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Issue 933
26 January - 1 February 2017



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Millions take part in 'women's marches' around the world

ORGANISE TO BEAT TRUMPISM, AUSTERITY AND CAPITALISM



The huge turnouts to the 'women's marches' around the world on 21 January shocked even the organisers. From Los Angeles to Tel Aviv, from Oslo to Antarctica, millions poured onto the streets to protest Donald Trump's inauguration as US president.

Potentially these demonstrations could mark the beginning of an important new phase in the fightback by young, working and middle class people against the brutalities of capitalism, its political representatives and the divisions they attempt to sow.

The Women's March on Washington was originally called by feminist groups to express fury at Trump's outrageous comments on women and the threat his administration poses to their rights.

But it, and the hundreds of sister marches it inspired, was taken up by many other groups wanting to give a clear signal from day one of the Trump presidency that his reactionary regime will face mass opposition every step of the way.

This snowballed into the biggest coordinated international protests since those against the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

It is now vital and urgent that this is used as a launchpad to build a sustained, democratic, international movement with a strategy to win and a vision of a socialist alternative. We must ensure that 21 January 2017 goes down in the history books as the turning of the tide, rather than a one-off, letting off steam.

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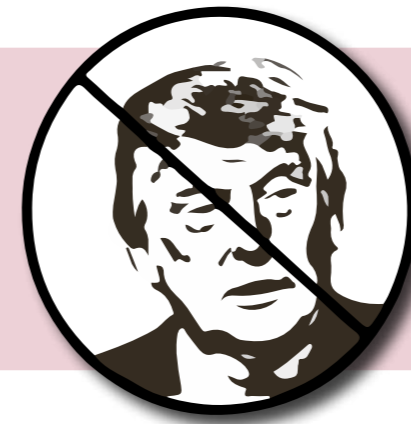


Reports from international mass protests



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BUILD A MASS MOVEMENT AGAINST TRUMPISM, AUSTERITY AND CAPITALISM



What we think

Estimates suggest up to five million protested across the world (see pages 8-9 for more reports and photos). It is important that so many felt such a strong sense of international solidarity with our sisters and brothers in the US as to protest in their thousands in places that will not all be in the frontline of the direct impact from the Trump presidency. This is partly because of the centrality of the US to world politics generally, and an understanding that instability and reaction there will have a global impact.

But it is also because in reality people were not just protesting against Trump, but against all the many 'Trumpisms' local to them, and against the 'Trumpist' policies carried out by capitalist governments around the world. Protesters railed against all forms of sexism, racism and inequality. Some were concerned about Trump's plans for the environment; others about war and xenophobia. The marches acted as a funnel for much of the discontent people are feeling - brought to a head by fear and anger at what Trump's election could mean.



In reality people were not just protesting against Trump but against all the many 'Trumpisms' local to them, and against the 'Trumpist' policies carried out by capitalist governments around the world

Many will have been angered by Theresa May's comments when asked if she would challenge Trump over his attitude towards women when they meet. She replied that the best thing she could do in that regard was to be there, as a female prime minister. Instead, she said, she would concentrate on 'pressing global issues' such as Nato and Syria.

May, regardless of her gender, does not represent the majority of women. It is clear that her priorities in those discussions will be ensuring the security of the capitalist system over the rights and safety of, for example, the 2.4 million women who have been forced to flee Syria. Many of them have been locked out and abused by western governments like hers who are aggravating the situation in the Middle East. And May has supported policies that have led to hundreds of thousands of women in Britain losing their jobs since the Tories came to power. It is expected that by 2020 women will have shouldered 85% of the changes to taxes and benefits since 2010.

A significant section of the marchers recognised facts like these and that they show the need to stay active and escalate the movements in each country, as well as to link different struggles together. Many of those who took part were on their first demonstration - but were clear that it wouldn't be their last. In Britain, a crucial part of showing solidarity with those in the US fighting Trump's administration is to fight back against austerity, oppression and capitalism here.



Socialist Party members attending the Unison Black Members conference show their support for #ResistTrump photo Glenn Kelly

One of the immediate tasks in this is to build for the biggest possible demonstration in defence of the NHS on 4 March (see back page for full details). The NHS is clearly a major target for Tory cuts and privatisations - and a potential major mobilising issue for wide layers of workers. For many, the brutal assault on such an essential public service summarises the callousness, cruelty and class hatred of this government.

Further action

In her response to Trump's inauguration speech, Kshama Sawant, Seattle city councillor and member of Socialist Alternative (cothinkers of the Socialist Party in the US) called for further days of action on International Women's Day on 8 March and International Workers' Day on 1 May, concentrating on women's rights and immigrant rights respectively. We should aim to hold solidarity events for these here, raising the issues affecting these layers in Britain too.

Through all of these individual mobilisations, we must unite the biggest force possible to fight the right. The demonstrations showed a huge openness to this; a desire



Trafalgar Square packed for the rally at the end of the Women's March on London photo Paul Mattsson

to turn numbers into real power to defeat Trump, his international counterparts and their ideas. Discussion and debate on the way to build this is vital.

As a starting point, the movement must recognise that it is the capitalist establishment that has allowed the rise of Trumpism. Some people have, by the brutal conditions they face - unemployment, run-down public services and sneering from politicians - been pushed towards the false solutions of the right. A movement to defeat it must be intolerant of that capitalist establishment. It must pursue policies that can reach out to those alienated workers and young people.

In the US, this means recognising that the Democratic Party, is inherently tied to the Wall Street establishment. This is why Hillary Clinton could not defeat Trump. The popularity of left winger Bernie Sanders' campaign in the Democratic primaries showed the type of radical policies that could have done. It was a mistake that Sanders dropped out and backed Clinton once the Democratic

machine had successfully fixed the race against him.

Following the huge campaign in support of Sanders, and now the burgeoning movement against Trump, the urgent task in the US is to build a new party of the 99%. Such a party, putting forward a bold, pro-working class, socialist programme, could seize the opportunities that exist and grow unprecedentedly quickly. The same is necessary all over the world - to fight for a political voice for the working class and developing radical movements. In Britain, this includes striving for victory for Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity stand over the right-wing Blairites in the Labour Party who will stop at nothing to crush it.

Socialist alternative

The fight for a new party in the US will only become more important as Trump reneges on his promises and lets down those who were wrongly convinced that he represented an anti-establishment vote. Crisis-ridden world capitalism is not going to realise all his pledges of jobs, schools and infrastructure. Clearly, right-wing billionaire Trump will not carry out the socialist policies that could. A new mass workers' party which vocalised this could win many of those who voted Trump in November. It could also - in contrast to the 'same-old, same-old' establishment Democrats - inspire the 42% who abstained in this election to turn out in future.

Another feature of the demonstrations was the number

of people explicitly searching for a socialist alternative. Kshama Sawant said in her Trump inauguration response: "In these trying times, I am given great hope by the new-found spirit of rebellion among young people. Most important is the growing support for socialism, with thousands joining socialist organisations across the country. The reason why is no mystery: capitalism is a failing system. Donald Trump is a particularly repulsive expression of the predatory nature of the capitalist system itself."

"We found out this week that eight people, just eight people, now own more wealth than half the world's population. We also found out that global temperatures, for the third year in a row, have broken all previous records - that climate disaster continues to rapidly advance. We need a radically different society. We need socialism. Socialism means a society run by and for working people, rather than the billionaire class. A society where the major corporations are taken into public ownership so we can democratically plan how to use society's resources to meet human need, rather than private profit."

A real opportunity now exists to use the momentum evident on the recent demonstrations to build a strong, international socialist movement capable of bringing such ideas to fruition. The Socialist Party and its sister parties in the Committee for a Workers' International will be at the forefront of these struggles.



Come to the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition national conference 2017

Saturday 28th January, 11am-4.30pm, Student Central, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HY

11am to 1.15pm: TUSC's role now and the 2017 elections

A TUSC forum with platform speakers from the three constituent organisations: Paul Reilly (RMT national executive) to introduce and Sean Hoyle (RMT president) to reply; Hannah Sell (Socialist Party); and Charlie Kimber (SWP).

Platform speakers will have 15 minutes for their opening contributions, speakers from the floor three minutes. A Socialist Party motion (see tusc.org.uk) will be formally moved in this session, with an indicative vote at the end.

1.15pm to 2.15pm: Lunch break

During the break the main hall will be used for a meeting open to all 'individual member' credential holders to discuss proposals to organise individual members within TUSC and, if the meeting wishes, nominate another representative onto the steering committee alongside Pete McLaren.

2.15pm to 3.00pm: TUSC's role now and the 2017 elections continued

Further floor speakers and then the three constituent organisations will reply to the discussion for seven minutes each.

3.00pm to 4.30pm: TUSC's anti-council cuts campaigning tasks

Introduced by Clive Heemskerck on behalf of the steering committee, followed by floor speakers.

Socialism Today

The Socialist Party's magazine

February issue includes:

- **Democrats** No vehicle for US workers, writes Calvin Priest
- **Trotsky's revolution** Peter Taaffe contrasts Trotsky's outlook with the failure of right-wing forces
- **February 1917** Two articles by Trotsky assess the significance of the revolution



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Socialist Party Fighting Fund

	£ received	£ target	January-March 2017	Deadline 31 March 2017
Northern	298	750		40%
South West	536	1,800		30%
Wales	645	2,300		28%
North West	468	2,100		22%
West Midlands	561	2,600		22%
Southern	249	1,600		16%
East Midlands	270	1,850		15%
Eastern	143	1,200		12%
South East	72	750		10%
London	527	6,100		9%
Yorkshire	203	3,300		6%
Other	39	5,650		1%
TOTAL	4,010	30,000		13%

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

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Bristol police taser race relations man



photo Paul Mattsson

■ Fight for community control of police policy and hiring

Tom Baldwin
Bristol South Socialist Party

Footage of police in Bristol taser an innocent black man has made news around the world. The attack was even more shocking because the victim, Judah Adunbi, was a prominent member of the police's race relations group.

The video, captured by a neighbour, shows the 63-year-old being confronted by police with their taser already drawn. They had the wrong person, but threatened to arrest him when he legally refused to give his name.

Officers blocked him from his own back gate, pushed him back and tasered him, causing him to fall to the ground. He had to be taken to hospital and was then held by police for ten hours.

Unbelievably, the victim was charged with assaulting a police officer despite video evidence showing the opposite. The person filming accurately countered police claims: "He wasn't trying to fight... you

started it. You both made physical contact first."

The charges have now been dropped. Mr Adunbi was also attacked by police in 2007, and was clear that this was a racist incident.

Sadly, statistics show institutional racism still exists within the police. Avon and Somerset Constabulary's own figures show officers are twice as likely to fire tasers on oppressed racial groups once drawn.

Nationally, black and Asian people are almost three times as likely to be stopped and searched as white people, according to Home Office data from last year.

The Black Lives Matter movement that erupted in the US following police murders of black people has been taken up in this country as well. The anti-Trump protest in Bristol showed its support, stopping outside a police station chanting: "No justice, no peace! No racist police!"

We need to fight for democratic community control of police policy and hiring to start to address institutional racism in the police.

■ Trident trouble

A Trident missile misfired last June, just weeks before an alliance of Tories and Blairites voted to renew the nuke system. The Tory government now faces accusations of a cover-up.

The unarmed test launch veered away from Africa towards the United States. Of course, in a real launch, landing anywhere - targeted

or not - would be a horrifying catastrophe.

Trident submarines will cost over £30 billion a year to replace. Even normal operation costs £2 billion a year.

The Socialist opposes renewing civilisation-ending bomb stockpiles. Scrap Trident, and guarantee the employment of its workforce on socially useful production. Divert the funding and retool the arms factories to achieve this.



Council workers lobbying councillors to vote against Tory cuts photo Scott Jones

■ Anti-cuts council candidates needed

REJECT SURREY'S 15% COUNCIL TAX INCREASE

Paul Couchman
Staines Socialist Party

Surrey's Tory council wants residents to fork out a whopping 15% council tax rise to pay for the crisis in social care. Because the proposed hike breaches government limits, it can only pass if residents back it in a local referendum.

Council tax is a regressive tax which hits the poorest hardest. The average annual bill in Surrey will, if this goes through, rise by around £230.

It is wrong to pass the buck onto working class people through a system which allows millionaires in mansions to get away with paying very little.

Yes - adult social care is in crisis nationally. Cuts and privatisation have driven this, alongside the Tory government robbing local authorities

year on year. In Surrey, the annual grant has been cut by £170 million since 2010.

One Surrey Tory MP told Sky News that the county's MPs had been trying to broker a deal with the government, but talks had failed. The MP said: "They'll hold a referendum returns a 'yes' vote, which is extremely unlikely, a 15% hike would still just be a sticking plaster over a gaping wound."

The fact that a Tory council in the flagship county of Surrey is finding it impossible to balance the books is yet another example of the splits and disarray within the Tory party.

It is particularly embarrassing for the government because Surrey includes the constituencies of Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt, Chancellor Philip Hammond and other leading Tory MPs.

If Corbyn's Labour and the unions called for no-cuts budgets and the reversal of all cuts and sell-offs, they could drive a wedge into the

Tory party's cracks. They would get a ready echo from working class people living and working in the shires.

There may be some who will say we have to support this to protect the services we rely on. But this would be a mistake. Even if the referendum returns a 'yes' vote, which is extremely unlikely, a 15% hike would still just be a sticking plaster over a gaping wound.

The local Socialist Party says to the Surrey Tories: you have come to the end of the road. We call on anti-austerity campaigners and trade unionists to consider standing candidates in the county council elections in May, against cuts and regressive tax hikes.

The election charter of Save Our Services in Surrey would be a good starting point.

■ Read the charter at sosis.org.uk/election-charter

Wales council votes to buy back homes

Dave Reid
Socialist Party Wales

Flintshire county council in North Wales has decided to buy back 55 council houses sold since 2005 when they become available on the market.

It is also building 200 council houses over the next five years.

Swansea council has also agreed to build a few new council houses. And the Welsh government is considering the abolition of the 'right to buy' scheme for council housing.

These are welcome measures, but they hardly scratch the surface of the housing crisis that has developed in Wales.

A socialist council would use the current low interest rates to fund mass council house building and

demand greater funding for housing from the Welsh government.

Abolishing the right to buy must be accompanied by a house building programme.

Welsh Labour has been forced by public pressure to reform housing legislation in Wales to make private landlords register as such.

But the registration is not backed up by enforcement of safeguards or tenants' rights. In fact, the act actually removed tenancy protection in the first six months of tenancy.

Tackling the housing crisis in Wales and across Britain will mean candidates standing on a programme of reversing the privatisation of housing stock. For real regulation of landlords, capping rents instead of benefits, and fighting central government for funding to reverse cuts.

Donate today!

If you agree with what you read in the Socialist, consider making a donation to the Socialist Party's fighting fund:

■ pay by card on 020 8988 8777 or socialistparty.org.uk/donate

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



■ Independents resign

The chief independent councillors on the Isle of Wight have resigned over central government funding cuts.

The council's leader and deputy "continually requested the Conservative government to recognise" the need for more funding. Their requests went unheeded.

Even attempts to challenge 'sustainability and transformation plan' NHS cuts received the response "that such action may prejudice other funding - essentially a form of blackmail."

Standing down rather than attacking local workers and residents is nobler than the spineless compliance of most councillors. But it won't solve the problem. Only fighting back has the potential to do that.

Anti-cuts councillors must set no-cuts budgets using reserves and borrowing powers. This would buy time to build a mass working class campaign to win the needed funds from Westminster. Any councillors unwilling to do this should stand aside - for fighters, not cutters.

What's your view? email:
editors@socialistparty.org.uk

Court says parliament must approve Brexit

Britain's Supreme Court has ruled that the government cannot leave the EU without an act of parliament.

Judges have also decided that the devolved administrations in Scotland and Northern Ireland cannot veto Brexit.

This is the expected result, and it would be politically difficult for Westminster to overturn the result of a referendum. However, anti-establishment voters from both sides may be angered by

the role of unelected judges and an unaccountable parliamentary establishment.

The Scottish National Party, the Liberal Democrats and others have already threatened attempts to block a Brexit bill.

The timing of the Supreme Court's decision means this issue of the Socialist cannot carry a full analysis.

For the latest on the establishment's EU crisis, see socialistparty.org.uk.

2016 HOTTEST YEAR ON RECORD, AIR POISONOUS



photo Simone Ramella/Creative Commons

■ Only socialist planning can end profit-driven pollution

Aaron Smith
Bristol South Socialist Party

There is strong evidence that 2016 was the hottest year on record from US space agency Nasa. Meanwhile, in 2017, part of London breached EU limits on annual hours of toxic air in just five days.

The Earth is now, on average, 1.3°C warmer than when records began in 1880. Such warming is apparent in the ever decreasing Arctic sea ice, which could be ice-free in summer in as little as five years.

This dramatic change is largely due to the vast amounts of greenhouse gases generated by human activities such as manufacturing, agriculture and energy production. Under capitalism, only profit matters.

The super-rich and their politicians - while pretending to care about the environment, and holding

annual climate conferences - continue business as usual.

Recent years have seen the Volkswagen emission cover-up scandal, the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, and the nuclear disaster at Fukushima.

At the time of writing, London's mayor has issued a "very high" air pollution alert, advising even the physically fit to take precautions!

Despite how serious the problem is, big business has little interest in an effective response to climate change and pollution, as it's just not profitable.

A socialist government would nationalise the big polluters, as well as transport and energy, and the top corporations, under democratic workers' control and management. Then we could invest in green technologies and infrastructure to finally deal with humanity's greatest challenge yet.



Port Talbot steelworks photo Swansea SP

STEELY OPPOSITION GROWING TO TATA PENSION OFFER

Alec Thraves
 Socialist Party Wales

Steelworkers in Port Talbot and across other Tata Steel plants in the UK will be voting at the end of January on a potential agreement that would see the final salary British Steel pension scheme closed down.

It could be replaced by an inferior 'defined contribution' scheme which could result in tens of thousands of pounds being lost by workers. It could also force those in this dangerous and physically demanding industry to work until 65.

The 'carrot' being dangled in front of steelworkers in order to support this draconian measure is the so-called promise by Tata to invest £1 billion over the next ten years, a commitment to keep the two blast furnaces operating for five years and 'seeking' to avoid compulsory redundancies.

Small print

As steelworkers have studied the small print over the past month the opposition to the deal has grown. Tata's guarantee of investment is dependent on the company making £200 million profit a year (most believe it has to be at least £300 million) while 'seeking' to avoid compulsory redundancies paves the way for further job cuts down the road.

Despite the steel unions providing no leadership to their members by making no recommendation on

the deal, in practice at the series of roadshows across the plant, management, the union and the pension trustees have been stressing that this deal is the only option on the table.

They have implied members should vote for acceptance or will see the plant close!

Carwyn Jones, Labour's Welsh first minister, has enthusiastically supported the proposals in the Welsh Assembly. But then alongside Stephen Kinnock, Labour MP for Aberavon, he has attacked other politicians who have questioned the deal and told them not to interfere but let the steelworkers decide themselves!

Plaid Cymru's demand for rejection of the deal and temporary nationalisation falls short of a

long-term solution. Steelworkers obviously want to both protect their pension scheme and secure a long-term future for the steelworks. That is not possible by handing a 'temporarily nationalised' industry back to the financial vultures and speculators of the private sector.

Real chance

The only real chance of securing the hard-won British Steel pension scheme and guaranteeing the long-term future of Port Talbot and the UK steel industry is by demanding the complete nationalisation of steel under democratic workers' control and management.

That should be the recommendation of the steel unions to the threat of Tata's dismantling of the pensions scheme.

#SaveourSteel public solidarity meeting, hosted by the National Shop Stewards Network

The NSSN is hosting a public solidarity meeting in Port Talbot on **Thursday 26 January** to build support for the steelworkers and community and discuss the pensions offer. **It is at 7.30pm at Taibach Rugby Club, Port Talbot, SA13 1LN.**

It is open to everyone and speakers include a **Port Talbot steelworker** and **Rob Williams**, NSSN national chair and former Swansea Visteon (Ford) union convenor, and other trade unionists.

See shopstewards.net for more information and updates.



RMT Southern Rail picket line at Victoria station, London on 24 January photo RMT

Tom Woodcock
 Train driver and RMT member

The RMT deserves its reputation as one of the most militant unions in Britain. Although drivers' union Aslef unfortunately suspend its 3 planned strike days on Southern Rail for talks with management, the RMT continued its action alone on 24-26 January despite only a minority of drivers being RMT members.

Scandalously, despite the negotiations involving Aslef being hosted by the TUC, the RMT, whose guards alone have taken 25 days of strike action, wasn't invited to the talks! The RMT pickets were successful in persuading many Aslef drivers not to cross picket lines, sending a defiant message to Southern Rail and their Tory government backers in a high-stakes battle for the union.

This current high profile battle has seen the RMT in dispute with the Tory government and their profiteering friends who operate the Southern Rail franchise for attempting to de-skill workers and de-staff trains through the expansion of 'driver only operation' (DOO).

At the same time RMT members have shut down most of London Underground during their campaign against job cuts. Labour Mayor of London Sadiq Khan has joined with the Tories by publicly attacking these workers, calling their action "unnecessary" and congratulating scabs who crossed picket lines.

These two disputes have placed the RMT in the national spotlight once again and the union's effectiveness at bringing the capital to a standstill makes it a target for the Tories. Their new anti-union legislation has been formulated with effective and militant unions in mind.

But over the last two decades the union has grown from 50,000 to over 80,000 members largely due to the fact that workers will join a union if they see it is prepared to stand up to the bosses.

Industrial power

Therefore, the consequences of a defeat in the Southern Rail dispute would be a blow not only for the future of guards on trains nationally, but for the RMT's industrial power on the railway.

The RMT is primarily a transport union. The sections of its members

with the most visible and far-reaching industrial power are those workers on London Underground, Network Rail and train guards (most train drivers are in Aslef). Around 70% of trains in Britain require both a driver and a guard to operate.

If Southern Rail, which has the government pulling its strings, manages to defeat the guards and remove their safety-critical role, it would mean that in any future strike trains could continue to run as normal (but less safely) with just the driver on board.

Furthermore it could set a precedent for the rest of the rail franchises which specify a conversion to DOO as they are renewed over the coming years. It may make the campaign to retain guards in those areas more difficult.

Unity of all rail workers is key to stopping job cuts and DOO - drivers don't want it, the majority of the travelling public don't want it. The heroic and determined RMT members at Southern have taken over 20 days of strike action so far in defence of jobs and railway safety. The Southern Rail bosses and the government can and must be defeated!

RMT determinedly continues Southern strike



photo by twitter account @cwmawr

2017 UNITE GENERAL SECRETARY AND EXECUTIVE ELECTIONS

In the upcoming Unite the Union elections the Socialist Party is supporting Len McCluskey for general secretary. Under Len's leadership, the union has taken a more militant stance with a whole number of disputes.

Gerard Coyne, the union's West Midlands regional secretary has announced that he will challenge Len McCluskey.

Clash

For the Socialist Party, this election is a fundamental clash about the political and industrial strategy of the biggest union in the country. Coyne is the candidate of the Blairites and

behind them the capitalist establishment, who see the election as an opportunity to strike a blow, not just against Len McCluskey but also Jeremy Corbyn in Labour.

In the executive elections that take place at the same time, four Socialist Party members are running on the United Left slate. Suzanne Muna has been on the executive since 2015 and is again standing for one of the London and Eastern territorial seats.

Housing worker Suzanne, secretary of the Unite housing workers branch, says: "I have been an active trade unionist for over a decade, leading several successful strikes. I

have also led a branch actively resisting attacks on pay and working conditions for housing workers.

"During my first executive term, I have highlighted the housing crisis and supported members in all sectors demanding higher wages and better conditions."

Jamie Concozza, a branch secretary representing workers in passenger transport is on the list for Scotland.

Former anti-cuts councillor Kevin Bennett is up for election in the General Engineering, Manufacturing and Servicing (GEMS) sector and Jimmy Tyson is standing in construction.

■ Nominations are from 16 January - 17 February and voting is between 27 March - 19 April. See unitedleft.org.uk for full slate.

Get the latest union news...
 ...with the National Shop Stewards Network bulletin
 Available every week at shopstewards.net and by email subscription



Len McCluskey addresses striking BA workers on 19 January photo Rob Williams



BA strikers protest outside M&S on Oxford Street, 21 January photo Neil Cafferky

Incensed BA cabin crew strike, protest and rally over pay

Chris Newby
 London Socialist Party

Despite freezing temperatures, striking British Airways (BA) mixed fleet cabin crew were out in big numbers at the start of their second set of strike days on 19 January. Rallying at Bedfont football club near Heathrow Airport, striking cabin crew (members of Unite the Union) heard local MP and shadow chancellor John McDonnell pledge his support.

Both John and London Unite secretary Peter Kavanagh made the point that the workers are just demanding a wage that they can live on, which British Airways can more than afford given that its parent company IAG is set to make over £2 billion in profits this year.

The strikers then moved out to set up three protest lines around Heathrow. There is clearly a lot of support for the cabin crew with plenty of drivers tooting their solidarity including local police.

The determination of the strikers was highlighted

by workers who had come straight off flights, some who had been working for over 12 hours, to join the strike.

These workers are incensed that they are being offered a pittance of a pay increase when their low wages mean that many have to commute long distances to work because they can't afford to live nearby. Because of this some cabin crew, when they have less than 24 hours between flights, have to pay for a hotel room out of their own money because it takes too long to go home.

Over 100 cabin crew then rallied at Hatton Cross station to hear Unite general secretary Len McCluskey pledge the full support of the national union to striking cabin crew. The Socialist Party also pledges its full support.

The strikers held lobbies of Marks & Spencer stores on Oxford Street on 21 January and held a rally beforehand which Socialist Party member and National Shop Stewards Network chair Rob Williams spoke at following an invitation from workers.

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CWI joins protests around the world against Trump



HUGE ANGER INTERNATIONALLY ON MARCHES AGAINST TRUMP

Mass protests across the USA

These were the largest simultaneous protests ever recorded in US history with millions taking to the streets over two days in a show of defiance against the inauguration of billionaire bigot Donald Trump. The Washington march alone on 21 January numbered up to one million, with 750,000 in Los Angeles, 500,000 in New York City, and 250,000 in Chicago... the list goes on! But it's clear from the following reports of Socialist Alternative members (US cothinkers of the Socialist Party) that there is also a thirst for ideas and organisation to fight back against Trump and the Republicans' attacks on the rights of women, minorities, trade unionists, migrant workers, etc. More international protest reports and analysis: socialistworld.net and socialistalternative.org

Thousands flood Chicago streets
Chicago responded with an incredible weekend of resistance. "Resist Trump" demonstrations were held on 20 January (J20) and the following day the Chicago Women's March was one of world's largest with over 250,000 people attending!
The women's march became so large that no actual march was possible. Instead, demonstrators took over Chicago's downtown loop for hours in a tremendous display of solidarity and shut down business-as-usual with a festival-like mass gathering.
Beginning just after the election, Socialist Alternative Chicago prepared for mass actions on Inauguration Day.
The failure of Democratic Party corporate politics in the election cost working people dearly and it became even clearer that it would take a genuine grassroots and radical opposition to fight the right.
For several weeks, Socialist Alternative worked with a strong coalition of groups under the banner of the Movement for the 99% to organise a #J20 rally and march.
The organising group's commitment to politics independent of the



Seattle photo Bryan Watson

two party system was vindicated when the J20 rally and march was effectively hijacked and sabotaged by deceitful representatives of the Chicago Democratic Party machine.
Pushing aside socialist activists using private security, counter-organisers featured former mayoral candidate and Cook County board member Chuy Garcia.
Garcia, despite presenting himself as a "Berniecrat," refused to take up any of the concrete initiatives supported by Bernie Sanders during his presidential candidate bid. Instead he steered the passage of a sales tax increase on Chicago's working class and poor just after his race.
In spite of the sabotage, thousands of Chicagoans marched on Trump Tower, denouncing Trump's agenda of racism and sexism. Marchers expressed disgust not only towards Trump, but toward the establishment: at one point demonstrators surrounded a police car, chanting "16 shots and a cover-up!", calling out Democratic mayor Rahm Emanuel for his criminal concealment of the police execution of Laquan McDonald.
Our movement will need to build on these tremendous protests with powerful ongoing struggles and mass civil disobedience, while developing strong demands and independent democratic structures.
Many attendees were eager to discuss

socialism and our strategy to defeat Trump, and Socialist Alternative passed out over 2,000 flyers for a mass meeting about the way forward for our movement.
Theresa Powers and Nick Wozniak
Boston
The demonstrations kicked off on J20, including a walkout of 150 striking Northeastern University dining hall workers from Unite Here Local 26, in a show of working class resistance to Trump's anti-immigrant, anti-worker and pro-billionaire agenda.
Over 4,000 people gathered for a rally later that evening, chanting loudly about women's and immigrant rights and healthcare, and showing

Our movement will need to build on these protests with ongoing struggles. Many were eager to discuss socialism and our strategy to defeat Trump



Seattle school students march photo Bryan Watson

the determination of the movement to unite and defend those who are facing Trump's most immediate attacks.
Socialist Alternative organised the major evening rally with several co-sponsors and had members talking to people about political strategy for the movement and the need for a new mass political party independent of corporate cash and interests.
The next day the women's march brought 125,000 people together at Boston Common for what was perhaps the biggest demonstration in the city's history! Socialist Alternative was at it again distributing leaflets on our strategy for fighting Trump's sexist agenda.
We talked with people about how sexism is built into the very essence of the capitalist system with the 1%'s constant efforts to reduce social spending and increase profits.
Boston Socialist Alternative is bigger and more ready than ever to build the resistance against Trump and the socialist movement!
New York City
There were three days of protests in New York City. 25,000 turned out to a rally organised by Michael Moore on Thursday night (19 January), 1,500 turned out to a protest Socialist Alternative initiated (J20) - which marched to the Trump building at 40 Wall Street to highlight Trump's ties to

the big banks - and up to 500,000 for Saturday's March for Women.
Despite the fact that most colleges in New York were still on winter break, Socialist Students managed a small walkout from two schools on inauguration day, including a high school in Manhattan and winter quarter students from Borough of Manhattan College.
Bay Area
2,000 students were crammed into Sproul Plaza at the UC Berkeley walk-out rally on J20. As one after another speaker condemned Trump's bigoted tide, the crowd got distracted by an invading, chanting army of youth. Several hundred Berkeley High School students had arrived and the college students' roar of approval circled the rally.
The Oakland Women's March on J21 was a huge, popular middle finger to all those that want to turn the clock back further against women's equality.
100,000 women, men and kids, formed a gigantic sea of defiant picket signs. The Socialist Alternative truck got huge approval for demands for free healthcare, unions, unity of the 99% and for the right to choose.
Marchers came up to our truck to take selfies in front of our Join the Socialists banner as the SA truck pumped out its dance music along the march.

Solidarity protests

There were numerous anti-Trump demos in England and Wales on 20 and 21 January in solidarity with mass protests in the US. Socialist Party members mobilised for and organised many of these, as a selection of reports below show (longer versions can be read at socialistparty.org.uk).



Liverpool

London
On 21 January, a sea of people - over 100,000 strong - most of them women, descended on the US embassy in Grosvenor Square to protest against America's newly sworn in sexist, racist, billionaire sworn.
The protest was colourful, lively and determined, certainly not pessimistic. There was an eagerness to discuss ideas. Socialist Party members taking part in the protest had hundreds of conversations about how we can support our brothers and sisters in the States and work to build a wall of resistance to Trump and his reactionary policies.
Crowds cheered speeches from the Socialist Party's open mic which laid the blame for Trump's victory not with ordinary Americans, but with complacent, big business-backed politicians whose neoliberal policies have left millions of Americans struggling to get by.
Hillary Clinton falls into this category. After all, it was her failure to offer anything other than a continuation of the rotten status quo which allowed Trump the space to cynically pose as 'anti-establishment', despite being a paid-up member of the billionaire class.
It was disappointing, therefore, that the official platform at the end of the march included politicians cut from the same cloth as Clinton. Yvette Cooper, whose failed bid for leadership of the Labour Party was an indication of the popularity of those ideas here in Britain, was one of the keynote speakers.
Copies of the Socialist Party were snapped up. Marchers were keen to read reports written by Socialist Alternative (co-thinkers of the Socialist Party in the US) about the movement in America as well as the lessons that can be drawn for the fight against racism, sexism and austerity closer to home.
Claire Laker-Mansfield

Coventry

Earlier in the day Socialist Students at Warwick University initiated a protest as part of joint action between Socialist Students in the UK and USA, along with the Sindicato de Estudiantes (Students Union) in Spain and CEDEP (Committee for the Defence of Public Education) in Mexico.
Speakers from Unison, NUT, Coventry TUC, the Socialist Party and Momentum all spoke in support of the growing global movement against Trump.
We need to fight not only Trump but the system that created him. That requires socialist policies to challenge the rule of capitalism - a system where eight people own as much wealth as half the world's population.
Coventry Socialist Party members



London photo Paul Mattsson

Leicester

"Dump Trump - racist Trump! Dump Trump - sexist Trump!" was chanted by more than 50 people gathered in the freezing cold at the Clock Tower in Leicester on 20 January.
The link between fighting sexism and capitalism was made by one protester: "Trump's success was a failure of the Democratic Party. Hillary Clinton openly represented Wall Street and big business rather than the interests of ordinary women. The movement around Bernie Sanders shows the mood for a socialist alternative to the current corrupt system."
Caroline Vincent

Leeds

Around 1,500 people marched through Leeds city centre. It was comprised largely of women but also had support from a diverse mixture of Leeds residents and others from around Yorkshire.
The protest began with a large rally which called for people to resist his presidency. Amy Cousins, who spoke on behalf of the Socialist Party, argued that the only way to stop Trump's pro-billionaire agenda and to defend women and immigrant communities, is to organise and build a new party of working and middle class people in the US, armed with a socialist programme.
James Ellis

Southampton

Around 200 energised and angry women, men and children gathered at the Bargate in Southampton.
Maggie Fricker, from Southampton Socialist party, said in her speech: "Women's reproductive rights in particular are being targeted by the reactionary right. Trump has promised to nominate a Supreme Court judge who has plans to destroy abortion rights in the US."
And around the world foreign aid will be withdrawn from any organisations who give women pregnancy advice - which will have a catastrophic effect on women's health.
This is only the start of mass resistance. Last year saw huge protests around the world to defend and extend abortion rights.
Women, workers, the poor and downtrodden, immigrants, refugees - we need to stand together, to organise, to protest, take strike action, to occupy... to demand and extend our rights."



Salford

ShIPLEY

Around 1,500 people joined a march in Shipley, West Yorkshire. The march was called by Shipley's 'Feminist Zealots' a reference to a derogatory comment made by local MP and Trump supporter, Philip Davies.
While organisers said the demo wasn't about the Tory MP, a number of protesters brought placards aimed at him, as well as at Trump. Many expressed their anger at the way the comments of individuals like Davies and Trump can legitimise sexist behaviour.
Socialist Party members from Bradford brought along a 'Dump Trump' banner. We ran out of the several hundred leaflets we had printed, and also sold many copies of the Socialist.
Iain Dalton



Warwick

Iain Dalton

Read more online at socialistparty.org.uk

DEFIANT MOOD AT NORTH TYNESIDE STP CONSULTATION

William Jarrett and Tim Wall
Newcastle Socialist Party



You're shutting two hospitals. There's no mention of that in your fancy graphs

A public 'engagement' meeting hosted by North Tyneside's Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), conducted by CCG chair Dr John Matthews and Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STP) lead officer Mark Adams, was held on 16 January.

Many participants were local people rightly concerned by the planned £22 billion of Tory cuts. Already, North Tyneside's A&E services have been relocated 15 miles away to Cramlington, an area well away from the main area of population.

And three walk-in centres are being merged into one - a massive blow to local services

that Save North Tyneside NHS is campaigning to stop from happening in October.

Socialist Party members have played a leading role in the establishment and growth of the Save North Tyneside NHS. In just over two months the campaign has benefited from local and regional media attention, holding two public meetings, and welcoming new activists to its ranks.

STPs rub salt in an open wound, enraging the community. We re-

ceived applause and cheers when we told Dr. Matthews: "You're shutting two acute hospitals. There's no mention of that in your fancy graphs. And, what happens if we just say no? We'll oppose every cut, and we need Labour councillors to refuse to sign off this plan."

Socialist Party activist John Hoare was greeted with similar enthusiasm. He explained Britain is the sixth wealthiest nation on Earth, and workers pay for a crisis created by establishment politicians and their partners in banking and business, insisting "cancel PFI contracts instead!"

A BMA junior doctor and a Unison regional organiser both said their unions had not been properly consulted.

The campaign continues, with another public meeting on 11 February in North Shields library.



photos Paul Mattsson

Lancashire: Hospital workers protest consultation

Becci Heagney
North West Socialist Party regional organiser



The three options to choose from all include making cuts!

NHS England arranged meetings on 16 January at short notice at Calderstones Hospital in Whalley, Lancashire, to consult on the future of its services. These meetings run alongside an online consultation. However, the three options to choose from all include making cuts!

Despite millions being spent on state of the art buildings in 2007 and 2013 at the site, NHS England is now proposing closing all

or most of them and building new hospitals in a different location. It is widely believed that this is "privatisation by stealth" and that many jobs and most of the services will be lost.

Calderstones has forensic medical beds for people with learning

disabilities who have either been in contact with the criminal justice system, retained under the Mental Health Act or pose a risk to themselves or others. The number of these beds will be cut as part of the so-called "homes not hospitals" pledge by the NHS.

Unison members at the hospital held a fantastic protest outside the consultation meeting, before going in to make their views known. Now workers will need to fight for a genuine consultation, to defend the service and their jobs. Part of this struggle will hopefully be a contingent on the national NHS protest on 4 March.

St Austell: STPs attacked

Rob Rooney
Cornwall Socialist Party

"My son was assessed four months ago but is still waiting for a carer," a mother told a packed consultation meeting - the St Austell leg of the Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) public relations tour. The meeting on 16 January brought Cornwall NHS bosses face to face with a tide of discontent which has the potential to grow into a significant movement.

Others among the 80-strong crowd highlighted the need to end rationing of adult services. While St Austell Socialist Party pointed out the need to end the hemorrhaging of NHS funds to Private Finance Initiative (PFI) parasites, such as Virgin Healthcare and the drug companies.

We challenged the bureaucrats to end privatisation and PFI contracts in Cornwall but the answer was evasive. The range of concerns brought up - from the closure of Fowey Community Hospital, to the recent scandal of elderly abuse at a private-owned St Austell care home, to the miserable working conditions of homecare workers - illustrates what a mess

NHS services are in Cornwall. The people of the county can have no confidence in the STP process. Buzz words such as "transformation" and "integration" and "sustainability" are fooling nobody.



None of the NHS's objectives can be reached if millions of pounds are cut from the budget

The three objectives, we were told, were to improve health and well-being, improve quality of service and increase financial stability. None of those objectives can be reached if millions of pounds are cut from the budget and the drain of funds for over-priced capital projects and profit-driven services continues.

Over the next few weeks St Austell Socialist Party will be publicising the 4 March national demo in London.



PAIGNTON: ORGANISING AGAINST HOSPITAL CLOSURE

Nick Slater
South Devon Socialist Party

Local residents, hospital workers and activists, angry at the possible closure of Paignton Hospital, packed a brilliant and passionate Save Our Health Services (SOHS) meeting on 17 January.

The NHS workers in particular feel the crisis most harshly every day. They simply cannot work under the horrendous condi-

tions that the Tory government is inflicting upon our hospitals and health care services.

One brave nurse described the nightly pressures of being so understaffed that it is bringing workers to their knees and putting them in incredibly compromised in dangerous situations. A humanitarian crisis? I'd say it is.

The meeting evolved into a new branch South Devon SOHS and I would ask everyone to get involved.



SURREY: SAVE OUR FIRE STATION

Paul Couchman
Save Our Services in Surrey and Staines Socialist Party

Over 200 firefighters, local residents, anti-cuts campaigners and their families gathered outside Staines fire station on 21 January to shout a loud 'NO!' to Surrey county council's (SCC) plans to close it.

Firefighters pointed out that the Staines fire engine is the busiest engine in the county. And that the local borough of Spelthorne has the busiest airport in Europe; the high-

est concentration of tower blocks; the worst record of fire deaths in Surrey, and many more high risk factors.

SCC initially refused to hold a public meeting but public pressure has forced them into calling a meeting at the Staines council offices on 7 February.

SCC is determined to make cuts (see page 4) but Save Our Services in Surrey (SOSIS) does not accept slashing public services or massive rates increases.

As I pointed out: "This government, and its representatives on

local councils, have made cut after cut in public services... The trade unions, alongside residents associations and community groups, need to draw a line in the sand and say: no more cuts."

The protest pledged to build the opposition to the proposed immediate closure of Staines station and to campaign vigorously for Spelthorne to continue to have two full-time appliances.

Anyone who would like to help SOSIS should visit www.sosis.org.uk or email Paul at saveourservicesurrey@gmail.com.



photo Paul Mattsson

South London march against community centre closures

Jimmy Lapin
Lambeth Socialist Party

150 south London residents marched to oppose the closures of their community centres on 21 January. Hyde Housing Group plans to close centres in Stockwell and Kennington in Lambeth, and seven others across London.

Hyde says it can no longer afford to subsidise the centres despite an operating profit of £95 million last year.

Lively working class demonstrators bought us out of copies of the

Socialist. Local Socialist Party member Steve Nally spoke after Labour councillor Alex Bigham.

Steve welcomed Bigham's attendance, but pointed out Lambeth's cutting Labour councillors are behaving like "red Tories," which marchers applauded.

Next

The march is only the beginning of the campaign as residents seek a judicial review to the closures in Stockwell and Kennington, and plan further lobbies of Hyde Housing head office at London Bridge. A petition launched after Christmas

The resignation of Blairite Labour MP Tristram Hunt, to take up a plum job at the V&A Museum in London, has led to a byelection on 23 February in his Stoke-on-Trent Central constituency. See socialistparty.org.uk for report.



photo FT/Creative Commons

already has 2,500 signatures.

The affected estates in south London were stock-transferred to Hyde 20 years ago. Part of that deal was the building of the new centre at Stockwell, which is only 16 years old, and the upkeep of both centres in Lambeth.

This will form the basis of the legal challenge to Hyde brought by local residents. The wider context of the closures is that housing associations now see themselves as property developers and speculators rather than providers of social housing. Services such as community centres are being trimmed as profits soar.



Bernard (right) being honoured at his retirement party in 2010 by CWU deputy general secretary Tony Kearns

Obituary: Bernard Roome 1947-2017

Alec Thraves

Bernard Roome, a member of the Socialist Party and trade union activist, has sadly passed away after a long illness.

Bernard spent decades as a prominent Militant and Socialist Party member in Swansea, serving for many years as branch secretary of the Communication Workers Union (CWU). He was also the longstanding secretary of Swansea Trades Council.

Bernard was a formidable trade union negotiator, a staunch defender of his members and a principled socialist.

Passionate

To say that Bernard didn't 'suffer fools gladly' would be an understatement in the extreme! The employers felt the sharpness of his tongue most frequently because he fought passionately for his trade union members' terms and conditions. But right-wing trade union bureaucrats who collaborated with them also felt the hot breath of Bernard's fury.

My own special memories include the 30 years we spent together as delegates from Swansea Trade Council to the annual conferences of the Wales TUC.

The sight of Bernard storming down the aisle to the rostrum to raise a 'point of order' terrified even the most authoritarian president of the Wales TUC. I am certain that comrades at the many conferences of the CWU and its predecessors also remember the exhilarating experience of witnessing Bernard in full flow.

Bernard was a loyal, proud and unflinching member of the Socialist Party and would always be to the forefront in selling the Socialist.

His political and trade union home was undoubtedly in Swansea but he also left his unique mark both across Wales and Britain as a respected trade unionist and socialist, serving on the general council of the Wales TUC and the national executive of the CWU.

Like many of our most prominent Militant activists Bernard was expelled from Gower Labour Party, during Neil Kinnoch's witch-hunt, which he regarded as a 'badge of honour' - defending his socialist principles against the political minnows that expelled him.

As expected, he also played a key role in the tremendous anti-poll tax victory and as chair of the Welsh Federation of Anti-Poll Tax Unions was a commanding public representative for that movement.

After retiring, Bernard moved to Surrey to join his CWU comrade and partner Grace, before they eventually retired to Spain where it was hoped the more favourable climate could assist Bernard's deteriorating health.

In the Valencia area, Bernard still assisted in distributing our leaflets on demonstrations and participated as much as possible in the work of the Socialist Party's sister organisation in Spain.

Tragically, Bernard and Grace's time together in their new home has ended far too early. We send our deepest condolences to Grace, the rest of Bernard's family, as well as his many comrades and friends.

The Socialist Party and trade union movement mourn the passing of Bernard but we will also celebrate his life by continuing to agitate and organise for the socialist future he fought so hard to achieve.

This obituary can be read in full on socialistparty.org.uk

Non-fiction review - Speaking Out

Ed Balls: 'Speaking Out' for capitalism

Derek McMillan
Brighton Socialist Party

Ed Balls has a conversational style of writing which makes this book easy to read. However his view that there is nothing wrong with capitalism will not make him any friends in the workers' movement.

He elicits sympathy for his battle against his stammer. His view that anyone who disagrees with him is a communist will probably elicit less sympathy.

He criticises the Oxford Labour Club for discussing whether to have a hammer and sickle on its banner, and complains they rejected his openly pro-capitalist stance.

The book seems to be more significant for its omissions than for its content. It gives some interesting and amusing anecdotes from the point of view of one of Gordon Brown's henchmen.

But it glosses over the role of New Labour in turning the Labour Party from one promoting peace and public ownership into one promoting war and privatisation.

The Blairites wanted Labour and Tories to be as different as 'left Twix' and 'right Twix'.

He talks of his and Brown's "distress" and "disquiet" over Iraq. He fails to explain why they did damn all to publicly oppose Blair's bloodlust and subservience to George W Bush.

As shadow education secretary he developed a useful skill. Every teachers' organisation in the country was opposed to Sats and academies. Balls managed to (metaphorically) stick chewing gum in his ears every time they spoke to him.

He coined the phrase "every child matters" - except the children of Iraq and Afghanistan, who were bombed from a great height. Clearly they did not matter.

Balls's sycophantic grovelling before the royal family is disgusting. He talks about the privilege of meeting the queen, the richest tax dodger in the land. He also expresses his (probably unique) view that Prince Charles's ventures into politics were of any use whatsoever.

Stick to the dancing, Balls. As Craig Revel Horwood might say, "New Labour was a disaster, dahling."



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Former shadow chancellor Ed Balls lost his seat to a Tory in 2015



The Socialist Inbox

Do you have something to say?

Send your news, views and criticism in no more than 250 words to editors@socialistparty.org.uk - or if you're not online, Socialist Inbox, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD



74-year-old Shirley Walsh had her heating cut off and couldn't afford to replace it

Pensioner poverty

A headline article from the Hull Daily Mail (13 January) exposes the cold, callous brutality of the Tories and their system.

74-year-old pensioner Shirley Walsh, having had her gas supply disconnected due to a leaking gas pipe on her property, was unable to afford the repair bill. If it wasn't for the generosity of neighbours providing hot water bottles and electric heaters Shirley would have most probably frozen to death by now!

Compare Shirley's plight to the OAP residing at Buckingham Palace who is having a £369 million upgrade paid for by the taxpayer. The millionaire press owners can only appeal to the generosity of the public to help get Shirley's gas supply reconnected.

Instead of capitulating to the right wing, it's high time Corbyn grabbed the bull by the horns, kicked out the Blairites and mounted a massive, bold, socialist campaign, including the nationalisation of the entire energy industry.

Yours whose blood is about to boil,
Tony Davison
Hull

Tax trouble

Who said "cutting the corporation tax rate to 17% makes for bad politics and an uncertain economic return"? The Socialist? The Guardian? Wrong and wrong. In fact, it's the free-market fundamentalists of the Economist!

As they point out, corporation tax was 52% in the 1970s, and Teresa May is now threatening to take it down to as low

as 10% to woo business if Brexit terms are harsh.

But for the Economist this causes a headache. While they oppose the 'burden' of 'interference' in the market such as the Tories' fake 'living wage', they're not stupid enough to miss that the tax cuts under the Tory-Liberal coalition "deprived the government of £8 billion a year"! The further announced cuts will "cost another £3 billion or so a year"!

According to their neoliberal theory, tax cuts boost investment to kick-start economic growth and job creation. But the Economist confirms what the Socialist has noted for years: "The profitability of private-sector firms is at its highest level since 1998, yet capital spending is stagnant."

For the Economist this is puzzling. But the Socialist has a simple solution - scrap the profit motive by bringing the key sectors of the economy into public ownership under democratic workers' control and management.

The ordinary people can decide how to invest to satisfy everyone's needs, rather than those of the 1%.

Iain Dalton
Leeds

Private profiteers

Brexit 'hard' or 'soft', it won't matter - without socialist action, the only people who are going to be made to suffer will be the working class.

Many years ago we were told gas was going to be free because loads of it had been discovered in the North Sea.

Many years on it has been anything but free.

And now we are running out fast, with those who have made the most profit from our gas allowed to move onto other, more dangerous ways of getting their profit as gas exploration moves inland, under our houses, under our park's and natural sites of beauty; licences galore given freely to the future polluters they call the 'fracking' companies so they can make cracking profits and leave us all to clean up the mess they install.

Post Office privatisation is coming thick and fast with profits in sight for more capitalist leeches to amass, as they wait to plunder a service being driven under by past profiteers who stand guilty of the wilful destruction of a once world-class service, built by the many only to be destroyed by the few.

Of those who look to profit from the Post Office demise we do have an insight, from their workers' eyes, that tells a story of legalised robbery, punitive punishments; money stolen at the drop of a hat, from workers' salary leaving them very little to feed even the cat - due to the littlest of mistakes, workers are made to pay.

If there is such a thing as paid slavery then it's being practiced throughout the UK today.

Rebel with a Cause
Rotherham

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.

CAPITALIST MYTH-BUSTER!

SARAH WRACK answers:

Don't we need competition to spur on progress?

In many ways capitalist competition is a lie. Just look at the huge monopoly on the mobile phone market held by Apple and Samsung between them. And for the last 15 years those two companies have been waging legal battles over patent infringements as they continually copy from each other.

They are able to 'compete' partly because they can cope with the costs of such legal battles - amounting to billions of dollars. So it seems it's the ability to enforce cooperation and the sharing of information, rather than freedom of competition, which creates the best mobile phones!

And individuals are not equally free to compete and achieve either. Those with money - and the education, health and networks that come with that - have more than a step up on those with less. If anything, socialism would in fact balloon the 'competition' because huge numbers of those who previously had no chance of reaching their full potential would be able to.

After all, it's not companies that further things but people. And people who are well fed with nutritious food, well educated in reasonably sized classes, and not constantly stressed by the possibility of losing their home or job, are much more likely to be able to achieve great things. All of those things would be offered by a socialist plan that put need before profit.

Science

Most people would instinctively recognise that the most efficient way of pursuing any scientific advance is by pooling all knowledge and expertise in the field.

Instead, we have ten different companies which have worked out one piece of the puzzle and then desperately try to keep it secret from the others. Nowhere is this clearer

and more perverse than in the pharmaceutical industry.

Scientists have warned of an approaching 'antibiotic apocalypse' because of growing resistance to the drugs. It has been 30 years since the last new class of antibiotics was released - because big pharma can't see a profit in research and development. No progress there, despite plenty of capitalist competition.

And sometimes the deadly role of the industry goes much further.

In 2001, 39 companies took legal action against South Africa to stop the government importing cheap versions of patented antiretroviral drugs at the height of the HIV/AIDS crisis in the country.

So in fact competition between private profit-hunters holds back human development. Socialism, in contrast, is the only way to allow it to blossom.

Human beings have always striven to understand more about our world, to test ourselves and to improve our lives. Long before capitalism existed people looked up to the stars and wanted to understand, built mechanisms to create more food and to make their homes safer, created new and improved ways of communicating, and so on.

Achievements

In a socialist society - one which takes the majority of the economy into public ownership and democratically plans production to meet the needs of the population - these kinds of achievements would benefit humanity as a whole, not just those with the greatest means.

People could still be proud of themselves and those they know, have a profile as the one who solves a certain problem or is best at something, and be rewarded for that.

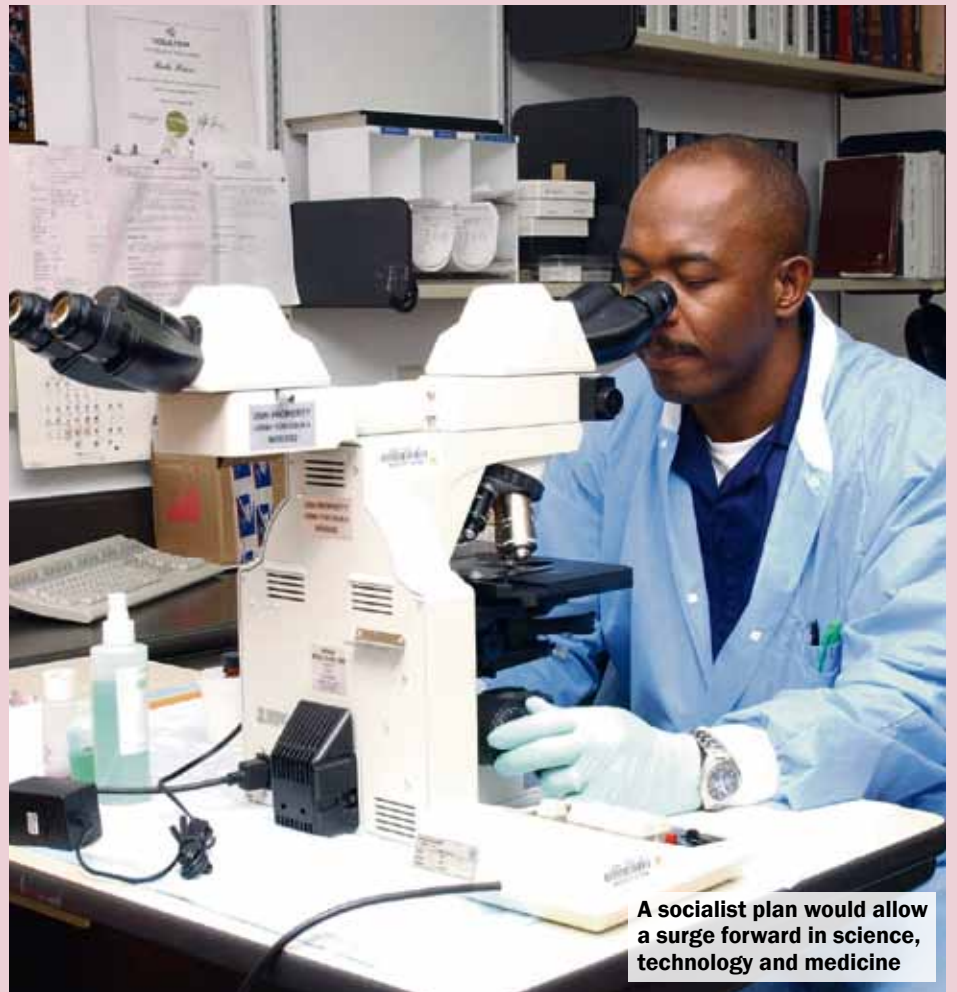
But that isn't the meaning of competition under capitalism. Under capitalism competition means those at the top have obscene amounts and those at the bottom have none. It means duplication and waste.

Why do we need hundreds of



Vladimir Lenin, one of the leaders of the 1917 Russian revolution

“ ”
Competition between private profit-hunters holds back progress



A socialist plan would allow a surge forward in science, technology and medicine

brands of washing powder that do the same thing? A socialist plan could produce one range of washing powders which people decide are best at the job and least damaging to the environment.

Russian revolution

Consider the impact of the 1917 Russian revolution. Russia was an economically backward country - the majority of the population lived in the countryside and could not read or write, they were ruled over by neo-feudal landlords in a system of inefficient small scale farming.

And yet just 40 years later - a micro-second on the scale of human history - the Soviet Union beat the US to launching the first satellite into space. A planned economy, even with the huge distortions and limitations of the Stalinist bureaucracy, was able to massively speed up the 'progress' of that area of the world.

This also partly explains why most of the biggest advances in recent history have actually come through research and development by public institutions rather than private companies.

The World Wide Web, for example, was created by Tim Berners-Lee while working at CERN (European Organisation for Nuclear Research) - a facility funded mainly by EU governments.

GPS technology was developed by a group of scientists working

for the US defense department. Of course these public achievements aren't used effectively for public good but instead are exploited by the private sector to boost its profits.

Real progress for the 99% is progress for all. Under capitalism all progress is exploited and distorted for the bosses' purposes.

Technological advances should make jobs easier and working hours shorter, not increase unemployment and inequality. Only a democratic socialist plan can offer that future.

Others in this series will include questions like:

Can't we just vote for different politicians to make things fairer?

Don't private companies create jobs and wealth?

Is there still a working class in the 21st century?

Aren't people too greedy for socialism?

Won't socialism crush creativity and make us all the same?

Can parties really be democratic?

Read more about the Russian revolution at 1917revolution.org



CWI stands in Northern Ireland elections

The Socialist Party (CWI Ireland) began its election campaign following the fall of the sectarian-dominated Stormont government in Northern Ireland. The CWI is standing candidates as part of Labour Alternative, a cross-community electoral alliance. Labour Alternative is demanding abortion rights and marriage equality, blocked by the sectarian parties. Here they are plastering Belfast with their iconic posters. photo Alex Kane

Socialists gather in Latin America



From 27-29 January socialists will gather for the CWI's Latin American school hosted by Liberdade, Socialismo e Revolução in Brazil. The highlight will be the Saturday rally learning lessons for the left today in the Russian revolution's 100th anniversary. The meeting is glad to welcome socialists from the USA, Europe, as well as Brazil and the rest of Latin America. Brazil's new illegitimate right-wing government has wasted no time in attacking workers. But this has provoked an equal resistance of occupations, strikes and demonstrations across the country. This event is another important step in the unification discussions between socialist organisations, CWI and Izquierda Revolucionaria. photo below Fernando Frazão/ABR/Creative Commons



Rosa launched in Belgium

The CWI in Belgium (LSP/PSL) has initiated a new campaign, ROSA (Resistance against Oppression, Sexism and Austerity). See facebook.com/campagneROSA for more details. On 21 January millions marched around world, a majority of them women, against Trump and his sexist policies. The tidal wave of anger demonstrated the opportunity to build a movement against sexism and the capitalist system that promotes it. Read about the protests on pages 8-9.

INDIA STRUGGLE AGAINST LAND GRAB IN PUNE

Socialists and villagers wage tireless battle



photo Ekta Parishad/Creative Commons

Venkatesh Harale
New Socialist Alternative (CWI in India)

The plundering of natural resources is a major form of capitalist exploitation. Land, in particular, acquires an important place in such exploitation mainly because of its speculative value. India, especially in the past 25 years of neoliberal onslaught, has witnessed the massive plunder of land under the guise of major infrastructure projects. Nonetheless, such land-grabbing has provoked mass resistance movements. New Socialist Alternative in Pune, is very actively involved in one such struggle - that against the proposed Pune International Airport. In October 2016, the government announced the use of the site of Purandar (eastern Pune) to build an international airport. This announcement came as a shock to the residents of Purandar and soon they started to protest against it.

New Socialist Alternative members from Pune have visited the affected villages and conducted multiple meetings with the inhabitants. One of the first questions we had to deal with was assessing the need for such a project.

Plunder
In the case of Purandar airport, the government initially proposed that around 1,200 hectares of land would be required. Then it was raised to 2,000 and now the requirement has become 3,000 hectares. Yet the larger Mumbai airport has an area of 750 hectares. It is crystal clear that it not only an airport that is the aim here. The excess land is going to be used for capitalist plunder. All this is specifically for the elite who can bear the cost of flights regularly. The original residents of this place - the farmers and their

descendants - are going to have no place here. The villagers at Purandar started protests straight after the announcement about the airport. A few of the villages passed resolutions against the project. However, as observed in many such struggles, as things proceed further, the state uses various tactics, from



The state-corporate nexus

Infrastructure projects motivated by capitalist interests are implemented under a 'public private partnership' model, which translates into a state-corporate nexus. The task of acquiring land, causing the displacement of its owners, is carried out by the government in the name of 'public interest', and the land acquired is then handed over to capitalists for the project to be carried out. Often, such a transfer of land ownership to a corporation is part of a much larger real estate game. A fraction of land acquired for industrial zones or infrastructure projects is actually used for the stated purposes while the rest is used either for commercial or speculative transactions. Such speculative transactions see developers selling land at prices a hundred times more than the amount paid to the original owners. In the case of the Yamuna Expressway, in northern India, these lands have been used to build expensive townships, elite shopping malls and five-star hotels, multiplexes for entertainment and also cricket and hockey stadiums. Moreover, this land, acquired under 'public interest', was used to build a Formula One racing track! How do investors raise the capital for such projects? Do they do it by digging into their own pockets? Such investments often ride on a debt bubble. In India, such investments are

done by borrowing mainly from public sector banks. When these projects turn out to be white elephants, the loans are never paid off. Governments, servile to the capitalists, then write off these loans, transfer them into 'non-performing assets' or restructure them. They are rarely paid back. Who pays for this? The common people! This is done through various indirect taxes. A recent example is of the central right-wing BJP government waiving around \$700 million loans for the corporation that includes liquor baron Vijay Mallya who, facing fraud and money laundering charges, fled the country some months ago.

cajoling to repression to scupper such struggles. One of the most powerful tactics they use is throwing big buck figures in compensation packages for land. These things could easily wear down such struggles. Hence, sustaining them requires providing leadership with correct strategy and tactics. New Socialist Alternative stepped into the struggle. We explained the predatory nature of the capitalist interests behind such projects to the villagers and advised them to form a committee of affected villagers to coordinate the struggle. We has played a leading role in forming a committee in Pune city that has involved different left organisations. New Socialist Alternative members have arranged meetings from village to village to discuss the impact with everyone affected. Sometimes, the meetings have lasted even until midnight. We, along with both the committees, gave a call in the affected villages to unite in a rally at the collector's office to show

our refusal to give up land. This solidarity has given confidence to the villagers to go forward in struggle. In the early stages of our involvement, the administration could successfully push for a survey by throwing in some false promises. Villagers realised this later and then together we stopped the survey at certain sites. Emboldened, this was replicated in other villages. "extremist" organisations. But, since we are working closely with the villagers, such tactics have been counterproductive. Together we are taking the struggle forward. Full article - see socialistworld.net

New website launched - 1917revolution.org

SOCIALISM 2017 REVOLUTION

Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!

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Socialist Party

What we stand for

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!



photo Paul Mattsson

The NHS crisis is growing by the day. Demand is growing but the NHS is facing huge cuts. For example the total number of overnight hospital beds in England fell from 144,455 in 2010 to 129,458 in the middle of 2016. And in some places whole hospitals are under threat. NHS campaigner **Hugh Caffrey** reports on the fightback to save Liverpool Women's Hospital.

The threatened closure of Liverpool Women's Hospital has stirred up a storm of opposition. Barely 20 years old, this much-loved institution is under threat.

Those wanting to close it argue that it's out of date to have a separate women's hospital and that it would be better for women who need transferring to the Royal Liverpool Hospital if the women's hospital was next to the Royal.

These excuses aren't even paper thin. Transfers account for less than 1% of those using the women's hospital, so while of course the 1% must be looked after, what about the 99% who benefit from being in a standalone hospital that currently is well-maintained, not massively over-stretched or under-staffed?

The same can't be said for the Royal, which is about one mile up the road. And as it turns out, the £100 million 'promised' to build a new women's hospital next to the Royal doesn't actually exist.

In other words, as we've warned all along, this is a cost-cutting measure linked to the local and national funding crises in the NHS coupled with the plans for centralisation and privatisation. 'Moving' the hospital means closing it.

Massive protest is forcing Liverpool's political establishment to belatedly oppose the closure, which in turn has thrown obstacles in the way of the whole Cheshire and Merseyside STP cuts plan. The hospital certainly isn't saved yet but the fightback is having an effect.

The next event is to lobby the hospital governors, followed by more protests and public meetings. We will continue fighting, inspired because we can win.

Similar storms are developing elsewhere in Cheshire and Merseyside against other threatened hospital closures. Devastating cuts are intended for our NHS, but it may well be that the Tories have over-reached themselves and could be compelled to retreat.

We aim to build a massive turnout for the 4 March national demonstration and from there an even bigger resistance in every town and city to every threatened cut.

■ **Lobby the women's hospital governors**
- **Wednesday 25 January, 4.30pm outside Liverpool Women's Hospital**

■ **Save our NHS demo - Saturday 4 March, 12 noon, Tavistock Square, London** *now backed by the BMA doctors' union*

NHS SOS

■ Save Liverpool Women's Hospital!

■ 4 March
national demo

