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## Editorial of the Socialist, issue 898

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### Teachers, doctors, all of us

# Strike together to kick out the Tories!

- After the 16 April march, build for coordinated workers' action
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**"Doctors and teachers unite and fight" was one of the chants that rang out on the 16 April anti-austerity demo, as junior doctors prepare for an escalation of their strike action and teachers start to ballot for national action.**

**In London on 26 April they are doing just that. A demo has been called jointly by the London region of the teachers' union NUT, and the South and North Thames regions of the doctors' union BMA, with the backing of the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) and others.**

**Join the march - Tuesday 26 April, assemble 5pm at St Thomas' Hospital, Westminster Bridge Road and march to the Department of Health**

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"Last month, a fantastic demonstration, called at short notice by NUT divisions in London, helped show the depth of opposition to the government's academy plans. The march helped give confidence to delegates at the NUT's conference to vote for strike action to oppose the threat to national pay and conditions that will result from the imposition of these damaging plans.

"Delegates also agreed that our fight is part of the wider battle to defend public services and that we should explore the possibility of coordinating our campaign with the BMA.

"With this joint demo on April 26, NUT members and other trade unionists can help build that united campaign and help give confidence to another set of workers facing an attack on their national conditions - the junior doctors."

**Martin Powell-Davies, NUT London regional secretary and one of the organisers of the demo**

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"Teachers and doctors are coming together to march against simultaneous attacks from a heavy-handed government which is putting private interests above the quality of the public services we deserve.

"We are both facing imposition - doctors of an unsafe contract; teachers, academisation of their schools. We are fighting, not for our own interests, but because we recognise these as attacks on core public services, that go hand-in-hand with austerity and the destruction of the welfare state.

"We must stand up against this together - not just teachers and doctors but everybody who uses the NHS, who has benefited from free education and who wants their children to have the same opportunities."

**Niki Fitzgerald, Whipps Cross Hospital junior doctor and BMA rep (in a personal capacity)**

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The 26 April demonstration in London, called jointly by the doctors' union BMA and teachers' union NUT, is very important.

It is a reminder of the first trade union demonstration in London against austerity in October 2010. Then, the National Shop Stewards Network joined up with striking London firefighters and the London regions of the rail union RMT, the NUT, the civil service union PCS and the lecturers' union UCU. We marched through London to oppose the "savage cuts" threatened by the then Tory-Lib Dem coalition government.

That demonstration, along with marches in other regions, helped build the pressure on the TUC to call the biggest trade union demonstration in history on 26 March 2011.

Junior doctors and teachers are currently on the frontline of attacks on the public sector. The NHS is in financial crisis with massive Private Finance Initiative debts and a £22 billion 'black hole'.

The junior doctors' strike action - the first time in 40 years - has inspired workers and communities across the board. Their fight against the Hunt contract is widely recognised to be a fight for the NHS as a whole, and is extremely popular with the public. This demonstration takes place on the sixth strike day.

Teachers are fighting on a number of fronts to defend education from Tory plans to force every single school in the country to become an academy, to do away with national collective bargaining for teachers, and to slash schools' funding. The NUT is balloting for national action to defend national pay and conditions across all schools, academies and non-academies, and aims to take a first day of strike action in early July. This would be followed with further action in the autumn.

The 26 April demo, as well as being a display of solidarity, must be the springboard for joint action. BMA members must campaign for their leadership to call action alongside teachers in July. The confidence of both junior doctors and teachers would be so much higher, and the impact so much greater, if they strike together.

## **Determination**

The student nurses' 'Bursaries or Bust' campaign is one indication of the determination of other health workers also to fight. It follows the strike of midwives in 2014 and the special conference of GPs in December 2015.

The doctors' and teachers' demo takes place at the same time as the conference of the health section of public sector union Unison. Delegates should place the demand clearly on their leaders to oppose pay restraint and cuts, and for united action with the junior doctors. There are one million workers in the NHS - united action would be an extremely powerful step, and would harness the support of millions in their communities who have marched and protested in town after town to defend their local hospitals and A&Es.

The magnificent battle in Huddersfield (see right) - which follows other massive campaigns in Lewisham and Staffordshire - shows how much support there would be for a serious campaign of action conducted by the health unions. Unison in particular, which organises the biggest number of health workers, has a responsibility to act.

In fact, all the trade union leaders have a responsibility to act. Tens of thousands marched in London on the 16 April anti-austerity demo called by the Peoples' Assembly. Yet again, young people especially, but also trade unionists, lined up to say "we're ready for action".

The demands of the demo, originally for health, housing, jobs and education, were expanded to include "Cameron Must Go" due to the welling up of anger against the rich with their snouts in offshore secret troughs.

But we found that people picked up the Socialist Party's placards because they didn't just want to say "Cameron out", they wanted to say "Tories out". And what thousands on the march craved - but unfortunately didn't get - was the strategy and programme to actually do it.

The Socialist Party ran an open mic at the start and end of the demo. Lots of young people, young workers, trade unionists, housing campaigners, people from the Bargee Travellers Association, from the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) and more, took to the mic.

The ideas put forward by the Socialist Party speakers - Socialist Party general secretary Peter Taaffe, former anti-cuts Liverpool City Councillor Tony Mulhearn, and others - were extremely popular.

Our speakers called to bring down the Tories but said we can't wait till 2020. The Tories are now riven from top to bottom in a historic crisis over the EU referendum - they could be out of office in a matter of weeks.

A mass movement has the potential to bring down the government.

Many people on 16 April were young, angry first time demonstrators and really enjoyed being part of a big crowd, making their voices heard. Demonstrations give people confidence - and shake the confidence of the capitalist class.

## **Not enough**

But it's not enough to just keep calling an anti-austerity demo each year. This is the third year that the People's Assembly has called a spring anti-austerity march. Each time, thousands more people have lost their jobs, homes, pay and/or benefits; more libraries and nurseries have been closed; and the Tories have ramped up the destruction of the welfare state even further.

The People's Assembly is funded by trade unions, especially general union Unite. The unions have tremendous potential power. In March 2011, three quarters of a million people marched, followed by a two-million strong public sector pensions strike in November. This should have been a step towards a 24-hour general strike to seriously challenge austerity. But the leaders of Unison and GMB retreated.

We have now had six years of austerity. From trade unions leading the struggle in 2011, the fight has been contracted out to the People's Assembly. Saturday's march had a turnout of thousands partly because it had some trade union backing. But at the same time no clear direction is put forward.

For example, Dave Ward, general secretary of the postal workers union CWU, concluded his speech by saying: "Join a trade union. Join the People's Assembly. Get behind Jeremy Corbyn."

Len McCluskey, general secretary of Unite, pledged solidarity with junior doctors and teachers but made no mention at all of coordinating strike action - a far cry from the call for a general strike he made in 2012. He concluded by saying "we will fight, fight, fight for a better tomorrow."

Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell's speech was hugely welcomed on the demo because it was such a contrast with Blairite New Labour. He pledged to end austerity and make the rich pay, to halt the privatisation of the NHS, to build hundreds of thousands of council homes. He said "Let's bring this government down at the first opportunity".

The trade union leaders and anti-austerity forces around Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell should organise a serious national campaign to do that. Instead, unfortunately, John and Jeremy Corbyn have

made a major mistake in campaigning for a Remain vote in the EU referendum alongside Cameron and the majority of the establishment politicians and big business. This is wasting the major opportunity there is at the moment to "bring this government down."

The "fight" will be made up of a myriad of issues, different sections of society and a range of types of action. But the Socialist Party has argued all along that it is the working class, organised in trade unions, that has the greatest power to challenge the government and bosses, and should be at the heart of the struggle, instead of handing over leadership to others.

This is why the joint BMA and NUT demonstration is important, and why Socialist Party members in the unions and the NSSN have worked to help it happen.

Mass strike action is the most powerful and unifying weapon the anti-cuts movement has, bringing behind it the support of millions in communities. The Socialist Party calls for coordinating the strike action of all those workers in dispute as preparation for a 24-hour general strike.

## **Councillors' revolt**

We also call on Labour councillors to stop passing on Tory cuts now, and instead help to build a mass movement to defeat austerity - a councillors' revolt could be a key part of bringing this government down. The Socialist Party is part of TUSC, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, whose challenge in this May's council elections makes that call.

When Socialist Party speakers on our sound system referred to the surge for Bernie Sanders in the US and the need for a socialist alternative, we were received with cheers. It is essential that a clear socialist programme is put forward that can mobilise and unify working class people and lay out what needs to be done to achieve a "better tomorrow".

For Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell to be able to do that would need a serious fight with the pro-capitalist, pro-austerity Blairite right wing in the Labour Party. It would mean standing firm on the necessary policies instead of retreating in the face of right-wing opposition, which unfortunately is what they appear to be doing on Trident and steel.

On the People's Assembly demo, John McDonnell said "we are committed to scrapping Trident if we win the argument in the party". On steel he called for temporary nationalisation, while Jeremy Corbyn in his video message just called for the government to "take a stake".

Stop academies, cuts and attacks on teachers. Stop the Hunt contract and end cuts and privatisation in the NHS. Permanent, democratic nationalisation of steel. Nationalise the banks, rail, energy companies and the main planks of the economy under democratic workers control and management, so that we can begin to create a society in the interests of the millions not the super-rich tax-dodging billionaires.

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"Everybody taking action at the same time is an idea that is well supported by many trade unionists and campaigners against austerity. But how to turn that idea into reality is the key issue of the day. The joint demonstration on 26 April could be the first step in coordinated strike action by NUT and BMA, two of the most important public sector unions in the fight to protect services and the conditions of the workers involved."

**Linda Taaffe, national secretary of the National Shop Stewards Network and a teacher**

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"On the big demo on 16 April John McDonnell said in his speech that we should aim to bring this Tory government down at the first opportunity. Health workers more than anybody are desperate to see the

back of this tax-dodging shower.

"We can't wait till 2020! Now is the time - with the attack on junior doctors, the unending pay freeze and the attack on student bursaries - for the health trade union leaderships to step up, get together and harness the anger in nationally coordinated strike action to save our NHS."

**Len Hockey, Unite the Union branch secretary, Barts health branch (in a personal capacity)**

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## **Clock ticking on UK steel: it's time to act!**

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

Four weeks ago, Tata Steel announced the sale of its UK operations. But if Tata can't find a buyer it will sack 15,000 workers directly employed by the company. Three times as many support workers will also lose their jobs. Reports have surfaced that the company will set 28 May as the deadline date, meaning workers have just over a month to save their jobs and communities.

The trade union rank and file National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) has organised public meetings and protests in South Wales, where Port Talbot (the biggest steelworks) appears to be at most risk. On 13 April, a group of steelworkers came to a NSSN public meeting in the town along with supporters and other union activists. There was a wide cross-section of ages and experiences but the same determination that they wouldn't be the last steelworkers in Port Talbot after a century of steelmaking.

### **Hard won**

There was an understanding that the unions must act urgently. The meeting agreed a proposal that the workers would go back to the plant and call on the unions to organise a demonstration in Port Talbot in May and call on all Welsh trade unionists to support it. But if the unions don't act, then the NSSN will take on the responsibility of organising it with rank-and-file steelworkers.

The meeting took place a day after the proposed 'sale' for £1 of the Scunthorpe steelworks to investment fund Greybull Capital on the basis of savage cuts to hard-won pay and pensions. But no one in the Port Talbot meeting held out any hope of a private sector saviour for its plant. Only permanent nationalisation can ensure that all the steelworks survive, with workers keeping their jobs on their present terms.

Any demonstration in Port Talbot or elsewhere must be the rallying point for a serious mass united campaign that turns the huge sympathy that exists for steelworkers into practical support and solidarity to fight to force the government to nationalise the steel plants.

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## **Cops bid to hide spy trial**

**Dave Nellist, Former Labour MP and supporter of Militant, now the Socialist**

Lawyers acting for police have argued that significant parts of an inquiry into infiltration by undercover police of political groups since 1968 should be held in secret.

On 23 March, Lord Justice Pitchford began a two-day hearing into legal arguments by the Metropolitan Police attempting to block public hearings, thus continuing the cover-up of spying.

On the second day, the barrister acting for Peter Francis, the whistleblowing former undercover officer, said up to 120 police officers were engaged in undercover operations. This covers the lifetime of two political police units: the Special Demonstration Squad and the National Public Order Intelligence Unit.

Francis has admitted to personally spying on members of public sector union Unison, the Fire Brigades Union, the Communication Workers Union, the National Union of Teachers, and the National Union of Students. He also went undercover in Youth against Racism in Europe, and Militant, forerunner of the Socialist Party.

Is that infiltration, as the Metropolitan Police have implied, a thing of the past?

Perhaps not coincidentally, at the beginning of April, the BBC started prime-time thriller 'Undercover'. Its premise is that police spying on organisations and individuals still goes on.

That's one of the questions the Pitchford Inquiry will need to address, and which the police seem to want to block.

The barrister acting for Ken Livingstone, Diane Abbott, Joan Ruddock, Bernie Grant's widow Sharon, and myself, argued the police must be held to account. All eleven then MPs known to have been police targets were spied on because they were on the left.

The next stage of the Inquiry will be a hearing on 27 April into the terms of any immunity against future prosecution. These would apply to undercover officers who admit to illegal operations in evidence in the court.

The full inquiry will begin this summer.

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## Treasury boss attacks call to nationalise Tata

The Treasury's former chief civil servant has attacked the call to nationalise Tata Steel.

Sir Nick Macpherson warned the state could make a loss on its £19 billion stake in the part-nationalised Royal Bank of Scotland when it sells it off.

The Socialist sees this as an argument not to sell, but rather take the bank's profits into public hands as well. Macpherson sees it as an argument against nationalising Tata to save 15,000 jobs.

The Financial Times calls him the "high priest of austerity". It's easy for the pro-EU Eton and Oxford graduate to preach pain for workers. His own secure tenure was worth a minimum of £185,000 a year.

Meanwhile, climate consultancy CE Delft reports that Tata has taken over £700 million in European Union carbon subsidies. It was the top UK recipient of handouts under the 'emissions trading scheme'.

The EU is happy to throw money at private owners to boost profits in lieu of action on climate change. But when the bosses threaten job cuts and asset stripping, EU rules oppose nationalisation.

The Socialist says: open the books! What happened to that £700 million? Defy the EU's anti-worker rules: nationalise Tata. Vote Leave to break up the EU's free-market treaties and institutions.

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## Free runs threatened

## **Parkrunning socialists**

A parish council in Gloucestershire has voted to start asking for 'donations' from runners at free weekly 'Parkrun' events. Stoke Gifford Parish Council does not pay for the volunteers who set up the event in an open public space.

Socialists say that taking part in Parkrun should be free for all. 'Voluntary contributions' should be fought. How long before charging becomes mandatory?

Parkrun is a free 5km event which boasts an incredible 932,917 runners with events at 185 locations. That is just in the UK.

Participants take turns to marshal and keep time throughout the year. Runners of all standards, from club runners to people running their first ever event, are encouraged and welcomed.

Many events take place on parks owned or managed by local councils. It now appears that one such parish council sees an opportunity to make a bit of cash out of people living healthy lives.

Local councils and central governments of every shade regularly tell us they want us to keep fit. Rather than trying to pass the cost of healthy living and recreation onto local runners, councils should refuse to pass on government cuts.

The Panama Papers show the money in society is there. It just needs to be in the hands of the 99%, not the 1%.

All runners should support Little Stoke Parkrun. Stepping up the protests - for example, turning up en masse to Little Stoke Parkrun - would help show the strength of feeling. Bold opposition can act as a deterrent to other councils.

- Sign the petition [here](#)

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# **Them & Us**

## **Panama papers**

Poverty charity Oxfam has detailed yet more of the capitalists' obscene hypocrisy as revealed in the Panama Papers. Its latest report, 'Broken at the top', exposes the lie that capitalism is an effective system for allocating global resources.

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## **£973 billion**

Amount the United States' top 50 companies have stashed in offshore tax havens (Oxfam).

## **£972 billion**

Gross domestic product (total economic activity) of Spain in 2014 (World Bank).

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## **\$100 billion a year**

Amount developing countries lose to corporate tax dodging (UN). Let alone 'legitimate' profits, which workers make but bosses own.

## **\$46.7 billion a year**

Maximum cost of providing clean water, sanitation and hand-washing facilities to all who don't currently have them (World Bank).

2.2 billion people lack water, 3.4 billion sanitation and 4.8 billion basic hygiene.

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## **"Close to pointless"**

Oxfam's assessment of the European Union's severely limited proposals to reduce tax avoidance in the wake of the Panama Papers.

The EU's unelected executive body, the European Commission, has no interest in attacking the bankers and big businesses which created and fund it.

Voting Leave would help disrupt the capitalists' international tax-dodging racket. Genuine, socialist internationalism exists in spite of the bosses' efforts to coordinate against us - not as part of them.

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# **Pent Valley school students strike against closure**

**Bethany Smith, Sixth-form student**

Hundreds of school students struck against the closure of Pent Valley Technology College on 14 April. The action in Folkestone, Kent, was part of a campaign to get the local authority to listen to us.

The atmosphere within the school was a sense of relief. Students felt like they could finally get their point across.

We have had several meetings in the school over the past few months. Kent County Council attended, and it wouldn't answer vital questions that students needed to know. In response, students started to convey bouts of anger.

I had the idea of a student strike a few weeks back, at the community demonstration (see [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk), 'Save Pent Valley school demonstration demands a council u-turn').

From there we gave the idea of a strike to the students, and they all organised it within themselves. We set up numerous events and pages on Facebook to notify the students, and create a strong discussion.

Back in January, I was personally told that I was best off finding another establishment to finish my A-level studies due to course closures, so I did. I even had to change course completely.

I had moved to Pent Valley in September 2013, and I couldn't have asked for better staff to support me through crucial times in my education.

The students say this isn't the end of the strike. School students will be appealing to teachers and their



unions to join us in action on future occasions.

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This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 15 April 2016 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

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## **2,000 lay siege to A&E cutbacks consultation**

**Aaron Bailey, Huddersfield Socialist Party**

"Let us in! Let us in!"

This chant echoed through the air as 2,000 people turned out to a public meeting proposing the closure of A&E services at Huddersfield Royal Infirmary (HRI) in Yorkshire.

Most had to stand outside, as the local clinical commissioning group (CCG) had booked a room whose capacity was only 450. The A&E cutters were convinced no more than that would show up.

This showed once more the resistance and determination of the people of Huddersfield. We endured more than two hours standing in the cold to make our point to the CCG. They could hear every word we said, and seemed extremely intimidated by the pressure from the crowd both inside the meeting and outside.

CCG leaders made a short appearance outside before the meeting got underway. The angry crowd showered them with chants of "Shame on you!" They beat a hasty retreat behind security staff at John Smith's Stadium.

The CCG has clearly not provided adequate facilities for people to attend the consultation on closure. The campaign has received legal advice that because of this, the consultation is flawed, and could be blocked through a legal challenge.

This was also the first demonstration for the 'Youth for HRI' campaign subgroup. It organised a feeder march of about 25 down to the protest. This brought together school, college and university students, plus young workers.

### **Youth**

There was a strong turnout from young people. Several delivered excellent speeches, ranging from correcting the CCG's misinformation, to personal stories about what the A&E had done for themselves or their loved ones.

Olivia Kidd, a member of Youth for HRI, said afterwards that there was "a fantastic turnout and an amazing show of support from everyone who came today." She added that it was "an honour to speak at the demonstration."

This was just the latest event in the ongoing rebellion to save the A&E not only at Huddersfield, but also at Calderdale Royal Hospital in the same trust. We want neither to be shut down. It is going to take an effort, but we will win this battle and save our A&E departments.

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## **Day of action against poverty pay: £10 now!**

**Iain Dalton, Socialist Party Yorkshire**

Chants demanding a £10 an hour minimum wage rang out through Wakefield city centre on 14 April.

Activists from bakers' union BFAWU, campaign group Youth Fight for Jobs and the National Shop Stewards Network took part in a global day of action against low pay and for union rights in the fast food industry.

Over the preceding week, we had visited fast food workplaces across Wakefield and nearby shopping centres. We've received an enthusiastic response.

On the evening after the protest, a public meeting heard via Skype from a fast food worker in New York striking for a \$15 minimum wage. We gained ideas from that on how to take the campaign forward locally.

Socialist Party member and new BFAWU member Tom commented: "We've had a fantastic few weeks of raising awareness of the BFAWU and its call for a £10 an hour minimum wage. And if we continue taking that message to local workplaces, I'm confident we can build BFAWU among fast food workers in Wakefield."

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## **Why I'm standing**

### **To fight austerity and build vital support for socialism**

**Tom Baldwin, TUSC mayoral candidate, Bristol**

Over £100 million has been cut from Bristol City Council by the independent mayor and his cross-party cabinet. Over 1,000 jobs have been threatened, with cuts to libraries, care services, parks and more.

These cuts haven't gone unchallenged. Anti-cuts campaigners have managed to reverse proposed library closures and the removal of public toilets.

But with the possibility of huge funding cuts by the Tory government each year until 2020, we face an uphill battle to stop the complete destruction of some services. Nobody in the council is giving voice to that battle, to the workers who provide vital services and the people that use them.

Unfortunately, despite the new leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, Labour councillors once again all voted for the latest cuts budget. We need representatives who are going to stand up for the city and oppose Tory cuts, not pass them on to us.

For that reason the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) decided to stand me in the election for mayor of Bristol, along with 18 candidates for council seats. We're standing on a platform of stopping and reversing the cuts.

We want a budget that reflects what Bristol needs, not the Tories' demands to cut. Campaigning can push them back on council cuts like it did on disability benefits, but we need to take a stand.

We're getting a great response to our message. I've spoken to hundreds of people at hustings and been interviewed in local papers and on the radio.

We have to fight to get the same coverage as the 'bigger' candidates, so we're doing what we can to

reach people on the doorsteps and on the streets. We're building support for socialism and for fighting austerity. That's vital in these times of cuts and capitalist crisis and it won't stop after election day.

TUSC is the 100% anti-austerity electoral coalition made up of the RMT transport union, the Socialist Party, other socialist groups, and leading trade unionists from other trade unions. This year we're standing 309 candidates cutting against politicians.

- [www.tusc.org.uk](http://www.tusc.org.uk)
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## **Increasing anger at cuts boosts Grimsby campaign**

**Val O'Flynn, TUSC candidate, Heneage ward, Grimsby**

The 2016 local elections will be the fourth the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition has contested in Grimsby and we've gained experience from each one.

In 2015 we stood in every seat being contested: two parliamentary candidates and all 15 council wards. Within weeks we had a council by-election. It was hard work but was successful in gaining us recognition across the whole of North East Lincolnshire. So it was important to build on that and there was no question that this year, we would stand in all 12 seats.

Coverage in the local paper helps to get us taken seriously, but it's the stalls and canvassing that are vital in being able to explain our policies, connect with the issues that concern people and answer their questions.

The Socialist is a great tool and being able to point to relevant articles really helps the conversation along. It also helps that we are seen on the streets all year round and not just election time.

People are definitely more interested in politics during elections and easier to talk to, so we get out every chance we can, even if there's only two or three of us - and it's fun.

It's clear that the mood is changing and anger at the government and local councillors doing the government's dirty work is increasing.

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## **TUSC Liverpool mayoral candidate Roger Bannister objects to censorship**

Merseyside Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition is recording its opposition to a Liverpool City Council election office decision to veto a section in Roger Bannister's election address which refers to "Liverpool Labour".

The rules disallow any personal reference to a political opponent, but do not disallow reference to a political party.

We strongly object to an unelected official, employed and paid by Liverpool taxpayers, censoring legitimate political expressions of opinion.

Why doesn't the council want the city to know that it's Labour making the cuts, when they are? What have Labour got to hide, except their shame? And why is the election office covering for the mayor again?

Due to lack of time before the election address submission deadline, Roger was reluctantly forced to accept this blatant interference with his election address. But his team will be seeking assurances that this undermining of the democratic process will not be repeated in future elections.

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## Jeremy Corbyn's EU u-turn

### The bosses' EU is no friend of workers

Hannah Sell, Socialist Party deputy general secretary

"Dodgy Dave decided my vote. He votes stay, I vote leave." This tweet on the EU referendum sums up the attitude of growing numbers of people. It is one important reason that the majority of big business and billionaires - desperate to keep Britain in the EU - are beginning to seriously worry that a majority could vote to leave in June's referendum.

They gained a little relief last Thursday when Jeremy Corbyn entered the fray, making a speech urging people to vote to remain in the EU, which was welcomed by Cameron.

The Labour leader was so closely flanked by Blairite head of the Labour Remain campaign, Alan Johnson, that the latter seemed to be holding a metaphorical knife to Jeremy's ribs to make sure he didn't deviate from his script. A script which was delivered with no more enthusiasm than the average hostage forced before the camera to read out the view of his captors.

The Labour leadership, of course, are insisting that Jeremy Corbyn is now a keen supporter of remaining in the EU. But what caused his change of heart? During the Labour leadership contest, Corbyn said he had "mixed feelings" on the EU and refused to rule out campaigning to leave. At one GMB union hustings he stated: "I would advocate a No vote if we are going to get an imposition of free market policies across Europe."

#### Prior to leadership

And prior to the leadership campaign he had repeatedly made clear that the EU did attempt to impose free market policies across Europe.

For example, speaking against the Maastricht treaty in 1993 he stated: "It takes away from national parliaments the power to set economic policy and hands it over to an unelected set of bankers who will impose the economic policies of price stability, deflation and high unemployment throughout the European Community."

And more recently in 2009 he wrote that the EU had "always suffered a serious democratic deficit" and that "the project has always been to create a huge free-market Europe, with ever-limiting powers for national parliaments and an increasingly powerful common foreign and security policy."

What has changed since 2009? Nothing in the EU. It remains an Employers Union, dedicated to continent-wide privatisation and attacks on workers' rights.

One of the most brutal examples of austerity on the planet is the misery imposed on the Greek people

by the institutions of the EU. The left Syriza government in Greece came to power imagining, as Jeremy Corbyn now claims to do, that it would be possible for them to reform the EU from within.

Instead they faced a choice between defying the EU or capitulating and implementing even more austerity measures on a population whose average wage had already fallen by a third. Unfortunately, despite the preparedness of the Greek people to stand firm, the Syriza government bowed to the demands of the EU's institutions.

Jeremy Corbyn was absolutely right to say in his speech on the EU that, "socialists have understood from the earliest days of the labour movement that workers need to make common cause across national borders". International workers' solidarity against austerity is vital but Greece demonstrates conclusively that this will have to be in opposition to the bosses' club that is the EU.

Some of Jeremy Corbyn's most popular pledges when he stood as Labour leader - including renationalising the railways and energy companies - would be illegal under EU law. This does not mean a Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour government could not implement them - but in doing so it would come into confrontation with the EU. Far better to remove that obstacle by voting to leave in the referendum.

It is not an objective change in the EU, but pressure from big-business in Britain, via the right-wing of the Labour Party, that has led Jeremy Corbyn to change his position.

Back in September last year, just three days after telling David Cameron he would not give him a blank cheque on the EU referendum, Jeremy Corbyn signed a letter that did just that. Co-signed by foreign secretary Hilary Benn it promised to call for a yes vote regardless of the outcome of Cameron's negotiations with the EU.

This was the result of the right's first major attack on the new Labour leader with Pat McFadden, then shadow Europe minister, threatening to resign unless the letter about the referendum was signed.

## **Exit on a left basis**

If Jeremy Corbyn had not made that early serious retreat, and had instead stood by his own historical position and led a campaign for exit on a left and internationalist basis, we would be facing a very different referendum campaign. Instead of a campaign dominated by big-business and Tories on both sides of the debate, the voice of the working class would be heard. That would have increased the chances of exit winning.

And, far from exit meaning a move to the right as some on the left claim, it would have opened up the prospect of a Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour government coming to power in the short term.

Tory elder statesman Ken Clarke was right when he said that David Cameron could not survive "for 30 seconds" if he lost the referendum. Quite possibly neither could his government, particularly if Corbyn had been standing clearly for exit.

Of course, whatever the outcome of the referendum the Tories will be tearing each other apart. A mass movement against austerity could force them to call a general election.

However, it is essential that Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters make no more retreats in the face of right-wing pressure but instead take a clear anti-austerity stance which could enthuse millions.

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## **Socialist Party on national media and online**

Judy Beishon puts forward the socialist case for EU exit

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Sarah Wrack, editor of the Socialist, debates the EU referendum on BBC News with Momentum's Michael Chessum - watch on [our Facebook page](#).

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The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition's national election agent, Clive Heemskerk, is interviewed on RT News (13 April) about the Electoral Commission's decision to choose the Tory-dominated Vote Leave campaign as the official voice of exit in June's referendum. Watch on the [TUSC website](#).

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## EU: bosses pick 'safe' reactionary out voice

**Clive Heemskerk, National election agent, Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition**

The European Union (EU) referendum campaign formally began on 13 April, when the Electoral Commission chose the 'official' voices of Remain and Leave. Its decision gives the chosen organisations guaranteed media coverage and substantial public resources.

There was one applicant on the Remain side, Britain Stronger in Europe. Tory peer Lord Rose, former boss of Marks & Spencer, leads the group - backed by David Cameron, the Labour Party, and the Liberal Democrats.

On the exit side, the reactionary Vote Leave campaign was chosen. This organisation includes all the Tory cabinet EU outers, the only Ukip MP Douglas Carswell, and Mayor of London Boris Johnson.

A big majority of the British capitalist establishment supports a Remain vote. This was a case of the establishment choosing not just its own team, but the safest opposition as well.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), which involves transport union RMT, the Socialist Party and other socialist groups, had also put in a bid to lead the Leave campaign. This was because the Electoral Commission had earlier refused to hear TUSC's arguments for why taxpayers' money should not go to reactionary Leave campaigners.

Not unexpectedly, TUSC was not selected. But our campaign has been vindicated.

The publicity generated by what the BBC called our "surprise bid" included multiple news stories and TV appearances. This shows how the process of choosing the official campaigns could get across the argument that an anti-austerity, anti-racist and socialist opposition to the EU is possible.

The Electoral Commission was forced into a tortuous defence. It said its legal duty to make sure the campaign chosen "adequately represented" working class Leave voters actually means "sufficiently represents, even if barely so".

What if not just TUSC, but other left-led unions in addition to the RMT had thrown their weight into a left exit campaign? Imagine the pressure it could have been under not to give lead campaign status to Tory outers and their Ukip allies.

Jeremy Corbyn has bowed to the pressure of Labour's right wing on the EU. He has abandoned his previous opposition to the EU bosses' club. This also helped to hand an important platform to Boris Johnson and friends.

But with our standing enhanced by the campaign it has conducted so far, TUSC will now organise its

own 20-city tour of public meetings on 'The socialist case against the EU'. The battle to shape the character of the Leave campaign is not over.

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## The socialist case for nationalisation

Nationalisation is back on the agenda. The crisis surrounding Tata steel has demonstrated that the market cannot secure the future of the industries vital for the economy. Nor can it provide the jobs that communities rely upon.

The Tories have been shown to be out of touch with the majority of the working class on this issue when Business Secretary Sajid Javid said that "nationalisation is not the answer". A YouGov poll shows that 62% of people think that it is the answer.

Paul Callanan looks at what the arguments against nationalisation are and what socialists say to answer them.

It would place an unreasonable burden on the taxpayer

This is a lie. And what's more, as the Panama papers show, it is one made up by people who don't even pay their taxes.

The cost of the government taking over Tata steel would be £1.5 billion a year according to some estimates. This is only the case if it is bought by the government at the market rate. They don't have to do that. The bosses at Tata have shown that they are not capable of running the company and that they don't care about what happens to the workers.

A private buyer would take massive government subsidies to take the company on. We say that it should be nationalised with compensation only paid to shareholders on the basis of proven need.

The cost of industries like Tata going to the wall would be enormous to the workers and communities that rely on them. It would mean people paying no tax and claiming benefits as a result of unemployment.

Privatisation of previously nationalised industries in the 1980s brought destruction to communities and cost the taxpayer dearly. During this period government spending on welfare rose on average 1.1% a year. Unemployment rose to just over 4 million in 1984.

Research has found that each person in Britain could save £250 a year in gas, water, electricity bills and rail fares - all previously nationalised utilities - if they were taken back under public ownership. In real terms water bills have gone up by 51% since privatisation. Travel fares have risen by 24% since 1995.

The government could rule that infrastructure and transport projects only buy their steel and other materials from government-owned enterprises. It would be an investment on which society as a whole would see a return.

### Wasn't nationalisation tried before? It didn't work

Yes and no. In the period of 1945-75 one-fifth of the British economy was state owned. This included coal, steel, transport, civil aviation, phones, electricity, gas, water, road haulage and trucking - a whole range of key sections of the economy. World War Two had seen economic devastation across the world. Most industries were bankrupt by the end of the war and could not be revived on the basis of

private ownership.

Added to this, working class people who had fought in the war had come home and were not prepared to go back to the hunger, cold and poverty of the 1930s. The whole of Europe was convulsed by revolutionary movements. Nationalisation came as a result of huge pressure from the working class who saw it as a step towards socialism.

However, capitalism managed to cling on and relative political stability ushered in the biggest upswing in its history - the "post-war boom". Workers experienced the biggest increase in living standards ever. Between 1950 and 1965 workers' wages rose by 40%. Unemployment in the same period averaged just 2%. Workers' conditions were also boosted by strong trade union organisation in the workplace. By 1980 trade union membership stood at around 14 million.

What was missing from the nationalised industries was any workers' control and management. In Britain they were controlled by ministers and civil servants from Whitehall who acted in the interests of capitalism. This did result in bureaucratic mismanagement and waste. It also meant that these industries were not responsive to the needs of working class people and communities. Elected committees of workers' representatives, the local communities and the government would have meant a democratic plan for production could have been drawn up. This would have enabled production to be focused on what people needed. It would also have made nationalised industries more responsive to changes in the economy when a new crisis began in the 1970s.

Ultimately nationalisation was ended by the Thatcher government. Thatcher was a disciple of neoliberalism and free markets. She represented the interests of the ruling class who were determined to smash working class conditions. Under Thatcher and her successors industries were sold off to big business in order for them to reap huge profits. The deliberate running down of the coal industry resulted in the heroic miners' strike in 1984/85 against the closure of nationalised mines.

The consequences of rampant privatisation are still being felt today. People see it in sky high gas, electricity and water bills. It is seen in the marketisation of the NHS and dodgy PFI deals; and in the proliferation of insecure work and the scourge of zero-hour contracts.

There is growing support for nationalisation among the working class. Over 70% of people support the nationalisation of the railways, 68% and 67% would renationalise energy companies and the Royal Mail respectively. And a whopping 84% believe that the NHS should be fully nationalised.

## **Didn't the government nationalise the banks? And we're still being ripped off**

Indeed they did. The collapse of Northern Rock in late 2007, and then AIB in America just weeks later, was the harbinger of the worst crisis capitalism has faced since the 1930s. When Northern Rock collapsed, the Labour government under Gordon Brown rushed to its rescue. This move was supported by the Tory opposition and its leader David Cameron. Contrast this with his present government's attitude towards a possible takeover of Tata.

This was followed by bailouts (cash handouts) and the government taking stakes in a number of banks including Lloyds and RBS. In effect these 'nationalisations' meant the government paying off the banks' debts and leaving the profits in the hands of the bosses.

Eventually the banks were partially sold off allowing someone else to reap the benefits of public ownership. Last summer George Osborne sold off the government's shares in RBS at a £1 billion loss to the taxpayer.

We have argued since the outset of the crisis that it is not enough to take a stake in the banks only to hand them back at knockdown prices. The banks should have been fully nationalised under democratic control. This way the banks could have been used in order for working people and small businesses to



get access to cheap loans. This would have to be done alongside a raft of other measures to take key sectors of the economy into public ownership.

## **Ok, but it wouldn't work anyway in a modern high-tech economy**

This argument was most prominently trotted out by Yvette Cooper when she said nationalisation "would not help young people trying to build an app". As well as being wrong, this argument is also disingenuous.

While working class people do benefit from new technology, it is also used by the ruling class to drive down wages and conditions. For example, the way Oyster technology is being used on London Underground to close ticket offices and sack workers.

This is because in the hands of big business, technology is being used to maximise profit rather than improve the lives of the majority.

Take the taxi app Uber where people can order mini cabs from their phone at cheap prices. This is fantastic in theory. But in the hands of profiteers it is undercutting drivers for other companies. Taken into public ownership the technology could be used to help aid the planning of cab services - dividing out the work, sharing out routes etc. This increased capacity to share information opens up possibilities right across the economy.

Also taking those companies that provide platforms for building the apps into public ownership would create huge potential. At the moment there are three platforms for building apps - Apple, Android and Windows. The code used for these platforms is incompatible with each other which means that often app builders have to produce three apps to do the same thing. While there is some open source code that can be accessed for free, most of it is controlled by market forces and at a cost.

Nationalisation of the mobile phone and tech companies would make it possible to make all code open source, allowing the builder to access all of it for free. The publishing platform could also be then used without charge with the three platforms made compatible.

New technology and the mechanisation of production have the potential to enhance the lives of working class people. It could mean that people get more leisure time. But in the hands of big business this potential will be, at best, only partially realised and at worst completely lost.

## **If you did that then wouldn't the rich simply take their money elsewhere?**

Whenever the arguments are raised for measures that would improve the lot of working class people this argument is dragged out. 'If we tax the rich to pay for services they'll take their business elsewhere'; 'if we nationalise industries the rich will move their money abroad'. It is of course true that capitalists are only interested in defending their profits and will do it by any means necessary.

But there are measures that can be taken to prevent this from happening. When Syriza took power in Greece at the beginning of 2015 the potential for a flight of capital was raised. The Socialist Party argued at the time that the Greek government would need to nationalise the key sectors of the economy if it was to avoid the catastrophe that was eventually inflicted on the Greek people.

Alongside that we argued for capital controls to be introduced that would stop the rich from removing all their money from the country. The government could also take control of imports and exports. This would prevent people from using exports as a cover for getting their money out of the country.

Ultimately, the rich wouldn't be missed. They owe their position to their ownership of factories, shops, restaurants etc. But they do not keep production going - workers do. This is what makes strikes so

effective. Workers can bring workplaces, industries or even countries to a standstill. This has an effect on profit, hitting the boss where it hurts the most - in the pocket. If your boss or CEO went on strike for the day, would you notice?

We called on the Greek government to take these measures in tandem with a call to the working class in other crisis and debt-burdened countries to fight for the same. On this basis, a confederation of socialist states in Europe could have been on the agenda.

International free trade means that the rich can move their money where and when they please. But in a socialist world where would they move the money to?

### **Well, I can see the point of it as a temporary measure, when key enterprises are failing**

This idea has been raised by Labour shadow chancellor John McDonnell as a solution to the Tata steel crisis. Basically the state can save the industry and wait until a viable private buyer is found. This is a profound mistake.

The steel crisis won't go away unless more far-reaching measures are taken. International competition means that buyers will continue to look for the cheapest product. In this case it is China dumping cheap steel in Europe as prices plummet domestically. Even if the government takes control for a long period problems like this will continue to persist. That is the (il)logic of free markets.

A private buyer would then simply take the companies and asset strip, ie sell off the profitable parts for personal gain. We support nationalisation but on this basis it would be, at best, a reprieve.

Society and the economy can only emerge permanently from the present crisis on the basis of a complete break with the logic of capitalism.

During the Russian Revolution of 1917 the working class took over the factories. This was organised through elected bodies called soviets. These soviets were organised at the level of the shop floor which then elected delegates to local, regional and national soviets.

In October 1917 the soviets, led by the Bolshevik Party, overthrew the capitalist provisional government which had taken power after the Tsar was overthrown in February that year. The commanding heights of the economy were nationalised under democratic workers' control and management. The working class was able to democratically plan the economy to meet the needs of everyone.

Ultimately, because of Russia's poverty and isolation and the civil war and invasion of imperialist armies, bureaucratic layers under Stalin were able to usurp the power of the soviets and institute a vicious dictatorship. Yet even without democratic planning and with the bureaucratic waste and stagnation under the Stalinist bureaucracy, the USSR became a world super power.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the USSR's economy and living standards advanced in ten years by levels that it took 100 to achieve in the advanced capitalist countries. Unfortunately the bureaucracy leeches off that wealth in the form of privileges and acted as a fetter on the further development of society - eventually leading to capitalist restoration.

Power in capitalist society is not exercised by elected representatives of the people. It is in the boardroom where power really lies. We stand for nationalisation to put that power in the hands of working people, not as a temporary fix whenever the capitalists find themselves in a hole. We would nationalise not just steel in Britain but the top 150 monopolies that control the wealth and resources in society. And we would also put the economy in the hands of those that produce that wealth.

Socialist nationalisation would include having elected committees to run every workplace. In turn these would elect representatives to be on committees that would form regional and national government. On this basis the whole of society would be able to take part in drawing up a plan for what industry should produce.

Breaking with capitalism in one country would be a huge step forward but not enough. But an appeal made to workers in other countries to carry out the same would gain a huge response. Socialist nationalisation across the world would allow planning not just on a national but an international scale.

Capitalism can no longer develop the economy and harness advances in science and technique to the benefit of all in society. The bosses and their political servants have no solution to the crisis that is destroying the lives of millions. The situation at Tata steel is but one example of this. It is only on the basis of democratic socialist nationalisation and planning that working class people can find a way out of the crisis and liberate humanity from poverty and inequality.

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## **Ireland: 100 years since the 1916 Easter rising**

### **A revolt against imperial power and war**

**Cillian Gillespie, Socialist Party (CWI Ireland)**

This year marks the centenary of the Easter 1916 Rising against British rule in Ireland. For many working class people in Ireland this event is regarded as a key defining event in Irish history, with its participants and leaders held in high esteem.

Their actions are viewed by many as a blow to Ireland's historic colonial masters. Over the course of one week, a small armed force took on the military might of the British Empire, which at the time constituted the largest imperial power in the world.

A significant proportion of the main forces that participated, the Irish Citizen Army and the Irish Volunteers, were working class in their composition or were drawn from the lower middle classes.

While the capitalist establishment in the South is more than willing to celebrate the rising in this centenary year, their forebears took an altogether different attitude to the events of 1916.

### **James Connolly**

Nowhere is this more exemplified than in an editorial that appeared in the Irish Independent on 10 May 1916, with a picture of the great socialist leader and key participant in the rising, James Connolly, beside it, which demanded that "the worst of the ringleaders be singled out and dealt with as they deserve."

A badly wounded Connolly was executed two days later. The paper's proprietor, William Martin Murphy, leader of the 404 bosses that had locked out Dublin's working class in 1913, was effectively campaigning for his execution.

Ultimately the rising had its roots in the oppression by British imperialism that had stretched over several centuries. This colonial oppression of Ireland had not only resulted in the denial of its right to political freedom and independence, but also its economic strangulation.

This was firstly done by destroying Ireland as a competitor to British capitalism in the aftermath of the

Act of Union of 1801.

Mass emigration from Ireland, particularly in the years of the great famine of the mid-19th century, also served to create a cheap pool of labour for Britain's industrial cities and "dark satanic mills".

## **Social struggle**

Ireland became Britain's 'bread basket' and would provide raw agricultural products, mainly meat, to feed these same cities.

It was for this reason that James Connolly wrote: "The struggle for Irish Freedom has two aspects: it is national and it is social."

Connolly argued that only a revolutionary movement of the working class that united both Protestant and Catholic workers, and linked with the struggle for socialism, could end Ireland's colonial domination.

Alongside Jim Larkin, Connolly played a critical role in the huge battles of the Irish workers' movement in the aftermath of the founding of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union in 1909. This culminated in the Dublin Lockout of September 1913.

While not an outright defeat, the outcome of the lockout did cut across the momentum that the ITGWU and Irish workers' movement generally had developed prior to 1914. Two other events were to have a negative impact on the development of the workers' movement in this same year.

The first was the danger of the partition of the island. Connolly correctly foresaw that this would produce a "carnival of reaction". Such a scenario, as history would later prove, would result in the increase in sectarian division between working class people to the benefit of imperialism and capitalism.

In August 1914 another catastrophe befell the workers' and socialist movement in Ireland and throughout Europe, with the outbreak of World War One. This was a war fought between the capitalist powers of Europe over whose respective ruling class would maximise their profits through control over the world market.

This event may not have come as a surprise to socialists such as Connolly, but the support given to it by the 'official' leaders of the socialist movement certainly did (see '1914 - The capitulation of the Second International' at [www.socialistworld.net](http://www.socialistworld.net)).

In violation of the basic principles of working class solidarity, they shamefully rallied in support of their own ruling classes in a war that would result in the killing and maiming of millions of working class soldiers, unprecedented in its barbarity.

## **Europe**

As Connolly wrote in 1914, following the betrayal of the leaders of the socialist Second International: "What then becomes of all our resolutions; all our protests of fraternisation; all our threats of general strikes; all our carefully built machinery of internationalism; all our hopes for the future?"

Irish Home Rule leader John Redmond - who the present southern Irish caretaker government saw fit to recently celebrate on a large scale banner in Dublin's College Green (see photo right) - rushed to support the imperialist war and advocate that members of the Irish Volunteers should enlist in the British army.

In contrast, Connolly wrote in hope that: "Ireland may yet set the torch to a European conflagration

that will not burn out until the last throne and the last capitalist bond and debenture will be shrivelled on the funeral pyre of the last warlord."

As the bloody carnage of the war dragged on, Connolly was driven by a burning desire to strike a blow against the capitalist and imperialist order in Europe.

However, he was isolated in Ireland, with no direct links to the small number of other revolutionary socialist leaders who stood against the imperialist war, such as Lenin and Trotsky in Russia, Luxemburg and Liebknecht in Germany, and Maclean in Scotland.

During the war, Ireland was not immune from the jingoism that had developed across Europe. Many working class people in Ireland, including those who had been blacklisted as a result of the lockout, were also economically conscripted into the British Army. Linked with this was the looming threat of actual military conscription being introduced in Ireland, as it had been in Britain.

It was in this context that Connolly became increasingly desperate to see some kind of rebellion take place in Ireland. In the absence, at that stage, of a mood for rebellion among broader sections of the working class, he looked to the forces of militant nationalism.

These forces took the form of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) and those sections of the Irish Volunteers who had refused to heed Redmond's call to support the British military effort.

## **Easter Monday**

The IRB's maxim was: "England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity". It had been preparing in secret for an armed rising since the outbreak of the war. In January 1916, Connolly was co-opted onto the military council of the IRB to prepare for a rising to take place at Easter.

On Easter Monday (24 April) 1916, an estimated 1,300 Irish Volunteers and 220 members of the Irish Citizen Army (Connolly's trade union militia) seized control of the centre of Dublin. They declared an 'Irish Republic', erected barricades and waited for the inevitable assault from British forces.

For one week, the insurgents stood firm even though outnumbered by 20 to one. They were quickly surrounded and shelled mercilessly.

By the end of the week they were forced into an unconditional surrender. 60 rebels, 120 British troops and 450 civilians lay dead, with more than 2,500 injured.

Various factors cut across the scale, duration and intensity of the fighting that took place. The countermanding order to the Irish Volunteers by McNeill - the nominal head of the force - who reflected the conservatism of the Irish middle classes - on Easter Sunday was one. Also the British seizure of the German submarine, the Aud, which contained 20,000 rifles set for the rebels.

However, ultimately the rising was doomed to failure from the outset, given that there was little mood or support for such an action among the population at large.

No attempt was made to organise a general strike in support of the uprising and no class appeal was made to the British troops sent to put down the rebellion.

Connolly himself confided to a fellow insurrectionary that there was no chance of the uprising succeeding.

In the run up to and during the rising itself, Connolly made political concessions to the forces of nationalism he was fighting alongside, setting aside some of the ideas and methods he had so carefully developed during decades of revolutionary activity.

This was reflected in the 'Proclamation' he put his name to, which, notwithstanding its positive sentiments, is a nationalist document.

Having decided to participate in the rising, it would have been better if Connolly had put out a clear, separate, socialist document that outlined his vision of a "Workers' Republic", where society's wealth and resources would be under the democratic ownership and control of the working class.

## Revolution

The tremendous courage and self-sacrifice displayed by Connolly, and indeed the others who fought in the rising, cannot be disputed. However, the prematurity of the rising can be seen by looking at events that followed it.

In the opening chapter of his celebrated work 'Labour in Irish History', Connolly had written that: "Revolutions are never the by-products of our minds but of ripe material conditions".

While the "material conditions" for a socialist revolution against British and Irish capitalism had not developed by 1916, the impact of national and international events in the period following 1917 made such a revolution a real possibility.

The outbreak of the Russian Revolution and the revolutionary wave that swept Europe had a deeply radicalising effect on the working class on the island.

This radicalisation had an effect not only on the South, where opposition to British imperialism began to harden in the aftermath of the rising, but also among Protestant and Catholic workers in the North. This resulted in a whole series of local and national general strikes. "Soviets" - democratic workers' councils - were proclaimed. And, in some cases, strikers and workers took control of cities, such as Belfast and Limerick. A pro-socialist outlook developed within society.

## Socialism

The absence of a revolutionary socialist leadership, which could have united the working class and these movements in the struggle for socialist change, meant that the revolution of this period gave way to the counterrevolution of the partition of the island.

Tragically, Connolly did not live to see these events and therefore play the necessary role in building such a leadership.

Contrary to the mythology purported by today's political establishment and mainstream historians, the "revolutionary period" of 1916 to 1922 did not give way to a positive outcome for working class people. What was created were two oppressive, sectarian states that failed to deliver for the needs of working class people, and still do to this day.

It is for these reasons that we must learn from the past, and strive to construct a socialist movement that can deliver the real change that working class people need.

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# Chernobyl nuclear disaster - 30 years on

Geoff Jones, Socialist Party Wales

On 26 April 1986 an explosion destroyed the nuclear power station in Chernobyl, about 100 miles north of Ukrainian capital Kiev (then part of the Soviet Union). This explosion, the worst 'nuclear

incident' in history (excluding the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki), set back confidence in 'clean' nuclear energy for a generation.

The nuclear reactor at Chernobyl used uranium fuel rods surrounded by graphite, which absorbed some of the heat of the nuclear reaction. Water piped past the fuel rods and graphite carried away heat, producing steam to drive turbines to generate electricity.

If the hot graphite and uranium rods should come into contact with the water, an explosion would produce radioactive steam.

## **Disaster**

30 years ago, this happened. Technicians, trying to fix a recurrent problem, had carried out a reckless experiment - and a sudden power surge ruptured the cooling water pipes.

Following earlier accidents at Sellafield, UK, and Three Mile Island in the USA, reactors in Europe and USA were built inside a 'containment' shell, aimed at stopping the escape of any radioactive gas. Chernobyl had no such containment, and so a radioactive gas cloud was spread west by winds over Europe and Scandinavia.

At first, the authorities tried to keep the disaster quiet. Only two days later, when workers at a nuclear plant in Sweden found their radiation detectors hitting high values even before they got to work, was the Soviet government forced to make any announcement.

How many were killed by the disaster? Proponents of nuclear power have tried very hard to play down the death toll. They only acknowledge the 30-50 mostly firefighters and technicians who heroically worked to shut down the reactor, with no thought to their own safety, and who died of radiation poisoning.

But many thousands more were affected by radiation. A conservative estimate suggests 30,000 to 90,000 deaths. But even that figure underestimates the massive suffering caused.

For Western supporters of nuclear power, Chernobyl was the result of Stalinist bureaucratic top-down management. This was certainly true, but there was an unspoken added assumption that it simply couldn't happen in the open, democratic, technologically advanced West - until five years ago.

## **Fukushima**

On 11 March 2011, an earthquake caused a tsunami (tidal wave) which overwhelmed the Tokyo Electric Power Company (Tepco) Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant in Japan. The result was a meltdown of its four nuclear reactors.

Immediately after the earth-quake, the reactors shut down automatically, and emergency generators came online to control reactor coolant pumping systems. But when the tsunami flooded the emergency generators, they failed, cutting power to the pumps. As the pumps stopped, the reactors overheated.

Prompt flooding of the reactors with seawater could have cooled the reactors quickly enough to prevent meltdown, but this was delayed because it would ruin the costly reactors.

When the government finally ordered the use of seawater, it was too late to prevent meltdown. Clouds of radioactive steam were blown out.

## **Fallout**

Estimated fallout at Fukushima was only between 10% and 40% of that from Chernobyl, and the number of deaths resulting from the accident was also probably far smaller.

However, at least three US Navy sailors on the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan assisting the Tsunami relief effort off the coast of Japan and exposed to the Fukushima radiation, have now died from mysterious illnesses. This is according to Charles Bonner, an attorney representing 247 of the sailors in a class action lawsuit against Tepco.

Moreover, over 150 thousand people had to evacuate their homes, and five years later many more still live in contaminated areas. They have not been taken care of or compensated adequately.

The plant is still releasing radioactive materials to the air and a huge quantity of radioactive water is being stored with no suggestion as to how it can be got rid of.

Recently, Tepco began releasing radioactive tritium into the sea from the 300 tonnes of contaminated water generated daily at the plant.

Japan is one of the world's most well-prepared countries in disaster management. But the authorities still failed at every step in their response to the ongoing disaster at Fukushima, showing that no country can be effectively prepared to mitigate a large nuclear accident and a major release of radiation.

These two very different nuclear disasters show the fallacy of 'safe' nuclear energy, especially when the control of nuclear installations is in the hands of an undemocratic bureaucracy as at Chernobyl, or a capitalist company as at Fukushima.

Here in Britain, the Tories are pushing new nuclear power for political reasons - to reduce reliance on imported oil and gas.

As socialists we demand complete public ownership of the energy system, with a democratically controlled national plan for power generation and distribution, taking into account safety, renewability and effects on the environment.

On the 25th anniversary of the disaster, the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) published interviews with 'Chernobyltsi' - victims of Chernobyl - painting a horrific picture of the effects on people living near the plant (The Rewriting of Chernobyl's History, [www.socialistworld.net](http://www.socialistworld.net)).

Rob Jones of the CWI, and Svetlana (a youth rights activist from the area, herself now sadly dead from cancer at the age of 20), spoke to Anna: "I was a child at the time of the explosion. Now the next generation of children is going to school. Many, like my kids, are in and out of hospital. My sister's child is permanently bald. My husband can't get work. Yet the government is doing all it can to wipe the memory of Chernobyl from the consciousness of the Ukrainian people."

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## CWU conference

# Huge profits for BT and Royal Mail, cuts and attacks for workers

### Socialist Party members in the CWU

As the 2016 Communication Workers Union (CWU) conference takes place British Telecom (BT) continues its obsession with cost cutting, despite a 14% increase in profits to £2.6 billion last year.



CWU members are expected to constantly increase productivity which results in stress and anxiety. Every minute of every day they face intrusive monitoring and need to provide detailed explanations for not reaching unachievable targets.

BT are circumventing the no compulsory redundancy agreement by making life at work a living hell.

A number of propositions at conference express dismay that the promised benefits of their 'Workforce 2020' agreement has not been forthcoming. Well, we told you so!

It was always intended to reduce pay and increase hours. We need to fight for agreed pay and conditions and for a 36-hour week for all!

Performance management and the health and wellbeing of our members dominates the agenda reflecting the continuing callousness with which BT treat us.

Gains have been made in Openreach's service delivery sector which can hopefully be extended across the whole of BT.

## **Public ownership**

However the real aims for the union should be to achieve a safe working environment that is focussed on employing enough staff to deal with the workload.

This can only be achieved by action and the public ownership of BT, which is union policy. There is a motion to the executive committee calling for CWU to lobby for the renationalisation of BT to be in the next Labour Party manifesto.

While Royal Mail workers have gained nothing under privatisation, some people have done very well. George Osborne's best man heads up a hedge fund which has secured profits of £36 million from the privatisation of Royal Mail in under six months - £210,000 for each day since the sale in 2015.

The government has been slammed by the National Audit Office for an under-priced sale which saw City firms walk off with two thirds of the public asset while 40,000 ordinary individual investors were excluded.

The Socialist Party also backs the renationalisation of Royal Mail - a demand that is again being legitimised by the crisis in Tata Steel.

A privatised Royal Mail attacks workers' rights - shown in the victimisation of Wakefield CWU rep and Socialist Party member John Vasey who was sacked by Royal Mail. John led a successful campaign to win his reinstatement. This shows that action gets results and we urge conference to back all propositions committing the union to take action against the government's anti-trade union bill.

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## **Usdaw conference**

# **Stop supermarket bosses making us pay for their mistakes**

On the eve of shop workers' union Usdaw's 2016 annual delegate meeting (ADM), Tesco CEO Dave Lewis, who received £4.1 million in his first six months as boss in 2015, was grilled by Channel 4 News for cutting workers' premiums and attacking pensions.

He tried to defend the cuts by calling them "an equalisation and a harmonisation" of terms and conditions, but was forced to admit that many workers would be worse off.

He was also reminded that Tesco workers in Ireland were prepared to take strike action over pay cuts. That preparedness has become reality as Mandate trade union members working for Tesco in Ireland voted emphatically 99% in favour of industrial action after a turnout of 85%.

Tesco, like in the UK, is the largest private sector employer in Ireland with 14,500 staff in 149 stores. Management at the company are threatening to cut wages for staff employed before 1996 by up to 35% on 16 May 2016.

In the UK, many of Tesco's 310,000 workers will have overtime, weekend and night-shift bonuses cut as part of new contracts. Similar attacks on premiums in exchange for basic pay increases have also taken place in Coop and Morrisons.

But Usdaw, a third of whose members are in Tesco and who are committed to fighting for a living wage, have been characteristically quiet and lacking in fight over the issue.

A vote on pay deals should be restored to Tesco workers and industrial action discussed by the union as has been done at mass meetings in Ireland, so that the strength of the 160,000 Usdaw members in Tesco is used to fight against low pay and attacks on conditions.

Propositions at the ADM on premium payments and a vote on pay review speak to members' frustration with recent pay reviews, especially in Tesco where members don't get to vote on this.

Other propositions on the trade union bill, company taxation, rail fares and union reps all deserve support.

As last year, the question of supporting the TUC demand for a £10 an hour minimum wage is on the agenda, after it was withdrawn last year. Given the Usdaw delegation voted to support this demand at the TUC congress in 2014, and Jeremy Corbyn's public support for such a call, it would be a travesty if Usdaw set itself against this demand.

## **Socialist Party members in Usdaw**

Usdaw Activist (Socialist Party members in Usdaw) fringe meeting: Boosting profits at our expense - Fight to Defend Premium Payments 6pm, 24 April at the Britannia Room, Ruskin Hotel, Albert Rd, Blackpool, FY1 4PW

- Speakers: Amy Murphy, Usdaw EC and Iain Dalton, Leeds PT branch (Both speaking in a personal capacity)

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## **PCS national elections: vote for Democracy Alliance**

Elections for the national executive committee of the civil servants' union PCS start on 21 April.

The Socialist Party supports the slate put forward by the Democracy Alliance which includes seven Socialist Party members including president Janice Godrich and vice president John McNally who are up for re-election.

PCS needs the Democracy Alliance's strong, campaigning leadership more than ever as the union faces unprecedented attacks on jobs, conditions and services from the government's ideologically-driven cuts and privatisation programme.

The government tried to destroy PCS through withdrawal of check-off (deduction of union subscriptions from wages). But this attack was defeated and PCS has emerged stronger, financially sound and more determined than ever.

Under the Democracy Alliance's leadership PCS will continue to be at the forefront of opposing the cuts by campaigning for an alternative.

Janice Godrich has said: "Life at work is difficult. While governments continue to attack our terms and conditions it is important to re-elect a leadership with a proven track record of organising a strong union."

Ballots will begin arriving 21 April and must be returned by 12 May. To see the full slate of candidates and for more see the PCS Left Unity website: [www.leftunity.org.uk](http://www.leftunity.org.uk)

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## **Review: 'On the Track' by Bill Mullins**

### **A demonstration of the role of a Marxist in the workplace**

**Dave Gorton, Unite shop steward**

There were 612 strikes recorded at British Leyland's Cowley plant in 1969 - workers today will be as amazed at that figure as the bosses were horrified by it then.

The years that signalled the end of the post-war boom brought with them increased struggles for better wages and the improvement of working conditions. This was seen clearly in the British car industry.

On The Track is one man's recollection of that turbulent period. Bill Mullins was no ordinary shop steward; he went on to become a Midlands organiser for the Socialist Party, then Militant, and then its national trade union organiser.

I had the privilege of working closely with Bill for many years and not once did he try and tell me: "this is the only way to do it". A generation of Marxists was taken under his wing and we learnt how to build our own confidence and earn trust in the workplace. No book can do this.

But Bill's memories in this short volume are still valuable - they demonstrate the role of a Marxist in the workplace - bold but adaptable, able to listen but not scared to talk and an ability to see 'the bigger picture'.

### **Disputes**

How many times have we seen disputes fail because the leaders have either been too timid or too rigid? How often have stewards been picked off by management because they allowed themselves to become isolated?

The 1970s saw the British trade union movement at its peak - 13 million workers organised by the end of the decade - a figure, with the huge decimation of manufacturing in Britain, that is unlikely to be surpassed. But it would be completely wrong to write off trade unionism and struggle just because car

manufacturing, mining and steel production has been exported by capitalism to cheaper shores.

Workers will always be forced to struggle while huge inequality exists between those who own the wealth and those who create it.

A campaign by unions that sought to explain how capitalism works to exploit workers, rather than hide it, and then a fight to tackle that exploitation could boost recruitment by millions.

If all unions sought to organise, say, workers on zero-hour contracts by promising action, then real gains could be won.

Margaret Thatcher's guru, Keith Joseph, wrote at the end of the 1970s: "We are now seeing militants increasingly taking over control from union officials".

It was militants like Bill he was referring to. We owe them a debt of gratitude. Read this memoir, use it to learn the lessons from the past, adapt them to 21st century Britain and build the forces of socialism that will transform the everyday lives of ordinary working people.

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## On the track

An account of trade union struggles at British Leyland in the 1970s by Bill Mullins (former TGWU shop steward)

£7 including postage

Available from Left Books,

PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD

020 8988 8789

[www.leftbooks.co.uk](http://www.leftbooks.co.uk)

bookshop@socialistparty.org.uk

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## Workplace news in brief

### Piccadilly tube strike

The next 24-hour strikes on London Underground's Piccadilly Line in the continuing dispute against "bullying, harassment and intimidation" have been pushed back a week to allow for talks at the conciliation service Acas. The next strikes were scheduled to take place on 19/20 April and 21/22 April but will now take place on 26/27 April and 28/29 April. London Underground has agreed to meet at Acas and these talks led to an offer of a review of industrial relations on the Piccadilly Line. The RMT believe this represents good progress from management over these issues and the strike action due to take place has been pushed back to allow more time to come to a firm dispute resolution agreement.

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### CCTV deal

After 12 days of strike action in six weeks, Glasgow's CCTV workers have secured an acceptable pay deal from the bosses. The 19 Unison members were taking strike action over the employer's failure to pay shift allowances. The dispute was about fairness and pay equality. The strike pushed the employer into putting back on the table a long promised new equal pay structure. This new pay structure, which will now be implemented later in the year, will see the workers' pay rise by 24%. In the meantime, the workers will receive an interim shift payment of £4,000 a year, backdated to 1 January 2016.

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## Museum threat

Low-paid staff at National Museum Wales are being threatened with dismissal if they do not accept the latest offer. The long-running dispute in Amgueddfa Cymru/National Museum Wales is about management's removal of extra payments for weekend working. Members in the museums have taken strike action throughout the dispute and are currently involved in a fresh round of weekend strikes. The museum's director general, David Anderson, has written to all staff telling them that they must accept the latest offer or be dismissed and re-engaged with no weekend payments and no compensation. Further strike action is planned on 23 and 24 April at Big Pit, National Museum Cardiff (Cathays Park) and Swansea Waterfront Museum and at all sites on 30 April and 1 May.

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## International news in brief

### Socialist TV appearance goes viral in US

Fox interview with Darletta Scruggs, member Socialist Alternative (the Socialist Party's co-thinkers in the United States), viewed millions of times, and receiving enthusiastic responses. Darletta puts the case for free university education.

- Watch the video - [www.socialistworld.net](http://www.socialistworld.net)
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### Kshama Sawant speaks at NYC Sanders rally

The widely known Socialist Alternative Seattle city councillor and fighter for \$15 an hour minimum wage, Kshama Sawant, addressed a rally of 30,000 people in support of Bernie Sanders' presidential campaign in New York City on 17 April.

As well as supporting Bernie for president, Kshama once again called for a new political party for the 99%.

- The video of Kshama's speech can be seen on [www.facebook.com/SocialistNYC/videos](https://www.facebook.com/SocialistNYC/videos)
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### Actor Rosario Dawson on Sanders march

Actor Rosario Dawson addressed a 3,000-strong 'March for Bernie' in NYC on 15 April using a Socialist Alternative (US co-thinkers of the Socialist Party) megaphone.

Hundreds of copies of SA's paper were sold over the weekend's events, with many buyers expressing an interest in joining.

<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/22657>