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# the Socialist

Formerly **Militant**

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# MARCH TO SAVE #OURNHS

**Sam Morecroft**

Sheffield South Socialist Party

**Our NHS is collapsing. How dare Prime Minister Theresa May deny claims by the British Red Cross last month that the NHS is experiencing a humanitarian crisis?**

After years of deliberate privatisation, funding cuts and outright sabotage under

New Labour, Lib Dem and Tory governments, the NHS is chronically understaffed, underfunded and under-resourced.

One in six A&E departments in the UK is at risk of closure. Senior NHS officials have warned that elderly and disabled people could face being denied hip and knee surgery because of funding shortages.

Nurses who speak to Socialist Party members at our campaign stalls frequently tell of being left alone to care for whole wards of patients due to staff shortages.

And now we're heading toward a two-tier health system. A GP surgery in Bournemouth will allow paying patients to jump the queue to be seen and have longer appointments.

Because of savage Tory spending cuts in social care, discharges of hospital patients are often delayed because there is nowhere that elderly, disabled or chronically ill people can be safely discharged to.

Totally inadequate care services up and down the country means that the pressure on hospitals is increasing even more dramatically.

It's now clear to everybody that the Tories are hell-bent on wrecking our NHS and selling it off to their big business mates. They don't think people like us should get free healthcare and they are doing everything they can to dismantle the NHS.

It's up to us to stop them. On 4 March, we

will march in London to save our NHS. This demonstration, called by a coalition of local health campaigns, is now officially being supported by Unison, the trade union which organises most health workers. But we need more.

Trade unions and NHS campaigners need to build demonstrations, strikes, direct action and community campaigns to stop the Tory wreckers in their tracks. Let's be clear, we can get rid of this weak, divided Tory government - and we must!

■ **NHS campaign report - see page 4**  
■ **#ItsOurNHS national demo**  
- **Saturday 4 March, 12pm,**  
**Tavistock Square, London, WC1**

■ Councils set budgets amid 40% cut ■ Surrey Tories get 'sweetheart deal'

# COUNCIL CUTS CAN BE FOUGHT - AND THEY MUST BE



## What we think

During February many council budget-setting meetings are taking place across the country, slashing millions more pounds off vital services.

Birmingham council, the biggest in England, has already cut around £590 million from its annual budget since 2010 and is expecting to cut another £180 million by 2021. The chief executive of that presently Labour-run council warned: "We are fast reaching the point where there could be catastrophic consequences for some people." This is an understatement, as many of the most vulnerable people have already suffered terrible consequences. Far fewer elderly people are receiving needed help, the number of people sleeping on the city's streets has quadrupled and children's and youth services have been callously cut to the bone.

The same shattering picture is seen almost everywhere, following the 40% real-terms reduction in core funding to councils from government over the last five years. This year the knife isn't just slicing in but is being twisted, because the government is allowing councils the leeway to impose an extra 3% increase in council tax to cover for cuts in social care.

This brings the total possible increase in council tax without holding a local referendum to 4.99%. However, while squeezing household finances further, it would be nowhere near enough to adequately fund social care in most areas.

### Surrey

How ironic it is that the only opposition to this scenario that has achieved media prominence in recent weeks has been from the Tory leader of Surrey county council, David Hodge. To put pressure on the government he announced a shock plan to hold a local referendum on a 15% council tax rise.

The referendum was later suddenly called off and Jeremy Corbyn managed to successfully draw attention to a secret deal that Hodge appeared to have reached with Theresa May's government. Corbyn wrong-footed May in

parliament by questioning her about the content of text messages mistakenly sent by Hodge to the wrong person, which indicated that a 'sweetheart deal' had been struck.

Hodge had no doubt been using his weight as the leader of the Conservative group in the Local Government Association and the fact that two leading Tory government ministers are Surrey MPs: Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt and Chancellor Philip Hammond.

Certainly Hodge impressed anti-Corbyn Guardian columnist Polly Toynbee, who wrote: "Over recent years I have admired David Hodge's fearless crescendo of complaint against his own government... That sets him apart from the craven mass of Tory council leaders obediently wielding the axe... Hodge might never have intended his referendum, but he has used every lever, including journalists like me, to rattle the government's cage: no harm in a bit of cage-rattling in a good cause."

But what about the 'craven mass' of Labour council leaders who are 'obediently wielding the axe'? Anyone who 'sets themselves apart' from them has only received Toynbee's disdain and criticism. And why can't

Jeremy Corbyn draw on more than a mini rebellion by a Tory council leader to fuel his challenge in parliament to the cuts? Corbyn and John McDonnell have not yet supported the idea of Labour councillors conducting a much more meaningful and effective rebellion by refusing to pass on the Tory funding cuts. Instead, they didn't even oppose a rule change at Labour's conference that banned Labour councillors from voting against cuts budgets agreed by their Labour groups.

### How to beat the Tories

However, there was a welcome crack recently in the mainstream media that usually choruses that Labour councillors 'have no choice' but to make cuts. The Independent's website carried an article by a contributor, Matthew Turner, titled: "Forget 'sweetheart deals' - this is how Labour councils can beat the Tories at their own game." Turner asked: "Why should Labour accept the cuts devolved to their local authorities?... It's time that Labour councils resisted a reckless and failing economic policy by refusing to implement cuts devolved to them from central government."



photo Paul Mattsson



photo Alison Hill



photo Paul Mattsson

# CORBYN NEEDS TO STAND UP TO BREXIT REBELS

■ Fight for a mass workers' party



## What we think

While most Labour MPs have no problem with defying the large-scale opposition of their constituents to austerity (see other article), it's a different matter for a section of them on the issue of the EU referendum.

Many of the 52 rebel Labour MPs who refused to obey the leadership's three line whip on voting for the triggering of Article 50 (the start of the two year Brexit process), referred to a majority 'remain' vote in their constituency as justification. Among shadow ministers who resigned their posts was Clive Lewis, who has been known as a Corbyn supporter. 60% of Lewis' Norwich South constituency voted 'remain'.

Other reasons clearly lay behind the decision of many of them: to act as good representatives for the 'remain' desire of much of big business; or to create more disarray and instability for Jeremy Corbyn to reduce his authority and further destabilise his position. It was yet another indication of the determination of the Blairites and others to never reconcile themselves to Corbyn's leadership but rather to wear him down and as soon as possible force him out.

Ten front bench ministers and three Labour whips were among those who defied the whip. Unfortunately, in the face of these multi-faceted and concerted attacks, Jeremy Corbyn once again reacted mildly, in a continued attempt at impossible reconciliation. Focussing on the issue of the majority 'remain' constituencies, he expressed 'understanding' for the dilemma of the MPs concerned. But the electorate of those constituencies, as with other areas, voted first and foremost for a party rather than an individual and the overall policies of that party are what fundamentally matters.

If the Labour Party was to unite behind a policy of exposing the interests of big business in wanting to stay in the EU, of forcefully opposing the racism of the likes of Ukip and of calling for a Brexit on a pro-working class, in-

ternationalist and socialist basis, it could attract support from a substantial layer of those who voted 'remain'.

Although it won't last, the Tories are managing to stage a show of relative unity behind Theresa May at present, putting the class interests of the top 1% in society a firm first. Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell will only be able to turn around Labour's electoral fortunes by placing the class interests of working class and middle class people as the sole driving force of the party and unifying - through democratic debate and discussion - all those prepared to back that position.

Continued efforts to placate those who adopt policies reflecting the interests of the super-rich owners of the top corporations is the road to ruin, as the Socialist Party has repeatedly argued.

### Draining away

On that basis there will be a further draining away out of Labour from the influx of new members who had hopes in Corbyn, those hundreds of thousands will no longer be there as a means of carrying through mandatory reselection of MPs, and the party will continue the process of haemorrhaging electoral support. The Brexit vote at root was an expression of great anger and disillusionment towards all the main pro-capitalist parties, Labour included, due to the decades-long erosion of living standards they have delivered.

New left formations like Podemos in Spain and left individuals like Jean Luc Melancon in France are attracting support away from former traditional workers' parties that have moved to the right. The new formations at this stage have got undeveloped democratic structures and draw only in a limited way on socialist ideas. However, they show that there is growing interest in a left alternative that can be built to challenge capitalism's inability to offer a decent future for the overwhelming majority in society.

## Socialism Today

The Socialist Party's magazine

### February issue includes:

■ **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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# Thousands march to defend heart centre



photo Steve Score  
Charles Wheeler  
Leicester Socialist Party

“Do not be debilitated by those who tell you protests and marches don't mean anything,” Unite General Secretary Len McCluskey told Glenfield Children's Heart Unit campaigners.

Despite snow and freezing temperatures, 2,000 people - including patients and their families, trade unionists and members of the public - took to the streets of Leicester on 11 February in the second march against the proposed closure of the unit in four months.

NHS England has insisted the plans have nothing to do with cuts. But a recent “outstanding” rating by inspectors, adding to years of consistent praise for the centre, shows that their proposal does not make sense. The heart unit is on target to meet ‘standards’ - the targets set by NHS England.

But the public hasn't been fooled. Support for the campaign has grown. Jess Whitehouse, holding her baby Elijah as she spoke, explained that her son was the youngest person ever to knock on the door of number 10 Downing Street when the 130,000 strong petition was delivered last week. “Without Glenfield he would not be alive today,” she said.

Ashma Fozdar, aunt of Glenfield patient Umayma, reminded the crowd that “it is our NHS. We pay



**We will not accept this. We will fight to the end, and we will win!**

for it. We're the stakeholders, so we have a say.” Every speaker showed the public willingness to fight to protect NHS services.

The Socialist Party argues that the closure of Glenfield children's heart unit cannot be disconnected from the attacks on NHS services across the country by this government. Campaigners collected 70 names of people wanting to go to the national demo to save the NHS on 4 March.

Leicester Socialist Party's Steve Score, whose teenage son was treated at Glenfield, closed the rally, saying: “We will not accept this. We will fight to the end, and we will win!”

A public consultation on the closure plans has started, but there will be just one official public meeting in Leicester during the process, at 5pm on 9 March in a room at the Tigers' Welford Road Stadium. We intend to fill it and surround it with more people protesting outside.

■ You can watch the speeches from Saturday's rally on Leicester Socialist Party's Twitter, @LeicsSocialists

# SOCIALIST STUDENTS: GROWING, BRIMMING WITH CONFIDENCE



Part of the 2017 Socialist Students conference photo Mary Finch



Part of the packed rally photo Socialist Students



Discussing organising school students photo Mary Finch



Debating Brexit photos Mary Finch

**Claire Laker-Mansfield**  
Socialist Students national organiser

Socialist Students conference, which took place on 11-12 February at Birmingham University's Guild of Students, showcased a growing organisation brimming with confidence and enthusiasm.

Around 80 attended over the two days, representing societies at more than 30 different campuses and colleges. The agenda was packed, and every session was filled with lively and thoughtful discussion.

down by the anti-war movement, the conference voted to launch a campaign for student walkouts on 'Day X' - the day this racist, sexist billionaire first arrives in Britain.

As an immediate step, we agreed to make 20 February, when the 'state visit' plans look set to be debated in parliament, a huge day of action, with activity planned on every campus where we are organised.

In opening the conference, Jamie Brackley, of Birmingham University Socialist Students and the national steering committee, highlighted the importance of internationalism, a proud tradition of the socialist movement. This was another theme of the weekend.

The rally on Saturday evening was addressed by Monica Caballero

Gonzalez, deputy general secretary of the Sindicato de Estudiantes (SE - students' union) in Spain. In her inspiring contribution, she described the historic victory won by the SE against neo-Francoist education reforms. Monica thanked Socialist Students for the solidarity action they had organised to support this struggle.

Members of the recently founded Socialist Students USA had prepared a video greeting for the conference.

Mary Finch from King's College London Socialist Students introduced a session on fighting the attacks on education, along with Dave Riddle of the Coventry branch of lecturers' union UCU, and London Socialist Students organiser Helen Pattison.

# Save child refugees, fight the cuts



Child refugees in the 'Jungle' camp in Calais before its brutal demolition photo Paul Mattsson

**Tessa Warrington**  
Leicester Socialist Party

There was widespread disgust after a written statement from the Home Office announced it was to end a vital rehoming scheme for refugee children.

The 'Dubs Amendment' to the Immigration Act 2016 committed Tory prime minister Theresa May to rehome a portion of the 90,000 unaccompanied refugee children from across 'Fortress Europe' with local authorities in the UK.

It was initially assumed that this number would be somewhere in the thousands. But the recent statement capped it at just 350, with 200 children having already been received. Buckingham Palace alone could house that many!

That such a decision can be made in the world's sixth largest economy

is an absolute scandal. Not only because of the vast wealth accumulated by those at the top, but because of the complicit role of the wealthy in creating the refugee crisis.

The destruction and extreme poverty caused by the Bush and Blair-led invasion and occupation of Iraq, and the subsequent western imperialist wars to bring about regime change in Libya and Syria, helped create a mass humanitarian refugee crisis. They also created the political conditions for terrorist groups like Isis to take advantage of those radicalised by the horrors of war.

However, it is the population in the region, not western capitalism, that primarily suffers at the hands of Isis. Now those in power want to wash their hands of the consequences.

Ending the refugee programme is an incredibly unpopular move. It is clear that refugee children left alone in the camps are vulnerable to

exploitation and human trafficking. May faces opposition from charities, religious groups and even many from within her Tory ranks. Local authorities have come forward to say they can take in more children. However, support for child refugees must be linked to the fight against austerity.

Central government spending cuts, passed on to the public without a fightback by councils, have created huge pressures on local services such as housing and education. Without a fight to stop the cuts and fully fund services, it is easy for right-wing politicians to scapegoat refugees.

Austerity is a political choice to make the working class pay for a crisis created by the rich, a choice that must be reversed. We need to invest in jobs and homes for all - those already here as well as those desperately fleeing war.

# Prison deaths scandal: invest in better inmate and staff conditions

**'Chris Miller'**  
Prison officer and POA union rep

The latest government statistics show yet another record high in prison deaths and violence. In fact the annual rate of deaths in custody, many of them self-inflicted, has doubled since 2012.

It is no coincidence that 2012 was the year that preceded the woeful “competition benchmarking” programme - a cost-cutting exercise that saw a 30% reduction in prison officers nationally.

Historically prison officers have been very skilled at identifying those at risk of self-harm or suicide. This was because officers had the time, resources and experience when it came to building professional relationships with prisoners.

Personal officer schemes, where

an officer was the first point of contact for a small number of prisoners, were fit for purpose and in place up and down the country.

However, these schemes were removed under benchmarking. Where a lack of proper resourcing occurs - the majority of establishments - this results in unsafe regimes and a toxic mix of drug and gang-fuelled violence.

Staffing is not the only contributory factor, of course.

Prisons are flooded with men, women and children who require the treatment and intervention that only a secure hospital can provide. But with very limited beds available in these facilities, they are dumped into the prison system - where prison officers receive no specific training in how to care for them.

Prisoners are also, at times, left in cells for 23 hours a day, with no

power or without a flushable toilet - while privatised maintenance providers ensure every nut and bolt is billed to the tax payer before repairs commence.

And their medical needs are left at the mercy of privatised healthcare providers.

Some of the system's most violent and vulnerable prisoners are located at HMP Grendon. Grendon suffers very few of the issues mentioned, as it is a highly funded therapeutic community which takes a multidisciplinary approach to tackling violence and self-harm. Staff at Grendon are highly trained and in sufficient numbers.

The government, which seems not to have answers in dealing with the prison crisis, could start by looking there - if it was serious about reducing prison deaths and violence, or enhancing rehabilitation.

## ■ Super-rich subsidised

The 'precarariat' - workers employed on zero-hour contracts and insecure work in the 'gig economy' - is costing public funds nearly £4 billion a year in lost taxation and benefits, according to the Trade Union Congress.

Workers unable to secure full-time employment are often forced into self-employment, with many effectively earning

less than the minimum wage. Officially, the number of self-employed has soared by 26% in the last decade to 4.8 million - 15% of the UK workforce.

The government blithely says it is “creating an economy that works for everyone.” For sure it works for the UK's 1,000 super-rich individuals. Their overall fortune increased last year to £576 billion, up from £547 billion in 2015.

**Simon Carter**



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

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photo Paul Mattsson

## UNITED FIGHTBACK NEEDED AS ENTIRE GRADE OF RAIL WORKER IS AT STAKE

**Tom Woodcock**  
RMT member

The Southern Rail dispute has been a high-profile battle in which the future of an entire grade of rail worker is at stake. If Southern management is victorious, the traditional safety-trained guard, and most importantly the guarantee of a second member of staff on every train, will be gone from Southern trains.

Alongside increasing numbers of unstaffed stations we are now already in a situation where train travel is unattractive to disabled people, women travelling alone at night and other vulnerable people.

The government's programme to 'modernise' the railway will involve further major battles with the rail unions because workers will inevitably resist attempts to cut jobs, attacks on pay and conditions, and privatisation of Network Rail, which owns the rail infrastructure.

The 'McNulty report' which was commissioned by the last New Labour government recommends all of these things and forms the blueprint for the Tories' miserable plans for our railway.

On 6 March Martin Zee, a Mersey-rail train guard, will be in court facing a possible prison sentence. He was involved in an incident where an elderly person was injured after falling onto the track while attempting to board his train. His employer launched a full investigation and

found that he had done his job properly and he was exonerated of any blame.

How then did he end up in court? Because he is being prosecuted by the state under the Offences Against the Person act 1861. If he is found guilty each and every train guard and driver will risk prosecution each and every time they press the 'door close' button.

### Driver-only operation

Merseyrail itself intends to switch to driver-only operation (DOO) just like at Southern. Transport union RMT is balloting its members in defence of the role of the guard at Merseyrail. If RMT is defeated and drivers have to assume control of train doors, members of drivers' union Aslef will potentially find themselves in the same situation as Martin Zee and facing time behind bars just for doing their job.

If we are to have a safe and reliable railway we need more fully trained staff, not fewer. But in the age of austerity the reality will be cuts in staff and an increase in casualisation to bypass the costs of hard-won rail workers' gains like the final salary pension scheme, sick pay, etc.

This is why we need a genuine united front against the employers and the Tory government. The rail unions share the same purpose: safe, secure and well-paid jobs for their members and a growing railway industry providing jobs for future generations.

## “Disgraceful” treatment of sacked EHRC workers

A PCS member

Ten government equality staff were sacked by email and had to clear their desks on 10 February. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) workers had been threatened with redundancy, but such action is unprecedented in the civil service.

The notices were emailed while PCS and Unite members were on strike over cuts.

EHRC says the staff will receive pay in lieu of notice, but workers did not agree to this because it closes off the opportunity to seek redeployment at the commission or elsewhere in the civil service. We had members who were in the middle of civil service applications and waiting to hear back from employers.

In London, Finola Kelly, a PCS union rep, was one of the members who had received a compulsory redundancy notice and was leaving her office for the last time with her personal belongings packed in a trolley.

Janice Godrich, PCS national president, was at the offices with a large group of supporters including the National Shop Stewards Network and described what had happened to Finola as “absolutely disgraceful” and “very humiliating”.

She said: “I’m really, really pleased at the amount of people who have turned up today, not just from PCS but from other unions and organisations, to show support, and I know that that’s happening all over the country at other EHRC offices.”

“We’re giving a pledge here today on behalf of PCS that we’ll continue to fully support these members until their justice is restored.”



Sacked EHRC worker Finola Kelly photo PCS

## PCS pledges to fight Jobcentre job losses at public meetings



Sheffield meeting photo Alistair Tice

### Llanelli

Over 70 people packed into a meeting comprised mainly of workers from the Llanelli benefits office.

The meeting was called to oppose the possible loss of 157 jobs due to the proposed office closure, part of 78 proposed Jobcentre closures across the country.

These job losses would have a horrendous impact on the workers and their families and on the town itself - a town that has already lost most of its relatively well-paid manufacturing and heavy industrial jobs. Speakers included Carrie Anne Watkins from the PCS civil service union.

The meeting was angry and did not accept the reasoning of the Tories for this reorganisation. As these are proposals, a consultation pe-

riod is under way and PCS members were urged to participate. I brought solidarity from the Unison local government committee, representing all 22 local government branches in Wales, and from Llanelli Trades Council and the Socialist Party. I suggested we set up an action committee to organise support for PCS's campaign.

**Mark Evans, Llanelli and West Wales Socialist Party**

### Sheffield

A well-attended public meeting of over 60 PCS members, local residents and supporters, launched the campaign to keep Eastern Avenue Jobcentre in Sheffield open.

Sheffield PCS branch secretary Tom Bishell said that the union

branch had successfully fought the proposed closure of two other local offices before but this time the closure plans were nationally driven by the Department for Work and Pensions. Eastern Avenue Jobcentre serves 1,100 claimants every week.

Jen Dunstan from Disabled People Against Cuts and Alistair Tice from Unite Community and the Socialist Party, who both live locally, pledged support, and will be organising a big solidarity protest outside the Jobcentre in the next few weeks.

People already struggling on benefits would have the extra hassle, time and expense (£4 a day bus fares or £10 a week) of having to sign on in the city centre, and the local shops, Post Office and library would all suffer.

To emphasise the point, a local disabled claimant publicly thanked the Eastern Avenue Jobcentre staff for the help they'd given him over the last 18 months in receiving the right benefits and support he was entitled to.

PCS members are considering industrial action and community campaigners intend to build local support to back them up and keep Eastern Avenue Jobcentre open. **Sheffield Socialist Party**

## Ultimatum as Deliveroo drivers down tools in Brighton

**William Jarrett**  
National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) North East

Online food delivery company Deliveroo has come under fire in Brighton, where nearly 100 of its workers downed tools during busy Saturday trading on 4 February.

On the same evening they voted to join the IWGB union. The threat of further action looms, with an IWGB deadline set for 21 February if demands aren't met.



Uber Eats courier protesting in August 2016 photo Scott Jones

At issue is the paltry sum which riders are paid for their 'drop', the delivery of an order, currently set at £4. Their demand is for an increase of £1 a drop.

Deliveroo dismisses out of hand the riders' employment as meaningful work, by stating that they "offer them flexible, well-paid work which fits around their other priorities, such as studying, starting a small business, or personal commitments."

This is the same empty and hollow language familiar to workers across the gig economy, from local authorities to Deliveroo, Task Rabbit, and Uber. Bosses exploit workers, riding high on the profits their labour generates, while perpetuating the myth that workers are happy to be casualised.

A mood of defiance across the sector is now finding its way in to the traditionally unorganised and low-paid service sector industries.

The NSSN and the Socialist Party both campaign for a minimum wage of £10 an hour, in line with TUC policy set in 2014, as well as secure contracts and the right to be regarded as workers.

## VIBRANT PICTUREHOUSE PICKETS IN CONTINUED LIVING WAGE STRIKE

Brian Debus and Nick Auvache

For the first time, Bectu entertainment union members at four Picturehouse sites took simultaneous strike action across London on 11 February.

The Ritzy in Brixton was closed and the other cinemas only stayed open by shipping in managerial staff from other sites.

At the Picturehouse in Hackney, despite the atrocious weather, a picket was maintained from 2pm to 9pm that persuaded several potential customers to go elsewhere and to write in protest to parent company Cineworld.

At the Picturehouse cinema in Crouch End there was a vibrant celebration of the strike. A very youthful picket line sang and danced and

demonstrated.

One striker said they were happy to be striking and would continue to do so until their demands were met. If management thinks it can bully and pressure these militant young workers to abandon their struggle it must be in La La Land!

Hundreds of leaflets at all sites were snapped up by the passing public, outlining their demand for a 98p an hour increase to meet the London living wage of £9.75 an hour, plus union-recognised sick pay and maternity/paternity/adoption pay.

It's not as though Cineworld could not afford it with record profits for the last four years - they made £83.8 million profit in 2015 and revenues were up by 8.3% in 2016. A mass blockade of Picturehouse Central in Piccadilly is planned on 25 February at 2pm.



## Solidarity with Tesco Ireland Valentine's Day strike

Scott Jones

Usdaw East London retail branch chair (personal capacity)

Up to 15 Tesco stores in Ireland took strike action on Valentine's Day 14 February after members of the trade union Mandate, which represents more than 10,000 workers at the company, voted 78% in favour of a walkout over contract changes.

The changes Tesco Ireland is attempting to force through without agreement affect approximately 250 workers employed before 1996. The new contracts would result in some workers experiencing reduced incomes of up to 15%.

Tesco began its attack on pre-1996 staff more than one year ago when they intimidated and bullied more than 900 workers out of their jobs through a redundancy programme. Strike action was narrowly avoided then.

The remaining 250 workers want to stay in the company on the contracts they have, but the company is

insisting they accept reduced terms and conditions.

This followed moves at Tesco in the UK to drive down terms and conditions last year when hundreds of staff lost out as a result of the pay deal, which caused pay cuts in overtime, weekend and night premiums.

Meanwhile, Tesco reported that it had its best sales growth, winning market share for the first time in five years at the end of 2016. This profit was further boosted by the Christmas sales meaning that Tesco is on course to deliver a profit of "at least" £1.2 billion for 2016-17.

We support Tesco workers in Ireland and their trade union Mandate for taking this action. And we call on Usdaw, the shop workers' union in Britain, to raise solidarity and discuss industrial action so that the strength of the 160,000 Usdaw members in Tesco is used to fight against low pay and attacks on conditions.

See [usdawactivist.wordpress.com](http://usdawactivist.wordpress.com) and [facebook.com/UsdawActivist](http://facebook.com/UsdawActivist) for more



[News in brief]

### Unite elections round-up

Nominations for the Unite executive and general secretary elections end on 17 February, and the four Socialist Party members standing on the United Left slate have received enough nominations to get on the ballot.

Jimmy Tyson, who is standing in the construction sector, has also been endorsed by a Unite construction national rank-and-file meeting on 4 February.

Housing worker Suzanne Muna, who has been on the executive since 2015 and is again standing for one of the London and Eastern territorial seats, has 58 nominations as we go to press.

Former anti-cuts councillor Kevin Bennett is up for election in the General Engineering, Manufacturing and Servicing sector, and Jamie Coccozza is on the list for Scotland.

The Socialist Party is also endorsing current general secretary Len McCluskey, who is up for re-election. He made his case in Manchester on 1 February.

McCluskey criticised his right-wing opponent Gerard Coyne and spoke of "reactionary forces" (including the Financial Times) trying to influence the election, using Unite's leadership battle as a "proxy war" against Jeremy Corbyn.

Socialist Party industrial organiser Rob Williams, former Unite convenor at Swansea's Visteon plant, has endorsed Len in a video that has got over 4,000 views.

Rob said: "In 2009 I was sacked, and Len McCluskey, who was then assistant general secretary, backed my fight, and thanks to that support and that of my members and others around the country, I managed to get reinstated."

**Socialist Party reporters**

### Unite ultimatum

Unite the Union has given Ford management an ultimatum to produce a five-year plan for its engine factory in Bridgend, south Wales. Len McCluskey met managers and shop stewards at the plant on 7 February, five months since Ford announced cutbacks on its planned investment in a new engine, but it said 1,850 workers would not be affected. A mass meeting will be held on 1 March if the union does not hear from the company.

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Available every week at [shopstewards.net](http://shopstewards.net) and by email subscription

# SPAIN: CLEAR WIN FOR LEFT AT PODEMOS CONFERENCE! NOW BUILD CLASS STRUGGLE

Izquierda Revolucionaria (see statement on right for more on IR)

The attempt to remove Pablo Iglesias from the leadership of Podemos (the left party formed out of the 2011 Indignados movement) has been a terrible failure. This was despite all of the resources poured into it, and the open support of the media for Errejon - leader of the "moderate" opposition to Iglesias.

There was a historic turnout of 155,000 members. Iglesias received almost 90% of the votes for the position of general secretary, more than 60% for his list of candidates for the 'citizens' council' (main leading body of Podemos) and more than 50% for the documents which his team put forward.

## Defeat for ruling class

To understand what this victory means, it is enough to read the capitalist press or listen to the establishment TV media following the congress. Their anger at this victory comes across in every sentence. The ruling class made an attempt to control Podemos, to assimilate it as a 'classic' social democratic formation to strengthen social peace.

However, they came up against the will of tens of thousands of fighters. The defeat of Errejon is good news for all those who have been part of the huge social revolt of the last few years - in the Indignados movement, the general strikes, the education and health movements,

student strikes, etc.

These mobilisations of workers and youth have been the motor of political change in Spain. This is the key factor which the likes of Errejon have been so quick to dismiss and denigrate in their attempt to derail Podemos towards parliamentarism and class collaboration.

The struggle within Podemos is of great importance. The traditional capitalist party PP, the new illegitimate leadership of the ex-social democratic party PSOE, the right-wing, populist party Ciudadanos, as well as big business, all know this very well.

Errejon and his followers want a Podemos which is closer to PSOE and to the programme of social democracy in crisis. They defend a process which in reality would make Podemos a mere clone of the establishment parties, happy with comfortable positions in parliamentary offices and well-paid committees, and the 'respectability' of the institutions and the system.

We cannot forget how El Pais, the main capitalist paper, repeated ad nauseum how Errejon defended "a more modern, democratic and open Podemos, different from the confusion generated by Iglesias around a strategy of ideological radicalisation and street mobilisation, the effect of which is to dilute the power and negotiating ability of the party in parliament..."

Izquierda Revolucionaria has supported Pablo Iglesias in this struggle against Errejon and his social democratic model. We distributed 6,000 leaflets explaining our position and sold hundreds of papers at the Podemos



To understand what this victory means it is enough to read the capitalist press - their anger comes across in every sentence



Students on strike in November against education attacks photo SE

congress, where we got a lot of support.

However, we also believe that Pablo Iglesias' mistakes and vacillations have contributed to Errejon getting as far as he has. The vision of political "change" as a mere electoral exercise in which mass movements had already fulfilled their role was also defended by Iglesias, especially after the success of the local elections in May 2015 and the general elections in December 2015.

His public declarations justifying the betrayal of Tsipras in Greece; and distancing himself from the Venezuelan revolution, echoing the position of reactionary forces; his emphasis on 'responsibility' and governability; and his express desire to occupy the "social democratic space," were mistaken.

They also contradicted the real reasons for the powerful eruption of Podemos, and reinforced the right wing of the party. Even after losing one million votes in June 2016, Iglesias continued to insist that parliamentary and institutional work was the priority.

But in the last months,

Iglesias has reacted to defend his leadership, on the basis that his survival, and that of Podemos, depended on returning to his original position and basing himself on the sections of society which, through their struggle, had brought Podemos into being.

In the last few months, Iglesias has questioned publicly whether it had in fact been the image of 'moderation' which was behind the unexpected electoral defeat in June.

He said that trying to occupy the space of social democracy so as to not "frighten" a sector of voters was a mistake, and more recently insisted on the need to reclaim the streets and for the unions to call a general strike against the anti-working class policies of the PP.

## Return to the streets

At the Podemos congress, in all the debates and discussions in the corridors the same idea was stressed again and again: it is time to return to the streets, to go back to what made Podemos strong!

The internal clash in Podemos, openly encouraged by the bour-

geoisie, was set to have an immediate impact, depending on the result.

A victory for the Errejon followers would have strengthened social peace, which is necessary to impose an agenda of cuts which has already been designed by the Rajoy government and agreed with PSOE.

## Social democracy

Errejon was very careful to reject the idea that there is in effect a grand coalition (PP, PSOE, Ciudadanos) and instead of explaining that the leadership of PSOE is part of the problem, insisted repeatedly that Podemos should join up with PSOE's 'initiatives'.

Right-wing policies cannot be fought by embracing social democracy, which is firmly under the control of the capitalists. To defeat the cuts there is only one option: fill the streets with massive and sustained mobilisation.

The example of the strikes led by the Sindicato de Estudiantes at the end of last year, which brought down the Francoist "revalidation" exams, is useful.

Pablo Iglesias and his collaborators must listen to the rank and file of Podemos. Unity cannot be built at the cost of abandoning principles and turning one's back on millions who are suffering the dramatic effects of a devastating crisis.

Unity must be built with those who struggle, those who suffer, those who can make real change possible.

That means calling immediately for mobilisation, to prepare now for a general strike against the increase in energy prices, the cuts to pensions, cuts to health and education and the anti-democratic laws against protesting, for decent housing, and for democratic rights including the right to national self-determination.

The only way to be solidly linked with the masses, the real power of Podemos as a left force for social transformation, is to defend a socialist alternative to the capitalist crisis, and be directly implicated in the day-to-day struggles of the workers' and youth movement.

Now Pablo Iglesias must live up to his word.

See [socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net) for full article

## COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL AND IZQUIERDA REVOLUCIONARIA - TOWARDS UNIFICATION

Joint statement from the **Committee for a Workers' International** (CWI - the international organisation the Socialist Party is affiliated to) and **Izquierda Revolucionaria** (IR - a Marxist organisation with presence in the Spanish state, Mexico and Venezuela; also known by the name of its newspaper, el Militante).

In September 2016, we published a brief declaration after holding an initial meeting between our two organisations - a very fruitful meeting which revealed a broad agreement, politically and in terms of our methods of building a revolutionary party. In this meeting, we agreed to begin a process of political dialogue and debate, as well as of practical collaboration.

Since then, the collaboration between our organisations has been regular, close and intense. Comrades from the CWI's international secretariat and from numerous CWI sections have visited Spain to participate in IR meetings, as well as attending the congress of the Sindicato de Estudiantes (student union).

Representatives of IR have also participated in various important meetings both of the CWI and of the Socialist Party, including the successful Socialism 2016 event in London, as well as the Socialist Party national committee. IR representatives also attended in the CWI's international executive committee.

This exchange and debate will continue in the course of various important events and meetings in the next few months.

In both Venezuela and Spain, where both the CWI and IR have organised forces, a very encouraging process of practical collaboration and political coming together is underway.

There has also been an important exchange of articles, documents and publications. Key materials have been translated and published in our respective papers, websites and theoretical magazines, and internal documents have been discussed and debated.



The opening of this new period of crisis of capitalism and opportunities for revolutionary Marxists has served to bring our paths together again

This experience has only confirmed, widened and strengthened the political, programmatic and methodological agreement between our organisations. We believe that the principled agreement between our organisations means that there is the basis for concrete steps to be taken towards the unification of our forces.

Therefore, the international executive committees of the CWI and IR agree:

- To discuss this declaration in the democratic structures and leading bodies of the CWI and IR
- To elaborate a programmatic document about our unification to be published around April/May 2017. This document will be debated in all the democratic structures and leading bodies of the CWI and IR
- To hold a unification conference in 2017

25 years ago there was a painful separation between our organisations, in the context of a period of great challenges and setbacks for the revolutionary Marxist left around the world. However, we held firm and managed to maintain our forces and contribute to the class struggle, albeit via separate paths. The opening of this new period of structural crisis of capitalism and enormous opportunities for revolutionary Marxists has served to bring our paths together again.

2017 - the centenary year of the immortal Russian revolution - can also be a decisive year for our organisations. Our unification on a principled basis will strengthen us both politically and in our ability to build a Marxist international to arm the working class with the revolutionary leadership it deserves. It can also be an inspiring example for the whole of the left, workers' movement and all revolutionaries.

We make a joint appeal to the workers, youth and revolutionaries of the world, for dialogue and debate, in search of the greatest possible collaboration and unity on the principled basis of revolutionary Marxism.

See full statement at [socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net)

## Report: IR central committee meeting

On the weekend of 4 and 5 February, a very successful meeting of the central committee of IR (see statement above) took place in Madrid.

The meeting was attended by members of the international secretariat of the CWI, including Socialist Party general secretary Peter Taaffe and Danny Byrne - as well as Linda Taaffe from the Socialist Party and members of the CWI from Portugal and Spain.

It was a historic gathering, reflecting both the growing strength and enthusiasm of Izquierda Revolucionaria as a Marxist organisation, and another hugely encouraging stride forwards in the process of unification between IR and the CWI.

Peter Taaffe opened the discussions with an introduction on world perspectives, which was well received by all - underlining the broad and solid political agreement which the process of coming together has revealed at every stage.

The discussion focussed on the impact of Trump's victory internationally and the crucial role of a revolutionary party in the current and coming class battles.



Peter Taaffe speaking at the meeting photo Danny Byrne

A glimpse has been shown of the crucial role of a mass revolutionary party and international, which we are uniting to build.

This has particularly been seen through the recent successes of the CWI in the US, England and Wales, and Ireland where we have developed a mass influence, as well as the fantastic achievements of IR and its role in the Sindicato de Estudiantes (student union) in the successful mass struggle against the right-wing PP government.

Juan Ignacio Ramos, general secretary of IR, gave an informative and

clear introduction on perspectives for the Spanish state, which has entered a new phase of turmoil and mass struggle.

The deep crises engulfing both the ex-social democratic party PSOE and the new left party Podemos (see main article) reflect a new conjuncture of sharpened class struggle, which could even surpass the dimensions of the last phase of mass protests and strikes between 2011 and 2014.

The meeting voted unanimously on a resolution to endorse and advance the process of unification between IR and the CWI.



Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias photo Ahora Madrid/Creative Commons

# the Socialist: 20 years old and more important than ever

Ian Pattison  
The Socialist campaign organiser

On the protests against Donald Trump, an unprecedented number of people formed a wall of resistance to his policies. In London mere days after his Muslim ban, what felt like a non-stop wave poured out of tube stations near the protest. The same was felt across the country.

What has struck many of us at these protests is the enthusiasm to topple the rotten capitalist system that Trump stands on, and the interest in socialism as an alternative.

On the 30 January protests alone, 700 people bought the latest edition of the Socialist. Socialist sellers brought people around us by chanting "Socialism not Trumpism" and "read articles by American socialists" to great delight.

We expect these sales to continue, particularly for young people, as we now call for walkouts on the day Trump visits Britain.

The Socialist has always fought against what Trump stands for: capitalism, racism and sexism.

This week is the Socialist paper's 20th birthday. In issue one we carried a feature article by Socialist Party general secretary Peter Taaffe outlining the role of a socialist paper.

In 1997 Peter wrote: "Many trade unionists in the USA are now starting to organise for a party of labour in the US because of growing disillusionment with [Bill] Clinton's move to embrace the Republican Party's ultra-right policies." The political situation in the US has been transformed but the need for a new party is even more acute.

We quoted one billionaire who was terrified that untrammelled capitalism would arouse greater and greater hostility from the working class. Inequality and poverty has only grown, exacerbated by a decade of economic crisis and austerity.



Plus ca change... Issue one of the Socialist campaigned against the privatisation of the NHS and for the rights of asylum seekers

Every year world leaders meet, some predicting that these trends will lead to mass revolt against capitalism. They're right, it has and it will. But while the capitalist class defends the profit system, they are powerless to change the course of history.

Peter concluded with a stark warning: A working class socialist alternative is vital to cut across right-wing forces attempting to express anger against capitalism inequality, and benefit. Socialist ideas battle Trump in the USA, Le Pen in France, and their international acolytes.

That first article made an important appeal, which stands today: "If

the Socialist is to reflect workers' lives you, the paper's readers and devoted sellers, need to make sure that there is a regular supply of reports, articles, comments, letters and interviews coming in."

Our paper is unique because working class people who read it also write its content and sell it on to people who want to find out more. Our paper gives 100% backing to every struggle of ordinary people to improve their lives, generally written by the people leading those fights.

Please help us continue to stand up and shout the socialist ideas needed to defeat Trumpism, austerity and capitalism.

■ **Coming soon: Following on from Rise of Militant, the next volume in the history of Militant and the Socialist Party - dealing with the period 1995-2007. By Peter Taaffe, general secretary of the Socialist Party. Enquiries/orders to 020 8988 8777**



Corbyn supporters want a Labour Party that fights austerity, not one that witch-hunts its members photo Paul Mattsson

## Flood of support for 'Cardiff no-cuts three'

Ross Saunders  
Cardiff Socialist Party

A flood of support from ordinary Labour members and trade unionists has greeted the appeal of the 'Cardiff no-cuts three' against their expulsion from the Labour Party. John Williams, João Félix and Rich Edwards were expelled after proposing a motion calling on councillors to refuse to make more cuts to jobs and services.

A solidarity meeting packed out the upstairs of a local pub in Cardiff on 9 February and messages of support have come from every corner of Britain.

One supporter, Tony, argued: "No Labour councillor should ever support vicious attacks on people. I stand with you in solidarity! How dare the party suspend you for standing up for vulnerable people in your area!"

Unfortunately, support has not been forthcoming from all quarters. We've discovered that Darren Williams, a Cardiff councillor and Labour NEC member, issued a call to other Labour members for the three to be expelled from Welsh Labour Grassroots (Momentum in Wales).

The Labour left is very short-sighted if it is backing this witch-hunt. The Labour Party doesn't stand a chance of being transformed into a party capable of fighting austerity without building a united front of all socialists who are willing to combat the Blairites and Tories.

If that is going to happen, Welsh Labour Grassroots (WLG) must

adopt a different course. Rich says: "We appealed to WLG for support. Their answer - without meeting with us so we could put our case - was to expel us from WLG as well as Labour!"

“”  
Our motion calling on councillors to fight the cuts was overturned in our absence

"We were blocked from attending the next meeting and they wouldn't even read out a written appeal.

"We understand that our motion calling on councillors to fight the cuts was overturned in our absence - despite having been adopted only a month ago."

In the upcoming council elections, Welsh Labour is not going to fight on a platform of defending jobs and services, and the leadership of WLG isn't going to organise a serious fight - one that could give people hope that Labour could be made to fight austerity. As a consequence, the danger is that support grows for the Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru and even Ukip.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) agreed at its conference in January to keep the option open of standing candidates for just the eventuality we're facing in Wales.

# ANTI-TRADE UNION LAWS USED AGAINST 'SHEFFIELD TREES ACTION' PROTESTERS



Protesters against Seffield council's tree vandalism protest outside the courthouse photo Alistair Tice

Alistair Tice  
Yorkshire Socialist Party

What happens when a Labour council signs a £2 billion private finance initiative (PFI) contract with a multinational corporation to manage its streets for the next 25 years? It ends up with local residents being arrested by South Yorkshire Police for peacefully protesting to save mature roadside trees being felled by Amey pl.

This is what has been happening in Sheffield over the last few months. It's cheaper for Amey to cut trees down than it is to maintain them and the pavements. Amey has a clear profit motive - if it blitzes the city's trees in the first five years of its 25-year contract, it can spend the next 20 years with much lower maintenance costs.

In November 2016 the Labour council colluded with Amey and South Yorkshire Police in a dawn raid to cut trees down on Rustlings Road. This resulted in two pensioners and a passer-by being arrested

on charges subsequently thrown out at court.

After that public relations disaster the council said that there wouldn't be any more 5am operations. But the tree felling has continued with over 4,000 axed so far and another 14,000 planned.

“”  
This is what happens when Labour councils refuse to fight the Tory government cuts

This has led to a huge and well-organised opposition from local campaign groups coordinated by Sheffield Trees Action Group (STAG). Sheffield's Labour council leaders have dismissed this as being "a middle-class issue."

While it's true that most protests have been in 'leafier' areas, many of the tree protesters are being politi-

cised as they connect together austerity cuts and privatisation with the role of the council, Amey and the police.

The issue has split the local Labour Party and Momentum. One Labour councillor was suspended from the Labour group for abstaining on a motion critical of the council's handling of Rustlings Road. And a "Labour against PFI" banner is now often seen on protests.

Last week, nine more protesters, including a Green Party councillor, were arrested under 1992 anti-trade union laws for "preventing lawful work". Police appear in big numbers before every felling to facilitate Amey contractors.

This is what happens when Labour councils refuse to fight the Tory government cuts; they end up down the privatisation road, backing corporations against local residents and sending police to use anti-union laws to arrest people.

The first two protesters arrested under anti-union legislation back in November go to trial on 9 March in what will be a big test case given the increasing number of arrests.

## May Day greetings in the Socialist

Celebrate the struggles of workers and the oppressed this May Day by placing a greeting in the Socialist.

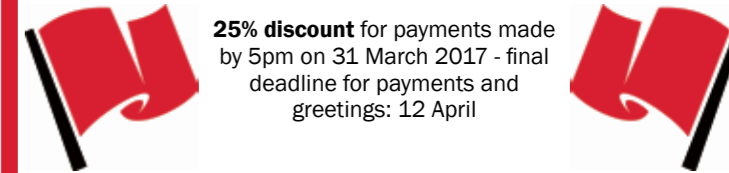
One hundred years ago, the workers' movement threw aside capitalism and took power for the first time. The Socialist believes the Russian revolution is the greatest event in history - yet. We have been instrumental in putting forward a political and industrial strategy to beat the bosses and their system of crisis, inequality and war. Help us build the movement which can achieve it.

May Day greetings help fund the best workers' newspaper in England and Wales.

Can you...

- Build for a greeting from your workplace with a petition sheet?
- Propose a motion for your next union meeting agenda?
- Send greetings from your university society or campaign group?
- School and college students get a special deal - we will place a greeting for whatever you can get from a whipround

For prices and to place your greeting: [socialistparty.org.uk/mayday](http://socialistparty.org.uk/mayday)  
For queries and resources, email [jamesivens@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:jamesivens@socialistparty.org.uk)



25% discount for payments made by 5pm on 31 March 2017 - final deadline for payments and greetings: 12 April



The Socialist Party has a new press (above) - thanks to your donations. It will enhance production of our posters, leaflets and publications. Martin Reynolds from the print shop says: "It makes the plates faster and we have a quicker turnaround. Everyone who has one of these presses loves it. It's only been running a few days and already you can tell this is going to be so much better than the old press."

## Toxic fracking could start in England in 2017

John Sibbald  
Wakefield and Pontefract Socialist Party and Frack Free Wakefield

It appears very likely that fracking is about to start in England in 2017. Permission has already been granted at Little Plumpton in Lancashire and in North Yorkshire where the Kirby Misperton protection camp has been established.

Protests have also been held in Sherwood Forrest (see issue 932). Here it has recently emerged that

Ineos, which has the licence for this area, has been threatening landowners who refuse permission to carry out seismic testing.

This is not surprising considering that the boss of Ineos is Jim Ratcliffe, famous for threatening his workers during the Grangemouth dispute in 2013.

Now in order to make the public believe that fracking is safe, four public bodies - the Environment Agency, Health and Safety Executive, Oil and Gas Authority and Public Health England - are touring the

country holding drop in sessions.

They were due to visit Wakefield on 7 February and the Socialist Party, along with other activists, planned a demonstration outside the venue.

However, a few days before, the event was cancelled. We don't know why but a local councillor suggested that "maybe they were worried about a confrontation".

I would urge others to check if one of these events is scheduled for your local area, full details are at [drillordrop.com](http://drillordrop.com)

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# NO, TRUMPISM IS NOTHING LIKE LENINISM



**Nick Chaffey**  
Socialist Party Southern region

Steve Bannon, chief strategist to US President Donald Trump, once called himself "a Leninist" - to the delight of Victor Sebestyen, a journalist for the Times, Spectator and Standard.

Sebestyen puts Bannon and Lenin together in a 'Comment is Free' article for the Guardian to demonise his two foes by showing their alleged similarities. "Bannon has an assortment of Leninist political tactics that could have come from the Bolshevik leader's playbook."

How could Steve Bannon, investment banker, former vice-president at Goldman Sachs and founder of 'alt-right' blog Breitbart News, call himself a Leninist? Vladimir Lenin was the leader of the Russian revolution that ended Russian capitalism and formed the first democratically elected workers' government in history!

In 2013, Bannon said: "Lenin wanted to destroy the state and that's my goal too." Bannon seems to see the capitalist state as an obstacle to maximising the capitalists' profits.

But for Lenin, the capitalist state ensured the capitalists' economic interests were maintained. The goal of the first workers' state was instead to ensure that the majority ruled in the interests of the majority. Through the 'soviets', democratic workers' councils, elected representatives from workplaces formed a government at local, regional and national levels.

Traditional conservatives like

Sebestyen fear the right-wing populism of Trump, with his blows against the institutions of capitalism such as the judiciary, press, and free trade agreements. Trump's populism threatens their control.

But they are even more fearful of the insurgent left. Bernie Sanders' campaign against the billionaire class threatened the Democratic establishment of Hillary Clinton and her Wall Street allies. They fear the renewed interest in socialist ideas, growing mass protests, and struggles like the fight for a \$15 minimum wage.

But how could Sebestyen conflate such diametrically opposed ideas? The title of his latest book, 'Lenin the Dictator', makes his intentions clear.

This is a familiar rehash of the

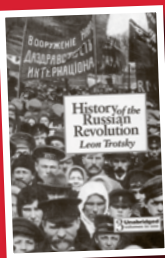
view that the vicious Stalinist bureaucratic counter-revolution that emerged after the death of Lenin was inevitable, and a seamless transition. It ignores the material basis for this, following the isolation of the Russian revolution after the destructive years of civil war, and the defeat of other revolutions, especially in Germany from 1918 to 1923.

From here, the first democratic workers' government in history is slanderously heaped together with Stalin's forced labour camps. Sebestyen adds in a dose of unsubstantiated character assassination in his attempt to bury Lenin and the Russian revolution.

Lenin was committed to the international struggle of the working class to replace the capitalist system of war, poverty and inequality with a socialist world - one where working class people democratically own and plan production to meet the needs of all. He was committed to building a mass revolutionary party with a clear Marxist understanding of capitalism, the Bolsheviks.

The Bolsheviks alone put forward a programme to satisfy the needs of the masses; "peace, bread and land." Their decisive leadership - while other political forces made compromises with the capitalists - led them to win a majority in the soviets, and end Russia's involvement in the bloodbath of World War One.

Lenin was critical of all that stood in the way of the working class; the capitalists themselves, their media allies, and their shadows in parts of the leadership of the workers' movement. His 'guilt' is his role in the abolition of capitalism and landlordism in Russia, and the example it offers today in this new era of capitalist crisis and revolution.



**History of the Russian Revolution**  
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# Foreign aid's not the problem - it's capitalist thieves

**Ross Saunders**  
Socialist Party Wales

Twenty-four times as much money is looted from poor countries in the global south than is sent in aid, according to financial transparency campaigners GFI.

The money sent out of poor countries outstrips money sent into them by an eye-watering \$3 trillion.

Countries in the OECD, which includes most advanced capitalist economies, give \$125 billion a year in aid to the rest of the world. In total, they send \$1.3 trillion over their borders, when investments and other transfers are included.

But that figure is dwarfed by the \$4.3 trillion sent back.

## Debt

A hefty chunk of the cash is interest on debt, and goes straight to the big western banks. Many countries don't stand a chance of ever paying their original debts back. Reported profits for foreign investors make up another big slice.

But the majority - \$13.4 trillion since 1980 - is profits smuggled illegally out of poor countries by big corporations and sent to tax havens, many of them based in British territories like the Virgin Islands.

Profiteering and tax avoidance by the super-rich in countries like Britain are part of the reason we don't have the money needed to fund public services. Public sector union PCS estimates Britain loses £123 billion of tax money every year. Exactly the same robbery by the rich keeps the poorest people on the planet poor.

Right-wing politicians and populists try to set ordinary working class and poor people from different countries against one another, with claims that foreign aid is the reason we don't have enough money to run our public services.

But in reality we share the same enemy: the tiny number of super-rich who exploit us all.

When the Panama papers scandal hit the headlines, Jeremy Corbyn said that British territories should be stopped from operating as tax havens. That's good, but unless we go further British companies will just find new methods of exploiting the poor around the world.

We should nationalise the biggest companies that dominate our economy to stop the greedy capitalists who run them now from ripping us all off. With socialist policies like that, a post-Brexit Britain would be far from isolated in the world.



photo Neil Palmer (CIAT)/Creative Commons

**Featured letter: NHS**

**Passport checks a backdoor to treatment charges**

Overseas visitors' treatments account for about £1 in every £300 of the NHS budget. As Aislinn Macklin-Doherty rightly says in the last Socialist, after charging and collecting costs are included, less than 0.05% of the NHS budget (£1 in every £2,000) would be recovered.

Once the expensive charging machinery is introduced, it would soon be used for other charges too. Maybe starting with a charge for a missed out-patient appointment, then single rooms, 'hotel charges' for in-patients, queue-hopping investigations and eventually certain treatments.

The Tories hope public opposition would be reduced by this gradual approach, with overseas visitors a soft first step.

All this would be great for private companies (many US-based) who greedily eye the NHS's annual £120 billion, want to take a slice and then maximise their profits.

**Jon Dale  
Bolsover**

**White paper whitewash**

'Councils will be ordered to build thousands more homes' is the message around the new housing white paper. I immediately thought I'd missed the election of a Corbyn-led government which was implementing a basic socialist policy.

No. It came from Sajid Javid, one of the more myopic ministers in a government whose eyes are fixed rigidly on the bottom line, and whose hostility to council housing is only exceeded by its hostility to trade unions.

I recall the denunciation of the Liverpool 47 Labour councillors in the 1980s: building council houses is 'irresponsible' screamed the media; 'impossibilism' thundered Neil Kinnock, as he grovelled before Murdoch and Maxwell.

These were just a couple of the epithets which were hurled at Liverpool's socialist council in response to our proud programme of, in our short period in office, building 5,000 houses and flats, plus converting a further 2,000 uninhabitable flats into beautiful apartments.

However, not surprisingly, there is no information on how cash-strapped councils would get the finance to translate



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photo Paul Mattsson

Javid's fine words into reality. In short, it's yet another empty promise from a government committed to enriching its rich friends. If every council had emulated the example of the Liverpool 47, today's housing crisis would not exist.

**Tony Mulhearn  
Liverpool**

**BBC blame game**

So the BBC has released an article on how to become a homeowner by the age of 25. They had four examples of how scrimping and saving can mean you can save up enough for a deposit and be able to afford the mortgage. It assumes a few things:

1. You are in a heterosexual relationship.
2. You both have above-minimum wage jobs.
3. You don't have kids.

4. You can live rent-free at your parents' for a few years.

I consider myself well off: at 24 I have a partner, a decent job and live in a reasonably affordable area. And yet to fit into these narrow criteria I would have to leave my low-paid partner and share a room at my mum's with my 18-year-old little brother. Even then, I couldn't afford to live in my hometown.

Instead of putting the blame on individuals, why don't they look at low pay, lack of council housing and high rents?

**Tanis Belsham-Wray  
Leeds**

**Strike screed**

On 14 January in the Huddersfield Daily Examiner, Robert Sutcliffe, in his Saturday column, treated us to a raving right rant about working people taking industrial action. In this case about safety on the railways. I nearly fell off my chair laughing!

Seriously, the fact that people's lives and safety are being put at risk by Southern Rail's actions to remove guards is ignored by Robert.

He followed up with puerile 1980s-style rubbish about printers holding the country to ransom. Many printers, who were skilled men and women, were sacked and ended up doing menial jobs. Tory heaven!

And what happened to Thatcher who helped this happen? She was crushed by a movement of 18 million people refusing to pay their poll tax, led by Militant, now the Socialist Party.

**Cormac Kelly  
Marsh**



photo Vieve Forward/Creative Commons

**Graphic novel review:  
'The Red Virgin and the Vision of Utopia'**

**VIVID VISUAL ACCOUNT  
OF THE PARIS COMMUNE**

**Iain Dalton  
Leeds Socialist Party**

After the 1917 Russian Revolution, there are a number of other revolutionary movements that Marxists hold as important events, which, have helped us develop our ideas. For Marx himself, none was more important than the Paris Commune of 1871, the first time workers took power.

This graphic novel strays across different periods of time, but its focus is on the commune and its aftermath. The title refers to the 'Red Virgin of Montmartre', Louise Michel, a revolutionary anarchist who the bulk of the story is told around.

Shortly into the story we pick up Louise among the starving masses in Montmartre, a suburb of Paris. Food shortages due to Napoleon III's disastrous war with Prussia were fermenting mass revolt.

This exploded during peace negotiations in March 1871, when the royalist National Assembly, which replaced Napoleon, attempted to disarm the mainly working class and anti-monarchist National Guard. The Parisian masses and the National Guard revolted against this abandonment.

Within days, a commune of deputies from the districts of Paris had been elected. This took radical measures, including providing schooling for free, pawnshop amnesties, cancellation of rent arrears, and public ownership of industry.

But with the revolution confined to Paris, the capitalist counter-revolution was left free to gather its forces in Versailles, and crush the Commune in bloody fashion.

A significant portion of the tale tells of Louise's capture, imprisonment and exile in the French Pacific colony of New Caledonia.

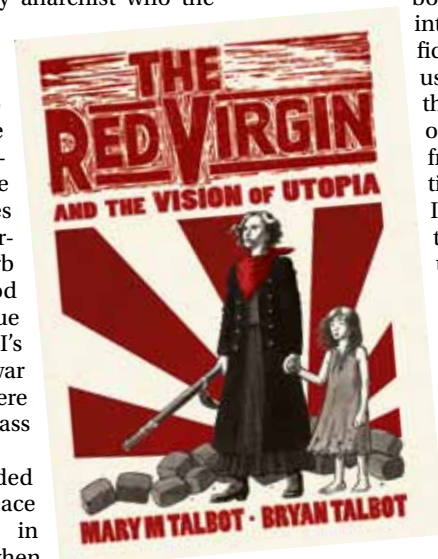
This section more than others illuminates her solidarity with the oppressed: Arabs deported for rising in Algeria around the same time as the Commune. And the native population, the Kanaka, which unsuccessfully rose against the French occupying authorities.

A thread running through the

book is Louise's interest in utopian fiction, which is used to illustrate the possibilities of a society freed from the domination of capitalism. It also serves as the reader's introduction to her through the eyes of American writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman, who discusses her life with a survivor of the Commune.

Graphic novels dealing with revolutionary events and revolutionaries are becoming increasingly common, including Kate Evans's 'Red Rosa' in 2015.

The combination of vivid artwork, detailed notes which give background, and narration and dialogue drawn from the subjects' own writings and speeches, can bring to life these events, and make them accessible to a wider audience. 'The Red Virgin' is yet another welcome addition to this growing genre.





# French presidential election

## CRISIS IN THE ESTABLISHMENT PARTIES

### Possibilities for the left to make gains

The upcoming French presidential election is revealing big crises in the establishment parties. The conservative Republican candidate Francois Fillon, who just weeks ago appeared to have the Elysee Palace in his grasp, is now mired in a damaging criminal corruption scandal and may withdraw. The capitalist class is no doubt hoping that their 'substitute' independent candidate, Emmanuel Macron, will make it through to the second round.

The ruling Socialist Party (PS) of lame duck President Hollande looked certain to back the neoliberal former prime minister Manuel Valls, but he was humilatingly pushed aside in the PS primaries in favour of left-leaning Benoit Hamon. National Front (FN) candidate Marine Le Pen has also been damaged over the resignation of large numbers of disillusioned FN councillors. And the mainstream media, in and outside France, largely ignores left candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who enjoys over 11% support in the polls and attracts thousands to his rallies.

An article from **Gauche Révolutionnaire** (CWI, France) explains what's at stake in the election.

The next few weeks will be crucial. The potential for a new political force to the left of the PS has actually strengthened with Hamon's victory in the primaries, even if Hamon does not go in this direction. Nevertheless the one that the people who voted for him have shown they want.

Mélenchon's candidacy and his campaign - 'France Insoumise' (FI, France Unbowed) - also represent this potential.

Mélenchon has said he is ready to meet Hamon, while recognising that positions adopted by the winner of the PS primaries are not all compatible with those of FI, notably on Europe. Hamon does not argue for a challenge to the bosses' European Union.

#### Mélenchon

But the tactic of Mélenchon also has its limits by confining itself only to the electoral field. Many young people and workers are preparing to abstain in the next elections because, understandably, they have had enough of the 'political circus'.

What is lacking in the face of the attacks of the bosses and the government against young people, workers and the majority of the population, is a force capable of organising tens of thousands of people to fight against capitalism.

It is this that FI will have to address in the next few weeks - even more so if those who voted for Hamon come to see that he does not have a genuine possibility of carrying out a real break with the disastrous policies of Hollande.

The scandal about the fictitious jobs of the Fillon family, where it's reported that his wife has been paid €900,000 for doing nothing, is

certainly the knockout blow for a candidate who was already on his way down.

His plan to destroy social security, increase VAT by 2% (to finance the wiping out of taxes on large fortunes, in short, to take from the poorest to give to the richest) had met with the opposition of an overwhelming majority of the population. A section of the capitalist class is already looking instead towards the movement around Macron.

As for the Front National and Marine Le Pen, things are not going too easily either. Her declaration of support for Trump is turning against her. Although high in the polls, Le Pen remains around the 25% mark and is failing to make progress.

Among her latest statements she is not in favour of an increase in the minimum wage for example. This shows more and more that the so-called 'social' posture of the FN is only an electoral argument.

Moreover, 400 elected FN municipal councillors out of 1,500 - 28% - have resigned since 2014 citing internal dictatorial methods.

The situation is a reflection of what has been happening in society for more than two years. Social discontent at low wages and poor working conditions is being expressed every day by dozens of strikes and struggles.

In this context, the lack of a real central day of action to fight for better wages and conditions at work and to reject policies of social cuts weighs heavily.

Trade union leaders, rather than 'consulting' the candidates when they know what they say about these issues, should campaign and prepare a major day of strike action and protests. This would have a big impact on the campaign because it



Left-wing presidential candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon photo Rémi Noyon/Creative Commons

is through struggles that things will change.

And the election campaign could be a point of support for this, especially if a candidate like Mélenchon takes up and fights for the demands of workers on a large scale.

This would also enable all those who do not want to vote because they do not feel involved in the elections in their present form to have an effect on them. It is clear that a new political force fighting capitalism will come from both the

millions of people who will vote for Mélenchon and other candidates to the left of the PS, but also of all those who participate in the struggles but are considering abstaining in the elections.

The situation is entirely open.

#### Yemen solidarity

Recently around 100 workers demonstrated in front of the parliament buildings in Sana'a, the capital of war-torn Yemen. They were demanding unpaid wages and seeking justice for their murdered colleagues. Their original employers (the

multinational oil corporation Total and its subcontractor, the security company G4S), robbed over 200 security guard workers of more than one year's wages, after the companies abandoned most of their economic activities in Yemen in 2015.

Photographs of the protest and also a copy of a resolution in support of the Yemeni workers adopted by the national conference of TUSC (Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition), which met in London on 28 January, are on socialistworld.net



Health workers on strike, November 2016 photo Gauche Févolutionnaire

All the candidates in the service of capitalism are weakened and without a base of really active and solid support.

A revolt is gradually bringing about a rejection of those who have been imposing an unjust, anti-democratic and pro-cuts policy on us for years. Everything becomes possible. The worries of the PS leaders, the right wing and the FN, should be seen as a real encouragement for young people and workers.

#### Capitalism

All those who are tired of capitalism and aspire to a society of social justice - tolerant and fraternal, giving everyone a job, housing and a decent future - can play a role if they come together.

This is why we call for a vote for Mélenchon, in spite of the fact that his programme remains too limited in dealing with the multinationals,

the banks and the shareholders.

We argue, for example, that the entire financial sector, from banks to insurance companies, should be nationalised and put into public ownership under the democratic control of workers and the whole population. Unfortunately, Mélenchon only puts forward the idea of a public banking network alongside the private banks.

The majority of those who are prepared to vote for him are doing so to express their frustration with capitalism and its dictatorship of profit. But voting is only one aspect of the matter. We need a mass movement to overthrow capitalism. This is what the Gauche Révolutionnaire wants to build.

Faced with political and

economic crisis, the only real alternative is for a truly democratic socialist society - where the economy is planned to satisfy the needs of all and not the profits of a few.



#### Police attack triggers protests

Paris has been rocked by days of protests following the horrific assault by police on a black youth worker from the poor northern suburb of Aulnay-sous-Bois.

The victim, 22-year old Theo, remains in hospital following major surgery after being raped with a truncheon during his arrest by four policemen. The police claim "it was an accident"! A bedside visit by President Hollande has done little to quell people's anger over this crime.



photo Mikael Marguerie/Creative Commons

Many, especially in the socially deprived outer Paris neighbourhoods, view the police as oppressors.

Indeed, Aulnay-sous-Bois, where Theo lives, was one of the suburbs which saw an uprising and violent clashes between police and youth in 2005, triggered when two teenagers being chased by police were electrocuted. The rioting which followed led to Nicolas Sarkozy, then interior minister, declaring a state of emergency.



#### 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!

Join the fightback!  
Join the Socialists!

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# RESIST TRUMP AND HIS ROTTEN POLICIES



## Why I'm walking out on 'Day X'

**Caroline Vincent**  
Leicester Socialist Students

Like millions of people around the world, I'm angry that the disgustingly racist and sexist billionaire Donald Trump is president of the United States.

That's why I'll be joining students from schools, colleges and universities across Britain in walking out on Day X - the day that President

Trump first sets foot in Britain.

Since Trump's inauguration, millions have mobilised and taken to the streets to oppose his actions. Significantly, protests resulted in the halting of the Muslim travel ban - a policy that just days into his administration provoked widespread revulsion.

UK prime minister Theresa May not only failed to condemn this despicable policy. She and Trump showed that the 'special relationship' between the UK and US gov-

ernments is alive and well, with a sycophantic display of cosy hand holding! There's no doubt that she'll be greeting him with open arms but students and young people will not be so welcoming.

Day X isn't just to protest against Trump, it's also to protest against the system. A system run by a corporate super-rich elite which managed to throw up the two most unpopular US presidential candidates in history - Trump and Clinton. So disliked that one poll revealed that one in

four 18-35 year olds would choose a giant meteor colliding with Earth over voting for them!

For the majority of Americans who've seen their living standards drop for decades, Hillary Clinton offered more of the same. Trump posed as anti-establishment, but this is not the case. His interests lie with his billionaire friends.

It's important to fight Trump, but replacing him with another representative of the 1% is not the solution. Most Americans want

genuine hope and change - decent jobs, affordable homes and free education.

On Day X we'll be fighting against racism, sexism and austerity, and supporting our US brothers and sisters in their campaign for an independent party with socialist policies to fight for a future for the 99%.

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