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Issue 938
2-8 March 2017



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the Socialist

Formerly **Militant**

International Women's Day

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BUILD A MOVEMENT TO

SAVE OUR

NHS



photo Paul Mattsson

- **CAMPAIGN**
- **STRIKE**
- **OCCUPY**

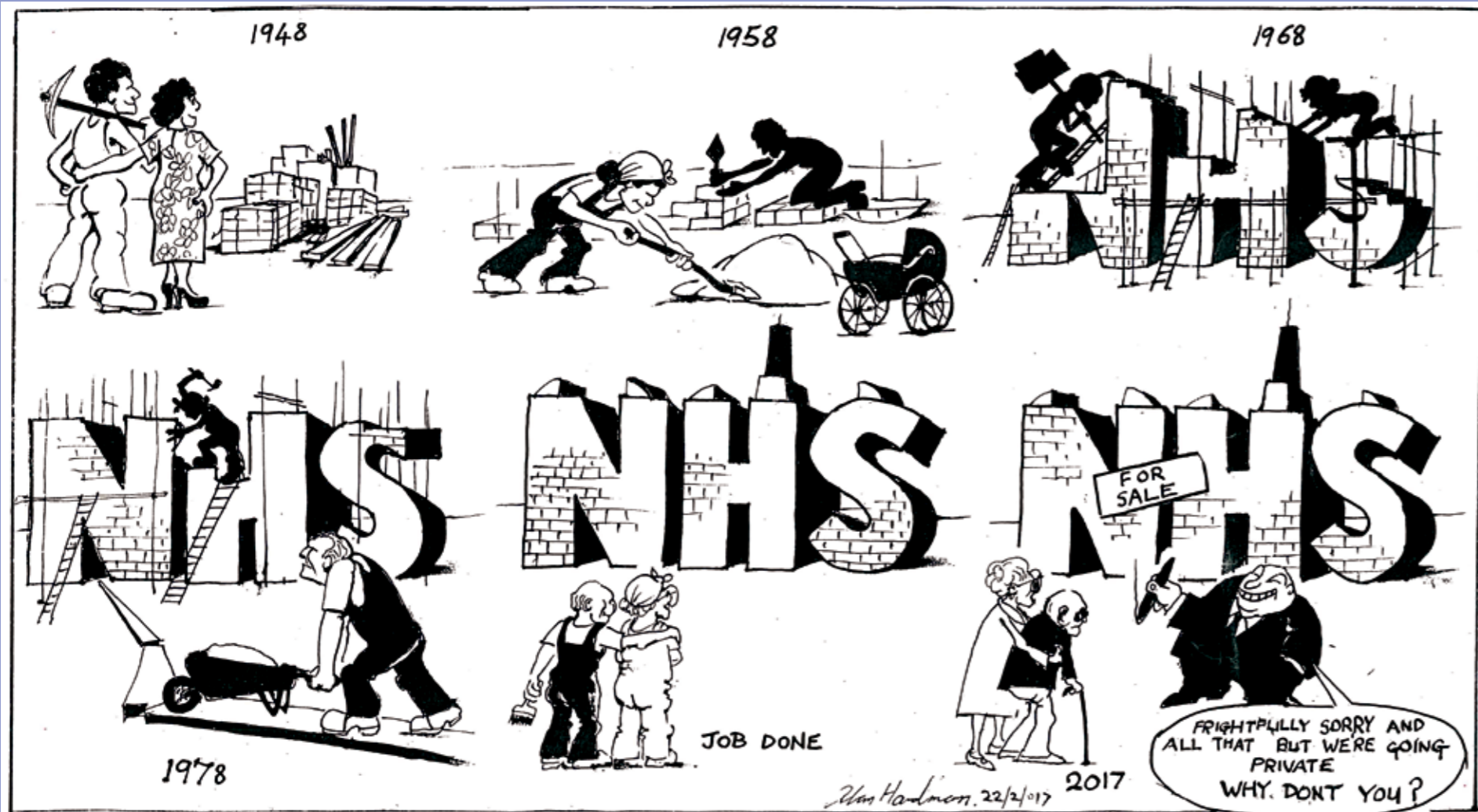
- For mass action to defend the NHS, with coordinated strike action at its heart
- Stop STPs and demand all councils refuse to cooperate
- No cuts, closures or job losses in the NHS
- End the pay freeze! Decent pay for all NHS staff. No attacks on NHS workers' pensions or conditions
- Renationalise our NHS! Scrap PFI and all privatisation schemes. Cancel all PFI debt
- Reverse council cuts to social care to relieve the beds crisis. Councils should not be cutting care for the elderly and disabled – Labour-led ones especially!
- Nationalise the profiteering big drugs companies
- For a comprehensive, high quality NHS, under democratic control, with care free at the point of use – a socialist NHS

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National demonstration 4 March, 12 noon, Tavistock Square, London

BUILD THE MOVEMENT TO SAVE OUR...



Hannah Sell
 Socialist Party
 deputy general secretary

As we all know, our health service is already in a critical condition - driven to breaking point by cuts, closures and privatisation. The national demonstration on 4 March is an important step forward in the battle to save it.

Now we need to use it as a springboard to build a massive movement that can defeat the Tory government's attempt to finish off the NHS.

The government is driving to cut £22 billion from the NHS by 2020, on top of the £15 billion cut last parliament. They are attempting to cover up these latest cuts by hiding them under the guise of 'sustainability and transformation plans' (STPs).

We have to expose the con-STPs are about nothing more than slashing, trashing and privatising our NHS. The King's Fund think-tank has already

said two-thirds of all STP plans will involve cuts and closures of hospitals.

But the Tories are weak and can be beaten. Unelected as prime minister - with a wafer-thin majority in parliament - Theresa May could find the STPs are her 'poll tax'.

Her role model, Maggie Thatcher, was thrown out of office along with her hated poll tax, after 18 million refused to pay it. This movement was led by the Socialist Party (then called Militant).

The anti-poll tax movement brought together wide sections of working class and middle class people, in rural as well as urban areas. The same potential exists for a movement in defence of our NHS.

Campaigns

From the 4 March demonstration we need to build local campaign groups in all 44 STP areas, brought together under a national umbrella, as Health Campaigns Together has begun to do. As a next step, Health Campaigns Together should name the day for a nationwide day of protest, calling on local trade unions to join the campaigns. We should build 44 massive

local demonstrations on the same day to stamp on the STPs! That should be followed by a Trade Union Congress (TUC) national demonstration to save the NHS - mobilised for by all trade unions and by the Labour leadership.

Corbyn

Labour can play a vital role in building this movement. It is good that Jeremy Corbyn plans to address the demo. Now he should use his position as Labour leader to campaign for a mass movement to renationalise the NHS.

Such a stand would help give people confidence to fight back, and make clear to millions the advantages of an anti-austerity Labour leader.

Jeremy should also call on the 100 or so Labour-led councils to stop making cuts now, including cuts to social care, and to reject their local STP; STPs include local authorities. So far a handful has done so, but if every Labour council was to publicly oppose its local STP, the whole thing would become unworkable.

The heroic strike action taken by junior doctors, who had huge popular support, gave a glimpse of the possibility of striking to

defend the NHS. Unfortunately, the TUC and the leaders of the other health unions did not organise the necessary solidarity action in support of the doctors' stand.

The 4 March demonstration has been backed by the major health trade unions - in the case of Unison, the largest health union, as a result of sustained pressure from its members. But that is only a beginning of what is needed.

Strikes

As well as helping to build demonstrations and community campaigns to save our NHS, which can raise the confidence of health workers, health trade unions need to prepare to organise coordinated strikes to break the pay freeze and stop the huge cuts and closures. Occupations to stop closures can also play an important role.

The Socialist Party calls for a comprehensive, high-quality

NHS, under democratic control, with care free at the point of use. To do this we need to take all elements of the health service into public ownership, to stop private companies profiting from our ill health.

We need to reverse the Tory privatisation drive, and scrap the 'private finance initiative' and all other forms of privatisation that New Labour expanded massively when it was in government. The outsourced 'independent sector treatment centres' should be brought back under NHS ownership and control.

At the same time, the social care sector should be brought into democratic public ownership and properly funded. The pharmaceutical companies that make billions from our ill health should also be nationalised. Pharmaceutical products currently cost the NHS about 10% of its budget annually, about £11 billion.

> **Our key demands: see p1**

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Reinstate the bursaries for student nurses now!

Kate Youngs
 Student nurse, Leeds

The Tories' scrapping of nursing training bursaries has already led to a 23% decline in university applications for this coming year for all nursing courses, a lot of these being mature students who often bring more life skills to the job.

As a student information officer for nursing union RCN, I approached the Leeds University Union executive. They repeated their "promises to lobby the government, university and MPs to not scrap the NHS bursaries."

Though the scrapping has already happened, the student union has promised "to support all students in any campaigning around this issue." It provided transport for 52 University of Leeds students to voice their concerns as part of the protest.

Join me and thousands of others in making our voices heard. Let's ensure everyone is cared for in their time of need in a safe environment, where everyone can access the facilities we should all be entitled to, by healthcare staff who are well-trained and fully supported.

If we all fight together then anything is possible.

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



Student nurses marching to save training bursaries photo Paul Mattsson

Profiteers behind NHS England missing paperwork scandal

NHS England chiefs tried to cover up more than half a million missing medical letters, it seems.

Internal courier 'NHS Shared Business Services' - a private company - wrongly warehoused them instead of delivering them. The correspondence apparently includes thousands of important test results and diagnosis reports.

Yet again, we find that private profiteers cannot be trusted with

public services. Nor can unaccountable senior bureaucrats.

And Tory health secretary Jeremy Hunt also faces accusations of involvement.

Kick out the Tory thieves. Scrap the anarchy of Blairite Labour's NHS 'internal market'. Take the whole health service into public ownership - under the democratic control and management of workers and service users.

Join the protest against heart centre closure consultation 'farce'

Families of heart patients at the threatened East Midlands Congenital Heart Centre at Glenfield Hospital have condemned NHS England for a "totally inadequate" public consultation due in Leicester on 9 March.

Only 96 seats were available to the public and patients. People attempting to register on NHS England's website are now being told the event is full.

Campaigners plan to protest outside the meeting at the Tigers' Welford Road ground from 4.30pm onwards on 9 March.

Socialist Party member Steve Score, spokesperson for the Save

Glenfield Children's Heart Centre campaign, said: "On 11 February 2,000 people marched in Leicester to oppose the ending of congenital heart surgery here, and over 130,000 local people signed the petition that was presented at 10 Downing Street.

"A meeting on a weekday evening makes it difficult for many parents to attend anyway, especially if they work and live a distance away.

"Why have they booked such a small room? The Tigers ground has the facilities for a much larger meeting. As parents, families and members of the public we demand to have our voice heard."

NHS v RBS

Under the Tory government's misnamed 'sustainability and transformation plans', a massive £22 billion of "efficiency savings" - i.e. cuts - will be rammed through the NHS in England by 2020.

The Tories clearly aren't

prepared to tolerate 'loss-making' public institutions, unless the publicly owned body is the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS).

RBS has reported losses of £7 billion last year, taking its total losses since the Blairites' 2008 government bailout to more than £58 billion.

Reopen our A&E says Grantham

Karen Seymour
 Mansfield Socialist Party

The message from rally speakers to Tory health secretary Jeremy Hunt, and those determined to keep Grantham Hospital's A&E department closed, was clear: we are not going away!

The affection for the hospital was evident on the march on 25 February as people spoke about the outstanding care they and their loved ones had received. Over 1,000 people marched through the centre of Grantham, in the rain, to express their anger and disgust at the continued closure.

The 4 March demonstration in London will show we've wised up to the government's plans for the destruction of our NHS. It must be brought back into public ownership, with all privateers kicked out, so that satisfying patients' needs is the goal, not profits for the government's rich friends.



Grantham Hospital A&E's 'temporary' night-time closure in August last year has been extended photo Socialist Party



Guardian 'arts critic' Jonathan Jones nearly exploded with outrage that the RA in London is putting on an exhibition of Russian revolutionary art.

His confusion and lies about 1917's socialist revolution were both outrageous and unoriginal. (See 'Smearing socialism by attacking the arts' at

socialistparty.org.uk.)

Surely, then, the far right must be even more beyond the pale? But Jones has rushed to the defence of a small gallery in Hackney, east London, which has been hosting 'alt-right' speakers.

To be sure, he says their politics "repel" him. But apparently not quite so much as socialism.

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■ Copeland and Stoke byelections BREAK WITH LABOUR BLAIRISM WASN'T ON OFFER



What we think

The dramatic byelections that reached their conclusion on 23 February were initially triggered by the resignation of two Blairite MPs - Tristram Hunt and Jamie Reed. Each of these men chose to exchange their parliamentary seat for a fat-cat executive job.

But it wouldn't be accurate to ascribe personal advancement as the sole motivation for the resignations. Clearly there was also a political agenda at work. Both Hunt and Reed hoped that these contests could provide a fresh opportunity for the Labour right to oust Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party.

In the event the mixed results, with Labour retaining its seat in Stoke Central but losing Copeland to the Tories, do not appear to have given the Blairites sufficient confidence to attempt a further coup at this point. Even so, Tom Watson's strategy of slow strangulation - attempting to 'hem in' and paralyse Corbyn with the hope of forcing his resignation - is continuing to intensify.

Over the weekend, a barrage of abuse has been aimed at Jeremy. The whole of the capitalist media, the majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party and a range of discredited political figures have all joined in the chorus of attacks.

Now a number of right-wing trade union leaders have also jumped on the anti-Corbyn bandwagon. This includes Dave Prentis, the general secretary of Unison, John Hannett, leader of Usdaw, and Gerard Coyne, who is being backed to the hilt by the establishment in his attempt to oust Len McCluskey as general secretary of Unite the Union.

Blair's toxic legacy

But the relentless anti-Corbyn campaign by the Labour right was a big factor in the byelection results themselves. Tony Blair's personal intervention, attacking Corbyn and setting out a case to reverse the EU referendum result, was a deliberate act of sabotage. It was specifically timed to coincide with the final stretch of the byelection campaigns.

But in truth it is Blair's own toxic legacy that has led to the steady decline of the Labour vote in these seats,



The very popular policies which Corbyn was elected on - the renationalisation of the railways, a £10 an hour minimum wage, and so on - have been muffled by the right so as to lose their force

both of which could once have been labelled Labour 'heartlands'. Under the leadership of Blair, Brown and Miliband, Labour's Copeland majority was reduced from 11,996 in 1997 to 2,564 in 2015. This had already had the effect of turning the seat, held by the party since 1935, into a marginal one.

Similarly, while Labour had retained a more substantial majority in Stoke Central, its margin had declined on an even greater scale during this period. In 1997 the Labour candidate, Mark Fisher, received 26,662 votes, a majority of 19,924. This fell to 12,220 for Tristram Hunt in 2015, a majority of 5,179; and now Gareth Snell has polled just 7,853 votes in the byelection, a majority of 2,620.

Ukip's setback

It is the gross betrayals of New Labour politicians both at a national and at a local level, where they have been responsible for devastating council cuts, that have allowed a space for the populist right to gain ground.

Nevertheless, Labour's victory this week has dealt a significant blow to Paul Nuttall's Ukip, that lost the Stoke Central election despite an 'all-out' campaign in an area in which EU 'Leave' voters outnumbered those who backed 'Remain' by more than two to one. Nuttall's alleged lies over his address, and more appallingly over the Hillsborough disaster - which was compounded by the deeply offensive comments of Ukip donor Aaron Banks - clearly contributed to this.

That said, Ukip's failure to make a substantial breakthrough in Stoke serves as a reminder that the vote to leave the EU was no endorsement of the bigoted politics of Farage and Co. Overwhelmingly, it was an expression of bitter class anger. No wonder that people in Stoke, which has suffered immensely from decades of de-industrialisation, austerity and poverty wages, voted by such a large majority in the referendum to strike a blow against the Tories and the establishment.

That's why Jeremy Corbyn's early concession to the right in his own party, retreating from his historic position of opposing the European Union on the basis that it is a capitalist club that acts in the interests of big business, was such a serious mistake. Had he stuck to his guns and led an internationalist exit campaign on an independent, pro-working class basis, it could have transformed the political situation and severely undermined the bigoted divide-and-rule approach of Ukip.

Despite this, Corbyn's election and re-election as Labour leader showed the deep-going desire that exists for a break with the politics of Blairism. John McDonnell was correct when he wrote in an article published in the Observer that the campaign of attacks on Corbyn amounts to an attempt at a 'soft coup'. However, in the view of the Socialist Party, he and Jeremy have so far failed to draw the necessary conclusions from this.

This is reflected in the fact John McDonnell quickly retreated on these comments when they were flagged up in the mainstream media and drew attack from the right. An almost constant sense that Corbyn and his few parliamentary allies are retreating under fire is only serving to embolden their right-wing adversaries who increasingly scent blood.

Since Corbyn's second victory as Labour leader in September 2016, the membership of the Labour Party has swelled to more than half a million people. The vast majority of these were freshly enthused by the anti-



photo PaulNUK/Creative Commons

austerity, anti-war stance taken by Jeremy and furious at the persistent attempts of the right to undermine this.

Despite his widespread support among the membership, the vast majority of Labour's MPs, councillors and bureaucratic machinery remains implacably opposed to his leadership.

Notwithstanding what will be claimed in the wake of these byelections, this opposition does not stem fundamentally from concern about Corbyn's personal appeal or electability. Indeed, if that were their primary concern, they would not be wasting so much energy in actions which serve to undermine these very things.

The reality is that this is about the far more fundamental question of what the Labour Party is for - in whose class interests it should stand. The New Labour project was designed to break any influence which working class people were able to have over the party - to make it a 'safe pair of hands' for the capitalist class.

Corbyn's leadership, and the huge support that it generates, threatens to fatally undermine this project. This explains the vicious consistency of the campaign being waged by the capitalist establishment against Corbyn.

But Jeremy is making a serious mistake if he thinks



photo Paul Mattsson

Corbyn-supporting Salford mayor oversees cuts to vital services

Steven North
Salford City Unison branch secretary (personal capacity)

alternative budget that would protect the most vulnerable.

In a welcome change of tone from that of Stewart, mayor Dennett and many Labour councillors came out and spoke with protesters for some time - listening to their concerns and promising to "look into" matters raised.

Unfortunately, despite the warm words from the mayor and the efforts made by the unions to propose an alternative budget, Dennett and his colleagues passed cuts of almost £16 million, to be made over the next 12 months.

When moving the cuts, Dennett made clear that the budget could be amended and that reserves could be used if further talks with unions and service users led to agreed outcomes.

Reserves from the unions shows that a legal budget that protects key services is possible if the council is prepared to use its reserves.

Reserves can only be spent once though, so along with Salford Unison, Socialist Party members argue that Salford City Council should use the next 12 months to campaign for the replacement of those reserves by central government and for an end to the austerity that is blighting working class communities like Salford.

The bulk of the protesters were from a community campaign to save Salford's only disabled children's home and from the city council's regulatory services department, which - despite providing essential services dealing with environmental health, rogue landlords and anti-social behaviour - is facing a cut of almost half a million pounds.

The other central reason for the lobby was to demand that £140,000 of cuts to the health improvement service (passed last year but not implemented) should be written off.

At the protest, workers commented that relations with the council had greatly improved since Paul Dennett replaced the much-depised Ian Stewart last May.

This meant that the trade unions had access to the requisite information to put forward an entirely legal

that a 'compromise' can be reached with the right within the party. In fact, since his election win, the only compromising there has been has come from the side of the left. This has contributed to the utter confusion felt by a large section of working class people as to what Labour actually stands for.

that a 'compromise' can be reached with the right within the party. In fact, since his election win, the only compromising there has been has come from the side of the left. This has contributed to the utter confusion felt by a large section of working class people as to what Labour actually stands for.

Lack of clarity and appeal

The very popular policies which Corbyn was elected on - the renationalisation of the railways, a £10 an hour minimum wage, and so on - have been muffled by the right so as to lose their force. The strategy of appeasement, which has characterised Corbyn's leadership, will only demoralise his supporters and further confuse and disorientate the wider working class.

In Copeland, the Tories (despite being deeply divided themselves) were able to exploit this lack of clarity. In particular, they attempted to stoke fears that Jeremy Corbyn's opposition to nuclear power could lead to Labour allowing thousands of jobs to go in an area in which a nuclear power plant is the largest employer. Had Labour advanced a clear programme on the issue - with nationalisation of the energy companies and a guarantee of no

job losses at its core - this would have helped cut across this cynical ploy by the Tories.

The fact that neither Gareth Snell, the candidate in Stoke Central, nor Gillian Troughton in Copeland, were supporters of Corbyn is a result of the failure to organise the hundreds of thousands of people who have joined Labour to act effectively against the right.

An effective fight would include reintroducing mandatory re-selection of MPs, to give Labour Party members a democratic say in who represents them in elections.

The utterly undemocratic, top-down constitution of Momentum, as well as its leadership's policy of excluding socialists and mirroring the Labour machinery's witch-hunting policies, means that this organisation is not up to task.

These byelection results will be used by the right to attempt to tighten their grip and further undermine Corbyn's leadership. Only a change in course by Corbyn, with a ferocious campaign to drive out the Blairites and re-found the Labour Party on a genuinely democratic basis, would secure his position as Labour leader and enable him to deliver urgently needed anti-austerity and socialist policies.



photo Becci Heagney

Socialism Today

The Socialist Party's magazine

March issue includes:

■ **Politics Trumped** US and Brexit shake up world, writes Hannah Sell

■ **A new movement** As women protest worldwide, Sarah Sachs-Eldridge reports

■ **Councils** Despite the attacks, councils could lead resistance argues Clive Heemskerck



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Corinthia Ward

The 1917 Russian revolution was a momentous moment in working class history, in which women played a pivotal and active role. It started with a strike by women textile workers on 8 March (International Women's Day - 23 February according to the calendar in use in Russia at the time).

Not able to take their impoverished conditions and food shortages any more, they took spontaneous strike action using the slogan "bread and herrings". The women called on the metal workers to join them on their strike, to demand not only food but peace - an end to Russia's part in the devastatingly bloody World War One.

The Bolsheviks (the party which led the movement of workers and peasants to overthrow capitalism and landlordism in 1917) recognised the need to address issues that specifically affected women and to free them from the burden of work in the home. This was made a key feature in the Bolsheviks' political programme.

After the revolution, women experienced life like never before. Within a short time of the fall of the Tsar - under whose rule they had been severely oppressed and subject to a life of drudgery - women were able to access freedoms their counterparts in capitalist countries like Britain and Germany were years away from achieving.

Communal laundries and restaurants began to be established. They provided women with time each day that they had previously been robbed of, opening the possibility of families being able to spend quality time together, and for women to have more independence.

What may seem most surprising to modern audiences is that one of the benefits to come out of the revolution was free and legal abortions. Having

control over their own bodies is still an issue many women are fighting for, even in what are regarded as 'advanced' capitalist countries, such as the US and Ireland.

Under Tsarism it wasn't unusual for women to give birth on the factory floor. The fact that a relatively short time later they had access to safe abortion illustrates what progress can be achieved when workers have democratic control over the running of their society.

Other important gains for women included the right to vote, equal pay for equal work, and the start of free childcare nurseries. Marriage became merely a legal proceeding and either partner could file for a divorce.

The Bolsheviks understood it wouldn't just be about giving women the same opportunities and rights as men but also about changing the sexist attitudes deeply embedded in society. In the cities and large towns, where many women had jobs in factories, the idea of women having lives outside of the family and of breaking from their 'traditional' roles gained support more easily, especially among younger women.

But in the countryside, the still largely feudal structure of society made it much harder to improve the lot of women. The Bolsheviks were determined to solve this by conscious campaigning to engage with women in the countryside, encouraging them to be active participants in creating a new society.

Zhenotdel

In 1919 the Zhenotdel, a special women's department, was set up to concentrate on these issues with women's 'commissions' to ensure women were involved at every level of both the Bolshevik party and society. The Zhenotdel addressed issues such as childcare, housing, public health and prostitution.

The department held conferences made up of working class and peasant women delegates. Young working class women were part of an outreach project with women in remote areas. Women were also seconded to other government departments and party work.

As most women during this period were illiterate, the Zhenotdel had to think up innovative ways to connect with them such as exhibitions, discussions and visual posters - as well as producing newspapers and journals for those who could read.

The efforts of the revolution meant every aspect of Russian life was being transformed, including sex and relationships. Young people began questioning expected personal arrangements and searching for new and meaningful ways to engage in living and relating to one another.

So what went wrong? Why is it that a country where women made important steps towards liberation in 1917, a hundred years later has recently passed legislation decriminalising domestic abuse?

The leaders of the Russian revolution from the beginning saw it as the first step in the struggle for socialism worldwide. They understood that the Soviet Union would not survive if it was left isolated.

If advanced capitalist countries like Britain and Germany had successful revolutions of their own, the huge

resources of these countries could have been planned to meet the needs of all and to aid the development of socialism in the Soviet Union. But despite many big movements of workers inspired by events in Russia, this did not happen, due to the failings of workers' and socialist leaders internationally.



The Bolsheviks recognised the need to address issues that specifically affected women

The capitalist classes around the world quarantined Russia in order to starve socialism to death. By 1920 Russia's output of manufactured goods was 12.9% of what it had been in 1913.

The post-revolution civil war and military attacks from capitalist, imperialist countries had ravished

International Women's Day 2017

LESSONS OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION FOR WOMEN'S STRUGGLE TODAY

most of Russia's wealth and killed millions of workers and peasants. Food shortages meant millions also died from famine - in 1919-1920 alone the figure was seven and a half million.



Recent 'women's marches' against Trump showed an angry mood against sexism, and also a big sense of internationalism and solidarity among those fighting oppression

These conditions started to unravel the hard work done by the Bolsheviks and the working class, including through the Zhenotdel. In the city of Petrograd (St Petersburg) by 1923 58% of those who were unemployed were women.

Even though women were legally able to divorce, many could not afford to leave the 'security' of the family and were therefore forced to stay in unhappy marriages.

Communal restaurants were never opened as widely in the countryside and so remained non-existent for many peasants. And even the ones in the cities were losing support. Food shortages meant the food being provided was of poor quality, making many turn away from it.

The Zhenotdel, which had taken good initiatives in raising women's consciousness and ensuring their needs were addressed by the party and the government, had started to disintegrate. Staff shortages and the effects of civil war meant the women who worked in the department themselves were exhausted and overburdened with work and family responsibilities.

In this situation it was inevitable that a bureaucratic caste would develop and take control, despite the heroic opposition of countless Russian workers, led by Leon Trotsky, one of the leaders of the revolution.

Stalinism

A small layer of the government, centred around Stalin, argued that rather than arguing for a socialist world, Russia should focus on developing itself alone. This bureaucratic elite was more concerned with maintaining its own position than working towards the democratic working class control of society.

Horribly, any socialists who fought against this came to be witch-hunted by Stalin and his supporters. The bureaucracy still presided over a planned economy, but did so in a top-down way instead of soviets (democratic workers' councils) being in control. The economy grew stronger, but the bureaucratic elite created off huge wealth at the expense of the majority; and without democracy, the quality of goods and services deteriorated.

The Stalinist regime consciously worked to reintroduce the institution of the home with defined gender roles, in part to condition people into 'knowing their place' and not questioning authority.

The communal facilities and nurseries were deliberately starved of investment and support. Abortion clinics were underfunded to the detriment of women's safety, which was then used as an excuse by the government to make abortion illegal once again.

Where posters had once been made to connect with illiterate women about liberating themselves, and artwork had depicted strong women for International Women's Day, Stalin used propaganda which could be compared to advertisements in the US.

Women were portrayed as beauties holding flowers and International Women's Day was turned into a day to buy the women in your life presents, not to remember the struggles women faced in shaping their society.

But in the early years of the



It doesn't have to be like this - women and socialism
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revolution, a glimpse had been seen of what socialism could achieve, including for women. That has important lessons for today.

The recent 'women's marches' against Trump in various countries showed an angry mood against sexism, and also a big sense of internationalism and solidarity among those fighting against oppression. This movement and all struggles against inequality and reactionary ideas must be linked to the fight for international socialism.

We need to criticise the current system and how it effectively places women as second class citizens in order to exploit them.

But what is also needed is to offer an alternative. It is within the very nature of a system divided by class to divide people in other ways and have some groups more privileged than others - women will always be among those who pay a price for this.

Socialist society

A socialist society would involve all people having a say in how their workplace, their town, and their world is run. Through democratic collective ownership of the biggest sections of the economy, we would be able to meet the needs of the majority rather than only the profits of the tiny few. These factors could begin to end all oppression and exploitation.

In order to win socialist change, we need the participation of the mass of the working class. The way forward for all those determined to fight for genuine equality for women must therefore include linking with the workers' movement and fighting to end capitalism once and for all and to replace it with democratic, international socialism.

Read more online at 1917revolution.org



1920s Russian International Women's Day poster



photo Paul Mattsson



photo Mary Finch

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 by Leon Trotsky £20

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Bristol cuts: The fight goes on

Protester bitten by private security!

The £33 million of cuts in the budget passed on 21 February by the council are not acceptable to the people of Bristol. We hear the excuses from the Labour Party that they have no alternative and the Tory government made them do it. But if this is really true, then why do we even bother electing local politicians?

Labour councils could legally choose to use reserves and prudential borrowing to suspend the cuts and join the fight for more money. A united campaign of ordinary people, anti-austerity groups, the trade unions and Labour councils would put huge pressure on the Tory government to capitulate and properly fund local government.

"Transparency"

Bristol's Labour mayor, Marvin Rees, addressed the budget meeting, claiming "transparency is a key commitment". Minutes later the public gallery was cleared by security staff, leaving councillors to discuss the cuts behind closed doors!

Unaccountable private security staff were again deployed by the

council as an anti-cuts protest gathered outside city hall

In a shocking incident, Bristol and District Anti-Cuts Alliance (Badaca) campaigner Mike Luff was bitten by security staff as he tried to gain access to the meeting. The violent attack drew blood and the victim was later treated in hospital. Complaints will be followed up against the council.

Badaca spokesperson Tom Baldwin said:

"We saw disgraceful behaviour from Bristol city council. This was



Socialist Party member Mike Luff shows the deep bite wound inflicted by a private security guard

not just a vicious assault on one individual, it was an attack on local democracy and on the right to protest. Disgusting as the biting incident was, the most violent act committed that night took place inside the council chamber itself. Councillors have voted to devastate services that many Bristolians rely on."

Tower Hamlets: There is an alternative, Mr Biggs

Amalia
Tower Hamlets Socialist Party

Just days before International Women's Day, Tower Hamlets council voted through millions of cuts in children's and youth services.

£58 million of cuts in total were passed by the council - headed by Labour's executive mayor, John Biggs.

Tower Hamlets is a very poor east London borough with the highest percentage of child poverty in the country. If these cuts proceed the problem will just deepen further.

Over 100 protesters filled the council chambers.

Very prominent among the campaigners were women, especially young mums. Presenting a petition, 'Tower Hamlets Mums' said parents in the borough have no idea what will happen to children's centres after 1 April. Many staff will be made redundant.

They also explained how important these services are, not just for their children, but also for them as new mums. Through children's services they are able to meet up and network with each other and get much-needed support.

There was also a group of young people holding slogans against cuts in youth services.

Socialist Party members had a strong presence both outside and inside the council meeting. Hugo Pierre - who previously stood for mayor as a no-cuts TUSC candi-



Tower Hamlets youth show their opposition to cuts. Hugo Pierre (inset) moves a petition defending services photo Neil Cafferky

photo Mahbub Alam

date - co-presented a petition against the rise in council tax.

Hugo made it clear that the council should not make any cuts but use its reserves, while building a campaign to demand its cut funding back from Tory central government. Also, councillors of the Independents Group presented an

anti-austerity budget motion.

Mayor Biggs said that he doesn't want to make any cuts but he has to balance the budget. We say we need a peoples' budget and that there is another way - the way of socialist councillors in 1920s Poplar (see page 13) and 1980s Liverpool.

Mayor Biggs and those who voted in favour of the budget should have to face the full force of a mass grass-

roots campaign from residents who can't afford to pay more and whose lives depend on these vital services.

The Socialist Party will be hosting a public campaign meeting on 30 March, 7.30pm (contact towerhamlets.sp@gmail.com).

For a detailed guide on how to propose a no-cuts budget see tusc.org.uk/txt/355.pdf

Why I joined the Socialist Party

Michaela
Huddersfield Socialist Party

Back in August last year, I attended a #KeepCorbyn rally in Bradford with my partner. I had recently become interested in current affairs with the Brexit vote and the immediate fallout from the mainstream politicians.

I listened to several speakers and was impressed with what I heard from two Socialist Party members (Tanis Belsham-Wray and Peter Robson).

I spoke to Peter afterwards, and he invited me to a branch meeting a couple of days later. I quickly found a great circle of like-minded comrades and joined the branch soon after with my partner.

Through speaking in meetings, I felt myself growing more confident.

We spearheaded a campaign to keep a local homeless shelter open after Bradford Council had decided to award a new contract to a lesser provider. Immediately I felt empowered by being a part of something that was striving to stop the council cuts and trying to make a change.

I've now moved to Huddersfield, and while I will be sorry to leave the Bradford branch (and some great comrades!) I am looking forward to getting stuck in and helping to make a difference in the local and national struggles.

I will be attending the NHS demo on 4 March and I'm really looking forward to it as it will be my first demo!

Northern region Socialist Party conference

Our Northern regional conference set the tone for our work in the next period. The main political discussion on Britain was introduced by Socialist Party executive member Ken Douglas.

Party members from Cumbria, Durham, Teesside and Tyneside discussed how we can impact on events in our region, Britain and beyond.

We raised £274 in a fighting fund collection and another £100 on the sale of food and raffle tickets.

Elaine Brunskill

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



SPELTHORNE: WE NEED SOCIALIST COUNCILLORS

Paul Couchman
Staines Socialist Party

Almost every available Spelthorne firefighter, and several from across Surrey, joined Fire Brigade Union (FBU) reps, other trade unionists and anti-cuts activists outside Spelthorne Borough Council on the evening of 23 February in Staines.

They were at a lobby organised by Save Our Services in Surrey (SOSIS), calling for a commitment from the borough council to stand up against Surrey County Council and defend the current fire service provision of two whole-time, fully crewed fire appliances in the borough.

The lobby was part of an ongoing campaign by SOSIS which has seen large public meetings, a demonstration of 200 at Staines fire station, a growing petition and a lively day of action in Staines High Street on 18 February. Our campaigning had already led to a u-turn over the planned immediate closure of Staines fire station.

SOSIS had the support of the FBU, the Socialist Party, Labour Party, Greens, and Lib Dems, in a



Cries of “shame!” and “betrayal!” were shouted... not because of the Tories, but due to the turnaround by Lib Dem and Labour councillors

united call for no cuts in fire service provision.

This changed at the council meeting. Cries of “shame!” and “betrayal!” were shouted from the packed public gallery and firefighters walked out in disgust - not because of the Tories, but due to the turnaround by Lib Dem and Labour councillors.

Labour councillor Susan Doran had a motion on the agenda, seconded by the Lib Dems’ Ian Beardsmore. If passed, it would’ve clearly committed Spelthorne to a no-cuts position in terms of the fire service.



Campaigners on an earlier protest to retain full fire service cover photo SOSIS

Doran stopped to speak to the protesters on her way in to the meeting, asking us all to stay for the meeting and to ‘back me up’.

Defections to Ukip

The council meeting got off to a bizarre start. A handful of Tory councillors announced they were leaving the Tory party and joining Ukip! It was like a nest of vipers, biting at each other.

Then came the important motion - what the vast majority of the

packed public gallery had come to hear. Councillor Doran moved it. The Tories had a prepared amendment which took out the specific call for both fire appliances to be fully staffed - effectively neutering the motion. Doran and Beardsmore were asked if they would accept this and they agreed!

This was nothing less than an abject betrayal of the firefighters and the people of Spelthorne. In the end it was the new Ukip group which - in typical opportunist fashion -

opposed the amendment and voted against the eventual motion.

This fiasco shows how important it is to elect principled socialist and trade unionist councillors who will stand firm against the cuts.

Many were saying after the meeting that SOSIS should stand anti-cuts council candidates.

This is something that may have to be considered by the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, as we have county council elections coming up in May.

Socialist Party Wales conference report

João Félix
Cardiff Socialist Party

A combative mood was expressed throughout a well-attended Socialist Party Wales 2017 conference.

The first session was introduced by Peter Taaffe, Socialist Party general secretary. Peter detailed the eventful political developments of last year, not just in the UK but around the world. In the US, mass resistance has forced Trump to “perform more somersaults than a circus gymnast,” he said.

The growth and political work of the Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI - the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated) was also outlined, with a special mention to the brilliant reunification with our



comrades in Spain from Izquierda Revolucionaria.

Contributions from the floor

ranged from insights on British and international political developments, to reports of the fight

for an anti-austerity alternative in the Labour Party, and analysis of the current situation in Wales, with the possibility of the right wing populists, Ukip, posing a real threat in the valleys.

The afternoon was dedicated to organising the fightback in Wales; including reports on resisting the council cuts, the fight against the closure and relocation of jobcentres, and contesting union elections.

The preparation and role of the Socialist Party and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in the forthcoming council elections was discussed.

It was also noted that we are the most impactful left-wing political force in Wales, with the Socialist Party’s political and practical approach attracting great working class fighters.

An excellent £1,300 fighting fund was raised. It seems the Socialist Party in Wales is well equipped to face the struggles ahead!

■ Cardiff Socialist Party public meeting

International Women’s Day meeting

Thursday 9 March, 7.30pm

‘Women and the Russian Revolution’

Speaker: Heather Rawlings, Socialist Women

Old Market Tavern, Trinity Street, Cardiff CF10 1BH



Socialist Party Fighting Fund

	£ target	£ received	January-March 2017	Deadline 31 March 2017
West Midlands	2,600	3,215		124%
North West	2,100	2,399		114%
Northern	750	596		79%
East Midlands	1,850	1,378		74%
South West	1,800	1,211		67%
Wales	2,300	1,404		61%
Southern	1,600	924		58%
Yorkshire	3,300	1,818		55%
Eastern	1,200	327	27%	
London	6,100	1,624	27%	
South East	750	135	18%	
Other	5,650	389	7%	
TOTAL	30,000	15,419	51%	

York University: Successful campaign to stop merchant of hate

Katie Smith
York Uni Student Socialists Chair

In December 2016 University of York Student Socialists first became aware of a campus society wishing to host Tommy Robinson - ex-EDL member and current leader of the Islamophobic organisation Pegida in Britain.

Immediately a campaign group was created on social media platforms and the society urged fellow

York students to boycott Robinson’s guest lecture on “free speech” which would undoubtedly turn into something far more sinister.

I met with members of campus security staff, following releasing a statement to the Huffington Post regarding plans for a protest on campus. The university was willing to allow us to protest and provide staff to ensure our safety from Robinson and his supporters. But after this meeting Robinson’s invitation to speak at the university

was withdrawn as the original society which suggested hosting him had pulled out.

This event is an example of why it’s always important to contest the presence of the far right: especially when they threaten to spread hate on university campuses. International Women’s Day is about standing up for all women of all backgrounds, and despite Robinson’s supporters going on to harass me on Twitter, this will always be a victory I am immensely proud of.

FIGHT LIKE POPLAR'S WOMEN COUNCILLORS TO CHANGE THE LIVES OF FAMILY CARERS



photo Vimeo/Creative Commons

Sue Powell
Gloucestershire Socialist Party

Looking at the history of the Poplar councillors, imprisoned in 1921 for fighting the Tory government's appalling conditions, it struck me that I have only come across two real-life "Minnies".

One was the socialist suffragette Minnie Lansbury, one of the Poplar councillors. The other was my great aunt.

Both were born around the same time to families with migrant backgrounds in London, both lived hard lives and struggled to the end. The comparison ends there. While the councillor fought for political change, my great aunt spent most of her entire adult life as a carer.

When Minnie Lansbury died - probably due to ill-health brought on by appalling prison conditions - her father-in-law George said: "Minnie, in her 32 years, crammed double that number of years' work compared with what many of us are able to accomplish."

"Her glory lies in the fact that with all her gifts and talents one thought dominated her whole being night and day: How shall we help the poor, the weak, the fallen, weary and

heavy-laden, to help themselves?"

It is significant that Minnie Lansbury wanted to help people fight against poor conditions and oppression. She rejected the idea of charity. Minnie Lansbury's life was short but exceptional.

My great aunt Minnie won't go down in history: she scarcely featured in my life as she devoted herself to caring for her brain-damaged son. He was severely affected by epilepsy, frequent head injuries and possibly the medication given in those days.



If we want women to be liberated, we must fight like Minnie Lansbury

She and her husband went without a holiday for 40 years; few of their relatives visited. My great aunt cared for his needs, washing, lifting and dressing him with the help of her husband, struggling without complaint.

Even in the heyday of the welfare state, parents of disabled children received little help, understanding or support. The Tories want to drive

us back to the days when family care was the norm.

In my Unite Community branch, we have been hearing many stories of people struggling to care for parents with dementia, sick partners, disturbed and violent grandchildren. So many stories like these are untold.

George Lansbury, Minnie's father in law, the leader of Poplar council and later the Labour Party, said: "When a soldier like Minnie passes on, it only means their presence is withdrawn, their life and work remaining an inspiration and a call to us each to close the ranks and continue our march breast forward."

My great aunt was one of millions of kindly, hardworking women who sacrificed their own fulfilment for their loved ones. As socialists, we stand with carers, mothers and grandmothers.

My cheery, lovely aunt Minnie had an abundance of love, but I was too young and inexperienced to ask how she really felt about her life, what she had wanted from it, and how it might have been if more social care was available.

If we want women to be liberated and my great aunt's example to be a thing of the past, we must fight like Minnie Lansbury and her fellow councillors.



The Socialist Inbox

Do you have something to say?

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

Worse-off women

In London, the number of people sleeping rough has risen every year since the government began publishing figures in 2010.

Westminster, where the average price for a flat exceeds £1.3 million, has both the largest homeless population in the UK and the most planning applications to build luxurious basements - where the super-rich are now storing their cars, installing their home cinemas, wine cellars and swimming pools.

These aptly named 'iceberg homes', with more space below ground than above it, are sought after by the super-rich. Developers are increasingly choosing to extend the size of existing properties rather than building new ones, which means no pesky 'affordable' housing laws to contend with.

85%

Estimated proportion of benefit cuts shouldered by women

Although land is at a premium in London, purchasing vast swathes of it outside the city is still a popular hobby of the UK's billionaires - inventor James Dyson owns more than the queen!

The Tories like to kid themselves that giving us our two female prime ministers is some kind of magical feminist feat. It has done nothing to improve the lives of ordinary women.

If May was really a champion of women's rights, she might start by addressing the fact that women are disproportionately affected by benefit cuts, shouldering 85% of the burden according to one estimate.

I'd like an underground swimming pool, Theresa, but I spend 70% of my wages on one room in a flat (and I can't swim). Take the wealth off the super-rich 1% -

because no one needs a private waterfall in their basement.

Ellen Kenyon Peers
Lewisham, south London

Farm fiends

When is a union not a union? When it's the National Farmers' Union, according to a report from the 'Ethical Consumer Research Association' - which describes it as an "English agribusiness lobby group."

According to the report, "as food production has globalised and the environmental movement has grown, consensus about how our food should be produced has broken down. Over the last 20 years... the NFU has hardened into an anti-environmental, free-market lobby group."

Using the term 'union' suggests an organisation where members have an equal vote, working in the interests of all workers in the sector. Not so the NFU, which actually works for the short-term interests of a small number of large-scale farm owners, directly against those of smaller farmers.

For example, by supporting mega-dairies which are driving small dairy farmers out of business. The owners of big farms, mostly in the South and East of England, have used the millions they get from EU subsidies to undercut and buy out small farms while outbidding them for any land that comes on the market. They have also resisted any regulation, especially that favouring conservation, wildlife and the environment - unless big subsidies are attached! Meanwhile small farmers struggle to survive and are driven out of business by even short-term cuts in the price they get from supermarkets for their milk, lamb or vegetables.

But as well as representing the interests of Britain's biggest farmers, the NFU apparently has a structure which allows corporate members, but does not disclose who these are. The Ethical Consumer report raises concerns about a perceived relationship with multina-

tional companies that determine the shape and future of British agriculture and food production - the agricultural industry and the big supermarkets.

Agribusiness giants like Syngenta, who make the neonicotinoids that are killing bees, and big supermarkets like Tesco, apparently don't just lobby the NFU for support, they could be much closer to it than that. They can - and do - use their relationship with the NFU to put pressure on government, working against smaller farmers, against environmental campaigns, and ultimately against consumers.

Kate Jones
Swansea

Trotsky and Poland

In Poland under Stalinism, many people realised it was totalitarianism, not socialism.

Elections were falsified. The government bureaucracy was saying that power was in the hands of the people but it was not like that at all. It was a perversion of Marxism.

That is why Trotsky was so popular among youth in Warsaw, because he fought against the hypocrisy of Stalinism and the departure from the true

ideals of socialism.

In the 1960s, Trotsky's writing became popular among young people discussing underground in Warsaw. The most famous group was centred around Adam Michnik, who at that time considered himself a Trotskyist.

Youth near the city who were studying in Warsaw created a group around Henry Szlajfer. These groups issued an open letter based on the ideology of Trotsky to the ruling Polish United Workers' Party. They were arrested, isolated from society and humiliated. In the late 1960s, some began to move away even from genuine Marxism because they were persecuted. We all exactly saw the distortion of socialism, everyone saw what was happening around us. Only Trotsky did not betray the true idea of revolution.

Everyone wanted socialism as Trotsky described it. Young people believed in his ideas, and Trotsky was a hero for them. They thought there must be built up a new system based on Trotskyism. 100 years after the Russian revolution, that country lives under Putin's authoritarianism. Real democracy does not exist in Russia. But the ideas of Trotsky are still remaining.

Agnieszka Ford
Worcester



photo Paul Mattsson

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.

Film review: Hidden Figures

HOW BLACK WOMEN FOUGHT RACISM AND SEXISM AT NASA



Sarah Wrack

Space rockets and the struggle against racism and sexism might seem an odd combination but *Hidden Figures* definitely pulls it off. It's an interesting, funny, and moving account - based on a true story - of three black women's struggle to reach their potential in 1960s America.

Katherine, Mary and Dorothy are mathematical geniuses.

They have already overcome huge obstacles. In an early scene, Katherine receives a scholarship to the only school in Virginia that offers education for black children beyond the eighth grade. They become human 'computers' on Nasa's Space Task Group, in the midst of the space race with the Soviet Union.

But they and the other black computers remain segregated from the white women performing the same role, working in a separate building.

As women, it is deemed impossible for them to have any more advanced role at Nasa - despite them showing time and again that they are some of the organisation's greatest minds. And throughout the film a mainframe physical computer is being installed, threatening to replace all of the women's jobs.

While not a film about the collective struggle of the civil rights movement or the general political

situation in the US in the 1960s, neither does *Hidden Figures* ignore this context.

Cleverly interspersed throughout the film are real historical TV and radio clips of not only the rocket launches, but also events like the bombing of a Freedom Riders bus, and speeches by Martin Luther King Jr and President John F Kennedy.



While mass movements are the driving force of change, they are often mirrored by millions of individual acts of defiance

Mary's husband, who is active in the civil rights movement, is initially hostile to her applying for the qualifications she needs to become an engineer - no black woman had ever previously been a Nasa engineer - saying: "You can't apply for freedom - it's got to be demanded, taken."

But the film is a reminder that while mass movements are the driving force of change, they are often mirrored by millions of individual acts of defiance - from the everyday

to the extraordinary.

Mary goes to court to demand her right to take evening classes at a whites-only high school, which does allow her to go on to become a qualified engineer. Dorothy, who has been acting as supervisor for the black computers without the respective pay, turns the threat posed by the mainframe to their advantage.

She teachers herself, and then the rest of the group, computer programming - and goes on to become a leading expert in this at Nasa.

Katherine, whose calculation skills prove indispensable to the whole mission, repeatedly lists herself as co-author of reports she has worked on, despite being told to remove it every time.

The film gives glimpses - albeit sanitised versions - of the prejudice and abuse black people faced at this time in all fields. We see the backward opinions of several of their colleagues at Nasa.

But it also shows - again in simplified Hollywood fashion - the impact of experience, especially of working together, on tackling some of those attitudes.

Whether you have an interest in this period of social or scientific history, or just enjoy a classic Hollywood beating-the-odds story, this is a well-made and worthwhile account of one small piece of the puzzle.

DEBATES ON BUILDING THE ANTI-TRUMP MOVEMENT

Sarah Sachs-Eldridge
 Socialist Party national organiser

Protest has been a major feature of the first months of 2017. On 21 January, the day after Donald Trump's inauguration, a five million-strong surge of resistance exploded on to the streets of 673 cities and towns worldwide. And thousands have marched and protested since.

The marchers are predominantly young. For this generation, hit hardest by student debt, lack of housing and unemployment, austerity has been the status quo their whole lives.

In response to the bigoted billionaire's divisive policies, the marchers, largely mobilised through their need to act rather than any specific organisation, raise slogans of solidarity, fighting racism and sexism and defending all our rights. Internationalism is a feature of the movement.

The ideas of mass civil disobedience, including strikes, are starting to be debated in the movement and

there is enthusiasm for Socialist Students' call for school, college and university walkouts on 'Day X', when Trump dares to visit.

The Socialist Party's bold socialist slogans found an echo with an important section of this incipient movement. They want an alternative to the capitalist system that Trump, Clinton, May and the Blairites represent and ideas about how to fight them.

Bernie Sanders

In the US the movement to support Bernie Sanders, a self-declared 'democratic socialist', showed the enormous enthusiasm that exists for an alternative to big business politicians. That's why Socialist Alternative (our co-thinkers in the US) called for Bernie to continue his run for president when he failed to win the Democratic nomination.

Here in Britain the support for Jeremy Corbyn's leadership challenges revealed the appetite for a break with austerity and Blairism. Socialist ideas - democratic planning and public ownership of key enterprises to meet the needs of all, and the crucial role the working class can play

when organised in changing the world - are needed.

However, there are two rival groupings vying for the leadership of the new potential movement, neither of which offers a clear way forward. On the one hand you have Guardian columnist Owen Jones attempting to build the Stop Trump Coalition.

The list of names Owen has gathered for his coalition includes Tim Farron MP, now leader of the Lib Dems which formed the vicious Con-Dem government with the Tories.

Establishment politicians see the widespread anger against Trump as an opportunity to try to rebuild their authority, proposing a fair capitalism - but no such thing exists. That just eight billionaires own more wealth than half the world reveals the inequality at the heart of capitalism.

In 2003, then Lib Dem leader Charles Kennedy spoke to the millions-strong 15 February anti-war demo. But it has since been made clear that neither he nor his pro-capitalist party was anti-war. Against the objections of the Socialist Party representatives on the Stop the War Coalition committee, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and its allies unfortunately pushed the decision through the committee to give a platform to Kennedy without any public criticisms.

They also refused to allow any speaker on behalf of a socialist organisation. This undoubtedly helped to build up the Lib Dems' 'radical' image, contributing to Cleggmania and the formation of the Con-Dem Coalition.

While 'Farronmania' is unlikely, it is a mistake to give these anti-working class politicians an uncritical platform, especially while arguing as Jones does, that Stop Trump is exciting "because it isn't dominated by any groups or sects for their own interest".

Ideas

Leading a movement should mean helping the most effective ideas that get thrown up become widespread and organising to realise them. Owen Jones has already proved himself incapable of this - he called for Sanders supporters in the US to switch to Wall Street candidate Hillary Clinton instead of building a party of the 99%.

When the second wave of support to defend Jeremy Corbyn against the Blairite coup last summer started to coalesce around the call for deselection of Blairite MPs, something the Socialist Party had been putting forward as invaluable in the civil war in the Labour Party, Owen Jones attacked and belittled the idea.

The SWP-dominated Stand Up



photo Gage Skidmore



photo Paul Mattsson



photo Mary Finch

to Racism is the other campaign attempting to control this new movement. But the SWP, in practice, does not put forward a bold socialist programme and shows itself incapable of a democratic method of organising.

We in the Socialist Party stand for the right of all left trends and ideas to have the chance to be heard and for genuine debate. We have a tradition of allowing other left groups to speak in our meetings.

In the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition - with the Socialist Party, the SWP and the RMT transport workers' union as the constituent

organisations - the Socialist Party is a stalwart defender of democratic decision-making methods. These groupings of Owen Jones and the SWP offer no such opportunity.

It is usual for Socialist Party members to be excluded from speaking at meetings the SWP have organised. In the current anti-Trump movement they have taken that method further by attempting to physically block Socialist Party activists from distributing our leaflets, papers and placards. They will not succeed in this but their methods are utterly wrong and, like Owen Jones', will not be of use to the new movement rising.

#DayWithoutAWoman

Protests and walkouts around the world for International Women's Day



CWI members and other women protesting against Trump in Brazil

This year's International Women's Day is of particular significance. Firstly, we celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the start of the Russian revolution (see centre pages).

Secondly, the movement against Trump, and in particular the massive 'women's marches' that took place in January, show the potential for a new phase of struggle against sexism and the oppression of women.

Coming in the midst of the anti-Trump movement, there are plans in various countries for bigger scale protests on International Women's Day than has been the case in recent years. Importantly, the idea of strike action is being discussed - in part inspired by last year's 'women's strike' in Poland as part of the successful movement to prevent the implementation of a full ban on abortion.

Socialist Alternative, our cothinkers in the US write: "In the face of record-breaking, historic resistance and record-low poll numbers, Trump isn't stepping back, he aims to speed up the attacks. We cannot wait until the next election. We need to step up our protests now."

Strike

They point to an article in the Guardian by Angela Davis and others who wrote: "The massive women's marches of 21 January may mark the beginning of a new wave of militant feminist struggle. As a first step, we propose to help build an international strike against male violence and in defence of reproductive rights on 8 March."

Socialist Alternative says: "This call to action should be taken up and organised by the major women's organisations and the labour movement... Socialist Alternative calls on everybody to support this strike and participate in it where it is possible to do so without risking your job or other retaliation."

Given the short build up to this date however, they also call for it to be used as a springboard for bigger action, if possible a one-day national



Members of the Sindicato de Estudiantes in Spain on strike in November

strike, on 1 May - international workers' day.

In Spain, young people are showing the way, led by Sindicato de Estudiantes (SE - student union). SE has launched a new initiative 'Libres y combativas' (free and combative - a slogan of the Spanish revolution in the 1930s).

They write: "The Student Union has made the call to the whole student movement to walk out of classes on 8 March from 12-1pm and gather in the grounds of the schools and campuses to say: Enough with sexist violence! In defence of women's rights! Down with Trump and all governments that encourage sexism and our oppression!"

Not one less

Big protests and some strikes are expected in Latin America, where, particularly in Argentina, there was a one-hour walkout by many women in October in protest against sexual violence, under the banner 'not one less'.

Members of our sister party in Brazil told us: "Protests are organised around two main slogans - against the pension reforms, which will hit women hardest, and against femicide. There will be some strike action - for example of teachers in Sao Paulo."

Members of our sister party in Ireland tell us: "In Ireland, the call for a



Campaigning for abortion rights by Rosa in Ireland

'Strike 4 Repeal' will see school and college students, and some workers, walking out to demand an immediate referendum to lift the abortion ban. There will also be a major march to parliament in the evening.

"Socialist Party activists, as part of the socialist feminist campaign Rosa, will join in these events, and will be part of a bus going to five cities from 6-8 March, defying the abortion ban by providing safe abortions pills in conjunction with Women On Web."

■ For updates on these events see socialistworld.net

■ For meetings and other events in England and Wales, see socialistparty.org.uk/whatson



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.

ENVIRONMENT

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and unrecycled 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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■ ORGANISE AGAINST AUSTERITY ■ STOP TRUMP
- FIGHT SEXISM ■ RUSSIAN REVOLUTION 1917

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2017

ORGANISE TO

RESIST

1917-
2017

FIGHTING FOR LIBERATION AND SOCIALISM

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Leicester Socialist Party

Women are on the move. They're on the move against Donald Trump in the US with millions on the 'women's marches'. They're on the move against attacks on reproductive rights in Ireland and Poland with a huge women's strike last year.

They're on the move against the legalisation of child rape in Turkey with massive demonstrations. And they're going to be on the move

again on 8 March - International Women's Day.

This year's International Women's Day commemorates the 100th anniversary of the heroic struggle of women textile workers in St Peterburg who walked out in unofficial strike action in 1917, demanding bread and herrings to feed their families. That strike marked the start of the Russian revolution, a struggle against the oppressive monarchy but also against the capitalist system.

100 years later women are still suffering under capitalism. The impact of austerity has been disproportionate on women. We make up the majority of the public sector workforce facing job cuts.

We rely on child benefits, maternity pay and flexible working to maintain a degree of financial independence while raising our children, all of which are now under attack.

Cuts

Access to contraception, safe abortions and safe childbirth are all threatened with the massive £22 billion scheduled cuts to the NHS (see pages 2-3).

We are the most likely to take on caring for the elderly as public care homes are closed and privatised, and suffer increased domestic and sexual violence as women's refuges and rape crisis centres are shut down. We have

many reasons to be angry, many reasons to move into action.

For the first time ever, women make up the majority of trade union members in this country. Making appeals to women that fighting austerity is necessary to fighting their own oppression is a key task for the trade unions.

The international movements clearly show that many women are open to methods traditionally used by workers' struggles, like strikes, and to socialist ideas. We need those women to join the Socialist Party to fight for an alternative in the struggles to come.

■ See pages 8-9 and 15 for more on International Women's Day