

# #KeepCorbyn: build the movement against austerity

Tory MP Andrea Jenkyns alleged that "dangerous Corbynista ideology" lies behind the junior doctors' strikes. Presumably by this she means the 'ideology' of rejecting austerity and supporting workers fighting back.

Workers were thrilled to see the leader of the Labour Party standing shoulder to shoulder with junior doctors on the picket lines previously because it stands out so much from the example of the majority of politicians. It's essential that he and all those supporting him do this boldly again for the future planned action.

Although the next round of planned strikes was called off, this important dispute remains an example of the battle taking place: Corbyn, with workers in struggle and all those against austerity on one side; the Tories, the Blairites and their big business friends on the other.

The representatives of this pro-capitalist side within the Labour Party are getting desperate. Corbyn himself has recognised the purge taking place of his supporters being denied votes in the leadership election and told the Guardian that he is investigating.

Only semi-behind the scenes the Blairites are scrambling around making contingency plans for if Corbyn wins - as they realise is increasingly likely. They have variously been reported as planning to change the leadership election rules, bring cabinet appointments under Parliamentary Labour Party control, quickly going for another challenge against Corbyn, or splitting to form a new right-wing party.

But none of their tactics are working. Every move they make only drives more workers and young people towards the conclusion that a win for Corbyn is a win for our side. This momentum must continue right up to the vote and beyond, and be drawn into a mass movement for a federal Labour Party with a socialist programme, standing firmly with all those fighting back.

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## Editorial of the Socialist, issue 915

# Break with Blairites essential to defeating divided Tories

In the aftermath of the EU referendum, with the Tories reeling at the shock of their defeat, the Tory leadership selection process was ditched and Theresa May was appointed prime minister. The Brexit vote represented a working class revolt, a rejection of the status quo, which shook the establishment. The hope was that May could bring the stability demanded by the capitalists. This is impossible on any sustained basis.

She has sought to be the voice of reassurance on all fronts. From the steps of Downing Street May promised to fight the "burning injustice" in British society.

On the question of withdrawal from the EU her verbal salve has been the meaningless phrase, "Brexit means Brexit". She ditched most of the leading figures in Cameron's government and intimated a change in the approach to austerity. But no end to austerity is intended by her.

These are barely even cosmetic touch-ups to a continuation of out-and-out pro-rich, anti-working class Toryism. A Tory party conference brochure advertises a 'business day' and dinner is £3,150 per person to meet May and her new ministers. That this 'cash for access' will be money well spent for lobbyists was demonstrated in her refusal to take on the sugar industry in her so-called childhood obesity strategy.

Now she has returned from her holidays to find that her party's problems have Alpine proportions. On the one hand the Tories hold a wafer thin majority in Parliament. They were elected by only 24% of voters, are deeply unpopular and their announcements are viewed with scepticism.

## **Brexit differences**

But even more pressing for May are the deep divides within the party - over the EU in particular. May's attempts to broker peace included appointing the main Tory Brexiteers - Boris Johnson, Liam Fox and David Davis - as the ministers for exit. May's reported clampdown on unauthorised press comments from MPs belie her fears that the differences over Brexit among them will reveal the deep ravines in her party.

However the limits to this manoeuvre were revealed only weeks later when Fox, the International Trade Secretary, was challenged by May for suggesting that the UK should leave the EU's customs union, which he believes would make it easier to secure new trade deals with non-EU countries. Her appointment was first and foremost to as far as possible protect British big business's access to the single market in any negotiations.

There has been talk of a snap general election - especially from right-wing Labour MPs who hope it could finish Jeremy Corbyn in a way their leadership challenge is failing to do. But May has ruled this out. She understands that the hope that she could cement her leadership and silence the Tory splits in a general election is a pipe dream. A general election would demand her party spelling out what Brexit actually means when big sections of the capitalist class hope that Brexit can be pushed back and pushed back into, if not a reversal at least an enormous dilution of the meaning of 'exit'.

But the flashpoints are too many to avoid by delaying an election - for example the looming question of whether the British government will pay money to Europe will test the Tories soon. Asked if she would rule this out, May answered by not answering: "What we're doing is making our preparations before we trigger Article 50 and go into the formal negotiations. I'm not going to give away my negotiating hand."

When the Tories are in such disarray is precisely the time to strike back at them and austerity. In an article about potential attacks on junior doctors' right to strike a senior Downing Street source told the Sunday Times that the prime minister was not proposing curbs on strikes herself, saying: "We don't want to poke them even more and get them even more wound up than they already are." She cannot fight on all fronts - while the battle inside the party rages is precisely the time for the trade unions to organise action. Coordinating all the current disputes in a 24-hour general strike would be most effective.

## **Labour Party**

The outcome of the civil war over the future of the Labour Party is also a major factor in determining the Tories' fortunes. A victory for Owen Smith would represent the re-taking of Labour by capitalism as its 'second eleven' - a party that could be relied on to continue the policies of privatisation, deregulation, attacking trade unions, and so on in the interests of the bosses. But this is not the most likely outcome.

The plotters seem to recognise their likely defeat. Although this has not stopped them from using every trick in the book to undermine the vote for Jeremy Corbyn - mass exclusions and suspensions by the compliance unit, false consultations of union members that find in favour of Smith, the shutting down of meetings and the suspension of Constituency Labour Parties. This is combined with the propaganda of 'unity'.

A 'united' Labour Party that means uniting with the Blairites cannot work. The interests represented by the right wing and the supporters of Jeremy Corbyn are diametrically opposed. As the election campaign goes on, and Jeremy Corbyn attends more and more big rallies, the support and demand for a bold programme is felt: rent control and investment in council housing, a £10 an hour minimum wage and renationalisation. All the indicators show that the bolder and more socialist, the greater the support.

Labour under Corbyn can also make big gains by showing it stands on the side of workers and that it is in government and councils to fight austerity. All those fighting back against austerity must be welcomed into the movement for Jeremy Corbyn. This was Jeremy Corbyn's correct approach when he expressed support for the striking teaching assistants at a leadership election rally in Derby. In contrast, Momentum organisers in Waltham Forest denied a group of tenants facing eviction the chance to appeal for support at a recent Corbyn

rally, where John McDonnell was speaking. John himself, however, gave a real boost to the campaign by offering his support.

However, given Jeremy Corbyn's advantage in the polls and the limits to the effectiveness of rigging the vote, the right wing are preparing for alternative strategies. Clive Betts has tabled a motion calling for MPs to elect the shadow cabinet telling Parliament, "we can't carry on as we are". This indicates one plan is to attempt to isolate and limit Jeremy Corbyn's leadership with the hope of removing him at a later date. In fact one Smith supporter told the Observer that if they didn't win this time they would seek another challenge next year.

## Reselection

It is very good that in response to Frank Field comparing the popular demand for mandatory reselection to MPs facing an "execution squad" Jeremy has said "party members must have a chance to decide who they want and what they want".

Mandatory reselection must be part of re-founding Labour as a party fit for the purpose of fighting the weak and divided Tories.

It must be combined with moves from above to kick out the Blairites - MPs should only have the Labour whip if they agree to accept the renewed mandate for Corbyn and his anti-austerity, anti-war policies and to support fighting workers and anti-cuts campaigns.

But another sort of unity is essential - unity of working class, socialist fighters. That means opening up and re-democratising the national structures of the Labour Party. The founding structures of the Labour Party involved separate socialist political parties linking up with the trade unions and social movements like women's suffrage campaigners and the co-operative movement.

That federal approach applied to today would mean allowing political parties like the Socialist Party and others involved in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), and anti-austerity Greens, to affiliate to Labour as the Co-op Party still does.

There is no doubt about the potential for such a party to win huge support with a bold programme and militant approach to struggle.

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# Should socialists give electoral support to the Labour right?

**Is backing Blairites at elections necessary to defeat the right's lie that Corbyn's Labour is 'unelectable'? A reader wrote a letter to the Socialist's editors raising this important question. The editors respond.**

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I fully endorse the 'What we think' editorial in issue 913 of the Socialist (see ['Answer right's attacks with firm socialist programme'](#)) - with the exception of your comments regarding Momentum.

"Our objections [to Sadiq Khan's selection] were pushed aside by ... the leadership of pro-Corbyn group Momentum." Khan was selected as Labour's candidate for the London mayoral election at the same time as Jeremy Corbyn was elected as leader, last September.

Corbyn and Momentum's support for Sadiq Khan during his election campaign was not simply because a Labour victory is better than a Labour defeat, but also because Khan's defeat would have been an 'endorsement' of the Blairite claim of Labour's unelectability with Corbyn as leader.

## Objections

Also, Sadiq Khan would have preferred not to have had the full support of Corbyn and Momentum, because he wanted to claim his victory was in spite of Corbyn's leadership. On the other hand, if Momentum had chosen not to fully support Khan's election campaign and he had lost, then Corbyn and Momentum would have been blamed for his defeat because of their lack of support!

If Corbyn and Momentum had raised objections to Sadiq Khan's selection, that could have provided Khan with the opportunity to refuse their active support - a decision that would have been 'erased' in the aftermath of his defeat and the Blairite outrage against Corbyn's leadership.

Consequently I believe Corbyn and Momentum chose to keep quiet about their objections to Sadiq Khan's election and fully support his election campaign.

Therein lies the compromise which deserves to be reported and commented upon. Bearing in mind your issue 907 'What we think' editorial comment on the Tooting byelection: "Labour more than doubled its majority, in what was the fourth byelection it has held comfortably. This again disproves the lie that Labour is unelectable with an anti-austerity leadership" (see ['Left alternative needed to counter austerity, racism and the far right'](#)).

**John Merrell, Leicester**

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We welcome John Merrell's letter, because criticism and debate of our ideas in the Socialist hopefully helps to clarify the understanding of our readers and working people generally.

We criticise the leadership of Momentum not for their general support for Khan against the racist Tory Goldsmith in the London mayoral election, but for its uncritical character.

No warnings were issued which even hinted at criticisms of Khan's political position on the right of the Labour Party. On the contrary, Momentum stoked illusions in him by declaring: "Jez we Khan"!

This is despite the fact, as we pointed out in advance of his election, that "he would use his position not as a political victory for Labour [and Corbyn] but as a personal victory in opposition to the anti-austerity message of Jeremy Corbyn" (editorial, issue 913).

The anti-Corbyn forces sought to use Khan as a rallying point against the left leadership of Labour. And Khan duly obliged - with his denunciation of Corbyn as an electoral liability, as opposed to himself, while at the same time endorsing Owen Smith.

As John points out, Momentum chose "to keep quiet about their objections to Sadiq Khan's election and fully support his election campaign."

The task of socialists, and particularly Marxists, is "to say what needs to be said and do what needs to be done, come what may".

And this applies not just to Momentum - but also, when required, to the trade union and Labour Party leadership. While generally supportive, we would have some criticisms, which we put forward in a comradely and friendly way.

## **Betrayals**

If this is not done, as was the case of Momentum in relation to Khan, then the labour movement and working class would, in our opinion, be unprepared. We must tell the truth about the inevitable betrayals of the Blairites and pro-capitalist career politicians who seek to shelter under Labour's ideological blanket, which Sadiq Khan clearly does.

When the heroic Butterfields tenants in Waltham Forest, east London, desperately appealed for Khan's help to prevent their eviction by greedy landlords, his office wrote back and said he could not intervene. This despite the fact that in the election campaign he promised to come to the assistance of all those harassed by grasping landlords.

We stand by our comments on the Tooting byelection, which John also quotes. However, we made the same point as we had done in the mayoral election. The victory was primarily the result of the new anti-austerity stance of the Labour leadership and movement around Jeremy Corbyn, but the task of dealing with the right-wing Labour opponents of socialist policies remains.

The editors

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# #KeepCorbyn: reports from the campaign

## Stoke support for Corbyn

Andy Bentley, Stoke Socialist Party

We have recently witnessed in Stoke-on-Trent the fundamental chasm that exists between the Blairite Labour right wing representing the big business establishment and the anti-austerity and socialist movement that's developing behind Jeremy Corbyn in the battle for Labour leader.

On 27 August supporter of big business, turned 'socialist' within 24-hours, Owen Smith, sneaked into Stoke virtually unannounced. He was given the opportunity by the bosses of Middleport Pottery to speak in their factory to about 25 people, who may or may not have been their employees.

The vast majority of people who live in Stoke-on-Trent remain completely unaware that this attempt to portray Smith as a friend of the worker had actually taken place. However, he was able to muster some support. Local anti-Corbyn Labour MP's Ruth Smeeth, Stoke North, and Rob Ffello, Stoke South, were there to lend their support although Stoke Central MP Tristram Hunt for some reason couldn't make it. Maybe he was busy plotting the next stage in trying to stab Corbyn in the back or looking for a picket line to cross.

Then on 1 September Jeremy Corbyn arrived in the city centre at midday to speak from the top of a fire engine provided by the fire fighters of the FBU to over 1,000 ordinary working class people who had come from all over the city to support Jeremy Corbyn and his anti-austerity message. If the rally had been in the evening it would have been at least double that figure!

Among the crowd there were trade union flags from Unison, CWU, Unite and others. Some nearby workers came in their dinner break. Parents brought their teenage sons and daughters.

There was loud applause for every measure Corbyn outlined - from the scrapping of zero-hour contracts to renationalisation of the railways.

## De-selection

Jeremy referred to 'the movement' more than once to describe what is taking place across the country. This growing movement is against austerity and for real socialist change. It includes Labour Party members, trade unionists, anti-cuts campaigners and socialists from other parties like the Socialist Party.

Local Socialist Party members had three campaign stalls at the rally calling for the de-selection of the Blairites and got a very good response. A large proportion of those who we spoke to recognised that if Corbyn remains as leader then the Labour right wing will not stop trying to "stab him in the back."

One man said: "Do we need de-selection? Too right we do, starting with the MP for where we are standing now, Tristram Hunt."

After Jeremy Corbyn had finished speaking, queues formed to sign our "de-select Blairites now!" petition.

In total 250 signed up and 135 people bought a copy of the Socialist, which every week has extensive reports and analysis of the movement behind Jeremy Corbyn and the fight for socialism.

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## **John McDonnell pledges to help Butterfields tenants win**

Socialist Party members accompanied Butterfields tenants to a lively Labour leadership rally in Walthamstow, addressed by John McDonnell. In the packed hall we all chanted together and held up 'Butterfields Won't Budge' signs, to help ensure tenants' voices were heard. The Butterfields campaign is one of the most significant campaigns in the borough in a long time, so it is unfortunate that the Momentum organisers had not invited a tenant to speak on their diverse platform. John McDonnell himself, however, gave a real boost to the campaign when he offered his support (see below). John's policies were extremely popular in the room. On our campaign stalls, we discussed with people about what is necessary to achieve a government that will be able to implement them. We talked about the need to kick out the Blairites, using a petition calling for reselection.

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Butterfields tenants joined a packed Momentum rally on 3 September in Walthamstow, east London, in support of Jeremy Corbyn in the Labour leadership election.

The star speaker, Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell, was met with rapturous applause, particularly when he proclaimed: "A Labour government would build a million council homes and introduce rent controls."

However, the tenants of Butterfields cannot wait until 2020. They need help now. Families are under threat of eviction by their greedy asset-stripping landlords Butterfields E17 Ltd. Several court summons have been issued in the last two weeks - the situation is urgent.

John acknowledged the lively Butterfields Won't Budge campaign, and met with tenants at the end of the meeting. Nicole Holgate said: "He listened and promised to do all he could to help us. We think that's great." He also commented that he might be able to pursue RBS, the bank bailed out by taxpayers not so long ago, that is now behind the landlords in their attempts to boot out taxpayers! Also he offered to re-tweet our financial appeal when we go to court. Linda Taaffe of Waltham Forest Trades Council said: "This is a real boost for the campaign to stay, and will encourage tenants to stay strong."

**Waltham Forest Trades Council**

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## **Burston strike school**

The annual Burston strike commemoration rally was held on 4 September to commemorate the Burston school strike, the longest strike in British history, which took place between the first and second world wars.

Jeremy Corbyn addressed the main rally focusing on the lack of social housing and the Tories attacks on education to rapturous applause from hundreds of trade unionists and his supporters.

Socialist Party members sold over 70 copies of the Socialist and our campaign stall sold £100 worth of socialist books and material.

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## **Ramsgate**

3,000 spectators in Ramsgate were in high spirits on 3 September as they waited to hear a new kind of politics and what the establishment see as the most dangerous man today to the political status quo - Jeremy Corbyn. He strolled into the crowd and made all the formal hellos to supporters who helped set up the event and made his way to the stage to make his speech - a fire engine donated for service by the Fire Brigades Union.

We gave out leaflets and sold 15 copies of the Socialist to people looking for a way to organise and fight back.

Corbyn's speech was good, flagging up some important ideas on investing in renewable energy, saving public services and a £10 an hour minimum wage now. If Corbyn sticks to socialist policies and stands up to the war mongers in and around the Labour Party, then his anti-austerity message will attract working class support which will win him the next general election.

Lee Crick, South East Kent Socialist Party

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## **Apple told to pay £11bn back tax: nationalise all the tax dodgers!**

James Clement

Tech giant Apple will have to pay back £11 billion it avoided in tax.

The Irish government had made a 'sweetheart deal' which the EU has now instructed it to overturn.

This move comes in the wake of Brexit, the mass working class revolt against the neoliberal EU establishment. It highlights the pressure the EU feels to make a show of taking on the capitalist interests it exists to defend.

Apple will of course resist and appeal this decision. Chief executive Tim Cook called it "maddening" and "disappointing" - although it's doubtful he will get any sympathy.

Here are some examples of what £11 billion could fund in Ireland:

- 20 new hospitals
- 130,000 new homes
- Free education - primary to tertiary - for the next 20 years
- Free bus services in all cities for the next 270 years!

The Irish state is quite happy to give leeway to big business and billionaires. But peaceful protesters fighting austerity face persecution by the 'justice' system.

### **Jobstown**

The 'Jobstown 23' staged a sit-down protest against water charges around deputy premier Joan Burton's car. Incredibly, the Irish state is trying to prosecute them for 'false imprisonment'!

Paul Murphy, a Jobstown protester, is a member of Ireland's parliament for the Socialist Party's sister party in Ireland. He and the Socialist Party have been campaigning against Ireland's tax haven status for years.

We say: no to dodgy tax deals! Nationalise tax dodgers and the top corporations under democratic workers' control and management. For a socialist plan of production to meet the needs of all, not enrich the billionaires.

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## **Refugee crisis: fight for homes, jobs and services for all**

Tom Baldwin

It is one year since Alan Kurdi drowned in the Mediterranean.

Heart-breaking images of the toddler's body lying washed up on the beach spread around the world. It led to powerful calls for European governments to do more to help those fleeing war and oppression in Africa and the Middle East.

Yet a year later the plight of refugees trying to enter Europe is still a humanitarian disaster. Around 3,000 have died crossing the Mediterranean so far this year. The Italian coastguard rescued over 1,000 people from the sea in just a single day last month.

Desperation is still forcing refugees into the hands of people traffickers. They risk everything to make the dangerous journey.

Arrival in Europe is often not the end of their ordeal. They're greeted with high fences, camps with appalling conditions, and the harassment that comes with being used as a political football.

As the wave of sympathy died down last year, right-wing politicians cynically reverted to scapegoating migrants. But the problems come from their policies and the capitalist system.

'The Jungle', the infamous refugee camp in Calais, is reportedly home to over 9,000 people and growing daily. Residents live in squalor, reliant on the charity of ordinary people, and under constant threat of eviction by French authorities.

Worst of all, the camp is home to over 800 children, the vast majority unaccompanied. They are at severe risk. Police estimate that almost 9,000 refugee children have gone missing in Germany alone.

A House of Lords report in July found child refugees were being "systematically let down" by the UK, and by the EU and its member states. However, last month the Home Office won a court case to prevent unaccompanied children from joining families in the UK.

Refugees, especially children, must be housed and helped, not vilified. Reverse austerity and invest in homes, jobs and services for all workers - not racist scapegoating while the super-rich rake it in.

The Socialist Party fights for a socialist world, free from war, terror and poverty, where people can move around freely, not be forced to flee.

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## Women lose out in the workplace

**'Karen Smith', care worker**

Pregnant women and mums are "losing out" in the workplace, according to Citizens Advice.

Employers use pregnancy to cheat women out of promotions, pay and leave. The rise in cost of employment tribunals is a major factor.

But working in the care sector, you might think women have it better. After all, it is dominated by women.

Further studies show women are still at a disadvantage in female-dominated workplaces. In the US, for example, the Journal of the American Medical Association found in 2015 that women nurses are paid \$5,200 a year less than men.

I work in men's mental health. A harmful culture of macho masculinity is evident around every corner. Men can't show their feelings, men can't cry, that's what 'girls' do. So instead some men show their emotions in the more 'accepted' form of aggression.

These are vulnerable men dealing with a history of mental health issues, abuse and neglect.



So when I challenged colleagues who said "man up" and called abuse survivors "pussies" for crying or "fairies" for complaining of ill health, I was not supported. My job is now at risk. Not because I am a woman, but because I am a woman who spoke out.

With more funding and attention given to mental health, the whole sector could be transformed.

Proper training, support and democratic control of the health service can help overcome bad practice damaging workplace cultures.

For now, cuts, insecurity and the profit motive of greedy outsourcers stand in the way of that.

I am grateful to have a job and a union rep to back me up. But the unions need to step up the action - coordinate strikes - to kick out the Tory cutters.

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## **London bailiff use soars by half**

**Alex Gounelas**

There, outside your home. A towering mound of gym hours. Rippling biceps and the beady eye waiting for that slight curtain twitch that will give your presence away.

Bailiffs collected council tax debts from 19,212 London homes in 2015-16. This is 51% up on the year before, according to the Child Poverty Action Group and Z2K charities.

26 out of 33 London boroughs are now charging council tax to people who didn't previously pay. Benefits cut by the government are now the responsibility of councils to collect.

To add insult to injury, councils add bailiff costs to council tax arrears - which over 131,000 households are shackled with. Ealing and Hillingdon have even introduced charges for disabled and unemployed residents for the first time.

318,000 homes have received a court summons for council tax non-payment. Bailiffs actually get any recovered costs before the council does.

The government should be forced to reinstate council tax benefit. In the meantime, councils should refuse to implement all benefit cuts and above-inflation council tax hikes.

Corbyn must take the lead in calling all Labour councils to do this, by setting no-cuts budgets and campaigning for the money back from central government. No bailiffs should be used.

London is desperate for more council houses, and rent caps on private landlords. Housing campaigns like on the New Era estate in Hackney show what can be achieved.

We need to be organised and ready to build bailiff-busting movements on the estates.

As cried out by Labour councillors in Poplar nearly a century ago: "better to break the law than break the poor."

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## **Them & Us**

### **Luxury retirement...**

Super-rich pensioners will soon be able to move into a retirement home with a tunnel direct to Harrods.

The £200 million project in Kensington, west London, will include a 24-hour medical centre and parking for eight mobility scooters. Its 34 apartments are likely to cost north of £5 million a pop.

Developers are aiming at "silver hipsters" who prefer ultra-plush capital living to the more traditional Surrey mansion. Residents will be able to shop at Harrods without having to cross any roads. The tunnel previously connected the luxury department store to storage and staff accommodation.

A Harrods own-brand 300 gramme gift box of tea costs £110. A 'champagne sabre' - designed for slicing the top off the bottle - is £285. Or you could pick up a maroon crocodile-leather clutch bag for your autumn ensemble at just £18,000.

## ... care home cuts

Meanwhile, two fifths of retirement homes are substandard thanks to cuts.

Healthcare regulator CQC found a third of homes need improvement, and a further 7% are inadequate. Austerity means councils have cut the fees they pay to care providers. "You can't provide quality for £2.16 an hour no matter who you are," said a spokesman for private care trade body Care England.

This is no doubt true. Councils must reverse these cuts and fight to win the funds back from central government. But the money would surely go further if private firms weren't splitting it between service and profit.

So the Socialist says we must also kick the privateers out of care. For fully funded, publicly owned, high-quality adult care for all, free at the point of use.

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## What We Saw

The junior doctors received a steadfast defence on Sky News on 1 September. The Socialist Party's Rob Williams, chair of the National Shop Stewards Network, took on a right-wing economics journalist.

She argued that austerity has hardly happened. What cuts have happened have had no effect. And "immoral" junior doctors don't care about their patients.

Rob pointed out that half a million public sector workers have lost their jobs, and wages have not recovered since the crisis. He said the Trade Union Congress should organise joint industrial action to support the doctors. They are striking precisely in defence of their patients and the NHS.

- Watch the debate at <http://tinyurl.com/RobDocs>

One outraged Labour Party member took to Facebook with this story about the leadership election. It seems you can vote for whoever you want - as long as it's Owen Smith!

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## TUC congress 2016

# Organise mass working class resistance to austerity

**Rob Williams, Socialist Party industrial organiser**

TUC congress is taking place at the end of what has seemed like a hot summer, industrially at least. In the run up to the event, the figures for days lost in industrial action in 2015 were published.

On the surface, they are alarming. The lowest number of workers on strike - 81,000 - in a single year since records began in 1893 and only 170,000 days lost through action - the second lowest in history. In the 1980s, on average more than three million days were lost.

No doubt the conclusion drawn by the pessimists and cynics within the trade union movement will be that this confirms that the organised working class is too weak to defeat the employers and their government.

In fact, the TUC press officer, Michael Pidgeon, has used the figures to argue that the Tories had no need to bring in the repressive Trade Union Act, the biggest attack on the unions since Thatcher's anti-union laws three decades ago.

They will also be used to justify the absolutely baleful role of the right-wing union leaders in the fight against Tory austerity over the last six years. No serious campaign of co-ordinated strike action has been called against the biggest jobs cull ever seen in the public sector. Last year, it was estimated that 400,000 workers had been sacked, with the possibility of another half a million going by 2020.

## **Opportunity**

The biggest opportunity to confront the cuts was the 2011 struggle to defend public sector pensions which saw 2 million workers walk out on the 30 November strike that year. If that dispute had been continued and escalated, it had the potential to stop Cameron and Osborne's austerity offensive in its tracks. Instead, the conscious sell-out only emboldened the Tories to go further.

The result has been devastating in terms of jobs, services and pay as well as pensions, which have contributed to the 10% drop in wages with increased pension contributions. No wonder the income of workers in the UK is still at pre-crisis levels. It was this position that forced joint action over pay in 2014. Although that too only lasted one day.

But it would be a huge mistake to draw pessimistic conclusions from a superficial view of these statistics. In some respects, they are a reflection of the disappointment of workers at the seeming inability of the unions to lead an effective fight against the Tory cuts.

As we have pointed out, this is the responsibility of the right-wing union leaders. Two of the three leaders who were primarily responsible for the ending of the pensions dispute, then leader of the TUC Brendan Barber and GMB general secretary Paul Kenny, were knighted by Cameron. The other, Unison general secretary Dave Prentis, is under increasing pressure from members of his union because of his role.

## **Joint action**

The ability of the Tories to drive through cuts in the public sector (which has a majority of union members and is where their density is greatest) without large-scale joint action over the last two years has undoubtedly had an effect on the figures.

But this masks the huge discontent and anger that exists. This has been reflected in individual union disputes in the public sector. For example, there have been national disputes by civil servants' union PCS and the Fire Brigades Union.

There have also been prominent local disputes, such as by Unite members in Bromley and Greenwich councils and Unison in Glasgow and Barnet. Socialist Party members have been prominent in some of these struggles.

There are many other disputes that don't even make the figures. Over the last few months there has been an uprising of teaching assistants in Derby and then Durham against pay cuts of up to 23% by Labour councils.

In Durham, 500 of these low paid workers filled a meeting and launched a public campaign but no actual official strike days have yet been sanctioned by the unions, Unison and the GMB.

Similarly, there have been three incredible disputes in London recently, at Deliveroo, UberEats and among contracted cleaners. It is likely that not one day of their action is officially recorded as neither of the small independent unions involved - the United Voices of the World (UVW) and the Independent Workers Union of Great Britain (IWGB) - have a recognition agreement with the employer.

Nevertheless both Deliveroo drivers and UVW cleaners have won victories against their brutal working conditions. Many of these workers are migrants and many have to hold down two or more jobs to have any chance of a living.

## **'Self-employment'**

Their struggles should be celebrated and show that it is possible for unions to flourish in the era of zero-hour contracts and bogus self-employment. The trade union movement, especially 'new unionism' in the late nineteenth century, was built in similar exploitative conditions.

The strikes also showed a number of features that are becoming increasingly common. The use of social media has been important to advertise the disputes and build solidarity, including protests and financial support.

The IWGB raised £8,000 in two days in their dispute with Deliveroo. PCS raised over £100,000 that helped pay National Gallery strikers during their dispute that lasted over 100 days last year. In fact, a number of disputes are seeing longer action.

Some of these disputes - such as those by BFAWU bakers' union members in 2-Sisters plants in Sheffield and Newport and PCS in the Welsh and Scottish Museums - were over employers attacking premium pay to compensate for the increase to the new National Living Wage.

The RMT has appeared to be on strike on all fronts - including Eurostar, Virgin East Coast, Southern Rail and ScotRail. Many of these have also involved protracted action. There have also been bitter disputes by Unite members on the buses in Leeds and Weymouth.

Construction workers went on strike at the Fawley oil refinery in Hampshire to ensure that migrant workers were paid the same as UK workers. Also, the first strike took place in the offshore oil industry for nearly 30 years. Both of these strikes got results.

## **Trade Union Act**

The Tories may find that their Trade Union Act could actually up the ante, as the new law means that disputes could be timed out after six months, forcing a re-ballot. Workers could draw the conclusion that they might as well go all-out from the beginning.

Actually, far from dismissing the threat from the unions, the right-wing Tory press have a far more realistic appraisal of the potential threat of the unions.

They have particularly been fulminating about the rail strikes, demanding the immediate introduction of the new undemocratic higher voting thresholds or even outlawing strikes altogether!

In response to the new strike figures, Matthew Lynn of the Telegraph wrote, "Strike action may have fallen to the lowest levels in over a century - but the sooner it is eliminated completely the better." He was railing against the Southern Rail strike but also what he calls the 'public sector middle class'.

Of course, the most prominent of disputes among this group has been the inspirational junior doctors. They exploded onto the scene, not just on picket lines outside hospitals but campaigning in town and city centres.

Scandalously, the overwhelming support they have received from fellow trade unionists and the public hasn't matched by that of the TUC and most union leaders, especially in health.

However, the junior doctors have rejected the government's offer and are embarking on the next phase of action. It should be a key debate at TUC congress to turn support into active solidarity. At the very least there should be a national TUC demonstration in support of the BMA doctors' union and also widened to defend the NHS.

## **National demonstration**

There is already a national demonstration called by the National Union of Students and lecturers' union UCU in November to defend education, just as national action has been taking place by teachers and lecturers.

The potential exists to bring all these struggles together. 90 years after the 1926 general strike, an increasing number of workers are groping towards the understanding that mass strike action can transform the political, as well as the industrial, situation.

The attempted Blairite coup against Jeremy Corbyn has deliberately deflected attention away from the historic crisis within the Tories after Brexit. The main architects of the brutal austerity offensive, Cameron and Osborne, are history.

May's government has no authority and she is only prime minister because of a defeat for an administration she was part of. In any other circumstance, there would be a clamour for a general election. Even if only semi-consciously, workers can feel that this is a weak government and this will only increase as more workers engage in action.

The National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) is again holding a rally before the start of TUC congress.

Its two main themes will be for the unions to prepare the mass strike action necessary to take on what's left of the Tories and also to defend the left Labour leadership of Jeremy Corbyn against the Labour right. Shadow chancellor John McDonnell will be addressing the rally alongside leaders from some of the most militant unions.

The political and industrial are beginning to fuse. The second Corbyn wave, created by the whip of Blairite counter-revolution, has drawn more workers into the struggle against the Labour right.

Workers understand how much is at stake as the right wing try to turn the political clock back. This is not a period of passivity but one of increasing volatility. If given a lead it can develop into a mass movement of struggle to defeat the Tories and their Blairite agents.

Join fellow trade unionists and socialists including John McDonnell and Ronnie Draper on the NSSN lobby of the TUC in Brighton on 11 September, 1pm in the Ashdown Suite, Holiday Inn, 137 King's Road (seafront), Brighton, BN1 2JF

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## **Brazil: impeachment farce only serves big business**

Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff was removed from office by a majority vote (61-20) in the Senate on 31 August, having been found guilty of manipulating government accounts. This follows an earlier vote by the chamber of deputies last May to suspend Rousseff and replace her with Michel Temer of the capitalist PMDB party - which was governing in coalition with Rousseff's Workers Party (PT). Temer immediately announced spending cuts, attacks on pensions and anti-union laws.

The impeachment amounts to a constitutional coup by the capitalist class gathered around Temer, whose party, like Rousseff's, is also mired in corruption.

LSR (CWI in Brazil) is part of the struggle to oust Temer and to build a political left alternative. Its banner was prominent on a recent large anti-Temer demo in Sao Paulo, later attacked by police.

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## **LSR (CWI in Brazil) statement**

The carpeted hall of the federal senate building has once more been a stage for the greatest of infamy. The vote on the definitive impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff, on spurious grounds, represents a dangerous precedent which puts the democratic rights of the Brazilian people in serious danger.

The fraud and political, judicial and media manoeuvres used to push through the impeachment shows the degree of rottenness of Brazil's political system.

We can expect nothing from these old and notorious corrupt suits and ties who will say and do anything as long as it represents the interests of their masters - big business.

If this reactionary political elite is able to do this to a president - who did not represent any serious threat to the establishment - imagine what they could do to left political forces of the working class which do represent the need for radical change in the country.

The decision of the senate confirms an old truth: that our 'democracy' is not real but only to keep up appearances when it is convenient for the masters of capital.

This decision is part of a project which deepens the attacks and counter-reforms against workers in the interests of big business - in the middle of one of the worst economic crises in Brazil's history.

To guarantee the privileges of those above, they need to stamp on the rights of those below. This is the shameful role which has been assigned to the figure of Michel Temer.

His government will spare no effort in its crusade to attack democratic rights, including the right to organise and demonstrate.

The new impulse of this illegitimate government against the workers can only be contained by a united struggle of the working class and poor.

## **Unpopular**

When she could no longer try to reverse the pro-impeachment position of the senate majority, Dilma Rousseff criticised part of Temer's counter-reforms in her last speech. However, many of these attacks actually began with her political programme, and she made no criticism of herself or her Workers' Party (PT) in this regard.

Discredited and without popular support - after going against her campaign promises and adopting the programme of her adversary (the right-winger Aécio Neves in the 2014 presidential election) - Dilma no longer had the political strength to carry through her project of cuts, privatisations and counter-reforms. This led the main core of the capitalist class to opt for a 'new' president, who moreover will not even stand for re-election (Temer's term in office could last until 2018).

The big mobilisations against Temer since the beginning of the impeachment process showed the willingness for struggle and resistance by the working class. However, these mobilisations were directly or indirectly sabotaged or impeded by the leadership of the PT and its allies.

From the beginning, ex-president Lula da Silva and the PT opted for the road of re-building pacts with political forces in the congress and with big business. The vocation for class collaboration - which, in the end, is the fundamental cause for the failure of 'Lula-ism' - is ingrained in his DNA. These people do not learn and will not learn from their defeat.

The parliamentary coup denounced by Dilma in the senate was not confronted as it should have been by the leaders of the PT. The idea that the struggle against the impeachment meant only the return of Dilma already prevented these anti-coup mobilisations from having sufficient strength to defeat the manoeuvres of the right.

In this context, it is fundamental to defend a policy whereby the people have the power to decide who governs. In other words, to demand new, truly democratic elections.

When Dilma, following much resistance, accepted the idea of new elections (thinking this could win a favourable vote from some senators), her own party rejected the idea. The leadership of the PT and Lula were comfortable with the idea of Temer ruling until 2018, so that he could lose popularity and prepare the political conditions for Lula to return.

What a terrible daydream! If Temer manages to govern until 2018, he will put forward a historic series of attacks on the working class. Moreover, the offensive against those who rise up against this will not be negligible. For all that, Lula opts for conciliation. He is in the firing line for the "Lava Jato" corruption case, and is unlikely to get to 2018 still intact.

There is a strong cynicism in the policy of the leadership of the PT. The tough measures of Temer are still seen by the PT leaders as essentially a necessary evil. In that sense, for them, it is preferable that Temer promotes the counter-reforms. This frees the PT from the responsibility and allows the party to return to making left rhetoric, as it normally does in the run-up to elections.

## **Alternative**

There cannot any longer be illusions in the role of the PT leadership, either in the fight against Temer or in the building of an alternative left power in the country.

It is necessary to build a broad united struggle against Temer and his attacks. This unity in struggle should create conditions for a general strike.

However, it is necessary in this process to build a political alternative of the socialist left. This should involve PSOL (Party of Socialism and Liberty, the broad left party in which LSR participates), PSTU (United Socialist Workers Party), PCB (Brazilian Communist Party), and other socialist organisations and social movements like the MTST (landless workers movement), and CSP-Conlutas (left trade union federation), etc.

These are the tasks for the socialist left and activists in the trade union and social movements - of workers, young people, women, LGBT and all the oppressed. There is no time to lose!

Temer out! General elections now! General strike to defend our rights!

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## **International news in brief**

Short stories from other sections and co-thinkers of the Committee for a Workers' International, the global socialist organisation which the Socialist Party is affiliated to.

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### **India: Mass general strike against Modi's neoliberal policies**

Ranking as the biggest stoppage in history, an estimated 180 million workers in India struck for 24-hours on 2 September against Prime Minister Modi's privatisation and anti-union plans. The strikers were also demanding a minimum wage of no less than Rs 18,000 (£180) a month, enhanced pensions, and extending healthcare.

New Socialist Alternative (CWI, India) was active in the strike. It said: "Capitalism shows no way out; a fighting, militant, combative approach is necessary in the day-to-day struggles of the working class... linked to the idea of the socialist transformation of society."

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### **Pakistan teachers' action**

Socialist Movement Sindh (CWI, Pakistan) demanding the reinstatement of suspended teachers and a stop to forced transfers to Karachi (see [www.socialistworld.net](http://www.socialistworld.net) for previous report). Due to protests by teachers and their supporters the education authority has cancelled over 50 transfers which they had initially ordered. However, the suspension of 15 teachers remains in place and the District Education Office has suspended five more teachers, accusing them of 'disrupting administrative work'.

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## **Sweden: Housing for all demo**

Demonstration (above) in Hammarkullen, Gothenburg, organised by Rättvisepartiet Socialisterna (CWI, Sweden) together with the Somali Association under the slogan "Power to the people over housing and community" and "Jobs, schools and housing for all".

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## **Junior doctors plan to continue contract struggle**

**Zoë Brunswick, medical student and Manchester Socialist Party member**

In a historic move, junior doctors have announced a new rolling programme of industrial action in their continued struggle against the imposition of a dangerous new contract.

Though an initial five-day strike, set to take place 12-16 September, has been called off, further five-day strikes in October, November and December are still set to take place.

Unless there is significant movement from the government, these must go ahead and be built for properly. This action will involve junior doctors' full withdrawal of labour from 8am to 5pm each day.

These strikes are the continuation of a year-long battle against the new contract being imposed by the government. After a decisive rejection by grassroots BMA members of the latest contract offer, this renewed fight is no longer seeking piecemeal alterations to the contract.

Instead, the BMA has entirely rejected the fundamental "cost neutral" basis of the contract, stating: "The government has failed to provide an answer to how it will plan, fund or staff increased services across seven days. Seven-day services cannot be delivered by contract change that is cost neutral."

Despite a £2.45 billion deficit in the NHS in 2015-16, this government is insisting on imposing a contract that seeks to stretch non-emergency services from five days to seven with no extra funding. The BMA will not accept this and adequate funding for the new contract is now a major demand.

The contract would disproportionately impact doctors who are women, carers, disabled or work a high number of unsocial hours. The BMA also demands an end to this blatant discrimination.

It is clear that this new contract is not only an attack on junior doctors, but on the NHS as a whole. The Socialist Party calls for coordinated action with other health unions against privatisation and cuts to the NHS. The Trade Union Congress should call a national demonstration in support of the doctors and in defence of the NHS.

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## **RMT executive member John Reid speaks to the Socialist**

## **Rail workers fighting back!**

**The summer has been a 'hot' one for the RMT union of transport and maritime workers, with a number of disputes on the rail network and in the offshore oil industry. The union has received much**



## **support and solidarity from workers and rail passengers and coverage in the press. RMT executive member and Socialist Party member John Reid spoke to the Socialist about the union's busy summer.**

The disputes the RMT has been involved in this summer are all tied to the bosses' drive to implement austerity and severe cutbacks. There has been the drive to implement driver-only operated trains on Southern, Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) and ScotRail.

There has been some resolution of the ScotRail dispute due to the action we have taken but on Southern, the bosses are failing to succumb to an agreement.

We were close but we know from outside sources there has been pressure from the government for the bosses to carry on attacking, which has been shown by the government giving this company a £20 million pay off. The company has made full-year profits of £100 million at the same time as bringing misery to thousands of passengers who pay very high fares for the service. The major issue is the removal of guards which has led to an increase of platform incidents already and the dispute will go on. We are back out on strike on 7 and 8 September.

On London Underground there have been ongoing disputes. On the Piccadilly line there has been a breakdown in relations with management and on the Hammersmith and City line, as well as in engineering, there is an attempt to take away a core working agreement. These workers are balloting at the moment to defend their terms and conditions.

### **Cuts**

Management are putting forward more proposals to make cuts of £2.9 billion on London Underground. They are attempting to do this by worsening our conditions and pay but we will resist them.

It is a question of resisting austerity measures and we will re-ballot if needed and will ensure we meet imposed thresholds required by new government legislation. We will ensure we remain a militant, fighting trade union, despite the Trade Union Act.

We have also had the first maritime strike for almost 30 years against Wood Group, a multinational oil and gas services company. It looks like many of the demands will be met due to the heroic strike action by this group of offshore workers. The company was making huge profits from North Sea oil but is now facing a fall in profits and wants to take that out on the workers.

The strike was backed up by protests outside Shell headquarters in London and other areas, supported by the National Shop Stewards Network.

We've won a number of victories; one of them was on the London Underground which brought tube lines from private company Amey back in house, which is a major victory by the union. While on Southern management have backed down on the closure of 83 ticket offices, which is a victory too.

### **Press**

The press coverage we have received has been the usual for our union. But in the Southern dispute for example, I don't think they've been able to find a passenger who backs the company over the union despite their best efforts.

On London Underground the majority of passengers back our struggle against austerity which they relate to their own workplace. The Daily Mail claimed our president, Sean Hoyle, received £47,000 in expenses. But these sorts of expenses are simply not paid out by our union and at the time they claim that he got these expenses he wasn't even president!

We are used to these attacks, they only attack us because we are a militant trade union not carrying out the wishes of the bosses.

As for 'Traingate', across the rail network there are issues of overcrowding. There should be an increase in stock, a full subsidy of National Rail and on London Underground - instead of cutting the subsidies, the money should be increased. There are forever increasing numbers of passengers on National Rail and London Underground. We should have fully financed, publically owned rail.

All workers should be brought in house, getting rid of agency work, with a decent wage and decent conditions. I think the interesting thing is that the evidence of other passengers on board the train Jeremy Corbyn was on was that they suffered the same situation, seats weren't available immediately.

We have a position that rail should be nationalised and Jeremy Corbyn supports that, people around the country support that.

Across the rail network we need greater staffing, for health and safety reasons and rail should be about the service we provide for users and passengers, not about profit. The whole system should be about need, not profit.

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## **Premium pay cuts are not just any cuts, they are M&S cuts**

**Usdaw member in East Midlands**

Marks & Spencer likes to claim that it's 'Your M&S' but since it only made a paltry £660 million profit in 2015, the company doesn't seem to have enough money to pay its staff a living wage.

Instead workers are being forced to sign a new pay and pensions contract which will mean Sunday, bank holiday and anti-social hours premium pay will be reduced. More than 2,500 shop workers will lose more than £1,000 a year as a result. Staff have been told that these pay cuts will be imposed if they do not voluntarily sign up to these changes.

The retailer said it was making the changes to help pay for a 15% increase in basic pay for its 69,000 workers from next April to £8.50 an hour. There is currently a loophole, which made it possible for companies to make changes to staff benefits in order to offset the impact of the introduction of the legally binding National Living Wage of £7.20 an hour this April.

A number of companies, including B&Q, Tesco and Morrisons, have raised basic pay only to cut perks and premium payments for weekend, holiday or late working.

Socialist Party members in Usdaw say there should be no cuts to pay or benefits for the staff who work in Marks & Spencer, as well as the other companies who are trying to get out of paying their staff the living wage. Instead we demand that the minimum wage should be £10 an hour with no loss of pay or benefits. Only with a fighting union and working class support can this happen.

Usdaw is one of the few unions to back Owen Smith in the Labour leadership election. Leicester Socialist Party campaigned outside Marks & Spencer recently, alongside members of the bakers' union, BFAWU, for a £10 an hour minimum wage. Jeremy Corbyn is echoing this demand.

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## **Royal Mail wildcat strike against bullying bosses**

**Carl Harper, CWU member (personal capacity)**

The burden of creating profits to pay faceless shareholders of a privatised Royal Mail continues to be laid at the feet of the workers. Under pressure managers regularly resort to bullying and harassment in order to

achieve the savings.

Chris Rye, area representative and branch secretary, became the latest in an ever growing number of Communication Workers Union (CWU) activists to be targeted as he was suspended against a backdrop of bullying and harassment of members he represents.

Although Chris is confident that he can win his case against the suspension "on its own merit", hundreds of workers walked out of Dorcan delivery office and were admirably joined in solidarity by other Royal Mail workers in the Swindon area.

The company had responded to the mounting cases of bullying and harassment and claims that the company had not been paying people properly and had reduced over time for workers - by suspending their CWU representative!

Workers at Dorcan Delivery Office were being made to "feel like prisoners" according to a report in 2009 and many Royal Mail workers feel this way today.

Financial cuts are dressed up as 'efficiency savings' as the public service continues its transformation into a full private company.

In 2013, I was also suspended on a 'jumped up charge' while defending members as their representative against unachievable performance demands and savings cuts. Members responded with four days of industrial action which saw me reinstated.

Solidarity action across the company, the industry and the wider trade union movement is the only way for workers to escape the ruthless rush for profit resulting from capitalism.

The Socialist Party calls for renationalisation of Royal Mail, run under democratic workers' control and management, as a first step towards a nationalised postal and courier industry.

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## **Workplace news in brief**

### **Bullying bus bosses**

London bus workers at Tower Transit in London took a second 24-hour stoppage on 6 September over the imposition of roster changes, pay and bullying bosses. The strike followed failed talks at Acas and involved over 1,000 drivers, engineers and controllers at three depots across London. The previous 24-hour strike on 26 August (see issue 914) led to services operating out of the Atlas Road bus depot in Park Royal, the Westbourne Park bus garage and the Lea interchange bus depot affected. All three depots were once again involved in the second stoppage which followed mounting frustration among workers, who are angry over a lack of consultation over roster changes which are leaving them out of pocket, as well as the non-payment of correct rest day working pay rates. There will be a further 24-hour strike on 12 September.

### **Scots FE walkout**

Unison members across Scotland's 20 further education colleges took strike action on 6 September. "Striking is a last resort, but we will support our members in every way possible to achieve the same fair and reasonable pay settlement as already paid out to teaching colleagues," said Unison Scotland organiser John Gallacher. Teaching staff received a flat-rate rise of £450 in May, but most support staff have been offered just a £230-a-year flat rate increase. Now workers in administration, admissions, funding, catering, cleaning, advice and security, together with classroom assistants, technicians and other support workers, will stage the country's first national strike in the sector next week as they seek fair pay and parity with their lecturer colleagues.

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# Letter: back the docs!

The BBC declared that public support for the junior doctors was 'crumbling' ahead of their now-suspended five-day strike.

This was on the evidence of a couple of Sun and Mail editorials, and a statement by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (or was it Royal College of Academies?)

Meanwhile, at Salford Shopping Centre on 3 September, there was precisely no evidence of a decline in public support.

Quite the reverse, in fact, as evidenced by the weight of our collecting tin - at least twice as much as last time, despite pouring rain - and dozens of petition signatures. Comments on the doctors striking included:

- "They do right"
- "Of course they should"
- "The Tories just want to privatise the NHS"
- "The Tories don't care what happens to working class people"

...and an outraged "That Hunt had the cheek to compare himself to Nye Bevan - did you hear that?"

This was one of the more printable comments about Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt, who can be assured of a warm welcome when he visits Manchester. We'll be launching our junior doctors' support group in Salford that same evening.

**Paul Gerrard, Salford**

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## Film review: Every Cook Can Govern

# Socialism, black liberation and cricket - the life of CLR James

**Isai Priya, Socialist Party black and Asian group**

'Every Cook Can Govern' takes us on the journey of an individual born in Tunapuna, Trinidad. A cricketer whose love for cricket was matched only by his love for Shakespeare.

A fighter who became a black liberation icon. But ultimately it is an incomplete look at the journey of an artist who became a revolutionary: Cyril Lionel Robert James.

Finance was an obstacle for the filmmakers. This is reflected both in the lengthiness and simplicity of the documentary - made by 200-plus volunteers working with education charity WORLDwrite. The best moments are the numerous clips of CLR James's often unseen interviews scattered all the way through.

The film starts with James's early life in Trinidad, focusing on his literary career and cricket - his first love and his passion. His life in England follows, and in particular his experiences in Nelson, Lancashire, where he was introduced to Marxism and Trotskyism.

We go on to see James's campaign work against imperialism, fascism, and Stalinism, his life in the US fighting racism, and his work on black liberation.

His life was shaped by big events. James was born when the British Empire was at its height. In his life he witnessed revolutions across the globe, including the Russian revolution where workers took power for the

first time, the Spanish revolution, and others.

He saw the rise of Stalinism and the peak of the Cold War. His political thought left a permanent impact, including the fight against the Italian fascist invasion of Ethiopia, and his famous work on the Haitian revolution, 'The Black Jacobins'.

The best part of the documentary is his journey in Nelson - a town with a rich history of workers' struggle and fightback. It was in that beautiful part of England, with a lively working class, that he began his political education. He openly identified himself as a Trotskyist and a revolutionary socialist.

The documentary rests on people who knew him or studied his work. James's life was interesting and fast moving. Unfortunately the same cannot be said of this film.

At three and a half hours, it does drag, making it difficult to concentrate. Some of his huge political impact is lost between the many commentators.

Nonetheless, 'Every Cook Can Govern' fulfils its basic aim. It introduces the audience to the remarkable life and work of CLR James. In that sense it's a documentary of some interest to anyone fighting racism, colonialism and capitalism.

'The Black Jacobins' - £12.99 plus postage from [www.leftbooks.co.uk](http://www.leftbooks.co.uk)

'Every Cook Can Govern' - [clrjames.uk](http://clrjames.uk)

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## **The Socialist inbox**

### **Do you have something to say?**

Send your news, views and criticism in not more than 150 words to Socialist Postbox, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD, phone 020 8988 8771 or email [editors@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:editors@socialistparty.org.uk).

We reserve the right to shorten and edit letters. Don't forget to give your name, address and phone number. Confidentiality will be respected if requested.

Views of letter writers do not necessarily match those of the Socialist Party.

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### **Long waits and service cuts at merged GP surgeries**

A few months ago I went to my local village GP surgery, a place that's been there for decades. Intending to make an appointment, I found instead that the door was locked.

The only explanation was a very small notice in the window. It informed service users we would only be seen in the morning. From two months earlier, afternoon surgery services had been cancelled. No explanation was given.

This facility had been custom built in the early 1980s. Prior to that the two long-standing GPs, with ancillary services such as nurses, had operated from what was an old school next door. It wasn't perfect, but it was working - until recently, when both doctors retired after years of service.

Unable to recruit suitable replacements, the surgery merged with a neighbouring village practice twice the size. This merger created a single service that has flourished in the new regime of 'Clinical Commissioning Groups'. In fact, it is growing, merging with other practices.

I'm not entirely sure, beyond profit, what the purpose of creating this vast monopoly is.

The major players are running a private business simultaneously. They are not secretive about this, despite a clear conflict of interest - on the issue of time management if nothing else.

At least one GP has a habit of taking a long time with patients. Ordinarily this would not be a criticism - far from it. However, patients are booked to fit in as many an hour as possible. The upshot is that people are kept waiting, sometimes for hours.

There are simple solutions to this, but they fall on deaf ears. The reason is that booking more appointments - effectively cramming in patients who cannot possibly be seen in time - yields more income.

The hours cut has also had a knock-on effect on secondary services. As a mental health patient I was due to see an outside specialist using a room at the local surgery. Since the practice is shut half the time that was not possible, because the specialist was only available in the afternoons.

Last but not least, patients from any of the individual practice catchment areas can book appointments at any of the partner surgeries. Again this might sound positive. But in truth it means smaller surgeries, like mine, have a higher chance of having appointments going to non-residents.

This is a problem for patients who don't have the luxury of mobility, or the opportunity to pick and choose where to be seen. Jeremy Hunt and the Tories call this 'choice' - but choice is an illusion. What people really want is the best treatment available, to be seen locally, and to get better as quickly and bloodlessly as possible.

**A Somerset Socialist Party member**

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## **Huge turnout in support of Huddersfield NHS campaign**

**Mike Forster , Chair, Hands Off HRI (personal capacity)**

Over 7,000 people turned out for the 'Hands Off HRI' (Huddersfield Royal Infirmary) fun day and festival in Huddersfield's Greenhead Park.

The park is around two square miles big but was filled to capacity. We had three stages for people to visit and watch local performances, brass bands and live music.

It was impossible to take in the whole event as it took up the entire park. There were over 40 stalls and attractions including axe throwing and free tennis induction. It lasted from midday until 8pm, a huge community event!

The festival was preceded by a march of 1,000 from the hospital to the park. Speakers included Mike Forster and Jackie Grunsell of the Socialist Party who spoke on behalf of the campaign, as well as local MPs and trade unionists.

This was the first big gathering of campaigners since the announcement of the junior doctors' strike and the sustainability and transformation plans announced by the government.

There was a feeling of anger but also solidarity throughout the day. Huddersfield continues to mount huge and mass resistance to the plan to shut our A&E.

This tremendous turnout will make the local NHS bosses think very carefully about their next steps. Socialist Party members continue to be an integral part of the campaign and will continue to offer leadership and resources to secure a victory.

Support for our ideas was reflected in the sale of 120 copies of the Socialist and over £200 raised in fighting fund.

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# Grantham on the march against 'life and death' cuts to health service

## East Midlands Socialist Party members

The sudden closure of Grantham Hospital's night time A&E service has sparked a wave of anger and rebellion. Up to 3,000 people marched through the town centre on 3 September.

The overwhelming majority defied the route the police wanted the march to take (along backstreets and riverside), instead going straight down the high street. Drivers stuck in the crowds tooted their horns in support.

The Tories can have all the restrictions they want on the democratic right to protest, but the mass of people voted with their feet and no attempt was made to stop us.

Leaving the final rally outside the hospital, a police officer thanked us for coming. Police cuts, privatisation and the extra 26 miles they have to drive to get to Lincoln A&E mean they are sympathetic to this community campaign, as are firefighters. Socialist Party leaflets calling for a nationally coordinated campaign against NHS cuts flew out of our hands and copies of the Socialist were sold.

Labour councillor and long-time campaigner against attacks on Grantham Hospital, Charmaine Morgan, spoke exposing the false arguments of the hospital trust.

Gary Freeman, a member of Unison's health service group executive and Socialist Party member, also spoke. He linked these attacks to government policies and other cuts being made around the country. The sustainability and transformation plan is looking at over £1 billion of cuts by 2020 in Lincolnshire, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire.

Not everyone on the march agreed with our message. Tory MP Nick Boles and Tory councillors tried to argue the closure was "not political". They fear the backlash against their own policies, building now in Margaret Thatcher's birthplace and across the country.

The following day Boles called for a ban on doctors' strikes: "If a public service on which people rely for matters of life, death and wellbeing are going to behave unreasonably, there will be growing public concern we need more than ballot thresholds," he said.

Grantham voters will note that there has been no ballot at all on the 'unreasonable' cut to this 'life and death' service.

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## London fighting fund BBQ success

For the second year running, London Socialist Party held a successful BBQ social raising over £150 for the fighting fund partly through the 'Great Socialist Bake-off' organised by Amalia Loizidou. The 12 entries were all delicious but Michael Wrack's Bakewell Tart (with homemade jam!) took the top spot. 25 people took part in a five-a-side football tournament, with some playing football for the first time. The Football Feminists and East Thames Trots lost in the semi-finals, leaving the South London Reds to scrape a victory against Dynamo Walthamton by two goals to one. The rain held off and it was a great way to end a busy summer of campaigning in London.

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<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/23521>