn't seriously injured himself and shouldn't need to stay in hospital. Cuts to social services mean that he'll be here until Monday as there aren't the resources to organise him the extra care he needs at a weekend.

Next, I'm called to see a young woman who's self-harmed. She's had to move into a hostel as she's lost her flat and is struggling to cope with her new environment.

Her wounds are cleaned and dressed and she waits for the mental health team to assess her. They are covering all of the patients in the community as well as all the local hospitals and are struggling with a spiralling demand on their service.

I leave my shift an hour late as there are still so many people to be seen. I go home feeling guilty that I haven't been able to give people the time, care and attention they've needed but proud to work for an organisation that provides for everybody regardless of ability to pay.

Staffing crisis

Worryingly, a recent survey by Unison reports that two-thirds of NHS staff are considering leaving due to low pay, staff shortages and the changing nature of the NHS. Constant attacks on terms and conditions for NHS staff have taken a toll but we are fighting back.

The government's attempt to impose a new contract on junior doctors is part of a wider attack on public services aiming to push through an agenda of privatisation.

Doctors in frontline services like emergency medicine and general practice will be hardest hit financially by the new contract making these already understaffed areas stretched to breaking point.

The contract also removes vital monitoring to ensure the number of hours worked are safe for patients and doctors. The BMA is currently balloting its members for strike action and thousands will march on 17 October demanding an end to a contract that's unfair for staff and patients.

The junior doctors' fightback must be linked to the fight for fair pay for all NHS staff and an end to the creeping privatisation of NHS services. Coordinated action of the healthcare unions is needed to challenge this government's austerity agenda and fight for a democratically controlled NHS to meet the needs of our society."

The centre of Bristol came to a halt on 10 October as 2,500 people protested against junior doctors' new contract changes.

Medical registrar Ben Wildblood said: "I dont think it is an exaggeration to say that if these measures are implemented we will see an increase in avoidable deaths in hospitals".

A number of demonstrators called for all NHS unions to ballot for coordinated strike action as a vital step towards beating these Tory proposals.

Steve German

Unison general secretary election: Roger Bannister wins place on ballot paper

Rank and file socialist Roger Bannister has received the 25 branch nominations needed to run for general secretary of Unison, Britain's largest public sector union. Socialist Party member Roger is secretary of Unison's Knowsley branch in Merseryside and has been on Unison's national executive committee since the union was formed.

Roger is running on a programme of putting Unison at the forefront of fighting cuts, the pay freeze and the anti-trade union bill. If elected Roger would only take an average workers' wage.

He has been the leading left challenger in previous general secretary elections, outpolling others by a sizeable margin.

Roger would like to thank all the branches who have supported him.

Follow the campaign at:

- @Roger4UNISON
 - facebook.com/roger4gensec
 - electrogerbannister@gmail.com
-

Workplace news in brief

Lights out

Unite have accused the government of allowing the 'light to be snuffed out' on steelmaking in Teesside, following the announcement that the coke ovens and blast furnace at the SSI Redcar steel mill would be closed. As reported in the Socialist last week, the steelworks was set to be mothballed and stop production after nearly 100 years.

However, as Unite national officer Harish Patel said: "The hope of a buyer stepping in has been cruelly extinguished by the liquidator's haste and the government's refusal to step in. It is devastating news for all those whose livelihoods depend on steel making on Teesside and the hopes of a community who thought that an alternative solution could be found.

"Following the announcement the Socialist Party continues to call on the government to fully nationalise the plant, safeguarding the up to 9,000 jobs that rely on the production of steel in the area. We also call on the trade unions that represent workers' at the site to get behind the call for nationalisation and hold pickets and protests in support of this, to channel the anger that has swept the region since the announcement.

Kill the Bill lobby

Join the TUC and union members from all over the country coming together to lobby and rally against the trade union bill on Monday 2 November 2015, Central Hall, Westminster (rally) and the House of Commons (lobby of parliament). The rally will kick off at 1pm and the lobby at 2.30pm.

Junior doctors protest

Following the government's announcement of a brutal new contract for junior doctors, protests have taken place up and down the country. On Saturday 17 October, thousands are planning to attend a protest at Waterloo Place, London from 2pm to 6pm. For more on the contract and protests see pages 9 and 16 and also issue 872 and 873 of the Socialist.

Living wage victory for striking Hackney traffic wardens

The five day strike by traffic wardens working for APCOA Parking in Hackney, in a bid to get a proper sick pay policy, (reported in the previous issue of the Socialist) has been suspended to allow talks to take place.

30 workers, members of Unite, were due to strike from midnight on 12 October until midnight on 16 October against APCOA Parking, which has the contract from Hackney council to run the service.

The traffic wardens have also rejected a 1.5% pay deal for this year. They previously staged two days of strikes in August, following a 100% vote for action.

Unite had also discovered that the company was not paying the London 'living wage' of £9.15 an hour to the workforce as it had been wrongly including a non-guaranteed bonus in the calculation and only 60% of workers on average were hitting the bonus target.

Backdating

Unite regional officer Onay Kasab said: "The employers have agreed to pay the London 'living wage', with backdating being considered.

"The management has agreed to negotiate with Unite over a company sick pay scheme. We have agreed to do this under the auspices of the conciliation service, Acas."

The dispute came against the backdrop of the Fair Deal For Local Government campaign by Unite's London and Eastern region which has almost 300,000 members. The campaign is aimed against privatisation and austerity in local government.

This is a vitally important campaign that shows what happens when services are privatised - pay and

conditions are attacked in a race to the bottom. But the workers and the union are determined to win what will be a well-deserved and important victory.

Derby school support staff: Furious response to pay cut threat

Steve Score

The noise outside Derby's Council House was deafening as 400 furious school support staff chanted "No ifs, No buts, No more pay cuts!" and "The school staff united will never be divided!"

They were there to let the council's cabinet meeting know how they felt about their pay being slashed by 25%, or more in many cases, following a council review. This is being done in the name of equalising pay and conditions, yet the big majority on the receiving end of the cuts are women and low paid. The workers will also lose payment for the school holidays.

One Teaching Assistant said: "I'm on £19,000 a year but will lose £6,000. The council should scrap it and start again."

David, an inner city Teaching Assistant, said: "Derby City Council called it an equal pay review but it doesn't feel like one. At the moment I work a 40 hour week; I have been offered a 32 hour week on a lower rate of pay. I would lose about £4,000 a year. When you are on low wages anyway it means struggling to pay bills or the mortgage. We feel we have been lied to by the council.

"We do our jobs because we love education and want to help the children we work with go on to have a decent life. But we are being denied this ourselves."

Most there were members of Unison. But the protest was organised via Facebook and word of mouth. David said: "It has disappointed me that this hasn't been organised by the union. And it surprised me that, apart from Unison, the other unions have already accepted the pay offer."

Council leader Ranjit Banwait was eventually pushed into coming out to address the workers. However his patronising comments like "I'm proud of you" and "We are on your side" did not go down well. His comments then went on to make it clear that the review was really about the need to make cuts, not about equal pay at all.

He hinted there may be some concessions and will be meeting Unison to discuss it. However if these are not enough the union should be prepared to take industrial action. Ranjit left to the sound of booing.

If Ranjit Banwait, who claimed to support Jeremy Corbyn in the Labour leadership campaign, was prepared to fight the government's cuts instead of passing them on to his low-paid workers then he would have them supporting him instead of angrily condemning him.

Members of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) were at the protest with leaflets, and have been supporting the campaign. We are writing to every Labour councillor to ask them to oppose all cuts. If they don't, then TUSC will stand against them. That idea went down well with many of the workers.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 9 October 2015 and may

vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Glasgow's trade unions demand 'no-cuts' budget from council

Glasgow City Council trade unions: Unison, Unite, GMB, Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), Ucat

Glasgow City Council has made spending cuts of £250 million since 2010, including huge cuts in learning disability and mental health services. Also, home care support, supported education for children, community work, library services, frontline office support and grants to voluntary organisations.

At least 4,000 council jobs have been lost. Voluntary organisations providing care services in the city have cut hundreds of jobs due to reductions in funding from the council. In the last five years charges for many council services have gone up or been introduced for the first time. These charges often hit the poorest families most.

Further cuts

The council has stated it intends to make further cuts of £103 million in 2016 and 2017 and has raised the possibility of another 3,000 job cuts, this is over 10% of the remaining workforce. This will be a disaster for vital services in the city and hit future employment opportunities for our young people.

The city's trade unions, along with various community organisations and anti-cuts groups, have been campaigning against these cuts from the start. Glasgow City Council politicians have a choice - implement Tory cuts or refuse. Trade unions in Glasgow City Council call on all elected politicians in the city to use all available financial mechanisms to hold-off any further cuts while leading a fight to win more money for the city.

The council could use some of its reserves and borrowing powers, supported by the legal financial process of "capitalisation", to fill the two year £103 million hole expected in April 2016. This would allow time and space to build a mass campaign of elected councillors, trade unions, user groups and local communities with the objective of winning more money from the Holyrood and Westminster governments.

Wrong hands

There is plenty of money in our economy - it is just in the wrong hands or lying in the bank accounts of big business. The trade unions will support any council politician or council political grouping who adopts this strategy of "No More Cuts".

The trade unions are aware of previous statements by the Glasgow City Council leadership that the city is treated unfairly under the current national local government funding arrangements.

Based on previous figures, this could be as much as £30 million over the next two years. The trade unions call on the Scottish government to change its policy on restricting funding for local government services.

College cuts and funding chaos

A sixth-form college worker

I worked at a sixth form college that proudly advertised itself as a 'zero landfill college'. This was frustrating however, as staff knew that all recycling was scrapped last year - due to lack of funding! This is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to cuts to funding in sixth form colleges.

Working in an academic support department, I have seen the effect of austerity in these colleges first hand. Low funding for our department means that there are too few staff to support the number of students with physical and academic learning needs.

Support

A few periods a week, three support staff are needed to be in six different classes to give the students the support they require to fully participate and get the most out of their lesson.

In struggling colleges across my hometown, non-special educational needs and disability students (SEND) are recruited as classroom supporters and the job is advertised as 'enrichment' to their timetable.

The students who take notes are very helpful, but are sometimes unreliable and do not show up without informing the department - leaving a student who cannot, for example, write independently without support.

Also, some of the students they help have very challenging behaviour. The second year A-Level students that support departments have a huge workload, so need their free periods to study. This is clearly unfair to both the supporter and the SEND student.

Budget cuts also mean students are required to pay for more printing themselves, disadvantaging low-income students. And cuts to printing budgets mean subject departments could not adequately adapt resources for visually impaired students.

Austerity

It is clear that austerity measures to state education services do not affect us all equally, and further education colleges are bearing the biggest brunt of cuts to education.

These cuts are hitting already disadvantaged students. Further education colleges have been underfunded and cut away over the last 20 years, all while still paying VAT on learning unlike private schools Eton, Harrow, Winchester and Rugby which are all 'charities!'

Fighting Fund target smashed!

Ken Douglas, Socialist Party national treasurer

Socialist Party members worked tirelessly to raise over £15,000 in September to smash our quarterly fighting fund target, reaching 110% - a total of £27,429. The Socialist Party has no rich backers, this magnificent sum was achieved by the fundraising of our members and from the donations of working class people in response to our campaigning and appeals.

The Tories are continuing their assault on the public sector and the working class with further huge cuts in local services and the cut in tax credits. Throughout England and Wales our members have been protesting against these attacks.

The fighting fund enables the Socialist Party to produce campaigning material on all these issues - to put forward a programme to defeat the cuts and bring down this government.

Campaigning

Four branches did extremely well in raising over a thousand pounds during the quarter: Salford, Southampton and Stoke campaigned against closures of local NHS facilities and for an end to zero-hour contracts. Determined to hit their target, Waltham Forest branch raised £1,250 in just four weeks with a whole number of different fund-raising ideas.

A new branch in Selby raised £42 campaigning against local fire service cuts. Leicester branch decided that they needed to boost their fundraising and agreed to do a four-hour 'super stall' once a month on pay-day weekend when there are more people in the city centre who they can discuss with.

Branches also held successful fundraising social events: South Tyne and Wear raised £149 with their regular curry night; Waltham Forest raised over £100 raffling a very good quality bottle of whisky; Llanelli and Swansea branches took advantage of some sunshine in August and raised £100 with a barbecue on the beach.

In the final three months of 2015, we have set ourselves the target of raising £25,000 for the Socialism 2015 finance appeal. This is a very important appeal, a quarter of which will go to the Committee for a Worker's International - the international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated - to assist in the pioneering work that our members are engaged in around the world.

If we reach this target then we will be on course for a record year for the fighting fund, vital if we are going to have the resources to build support for a socialist alternative to the corruption and greed of the bankers, the super-rich and their capitalist politicians.

Donation

Can you help by making a donation or taking out a regular direct debit at www.socialistparty/donate?
Can you commit to raising some money yourself with a loose-change jar, raffle or some other idea?
We can guarantee that every pound raised will be used to help in the struggle for socialism.

Thousands cram 'the People's Post' rally to hear Corbyn

Becci Heagney

The enthusiasm on the protest outside the Tory Party conference on 4 October continued throughout a week of action in Manchester. The next day thousands of people attended the Communication Workers' Union (CWU) 'the People's Post' rally.

This campaign aims to defend postal services and postal workers' terms and conditions. The privatisation of Royal Mail is deeply unpopular but clearly the biggest draw to this rally was the main speaker, Jeremy Corbyn.

1,500 people crammed into Manchester Cathedral while over 7,000 made up the 'overflow' meeting outside, with speakers addressing both. The mood was electric - Corbyn got a five-minute standing ovation inside and the cheers outside must have been heard throughout the city centre.

Other speakers included Owen Jones, Kevin Maguire (deputy editor of the Mirror) and Mark McGowan (Artist Taxi Driver). Any mention of opposing austerity, defending trade union rights and fighting for an equal society got huge rounds of applause, indicating the popularity of these ideas.

Support

Talk of Corbyn and left-wing ideas being 'unelectable' is consistently being made to look ridiculous. How many politicians attract thousands of people to stand outside in the cold and listen to what they have to say? Corbyn's support for the CWU campaign and defence of workers' rights was warmly received.

However, despite asserting many times that he opposes privatisation of any public service, he didn't commit the Labour Party to, or even mention, renationalisation of Royal Mail.

The only way we can really have a 'People's Post' that is run as a service and not a profit-making venture is to bring it back into public ownership. Compensation should be paid only on the basis of proven need.

Perhaps the comment of the night, which summed up the mood of many there, came from CWU president Jane Loftus when she said: "If the Labour Party don't want Corbyn, let's have him in a People's Party".

This prompted cheers from the audience. We need a party that fights to immediately renationalise all privatised services. Corbyn could be instrumental in the creation of such a party.

TUSC groups writing to Labour councillors

As previously reported in the Socialist, local Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) groups are writing to their local Labour councillors asking for a meeting to discuss working together against austerity in light of Jeremy Corbyn's election. This process is now underway in many areas.

Several councillors have responded positively about starting such a discussion, though many express concerns about the practicalities of setting no-cuts budgets (which TUSC has dealt with extensively).

Others have been less open - one in Derby simply responded "Sorry I do not subscribe to Communist propaganda please do not send me any further emails and kindly remove me from your list."

Sending the letter, and the meetings that will start to take place soon, could form a vital part of uniting those inside and outside the Labour Party in a battle against the Blairites. For TUSC, central to this should be a programme that concretely opposes all cuts.

Let the Socialist know what responses you get from councillors in your area. A model letter can be found on the TUSC website.

www.tusc.org.uk

<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/21561>