

£1/£2 solidarity price

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the Socialist

Formerly **Militant**

Readmit expelled socialists

■ Socialist Party support for the Corbyn movement
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Mass protests break out to #ResistTrump > page 14



■ Cash for rich and royals ■ Cuts for the 99%

FIGHT



photo Diliff/Creative Commons

AUSTERITY

Ryan Aldred
Plymouth Socialist Party

In a recent statement to the conference of bosses' organisation CBI, Theresa May reassured businesses she will rescue them from the cliff edge. Yet, for millions of people facing the harsh realities of austerity Britain, there is no such rescue in the Autumn Statement.

With promises to ensure Britain has the lowest

corporation tax rate in the G20, it's clear the interests of big business are safe. Likewise, they can find an extra £369 million pounds to renovate the most expensive council house in Britain, Buckingham Palace, at the taxpayer's expense.

Meanwhile, we queue at food banks, or wait glued to our phones at all hours in the hope of picking up shifts, because there's apparently no money.

Hospitals

At one London hospital this year, a psychiatric patient waited on an A&E trolley for 46 hours due to shortages. And how many struggling pensioners will make it through the winter with rising food and heating costs?

They can find money to give tax breaks to corporations, while ensuring our billionaire queen retains a life of extreme luxury. So why can't they find money to invest in secure jobs, our chronically

underfunded NHS, or the desperate housing situation?

We don't need to accept this. The Tories are weak, and remain deeply divided over how to handle Brexit. With determined industrial action from trade unions, and a political fightback from Corbyn's Labour, we could see an end to this government, and an end to austerity.

For that to happen, we need to fight to make Labour a party fit to represent the working class - kick out the Blairites, and readmit all the socialists they have expelled.

A mass workers' party with a socialist programme could start to end this misery for the millions, and finish off this government of and for the millionaires.

■ **This issue of the Socialist goes to press ahead of the Autumn Statement. For the latest news and analysis, see socialistparty.org.uk**

Tories drop 'pay to stay'

In a humiliating and massive u-turn, the Tory government has dropped plans to introduce 'pay to stay' as part of its Housing Act.

This tenant tax would have seen council and housing association tenants on household incomes of over £40,000 in London, and £31,000 elsewhere, face a 15% rent hike. With continuing mass opposition, the Act is in deep trouble.

> **Continued on p2**

WHAT WE SAW



Should young people have to work for free to get into competitive professions like journalism?

Socialist Party member Paul Callanan debated this question on Sky News on 16 November. Opposite him was Sam Bowman of the Adam Smith Institute, a Thatcherite think-tank.

Bowman tried to downplay the extent and impact of unpaid internships, saying young workers should be grateful for the "experience".

Paul argued that all work should be paid. Unpaid internships exclude the working class, and offer no job security or quality of life to young people. They also undermine the number and conditions of paid positions.

Watch Paul here: tinyurl.com/paulinternships



Can socialists organise to defeat the rise of Trumpism?

Darletta Scruggs of Socialist Alternative, US co-thinkers of the Socialist Party, appeared on RT's 'Going Underground' on 16 November.

Darletta acknowledged this is a frightening and difficult time for working class people. But it also shows that the US political establishment is in a deep crisis.

There are big opportunities for socialists to direct the huge anger in society in a constructive direction. What the US needs is a new, mass party of the 99% - with socialist policies.

Watch Darletta here: tinyurl.com/darlettaRT

Tory 'pay to stay' u-turn

> Continued from page 1

The Housing Act cannot yet be enforced, because secondary legislation is still not in place.

The Tories were first forced to exclude housing co-ops entirely from the act. Now the entire cruel policy

- which ends permanent tenancies and sells off hundreds of thousands of social rented homes - can be defeated, by tenants, trade unionists and housing campaigners standing united in strong opposition.

Niall Mulholland, London Co-op Housing Group (personal capacity)

Tessa Warrington
Leicester Socialist Party

The Tories have used fears around Brexit to lower expectations for Chancellor Philip Hammond's Autumn Statement.

They claim that weak growth projections mean they can't increase taxation on the wealthy, because Britain needs to remain a safe haven for private profit to 'create' wealth and jobs - so increased public expenditure is out of the question.

During the referendum campaign, the political establishment understood how few positives there were to sell EU membership on. They resorted instead to Project Fear. Fear of losing meagre workers' rights, of international political alienation, and that exit would cripple the UK's economy.

There has been an economic backlash as the big bond and currency traders try to punish the British working class for daring to vote against corporate interests.

However, recent figures show that retail sales have seen the strongest rise in over a decade. The weak exchange rate has also led to a boom in foreign tourist spending in London. And a weakened pound could in fact help reduce British capitalism's trade deficit.

But neither hope nor crisis for the bosses automatically means good or bad news for us - we have to fight. One of the most important gains we could make by leaving the EU, for example, is no longer being subject to its extremely restrictive treaty agreements on spending and public ownership.

The Socialist has always argued that Brexit on capitalism's terms would solve none of the problems facing working class people. We do not believe capitalism can be 'fixed' for anyone except the super-rich.

The incompetency and splits of the Brexit negotiators are laying bare the crisis within the capitalist class.

But the Leave vote means Jeremy Corbyn now has a huge opportunity to fight for what is needed: exit on a socialist and internationalist basis.

JOB FIGURES MASK CASUALISATION

For real jobs, not 'gig economy'

Pete Offord
Lewisham Socialist Party

Unemployment levels are at their lowest for eleven years, according to the Office for National Statistics. You might be forgiven for thinking that the economy had turned a corner.

However, when you scrape below the surface of the headlines, then

for ordinary people there is little to celebrate. The figures are propped up by a big rise in often bogus self-employment, now 15% of the total UK workforce.

Most of these workers are living on a knife's edge. 50% of them take home less than half the national average. This is part of an explosion in casual labour. The Guardian estimates around seven million are now

in precarious employment - including self-employed, temporary and zero-hour contract workers.

These jobs have the lowest levels of employment rights, and are no longer confined to the 'McJobs' of the fast food industry. Within higher education, over 50% of teaching staff are now on temporary or casual contracts.

Meanwhile, the recruitment agencies supplying much of this cheap labour have found ever more inventive ways to profit from the misery of



For the latest Autumn Statement analysis, see socialistparty.org.uk

£3.5bn on temporary housing for councils

Spend the cash building homes!



Mary Jackson
Doncaster Socialist Party

Councils have spent a disgraceful £3.5 billion in the last five years keeping homeless vulnerable families in temporary accommodation according to figures obtained by the BBC.

A million houses are needed to tackle the housing crisis. At £100,000 a house, the amount councils have spent could have built 35,000 homes which would last for decades.

The millions, possibly billions by now, put aside from the sale of council houses over the past 30 years is ring-fenced - but cannot be spent. How can this be in the present homes crisis?

Homelessness in Britain is alarmingly high. 120,000 children will be

homeless this Christmas. They'll be in hostels, bed-and-breakfasts or private lets. No security, no peace, very little privacy, not even a toilet for each family.

The law in the UK means that a person is only statutory homeless if they are vulnerable in some way, for example because there's children in the family, or severe disability.

Vulnerable

But even that is no guarantee of being accepted. A court in Manchester decided that a man without legs was not vulnerable, because he was born without legs so was used to it!

Apparently Buckingham Palace needs some upkeep, at a cost of £369 million.

Now this modest home for the queen and her hangers-on has 775 rooms. That should be enough to

satisfy anyone, but apparently not. The government (in other words, we) bought her another little castle for her 90th birthday.

This is unbelievable. We've had the mantra of austerity drummed in our ears since 2010, when the Tories, first aided and abetted by the Lib Dems, then on their own since 2015, have savagely attacked the standard of living for vast swathes of folk.

They have increased council and housing association rents at the same time as capping housing benefit, forcing families into arrears and homelessness.

Let's campaign to make Labour a mass workers' party with socialist policies and kick them out! And Jeremy Corbyn should join our call for Labour councils to refuse to implement cuts, and start a mass council house building programme.

7m
Workers in precarious employment (Guardian)

'Just about managing' families £2,500 worse off by 2020 - lift the benefit cap!



Mike Barker
Leicester Socialist Party

As profits for Tory toffs steadily climb, low-income working families will be left £2,543 worse off by 2020. These same families are the so-called "just about managing" households that Theresa May has pledged to help!

But the only people May is interested in helping are her corporate mates. While ordinary people are beaten down with austerity, big business is offered tax breaks. May aims to lower corporation tax, already the lowest in the G20 advanced economies, to 17% by 2020.

The Autumn Statement should be a call to arms for Labour councils across the country. However, the vast majority of councillors are still committed to "just about managing" Tory cuts without fighting back.

They are choosing to implement policies they know will only raise poverty and homelessness levels.

Conservative

If anything, estimates that household income will drop by £2,500 are conservative. The consultancy that undertook this shocking report, Policy in Practice, is headed by Deven Ghelani - one of Iain Duncan Smith's protégés, and the primary architect of the Tories' hated 'Uni-

versal Credit' welfare counter-reforms. He can hardly be relied upon for an impartial appraisal.

Either way, Deven's report concludes: "Working households will lose £48.90 per week due to cuts to Universal Credit, rising private rents and the benefits freeze."

The government's response to cutting £381 million from welfare payments to the 190,000 households examined in this study has been to hand back a measly £10 million in discretionary housing payments!

Enough is enough: we demand a cap on rents; the reversal of all welfare cuts; secure, well-paid jobs for all; and an end to the scapegoating of society's most vulnerable.

Have you got news for us? DEADLINE: Friday before publication date - urgent news: Monday

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THE SOCIALIST PARTY AND SUPPORT FOR THE CORBYN MOVEMENT



What we think

Socialist Party members have received widespread support from trade unionists, anti-cuts activists and supporters of Jeremy Corbyn both inside and outside the Labour Party for our calls for democratising the Labour Party, restoring the collective voice of trade unionists within it, reintroducing mandatory reselection for parliamentary candidates, readmitting expelled socialists, and other steps towards Labour becoming a socialist, anti-austerity workers' party. Unsurprisingly our positions and proposals are regularly attacked by Labour's right wing, including using unfounded accusations. Here, in brief, we set the record straight on six distortions.

The Socialist Party got it wrong when its members left the Labour Party in the 1990s - it should live with the consequences

As the Labour Party's leaders moved the party to the right in the 1980s and 1990s, they set out to drive out the Militant (forerunner of the Socialist Party). In 1982 they drew up a 'register' of groups that would be allowed in the party, and excluded Militant from it. The editorial board of the Militant newspaper (which later became the Socialist) was then expelled in 1983 and more expulsions followed - including in 1986 of some of the leaders of the magnificent Militant-led Liverpool council struggle. This was a political witch-hunt orchestrated by the ascendant right wing.

To mask the fact that it was a witch-hunt of ideas, Militant was accused of being 'organised' inside the Labour Party. But other sections and groups in the party were allowed to remain organised! And the party had in fact originally been founded as a federal party of trade unions and different strands of socialist opinion across the labour movement.



To mask the fact that it was a witch-hunt of ideas, Militant was accused of being 'organised' inside the Labour Party

For those who weren't expelled in the 1980s, the anti-poll tax struggle of 1989-90, led by Militant supporters, became a turning point. This was because as well as being against the Thatcher-led Tory government, that 18-million strong movement had to oppose Labour-led councils that were pushing ahead with collecting the hated tax, even jailing non-payers, while at the same time Labour was preparing to expel anti-poll tax activists from its ranks.

The Labour Party had increasingly come under the stranglehold of the right wing, which was determined to make the party a safe vehicle for capitalist interests. The anti-poll tax struggle had to be conducted almost completely outside the Labour Party, which showed how difficult it had become by that time to defend the interests of working class people from within Labour - a crucial experience on Militant's route to working more independently.

Also, discussion and debate on socialist ideas at all



Socialist Party members support Jeremy Corbyn at a Birmingham rally during his leadership campaign photo Corinthia Ward

levels of the Labour Party was being stifled, so that Labour's annual conference and other bodies could become politically sanitised forums that would only echo pro-big business interests. The right wing - buoyed up by the period of capitalist triumphalism after the fall of Stalinism - dramatically reduced influence on policy from the party's rank and file and affiliated trade unions.

Labour's change into a completely capitalist party, part of an international trend that impacted on all social-democratic parties, made it impossible for socialists in

Militant to remain active in its ranks. Our ideas remained consistent - it wasn't us who moved away from Labour's historic commitment to the "common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange" as Clause Four of the party's rules put it, but the right wing that wrested control and eventually erased that clause as part of its agenda.

Only through working independently were we able to continue to be principled fighters fully supporting workers' struggles against neoliberal attacks, strongly oppos-

ing New Labour's acceptance of capitalist-driven austerity, and always arguing for socialist ideas no matter how difficult the period.

The recent letter sent to the Labour Party to readmit expelled socialists is just a publicity stunt

On the contrary, the Socialist Party-initiated letter calling



Jeremy Corbyn photo Paul Mattsson

opportunity to reverse the Blairite policies and attacks on democracy, and transform Labour into a party capable of implementing Corbyn's anti-austerity proposals.

To aid this, in addition to the many thousands of new party members who support Corbyn, the party's left wing would be strengthened by socialists who have a long, tried-and-tested history of leadership in workers' struggles - both from inside and outside the Labour Party - and who play a leading role on the left in a number of trade unions.

The Socialist Party campaigned for Corbyn's victory throughout both of his leadership election campaigns. We call for maximum unity across the workers' movement to provide a politically and organisationally firm, mass base for Corbyn that can enable the movement around him to democratically defeat the Blairites and successfully pursue the programme that its hundreds of thousands of supporters want to see implemented.

The involvement of Socialist Party members in the Labour Party only damages Jeremy Corbyn's cause

Our presence in Labour would damage the cause of the Blairites and not Jeremy Corbyn! Pro-capitalists in the media, in the parliamentary political parties and the right wing of the trade unions were all part of pushing the Labour Party to the right. From those circles comes the chorus of keeping out of Labour what they call the 'hard left'.

The agenda of which wing of the Labour Party should be satisfied? That of the pro-capitalists in the labour movement? Or those who want to see a working class-based, socialist, vibrant mass party where the best ways of advancing the interests of the majority in society are debated and adopted?



By the mid-1980s, Militant had become the most influential Marxist organisation in the Labour Party, playing a key role in building the drive for socialist policies

By the mid-1980s, Militant had become the most influential and well-known Marxist organisation in the Labour Party nationally, playing a key role in building the left and reinforcing that wing's drive for socialist policies. Militant also played an indispensable role in attracting young people to Labour, as shown when it democratically won the leadership of the Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS) at the start of the 1970s and went on to build the LPYS to new heights.

An editorial against the 1982 witch-hunt in one of the Labour Party's own publications, the New Socialist (September 1982), pointed out: "The Labour Party always has been a broad collection that includes Marxists among its ranks. The Militant Tendency, drawing as it does upon Trotsky's critique of Stalinism, belongs to this Marxist tradition, and has a legitimate place within the Labour Party... The very existence of Militant and other groups within the Labour Party is a source of strength rather than a weakness. By working for the adoption of alternative policies and candidates, they assist the

for the readmittance of expelled socialists is entirely genuine in its intentions. It is not surprising that it's dismissed as a stunt by those who think it has no chance of succeeding and who don't want it to succeed - and who make that allegation as another way of attacking the Socialist Party.

We make the call for admittance because Labour is at a critical juncture. It is effectively two parties in one. As a result of the impressive surges that propelled Jeremy Corbyn into the leadership, there is a real and very important



Workers supporting Militant-led Liverpool council in the 1980s, where there was an electoral swing to Labour against the national trend photo Paul Traynor

democratic functioning of the party."

Now, with Jeremy Corbyn as Labour's leader, the party has the chance to again become a party that has healthy, democratic debate, in which different strands of opinion can be discussed and voted on. To exclude socialists who have a history of leading successful mass movements and who have participated in a great many local and national workers' struggles in the years since then, would be to weaken the prospect of developing a strong, organised, political resistance to the Tories and the building of a socialist political alternative.

What about the argument from some that we would be an electoral liability for Labour? History has shown the opposite: Liverpool in 1983 saw a swing to Labour that was against the national trend, and in the 1987 general election Labour achieved its best ever vote in the city - a 57% share - higher even than in the 1945 election that was a landslide victory for Labour nationally.

Labour was made attractive by that council's creation of thousands of new jobs and homes. Likewise today Labour will only win votes if it firmly rejects austerity and instead delivers improvements to the lives of the majority in society; an outcome the Socialist Party would gladly help to achieve.

The Socialist Party should dissolve itself to allow its members to join the Labour Party

Why should the Socialist Party dissolve itself when right-wing and other organisations inside the Labour Party are allowed to exist and fully organise? Labour's Blairites are happy to allow the existence of right-wing organisations like Labour First and Progress that support their own pro-austerity ideology. They also tolerate left-leaning organisations like the Labour Representation Committee and Momentum, providing these groupings keep within what the right wing views as acceptable political parameters.

Regarding affiliates, there are large independent organisations affiliated to Labour: the trade union affiliates, and also a number of smaller independent organisations, including the Fabian Society, the Co-operative Party and Labour Business. The Co-operative Party reported last year that it has 8,640 individual members and on its website makes clear the extent of its own organisation: "The Co-operative Party is an independent party. It maintains its own membership, staff, national executive committee (NEC) and policy platform, all of which are independent of Labour's."

There are no demands for the Co-operative Party to dissolve because it acts to bolster the right's position, as the Financial Times touched on when it recently reported: "Unions such as Usdaw and Community, as well as the Co-operative Party, are setting up local branches in the constituencies of MPs who are at risk of

deselection by Mr Corbyn". The report went on to explain that these 'branches' would try to prevent trigger ballots for deselection.

So the real underlying reason of those who argue that the Socialist Party should dissolve is not that we're organised, as all the affiliated organisations and other groups clearly are. It is because of our utterly determined opposition to the Blairites' pro-big business policies and their resulting fear of our ideas and the echo that we could again receive for them within Labour.

There are rightly demands for openness and honesty as well as democracy from the new layers of workers and young people who are looking towards Labour. We have no interest in hiding our meetings and activities - we welcome new participants to our discussions - and we believe that the Labour Party can only gain by allowing different groups to argue for their ideas and then sink or swim depending on the support they attract.

It's hypocritical to argue that the Socialist Party should be allowed to affiliate while arguing against trade unions affiliating

We haven't argued against trade unions entering into discussion with Labour's leaders about the possibility of affiliating or re-affiliating. Rather, we've warned against them affiliating prematurely to the existing, still undemocratic Labour Party machine - as we argued that the FBU did - because there is much that could potentially be gained from a discussion on how the collective voice of trade unionists can be restored

in the party. Under John Smith and Tony Blair through to Gordon Brown and Ed Miliband, the influence the trade unions had in the party (originally founded by the trade unions) was cut away piece by piece. To re-affiliate and hand over to the Labour right-wing machine tens of thousands of pounds of trade union members' money without even a start to this process being reversed is what we oppose.

There is also the crucial issue of the job cuts and attacks on terms and conditions being meted out to firefighters and other public sector workers by Labour-led local authorities. Resisting the demands of the Tory government and stopping these cuts needs to be another vital element of pre-affiliation discussions - the results of which should be made transparent in the workers' movement.

We've had no duplicity on this; our call for the Socialist Party to have the right to affiliate does not mean that we would prematurely affiliate without discussion with Jeremy Corbyn's office and being satisfied with the outcome. In particular it's essential to discuss how the 'surge' that elected Corbyn can be built on to defeat the right wing at local and national level and propel forward a transformation to a workers' anti-austerity and socialist party.

Changing Labour won't happen overnight. It's important to keep within the rules and 'play the long game'

The Blairite wing has built up a formidable amount of control - both through the anti-democratic, structural changes they have engineered over decades, and having the allegiance of the overwhelming majority of Labour's councillors, MPs, MEPs and officials. This won't be changed 'overnight', but the important question is: is a process of change underway that can succeed?

After Corbyn's first election as leader, we called for a conference to take place of the trade unions, Labour Party bodies and other organisations that supported him, open also to individuals inside and outside the Labour Party, to discuss and debate what would be the most effective strategy for transforming the party.

Unfortunately such an event wasn't organised and neither has a strategy - or deeds - yet emerged from the leading lefts in the party to decisively shift the balance of power to the Corbyn-led wing. Nor have Jeremy Corbyn and those around him gone on a political offensive to voice workers' interests, for example by calling on Labour councillors to set legal no-cuts budgets, or by clearly supporting the recent walk-out by the POA union of prison officers and allied workers.

The danger inherent in a 'long game' is that it will be so long that the opportunity to transform the party will be missed. The right wing will seize the first chance it has to re-take the leadership, and the new influx into the party could melt away until a new prospect for challenging capitalism presents itself.

In the meantime, also at stake are the jobs, pay, homes, services and benefits of millions of people, who are suffering at the hands of the Tory government's policies and the council cuts being made by all the main parties. So we are right to place urgency on measures to counter and defeat the Blairites - there is much at stake to win or lose.



One of the mass rallies in support of Jeremy Corbyn during his second leadership campaign in Derby photo Steve Score

"I DON'T ALWAYS FEEL THAT I'M A CARER ANYMORE" - A DAY IN THE LIFE



photo Manchester Pemberton/ Creative Commons

A care worker
Almost anywhere in England

On 12-13 November I attended Socialism 2016. I have been to this event before but never felt the need to say anything. However this time I could not keep quiet. I have worked in healthcare for many years, mainly in nursing homes.

I love my job, but things have changed. The home where I am now employed is run by a private company which appears to put profit before the safety and well-being of both staff and residents.

The company does not pay sick pay, so when we had an outbreak of diarrhoea and vomiting last year, which affected many of the staff, we

had to take time off for which we didn't get paid. I lost a week's pay. I know of others who came to work ill as they could not afford to lose this money. The reason given by the company for not paying sick pay was that they think it will encourage people to take time off!

They have also said they had been considering introducing sick pay but then had to pay the minimum wage which was costing them £2 million (the company made over £20 million in profit last year).

As the staff representative, I have asked why we cannot get paid a little more when we are short staffed and was told that if they did, it would encourage us to work understaffed. In practice this happens on a regular

basis as they do not recruit agency staff. I do not know any member of staff who would put money above the safety and well-being of the people in our care.

What this policy means is that staffing numbers are calculated on the basis of funding, not the needs of the residents, which the company claims is its prime objective. This policy also means that people who are in the last stages of their lives are left on their own as there is nobody free to sit with them. People who cannot help themselves are hurried with food and drinks.

Profit before care means that residents who have an incontinence problem are only given three pads a day by the NHS (the home is meant to give more). This means one in the

morning, one before going to bed and one in the night. Often this is not enough and we regularly have to take pads from other people or keep the pad on longer than is hygienic. Where is the dignity for our residents in that!

I once saw an ad that said you could make £1 million from owning a care home and yes maybe by putting profit first you can, but that's not care.

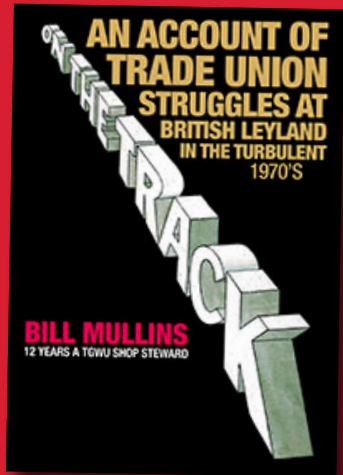
I love my job but with more and more responsibility put on us and fewer and fewer staff, I don't always feel that I'm a carer anymore, but just the person who hurries to get your mum or dad up, washed, dressed and given breakfast in the 25 minute slot allotted. Where is the care in that?



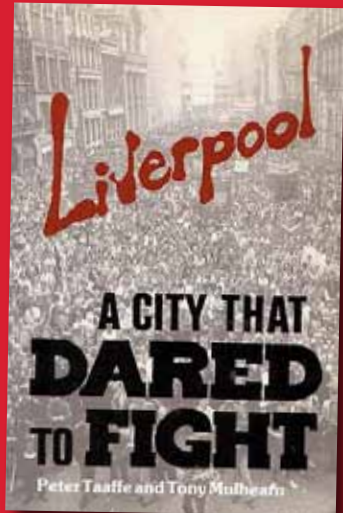
photo and report Chris Newby

RMT members who are conductors on Southern Rail have taken part in the 16th and 17th day of strike action to defend the safety-critical role of the conductor. Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR), the owner of the Southern Rail franchise, continues to put profit before the safety of passengers and rail workers. On 22 November RMT pickets at Victoria station, London, handed out leaflets detailing many examples of the crucial role that conductors play. Yet GTR continues to send out trains with only the driver and no conductors. Not only that, there are examples of there not being enough station staff at the bigger stations to safely prepare the train for departure. Yet again, many members of the public came up to the pickets to give their support. Striking Southern Rail workers and the RMT are determined to continue this struggle to make sure there is a safe rail service on Southern Rail.

Bill Mullins - An account of trade union struggles in the 70s - £6



Peter Taaffe & Tony Mulhearn - A city that dared to fight - £12



Peter Taaffe - The rise of Militant - £12



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LESSONS OF 30 NOVEMBER PENSION STRIKE

John McNally, national vice-president, Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) (personal capacity) and **Rob Williams**, chair, National Shop Stewards Network

The fifth anniversary of the public sector pension strike on 30 November 2011 allows an opportunity to reflect on the most significant and defining trade union struggle of the recent period.

A struggle which exposed right-wing unions for either being incapable or unwilling to come to terms with what austerity meant as a generalised attack on the working class and the necessity for sustained, generalised and coordinated action to resist it.

The pensions dispute also demonstrated the enormous potential power of our class when organised in our own democratic organisations - trade unions - to challenge the coalition government of Tories and Liberal Democrats who were intent on stripping away hard-won rights and conditions. They wanted workers to pay for a banking crisis they had no part in creating and which, in fact, the ruling elite ruthlessly exploited in order to drive through cuts and privatisation.

The question of the crisis of leadership in the union movement was sharply defined in the disconnect between the willingness of workers to struggle in defence of their interests and union and Trade Union Congress (TUC) leaders who had no confidence in those members to struggle.

The coalition intended to ramp up the cuts and privatisation programme that New Labour had developed from the Thatcher-Major governments. The public sector was directly in their sights and if they could neutralise or defeat the public sector unions then the path would be clear to implement their programme without the obstacle of the organised working class in their way.

Attack

Their decision to launch an attack on the pension rights of millions of public sector workers was a gamble for them, but a necessary one in which they calculated, in the words of Tory minister Frances Maude, that the trade unions "had no stomach for a fight". The Tories, not for the first time, failed to distinguish between the conservative trade union leaders and the membership.

Public sector workers were outraged by the attack on their pension rights, particularly since an 'affordable' pension deal had been agreed only a few years earlier. The justification for the changes was a report by the contemptible Blairite John Hutton, a notorious collector of corporate

sponsorships for services rendered. Pensions were the great unifying factor throughout the public sector. The government planned to steal £2.8 billion from mainly low-paid workers, with women workers being disproportionately disadvantaged.

Low pay means low pensions. The average civil service pension for full service, excluding the tiny proportion of high earners, was £4,200 a year - hardly the riches implied by government propaganda.

The draconian proposals meant members would be expected to double or even treble their contributions (the value of an extra day's work a month), work until 68 and accept cuts of 20-50% in the value of pensions.

All this represented a savage assault on the living standards of some of the lowest paid workers in society, who were also facing an avalanche of attacks on wages, conditions, privatisations and job losses.

Right-wing leaders

Maude was also relying on right-wing union leaders like Brendan Barber, TUC general secretary, and Dave Prentis, Unison general secretary, to not just keep members in line but also those union leaders like the ruling elite left leadership in PCS - which had already clashed with the new government - the National Union of Teachers and others, who were prepared to fight.

In this, Maude also had the cooperation of the Labour leadership, which under Ed Miliband continued to support the neoliberal cuts and privatisation programme of Blair and Brown.

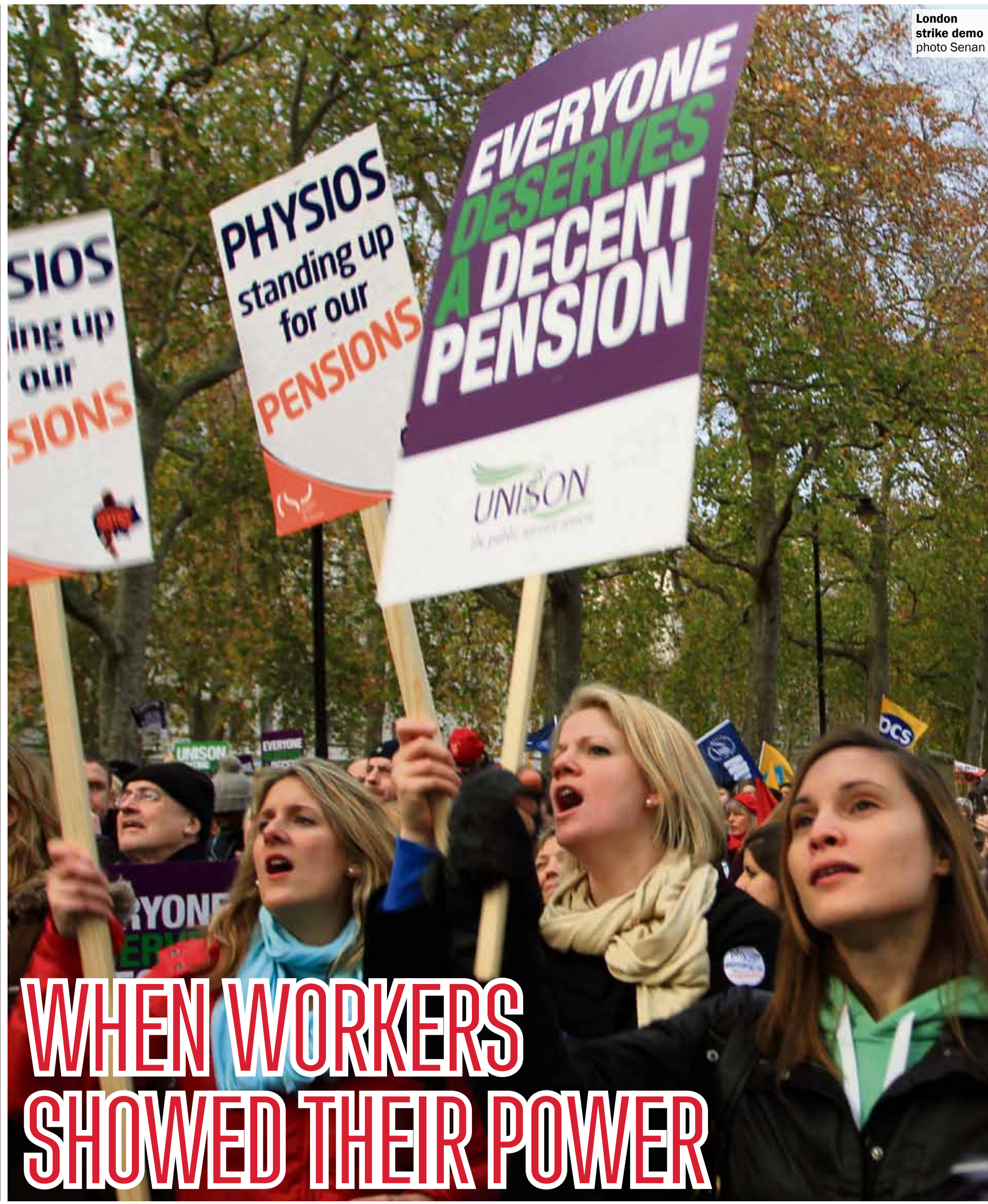
The only, barely recognisable, point of departure between them was summed up in the craven slogan that the cuts were "too fast and too deep" which incredibly, appeared on the bibs of stewards at the massive 750,000-strong TUC demonstration on 26 March 2011.

Negotiations between the government and public sector unions were described by PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka as a "farce".

From the beginning PCS demanded total rejection of the detrimental elements of the deal and argued the only way to defeat this attack was by the unions sticking together and building a coordinated campaign across the public sector, including coordinated industrial action, organised by the Trades Union Congress (TUC).

PCS members voted for action alongside three education unions on 30 June 2011, which involved around 750,000 workers in the first major industrial action against the coalition.

PCS members voted not just for a day of action on pensions but for a programme of discontinuous action to defend pay, jobs and conditions, all of which were under attack - not



London strike demo photo Senan

WHEN WORKERS SHOWED THEIR POWER

just in the civil service but across the entire public sector.

This linking of issues caused deep unease, not only in government ranks but also among TUC and union negotiators who wanted the pensions issue disposed of almost entirely on the terms dictated by the government. Strike action on 30 June galvanised civil service and education workers but also those in unions like Unison, the biggest public sector union controlled by the right wing.

Workers rightly demanded 'if they can take action against these attacks why can't we and moreover why can't we do it together?'

As the summer progressed more unions decided to ballot their members. The government tried to divide the unions by demanding they enter talks on a sector-by-sector basis but PCS was adamant that the key principles must be collectively opposed and negotiated before any sector talks could begin. Confidence was high among workers and this posed major problems for the government and the right-wing leaders who wanted the issue done and dusted with as little fuss as possible.

The government clearly tried to divide those 'reasonable' union leaders with who they 'could do business' against PCS and other unions who Alexander said were "hell bent on premature strike action".

Defining battle

All sides knew this was a defining battle which laid bare the intense antagonisms between the ruling class and the rest of society. It also laid bare the unbridgeable chasm between those leaders in the trade union movement who wanted to fight the attack on pensions as well as the entire cuts and privatisation agenda, and those who were determined to bow down before it.

Serious attempts were made to isolate PCS within the movement but the upsurge of anger by millions of public sector workers meant there could be no avoiding industrial action and a one-day public sector strike was called for 30 November.

30 November involved up to three million workers and also gained the enthusiastic support of other workers. Striking workers were cheered and clapped as they made their way through towns and cities throughout Britain.

Marches and rallies attracted huge numbers, for example 30,000 in Manchester, 20,000 in Bristol and an astonishing 4,000 in Taunton. This was the biggest industrial action in modern British history - effectively a public sector general strike. The government was rattled.

PCS speakers at rallies demanded targeted, selective or rolling action must be coordinated by the TUC for maximum impact. The way to win was to demonstrate our power. National coordinated industrial action was the key to defeating the attack on pensions and the cuts themselves.

Shamefully, Ed Miliband stated he could not support the industrial action, which was a barely disguised nod and a wink to the craven right-wing union leaders to get the whole thing sorted as soon as possible. Many speakers at rallies across the country condemned the treachery of Miliband and Labour.

At the start of the day of action Prime Minister David Cameron tried to portray the strike as a 'damp squib'. But as the truth dawned he lambasted the hapless Miliband in parliament later in the day.

Rather than seize the initiative created by this magnificent show of class power, the TUC and other right-wing union leaders moved quickly to dampen expectations and it is clear they collaborated with the government to derail the struggle. Rumours began to circulate of a "heads of agreement" which Barber was selling as a solution to the dispute. It was also common knowledge that no concessions, other than those already secured by the threat of action, were on the table.

The TUC general council in December was met by a lobby organised by the National Shop Stewards Network that was supported by activists and members from various public sector unions and addressed by left leaders. Inside, Mark Serwotka, with the full support of the PCS national committee, led opposition to what was a cynical sell-out and a disgusting betrayal of millions of workers.

The TUC leadership's plan was to divide the unions by accepting the government strategy of entering sectoral negotiations without securing common collective agreements on the core issues.

The betrayal was carried out in the full knowledge it meant a green light was being given to the government to not just attack pensions but press forward with their cuts and privatisation programme.

The betrayal was acted out over the Christmas period and leaders of key unions like Unison indicated they were up for the deal. PCS Left Unity (the socialist group in the union) organised a special fightback conference of activists on 7 January, chaired by Janice Godrich and addressed by John McDonnell MP, Mark Serwotka and others. Between 500 and 600 attended, showing the scale of anger at the betrayal of public sector workers.

PCS was at the forefront of an attempt to re-build a coalition of unions that wanted to fight on. But when key allies could or would not join in proposed action on 28 March 2012 it had to be suspended. Further action took place on 10 May with PCS, UCU, Unite and ISU taking part. The militant rail workers' union the RMT also took action.

So too did the prison officers' union POA despite a no-strike ban imposed under a Labour government. The Police Federation also held a major demonstration in London that day against attacks on pay, jobs and against privatisation.

Bitter reality

The bitter reality was this reduced coalition simply could not deliver the level of action PCS members agreed to and, in the final result, the divide-and-rule strategy of the Tories with which the movement's 'leaders' acquiesced, allowed the government to drive home its pension changes. It



Leeds



Swansea

was a carefully choreographed act of cynical class collaboration and it exposed the deep failure of leadership in our movement.

The pension dispute was a defeat and a setback. But not one that resulted in the smashing of the unions in an industrial struggle like the 1984-85 miners' strike. It was on the basis of open treachery by a cowardly leadership who believed there was no point fighting back - despite all the evidence that fighting can secure concessions and even victories.

Two of the three 'leaders' who signed the heads of agreement were given knighthoods for 'services to trade unionism'.

The pensions dispute demonstrated the great gap and contrast between the capacity and determination of workers to struggle and union and TUC leaderships that only understand concession bargaining - and only on the basis the unions give all the concessions.

The vengeful and vicious Tories could not let any opposition and resistance go unanswered. They attempted to smash PCS by the withdrawal of the union subs check-off facility, an attempt to bankrupt the union. This attempt failed and PCS, under its socialist leadership has emerged stronger from the experience.

'Pragmatic'

The ever 'pragmatic' leaders of the Prentis-Barber stripe set the conditions for a brutal assault on British workers and the working class in general.

The recently legislated Trade Union Act is a direct result of the pensions defeat. Had the TUC stood up to the pensions attack it would have been simply impossible for the Tories to attempt such an outrage.

The election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party is a delicious irony being played on those union leaders who refused to fight on pensions, opening the possibility Labour could once again become an effective vehicle for working class representation.

This was based, like the Yes vote in Scotland and the Leave vote in the EU, on an anti-austerity mood they refused to harness to defend the rights and conditions of millions of workers during the pensions dispute.

The crisis of leadership in the trade union movement is the biggest single factor in

allowing the Tories to press their 'race to the bottom' policies. The concession bargaining 'diplomats' of the union and TUC bureaucracies are dead weight on our movement and a millstone around the necks of workers who are prepared to fight.

The struggle to build a leadership capable of standing up to the bosses will continue. And, despite setbacks, the empty role of the collaborationists will be more sharply exposed, with the need for fighting leaderships more pronounced in the coming period.

For a longer version and further analysis see socialistparty.org.uk

At Socialism 2016 weekend many Socialist Party members wrote on the 'why I joined' wall about why they became members - here are some of the reasons:

- Seeing pensioners queue for their savings when Northern Rock collapsed made me ask: "Can't it be better than this?"
- To oppose the Tory government who were taking away EMA and increasing tuition fees
- To build a society where we can all develop to the full (and fight long hours of work that make it hard to think and organise)
- Because I wanted to do something to change the world
- To join the fight to put the capitalist system to bed
- To work with likeminded people in order to overthrow capitalism to create a new society which works in the interests of everyone
- Because racism, sexism and homophobia cannot be defeated under capitalism
- People before profit! Plan for people's needs first. Socialism is the only answer to all our problems
- To fight environmental destruction and for nuclear disarmament
- Because the Socialist Party defeated Thatcher and the Poll Tax
- To place power back in the hands of ordinary people
- Take the fight to the Tories (red and blue)
- I'm sick of a system that makes me work to make the bosses rich
- Hope, strategy and action. We are confident in our class, clear about our ideas and we don't just discuss but work to change the world
- To resist Trump and fight for a real alternative to the status quo
- To change the world you have to be organised against the capitalists
- As a feminist I believe there is no chance of equality without defeating capitalism
- The most committed socialist and the best debates, the fieriest fighters for the working class

Why I joined the Socialist Party "I can't stop thinking about Socialism 2016 - it was truly brilliant"



Socialism 2016 photo Paul Mattsson

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- cheques payable to 'Socialist Party', PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD

Socialist Party Fighting Fund

	£ received	£ target	October to December 2016	Deadline 4 January 2017
Northern	1,551	750		207%
Wales	2,369	2,300		103%
South West	1,815	1,800		101%
West Midlands	2,584	2,600		99%
North West	1,871	2,100		89%
East Midlands	1,543	1,850		83%
Southern	1,017	1,600		64%
London	3,471	6,100		57%
South East	426	750		57%
Yorkshire	1,361	3,300		41%
Eastern	271	1,200		23%
Other	3,420	5,650		61%
TOTAL	21,700	30,000		72%

Marian O'Brien
New member, West London Socialist Party

I can't stop thinking about Socialism 2016. It was the first time I attended and I was so impressed with the passion, strategy, knowledge and awareness of people's situations which was expressed by all the speakers and the response from members.

Blown away

Organising such an event is a tall order and there was nothing that was left out - truly brilliant. I became a member of the Socialist Party straight away.

There were speakers from the USA, Spain and many more. They spoke of local successes as well as

successes internationally. I was really blown away by their commitment and dynamic oration with a powerful movement for action and change.

The breakdown of capitalism is evident across the world. Polarisation of the rich and poor is at its most extreme as well as obscene.

Rates of pay are being significantly lowered, workers' rights are being attacked including using zero-hour contracts. The whole picture is one of poverty and crisis in a capitalist system which puts profit entirely before working people.

Everyone is suffering, which rightfully makes us angry. Anger turned to action is positive and effective.

The rich cannot hold their power forever in a world which knows how they operate. We can't take any more. We need to fight back.

Socialism 2016

WHAT YOU THOUGHT

The discussion between Peter Taaffe and Michael Crick was well worth attending. It highlighted the incapacity or inability of mainstream capitalist media to understand and grasp the size and breadth of the global revolt against capitalism, from the USA to Greece, Ireland, Spain, and here in Britain.

Kevin Corran, Salford

After Donald Trump's election I needed something to lift the gloom and this weekend has done just that. A valuable experience with the added benefit of being thoroughly enjoyable.

Paul Trickett, Northumbria University

Had a fantastic weekend at Socialism 2016. Highlights would have to be the sessions with Darletta Scruggs, Tony Mulhearn and Hugo Pierre. An event that doesn't fail to recharge the batteries for the battles ahead.

Trevor Maris, Chesterfield

Socialism 2016 was more than inspiring. To listen and learn from the struggles and experiences of comrades all around the world, shows that if we fight, we can win. Brilliant speeches and contributions throughout the weekend showed that socialists do not only talk the talk but walk the walk. And we will carry on in the streets and workplaces.

It was electrifying to hear comrades from Spain - Juan Ignacio Ramos; the USA - Darletta Scruggs, Ireland - Paul Murphy, victorious Butterfields tenants, Tamil Solidarity activists, leading trade union fighters. All of these were and are at the forefront of our struggles against the attacks of capitalism and to build an alternative system that works for all - a socialist society.

Joao Felix, Cardiff

When you see Paul Murphy speak at a massive rally, talking about the victories the workers have won in Ireland against water charges, in the Irish parliament representing working people, living on a workers' wage, being tried in court on false charges and facing prison for the crime of organising a movement and standing up for ordinary people, you know you are in the right party.

Jaime Davies, Caerphilly, south Wales

Great weekend at Socialism 2016. Great speakers with equally great contributions from the floor. The two rallies were superb.

Trevor Hall, Truro, Cornwall

Veterans of the great struggles of the working class of the Thatcher years (Liverpool and Poll Tax), American comrades talking about the resistance that is being organised against the presidency of Trump, Spanish comrades in Izquierda Revolucionaria... one word: wow!

Nicolas Croes, Leige, Belgium

Packed-out Socialist Party meetings hear American socialist and Black Lives Matter activist



Darletta Scruggs photo Paul Mattsson

Socialist Party reporters

"Within hours of Donald Trump winning the US election we were able to get 40,000 people on the streets and put socialist ideas out there, at the time when we had the biggest audience", said Darletta Scruggs when talking to over 60 people, mostly from the local black community, who squeezed into a public Socialist Party meeting in Hackney, east London.

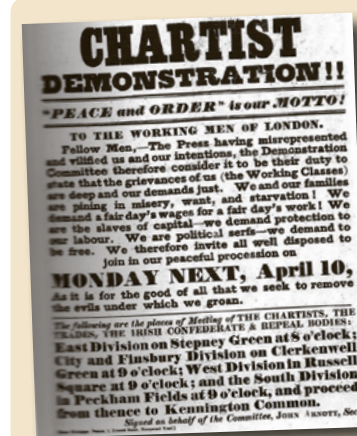
Darletta is a member of Socialist Alternative, the Socialist Party's co-thinkers in the US and a Black Lives Matter activist in Chicago. The meeting followed others the day before in Lewisham, south London, where over 40, mainly young,

attended, and a meeting of students at the University of Arts. In Birmingham, Darletta spoke to a packed-out, energetic public meeting of over 60.

Malcolm X

Afterwards Darletta and Socialist Party members visited Marshall Street in Smethwick where, 51 years ago, just days before he was assassinated, black revolutionary Malcolm X paid a visit.

Some residents of Marshall Street were calling for the council to buy up empty houses and make them available to white families only. Malcolm X said he was visited because he was "disturbed by reports that coloured people in Smethwick are being treated badly".



Scott Jones
East London Socialist Party

"I would like to vote, because I want a say in how my life is run and I know more than many who do!" This was one of the responses when I asked a room of 12-year-olds if they would like the right to vote.

On 11 November I had the privilege and pleasure to speak to two year 8 history classes at School 21 in Stratford, east London. I was invited to speak on behalf of the Socialist Party about Chartism, Suffragism and why their struggle for the vote is important today.

Chartism

Chartism in particular, the world's first working class movement, I enjoyed learning about in school myself. And the parallels between then and now are huge.

Now most of Chartism's demands have been won. But having fought for pay for MPs so that not only the wealthy could afford to go to parliament, now practically all working class MPs have been absorbed by the capitalist class and its system.

SCHOOL TALK ON THE STRUGGLE FOR THE VOTE AND ITS IMPORTANCE TODAY



The children asked many questions about politics today, including the US presidential election and about the historical struggle for the vote and changing the world.

I gave examples of what the Socialist Party stands for and why get-

ting active and organised to fight for our rights is just as important as having the right to vote itself. The children are organising a re-enactment protest march around Newham soon which we have also been invited to participate in.

CAMPAIGNING SOCIALIST STUDENTS GROUPS NEEDED TO HOLD STUDENT UNIONS TO ACCOUNT

Iain Dalton
Socialist Students Yorkshire organiser

The first National Union of Students (NUS) national student demonstration taking place in four years (see back page), a new left leadership of NUS, and the backing of lecturers' union UCU sound like key ingredients for a successful revitalisation of the student movement.

Stunts

Yet local student unions failed to properly organise and mobilise for the demonstration on 19 November.

In Yorkshire, among the best were the Leeds Universities that booked coaches and did a few stunts, posters and leaflets to advertise the demo. Yet unfortunately, rather than start this from freshers week

to fix the date and slogans of the demo in students' minds, this was all thrown together in the last few weeks.

At the other end of the scale is Huddersfield, where the student union had the names of 30 people interested in coming - but then put on a meeting that they failed to publicise, with the result of just one person showing up, which was used as an excuse to cancel putting on any transport.

Student union officers at York used the same excuse, pulling out of running a coach with less than a fortnight's notice. They had promised to fund transport, and had even had an offer from the local UCU branch to collaborate on this.

This all demonstrates the vital need for active, campaigning Socialist Students groups at every university and college.

WHAT WE HEARD

Reselection passed at Labour Party branch

On 14 November Chingford Labour Party branch passed the following motion concerning the mandatory reselection of Labour Party candidates:

1. This branch supports the principle of mandatory selection of Labour Party candidates before every general election to make the party more democratic.
2. This branch agrees to write to the NEC to communicate our support for mandatory re-selection.



Socialism 2016 photo Paul Mattsson



The Socialist Inbox

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■ Poem: Blame The Poor!

Those 'stupid masses',
They've done it again!
The workers,
The poor,
'The uneducated',
The 'multitude swine'!
First Brexit,
Now Trump-Pence
Can't they see that
Republican austerity
Is worse than
Democratic austerity,
Which is as good as
New Labour austerity,
Which is not as bad as
Conservative austerity?
Done with regret
Better than
Done with relish!
Deindustrialisation,
Welfare cuts,
Devastation of services,
Demonisation of the poor.
Poverty pay
In the gig economy,
As the rich get richer.
Why can't we just accept?
For so many a vote
For a bigoted,
Corporate billionaire,
Preferable to a vote
For a corporate,
Establishment millionaire.

Half the electorate
Rebuffed both!
For Wall Street,
For Clinton, a vote
For a bigoted billionaire
Preferable to a vote
For Bernie Sanders,
He could have won!
Blame the poor
For revolting against the elite,
For rejecting lesser evilism!
Anti-worker Trump
Will disillusion and anger.
Return to Democrats
Is not the answer.

The protests have started,
Against racism,
Against misogyny,
Time for a socialist alternative!
Jim Horton
North London

■ Palace v peasants

It's hardly a big surprise that our public taxes will pay for the repairs to Buck Palace. Rightly, many will think that just a tad unfair and will complain. While we do that however, there's a stunning fact we should all consider. In terms of living standards, the peasant under feudalism was closer to the monarch than the 99% of us are to the elite 1% today. So if we want to do something about the outrageous gaps between the lives of

'ordinary' folk and the ever more powerful elite who rule us, really, our focus should be on dumping capitalism.

Dave Gorton
Chesterfield

■ Obituary: Bill Graham

Bill Graham, a former supporter of Militant in London, has passed away after a short illness.

Bill was a socialist, trade unionist and defender of the most oppressed. During the 1980s and 90s Bill was active in many campaigns around youth unemployment, housing and fighting racism.

However it was in the anti-poll tax battle that Bill really hit home, building a big campaign in the Camden area that was regularly featured on TV and in the local papers. Bill built a model bailiff-busting squad that was second to none. Needless to say, no bailiffs dared come into his area.

Bill campaigned all his life against injustice, and only recently was with his wife, Josey, in Calais, supporting those fleeing war and terror. That was the measure of the man.

He will be long missed by so many. Our thoughts are with Josey and his family.

Steve Nally
Lambeth, south London

■ Hunting Hunt

The one and only Tristram Hunt MP graced us with his presence recently at our campaign stall in Hanley, Staffordshire. As you would expect, we were slightly surprised by this unusual development.

We were all wondering as he approached us, is he going to sign our petition calling for an end to zero-hour contracts and for a minimum wage of £10 an hour now? But no, he went straight past that one. Was it to sign our petition against the closure of another 64 local NHS hospital beds, with the threat to 200 nurses' jobs as well? No, he went straight past that one too!

Then we all thought the same thing - no, he can't be interested in the petition calling for deselection of Blairites? Surely not? But we were wrong! This is exactly

why he strode so purposefully up to our stall.

And then, talking over three of us who were trying to get a word in edgewise, he hit us with his best shot: "You can't call for deselection, you're not members of the Labour Party," turned on his heel, and strutted off - presumably to lie down in a darkened room somewhere. The majority of people who have signed our deselection petition are Labour Party members. As soon as he had gone, a load of people who had been listening to him formed a queue to sign.

Stoke Socialist Party

■ Consulate complaint

We are always taught that the British Embassy is here to help us when we get in trouble abroad, aren't we? The experience of a friend of mine when he had his passport stolen recently tells a somewhat different story.

Despite the process being called 'provision of an emergency travel document', there is no emergency out-of-hours service, so we had to wait until the following morning to replace the passport.

You also have to make an appointment. You don't, however, make an appointment to have your passport stolen.

There are no photography facilities at the consulate. My friend had to walk to the local photographer who the consulate has a contract with - a familiar pattern for how the British government delivers

'services' - and pay €10 to have his picture taken.

The end result was that my friend had to pay £100 for a flimsy passport, which was exchanged at the Eurostar terminal for a photocopied piece of paper, which was valid only for the journey home.

This is more expensive than the £72.50 cost of a full ten-year passport! Clearly the British consular service sees misfortune as a revenue opportunity.

I found that the consulate treats people with the same contempt and indifference that the government does. Embassies aren't there to protect our interests, but the interests of the elite.

Clive Walder
Birmingham

■ Trump talk

Watching a news programme the following day after Trump's victory, I heard the remark of one American journalist who had followed the Trump campaign.

She mentioned a skilled factory worker she spoke to in one of the deindustrialised 'Rust Belt' states, 30 years old, who had voted Democrat all his life, and was a workplace union rep who had lost his job. "I'm voting Trump because maybe he will bring us jobs back."

That remark speaks volumes to me. Just imagine if Sanders had stood. He could have won.

Chris Fernandez
Derby

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SPAIN: STUDENT UNION SURGES FORWARD IN HISTORIC CONGRESS



Danny Byrne,
 Committee for a Workers'
 International (CWI)

On 19-20 November, 300 young revolutionaries from 26 cities throughout the Spanish state - along with dozens of trade unionists and working class militants - met in Madrid for the 18th congress of the Spanish Student Union.

CWI members and representatives - including Peter Taaffe, Socialist Party general secretary - had the privilege to attend. The congress displayed a vibrant organisation whose forward march already has Spain's new, illegitimate PP government on the ropes.

Founded in 1985, and forged in the heat of another historic student movement which defeated the Felipe Gonzalez government, the Sindicato de Estudiantes (SE) is today at the epicentre of the class struggle.

It called and organised the momentous general student strike of 26 October (26O) which brought millions of students out on strike and over 200,000 onto the streets.

26O shattered the suffocating 'social peace' of recent years. In

“
The message that struggle with militant methods pays will not be lost on the rank and file of the labour movement
”

her opening speech, Ana Garcia, SE general secretary, explained that its struggle against the education attacks and the anti-working class Francoist 'revalidation' exams has become the new government's most troublesome 'hot potato'.

On 24 November, the SE will again empty the classrooms and fill the streets in another general student strike. For the government to begin its mandate with a defeat to the SE would have an enormous impact.

The message that struggle with militant methods pays will not be lost on the rank and file of the labour movement, whose leaders' main policy of social peace and class collaboration has won no such results.

SE's unbreakable link with the working class was underlined throughout the congress.

Speaker after speaker emphasised that this was a union of working class students, wedded to the struggle of the wider working class against austerity and capitalism.

The atmosphere throughout the weekend was electrifying.

Those attending, many who had only recently joined the union, were full of confidence and combativity. The anger against the ruling class, the sorrow of mass emigration and determination to fight for a future, were all vividly on show.



Socialist Party general secretary Peter Taaffe (second left) joins the anniversary celebrations

Hundreds rally to celebrate anniversary of SE and Izquierda Revolucionaria/El Militante

On Saturday evening a joint rally was held to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the SE, and the 40th anniversary of Izquierda Revolucionaria/El Militante (IR), the revolutionary Marxist organisation which formed the union and continues to lead it.

Over a dozen speakers addressed the rally. Antonio Garcia Sinde, a leading IR trade union organiser, spoke of the birth of Nuevo Claridad (IR's predecessor in the 1970s), as a Trotskyist organisation working in clandestine conditions under the Franco dictatorship.

A small group of young revolutionaries, they entered into contact with Militant supporters in Britain and developed the tools and methods necessary to build a powerful force.

Speakers from throughout the history of the SE and El Militante spoke: from its foundation, to the anti-war movement and the movement in response to the terrorist attacks in Madrid in 2004.

El Militante/Izquierda Revolucionaria was founded as a section of the CWI, though a split in our forces at the beginning of the 1990s led them to chart a separate path for over 20 years.

The common root of both organisations was on show throughout the weekend, with multiple references to Militant, the Liverpool council battle of the 1980s, etc.

CWI participation

The participation of CWI comrades, and of Peter Taaffe representing the CWI's International Secretariat, was a key part of the process of discussion and collaboration through which our paths are again converging.

Sean Burns, of the Socialist Party in Northern Ireland, also spoke on behalf of the young CWI comrades present, who attended from Portugal, Ireland, England and Wales, Belgium, and Germany.

Peter was met with a standing ovation before he had even begun speaking! He explained how both our past and present successes, along with those of SE today, show the necessity of revolutionary leadership,

methods and policies, even in the struggle for reforms. The building of unity between the CWI and IR is an important step in building this revolutionary leadership, which will be key to the next period internationally.

The hall rose to its feet as Peter explained that while the 20th century had been one of revolutionary struggle, the 21st will be one of revolutionary victory. Paraphrasing the heroic sans-culottes of the French revolution, whose slogan was "tremble tyrants the masses are coming", he addressed himself to arch-reactionary Donald Trump: "Trump, the working class is coming".

Juan Ignacio Ramos, who was the first general secretary of the SE during the historic battle of 1986-87 and is currently the general secretary of IR, was the last speaker.

His graphic account of how a small but audacious revolutionary group had built a mass rebellion of the youth against the Gonzalez government, leading three months of student strikes and occupations, was electrifying.

The victories which were won by that movement - including free second-level education and the building of schools - are among the rights being defended by the SE in struggle today.

Both the SE and IR have enormous potential to grow and develop in the next months and years. Many of the students who were present took the decision to join IR during the weekend, recognising that to fight and to be organised is key, but not enough. A revolutionary political leadership must also be built.

All the CWI members who attended the congress left with a deep conviction that IR is on the right path towards the building of such a political instrument.

■ **The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated. The CWI is organised in 45 countries and works to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against global capitalism and to fight for a socialist world.**
socialistworld.net

USA MASS PROTESTS BREAK OUT TO #RESISTTRUMP



Seattle against Trump

Calvin Priest and Kailyn Nicholson
Socialist Alternative (co-thinkers of the Socialist Party)

Donald Trump's shocking victory was met with a mixture of anger, confusion, and very real fear among ordinary people in the US and around the world.

Millions asked, how could Trump win? And further, what will his presidency mean for immigrants, women, Muslims, and all others targeted by his viciously right-wing campaign?

But the election of one of the most right-wing presidents in US history was also met immediately by determined mass protests. Within hours of Trump's election, Socialist Alternative, Socialist Students, and Movement for the 99% organised protests in cities around the country.

Wall

The call was met by 5,000 people in Oakland, 6,000 in Boston, 3,000 in Philadelphia, 6,000 in Seattle, and nearly 10,000 in New York City.

At Seattle's Westlake Park, the rally was addressed by a range of speakers representing different groups including young Latino activist and member of Socialist Alternative, Manuel Carrillo.

He responded to Trump's infamous call for a wall along the Mexico border by saying the movement would build its own wall: "Ours will

be a wall of resistance, built on solidarity, struggle, and a socialist alternative."

Protests have been marked by frustration and disillusionment in Hillary Clinton and the Democratic Party and their failure to defeat Trump.

Many recognised that the calculated undermining of Bernie Sanders' campaign by the Democratic Party establishment - despite polls showing Bernie matching up far better against Trump than Clinton - was a major factor in Trump's improbable victory.

Seattle City councillor and Socialist Alternative member Kshama Sawant addressed the crowd at Seattle's Westlake Park: "We cannot even trust the Wall Street-dominated Democratic Party to beat the most unpopular candidate the Republicans could ever find to run for president.

"Their politics prepared the ground. Look at Nafta and the TPP [job-losing free trade deals]. Look at cuts to social security and welfare..."

"To build the resistance against Trump, to stop the growth of his movement, we need to build our own movements, we need our own mobilisations. Working people and youth need an independent party of, for and by the 99%. Are you with me?" She was answered with a deafening cheer.

The question is whether we can turn the initial protests and solidarity into sustained and powerful movements. The burgeoning resistance has crystallised around

another date of protest: Trump's inauguration on 20 January.

Already, in Boston, Socialist Alternative members held a public meeting to discuss the way forward for the movement that attracted over 400 people.

Attack

Building the kind of resistance necessary to block Trump's attacks will require rejecting the calls of Democratic Party leaders and others to silence our movement. After calling Trump "profoundly dangerous," Clinton is now telling her supporters: "We owe him an open mind and the chance to lead."

But we cannot wish Trump any "success" in his 'Contract with the American Voter' or the rest of his bigoted agenda. This would be a dangerous mistake.

Trump seeks to attack immigrant workers to divert anger from the failure of capitalism to provide decent jobs for millions of working class people.

We need unity of ordinary people to stand up against his call for mass deportations, registration of Muslims, and other vicious attacks on the working class and oppressed people.

- A full version of the above, plus more articles, can be read on socialistalternative.org
- Kshama has been subjected to an orchestrated stream of abuse by the so-called 'alt-right' (ie the far right) for her leading role in mobilising opposition to Trump

Ireland Repeal the 8th Amendment Fight for abortion rights



Socialist Party TD Ruth Coppinger, who proposed the bill in the Irish Parliament to end the ban on abortion

Laura Fitzgerald

In October, the Fine Gael-minority led government refused to give a second reading to the AAA-PBP* bill which called for a repeal referendum to the 8th amendment of the Irish constitution (which prohibits women's abortion rights). The bill was proposed by Socialist Party member Ruth Coppinger TD (MP).

The government has now delayed even an initial debate on the issue at Dáil (parliament) level for at least a year.

Pro-choice

The pro-repeal government Independents fell pathetically into line. Sinn Féin supported the bill, but used its speaking time to clarify that it supports very limited legislation, namely the status quo (abortion allowed if life is in danger, including through suicide), plus fatal foetal abnormalities, rape and incest.

In Ireland there has been a clear development of a pro-choice sentiment within society. In poll after poll, two-thirds want increased abortion rights.

All this serves to reinforce the need to build a growing, active, powerful movement outside the Dáil to force through change.

Recently in Poland there was a successful 100,000-strong women's strike to block the government's attempt to bring in a full abortion ban.

It's more than possible to win people over to the notion that, as opposed to the church or state, whether or not to continue with a pregnancy has to be the woman's own decision.

A bold pro-choice movement, especially a movement that is also raising the need for public housing, for massive investment in state childcare, and for equality generally, will be greeted with solidarity and support from the majority of people.

*Anti Austerity Alliance (AAA) and People Before Profit (PBP) left bloc in the Dáil (Irish parliament). The AAA, in which the Socialist Party plays a leading role, has been to the fore in successfully campaigning against the imposition of the previous Fine Gael-Labour coalition government's hated water charges.

UN climate change summit More hot air from Marrakech

Pete Dickenson

The latest United Nations-sponsored climate change conference has just ended in Morocco. This conference was a follow up event to the 'historic' agreement reached in Paris a year ago, that was intended to create a successor to the Kyoto Treaty that ended in 2012.

The main aim in Marrakesh was spun as being to build in a 'ratchet mechanism' to the Paris deal, so that the pledges made there (entirely self-determined) to control greenhouse gas emissions would get more ambitious over time as the review process got under way.

Trump

This certainly is needed, because even if all the commitments made in Paris were fulfilled, global temperatures would probably still rise by a disastrous 3°C. There was no agreement on this.

According to the European Union, one of the key deliverables was the Marrakech Action Proclamation, a call for the highest political commitment to be made to tackle climate change. In other words, more hot air.

The self-congratulatory mood at the conference was shattered by the news of the election of Trump, who

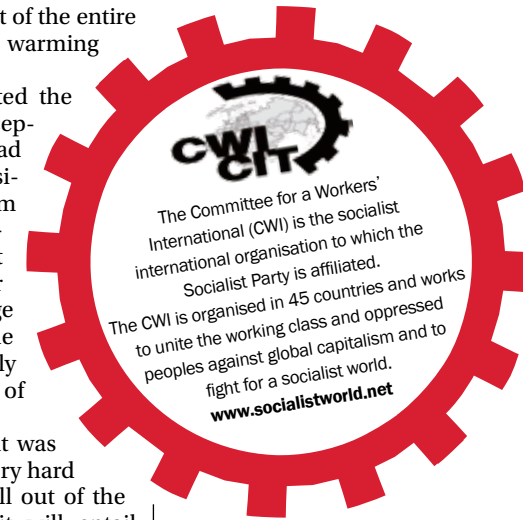
has pledged to pull out of the entire process, calling global warming a 'hoax'.

Trump has appointed the notorious climate sceptic Myron Ebell to head his environment transition team. Ebell, from the Competitive Enterprise Institute, sent two of his cohorts over to Morocco to stage a stunt to ridicule the conference, which duly got them thrown out of the gathering.

The Paris agreement was designed to make it very hard for any country to pull out of the agreement, because it will entail four years of bureaucratic wrangling. Optimists in Marrakech were hoping that this would put Trump off. But he doesn't have to go to the trouble of pulling out, he can just ignore the Paris agreement.

This exposes one fundamental drawback with Paris - it was completely voluntary. There will be no sanction whatsoever if Trump decides to ignore the pledges that the US administration previously made. This will also apply to emission targets resulting from any future ratchet mechanism that is agreed.

None of the major emitters of greenhouse gases would have



signed up in Paris if the emission reduction commitments had to be legally binding. The other major powers, in particular China, will now be able to hide behind Trump and say, although they really wanted to cut emissions themselves, they will not be prepared to give the USA a 'free ride'.

Tipping point

Meanwhile, away from the farcical horse-trading at the UN, the climate situation is rapidly worsening. 2016 is set to become the hottest ever, and the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, the main driver of global warming, has gone over 400 parts per million (ppm). When it reaches 450 ppm there will be a real danger that a tipping point will be reached and uncontrollable global warming will set in.

The UN-sponsored climate talks, going back for decades, have completely failed to tackle the threat we are facing, because none of the big capitalist powers that call the shots are willing to risk the profits of their own multinational corporations. Sweeping away the profit-driven capitalist economic system is the only way to break out of this spiral to environmental disaster.



Planning for the planet: How socialism could save the environment
by Pete Dickenson
£10 - postage free

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photo Alfred Palmer/Creative Commons



The Socialist Party fights for socialism - a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also oppose every cut, fighting in our day-to-day campaigning for every possible improvement for working class people. The organised working class has the potential power to stop the cuts and transform society.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international.

The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

Our demands include:

PUBLIC SERVICES

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, public services and benefits. Defend our pensions.
- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.

- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and 'free schools'!
- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs - free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!
- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

WORK AND INCOME

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £10 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards a real living wage. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension.
- Reject 'workfare'. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.
- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

ENVIRONMENT

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and un-recycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
- A democratically planned, low-fare, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

RIGHTS

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.
- Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.

MASS WORKERS' PARTY

- For a mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-war campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations.
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the bosses' neoliberal European Union! For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!

**Join the fightback!
Join the Socialists!**

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FIGHT BACK TO SAVE EDUCATION

Bridget Taylor
Manchester Met Socialist Students

Up to 15,000 students, education workers and trade unionists marched through London on 19 November to protest against the Tories' latest attack on students - the Higher Education Bill. Socialist Students led the biggest, loudest and most vibrant bloc on the demo.

The HE bill, which is going through the House of Lords, will create a competitive market in the sector, open the door for 'for-profit' universities, and allow the highest ranked institutions to raise tuition fees - which could mean an extra £250 (or up to £9,250) a year starting in September 2017. Some universities, are already advertising fees above the current £9,000 maximum.

The National Union of Students (NUS) and University and College Union (UCU) called the demo to protest against the rise in fees and cuts. Socialist Students led the call for free education. We chanted: "Education should be free, not just for the bourgeoisie" and "Fight the power, change the system, what we need is socialism".

The point being not only to combat the Tories' latest attack, but to demand a radically different higher education system that is fairer for everyone: free education, living grants for all, the scrapping of student debt and no more cuts to education budgets.

Start

This demo has to be the start of a sustained campaign. We should be making stronger links with the trade unions and learning from our student comrades in struggles across the world. Like the recent two million-strong Spanish student strike, and the South African students who marched on parliament and forced the ANC government to back down on a proposed tuition fees hike.

Manchester Socialist Students has called a meeting bringing together trade unionists, students, local activists and lecturers to discuss next steps for the student movement, and would encourage other Socialist Students groups to do the same.

If we want to be successful we need to be coordinated, united and organised - to take this fight to the Tories and show them just how powerful we really are.

■ Such was the eagerness for socialist ideas that over 30 people expressed an interest in joining the Socialist Party on the day.



One of the speakers at the end rally was Darletta Scroggs from Socialist Alternative (US co-thinkers of the Socialist Party) in Chicago. Darletta spoke of the need to fight the likes of Trump and May who represent the 'billionaire class', and to fight for socialism. She told the crowd that Socialist Alternative had received a tremendous response when it called 'Resist Trump' demonstrations across the US immediately after Trump was declared the winner of the presidential election (see article on page 14). **See the video at tinyurl.com/nustwitter**



photo James Ivens and inset Paula Mitchell

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