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# the Socialist

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# Public sector wages

# PAY UP!

## Strike to smash the cap

**Jane Nellist**  
National Union of Teachers  
national executive (personal capacity)

**A** stark new report by the government's own advisors on public sector pay has shown that there was a 6% drop in average wages from 2005 to 2015.

That's reflected in a £3 an hour loss for teachers, £2 an hour for police officers and £8 an hour for doctors.

More experienced teachers have lost as much as £5,000 a year because of pay restraint, and that doesn't include the loss from increases in pension and National Insurance contributions.

There is a growing anger among public sector workers about low pay and funding cuts to the services they deliver. The Tories are wobbling on the public sector pay cap, with many cabinet members - fearing mass revolt - coming out for change.

But we cannot rely on their 'good nature'! They'll just cut somewhere else to pay for it. We must come out fighting.

At the 1 July 'Not One Day More' demo Mark Serwotka, leader of the PCS civil servants' union, absolutely nailed it when he posed the question: "Why don't we have a public sector pay strike to break the pay cap?"

As each day goes by, the Tories are getting weaker. Even though mathematically they have a small majority, propped up by the billion-pound bribe for votes from the DUP, they have no authority.

And it's not only pay they're showing weakness on, some have hinted at tuition fees being on the table too (see page 4). As their poll ratings plummet, they are more divided. We need to push harder to put them out of their misery.

The recent demo was vibrant and young.

Labour's manifesto started to lift aspirations on so many fronts. The mantra of austerity, 'we are all in it together,' is dead.

The mood is changing and there is a tangible feeling of victory in the air. That can become a reality, but only if the leadership of our trade unions starts to lead.

Now is the time to organise the millions of public sector workers in a serious coordinated campaign, including strike action, to win back dignity for public sector workers and the services we deliver.



See pages 2-3 for report from the 1 July demo and our editorial discussing what's needed next

# 1 JULY DEMO: ANGER AND ENTHUSIASM SHOWS POTENTIAL MASS MOVEMENT

All who attended the Tories Out demonstration on 1 July will have been given a huge boost of confidence that the anger and determination exists to bring down this weak and wobbly government. Many tens of thousands of workers and young people came to express their opposition to the Tories, the DUP and austerity.

The Socialist Party made a big impact on the protest. Our flags, gazebos, placards, leaflets and sellers of the Socialist couldn't be missed. Socialist Party members sold over 800 copies of the Socialist and raised over £1,000. More than 70 people gave their details as interested in

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joining the Socialist Party and vice joined on the day.

At various points of the day hundreds of young people joined the vibrant 'red bloc' organised by Young Socialists - Generation Socialist. The open-mic stage which launched the bloc at the start of the demo had queues of people wanting to share why they had come along.

## Corbyn

The now famous 'oh Jeremy Corbyn' chant echoed around the march throughout. But this was no blind hero-worship - people were serious about winning what Corbyn promised in the election manifesto. Socialist Party placards calling for people to 'organise, strike, resist for Corbyn's programme' flew out of our hands at tube stations and coach stops as people arrived.

So too with the 'capitalism kills'

placards with the evocative picture of a burnt-out Grenfell Tower.

The stage on the final stretch of the demo, organised by the National Shop Stewards Network, received a great response as crowds arrived. When Socialist Party member and Barts Health Trust Unite branch secretary Len Hockey said, "we're going on strike," there was a roar of support from those passing.

The turnout was only a fraction of what could have been achieved had the trade unions turned fully to the task of building for it and organising coaches. Instead there were reports of transport being called off even on the morning of the demo.

It is even more impressive, therefore, that such a number made their own way on trains from around the country and in droves from across London. As discussed in the article opposite, this protest must be just the beginning.



photo Dhanuvintha



photo Paul Mattsson



photo Mary Finch



photo Paul Mattsson



photo Mary Finch



photo Mary Finch

## What we think

## After the demo - what next?

"For years we have campaigned for the idea, another world is possible," said John McDonnell, Labour's shadow chancellor, at the People's Assembly (PA) demonstration closing rally in Parliament Square on 1 July. "But now," he concluded to rapturous applause, "we can truly say another world is in sight".

A mood of celebration dominated the day and was reflected from the platform. Almost every speaker said, in different ways, that the Tories were 'weak and wobbly' and that there was a real prospect now of a Corbyn-led government.

Jeremy Corbyn himself told the rally that not only are "the Tories in retreat, austerity is in retreat, the economic arguments of austerity are in retreat."

Unfortunately, however, there was less clarity from the platform speakers on the next steps that are needed to actively work to bring down the government, or to build the forces that will be needed to meet the inevitable opposition of the capitalist establishment to a Corbyn government.

The PCS civil servants' union general secretary Mark Serwotka rightly argued for coordinated public sector strike action to break the pay cap but this concrete call was in sharp contrast to other speakers. Trade Union Congress (TUC) general secretary Frances O'Grady typically confined herself to vacuous slogans.

"Every worker needs a pay rise," she said - and who could disagree? But she then said absolutely nothing on what the TUC proposed to do, not even to use the new political situation for a mass unionisation drive.

## Counter-powers

That is not good enough. The TUC, the co-ordinating body for over six million workers, is a counter-power to the government. If it gave a lead May would be gone in months. It was a political mistake by the PA organisers not to use the demonstration to make a firm call on the TUC to act.

The same was true with regard to Labour councils, also a potential counter-power to the government.

A Fair Funding for Schools campaigner spoke passionately about the present £3 billion schools funding gap and teacher redundancies. But PA stalwart and National Union of Teachers executive committee member Alex Kenny offered no way forward in response.

"We don't know when the next election is," he said, "but we do know there's a budget in November. So if you live in an area with Labour, Liberal Democrat or Green MPs or councillors, you must work with them to build the pressure on the Tories before then".

But why do councils, Labour ones especially, need 'permission' from the May government "in November" to act on the schools funding crisis now? They have the power to step in and, using their borrowing powers and reserves, underwrite school budgets so that the sacking of teachers and support staff could be stopped immediately.

What could the government do? If they dared to take on councils protecting local public services they would only bring the next general election nearer and guarantee their final demise. Austerity must be resisted in action, not just in words.

One speaker, the Green Party London Assembly member Sian Berry, did point to the record of Labour councils on housing. Grenfell Tower was referred to by many as a symbol of Tory Britain but, as Sian Berry said, most



photo Mary Finch



photo Paul Mattsson

## Consolidating the Corbyn revolution

The July edition of Socialism Today, the Socialist Party's monthly magazine, includes a call for Jeremy Corbyn to go over the heads of the Blairites who still dominate the Labour Party apparatus and present his own proposals for a transformed Labour Party directly to members and trade union supporters.

Peter Taaffe, in an article headed 'Britain's earthquake election

- consolidating the Corbyn revolution,' argues that "the civil war within Labour has not been settled by Jeremy Corbyn's success in the election campaign and subsequent events like the Grenfell Tower fire..."

"The majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party is still steeped in the ideas of Blair, of Labour remaining within the framework of capitalism, and ultimately being prepared to

bow to the pressures of the system..."

"If Corbyn does not act, his triumph could dissipate over time... [He] should boldly act as he did with the general election manifesto. He appealed over the heads of the right and got support for his radical proposals. That confronted the right with a fait accompli!"

## Referendum

"He should do the same by presenting his own democratic constitution to a referendum of all Labour

We are proud to add Corbynist MP IAN MEARNS to our line-up of fantastic speakers

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Labour councillors were pursuing exactly the same policies of privatisation, deregulation and cost-cutting. Significantly, her criticisms were not received with any hostility by the crowd.

But even her points were only half-made, not spelling out clearly the need to clear the Blairite councillors out of the Labour Party if it is to be transformed into a real anti-austerity movement or offering support to Jeremy Corbyn in that task. And when Green councillors have been in positions of power, they too have not resisted the austerity agenda.

## Re-shape the labour movement

Overall, the demonstration confirmed the changed mood and raised expectations since Jeremy Corbyn's general election campaign. But it was a missed opportunity by the PA organisers not to map out a clear way forward, reflecting their political adaptation to the right-wing of the labour movement.

There were calls, rightly, for more demonstrations. Lindsey German, convenor of the Stop the War Coalition, said "we can't wait for a general election. If this is the number of people we can get on the streets in just three weeks," she went on, "imagine what we can get to demonstrate outside the Tory party conference in October".

But on the vital task to re-shape the labour movement for the battles ahead, to organise to defeat the Blairite remnants as well as the Tories, not a word was said to the assembled crowds.

Jeremy Corbyn concluded the rally by stating that "it's the ideals of social justice, of unity, of people coming together to oppose racism and all those that would divide us, that are the ones that are moving forward." Although, he did not explicitly say that it is only through socialist policies that those ideals can be realised - another frustration on a day when tens of thousands mobilised to seek an answer to the question, what next?

Party members - full and associate - which would have at its heart mandatory reselection of MPs and the replacement of the bureaucratic machine, with power resting in the hands of the membership, particularly new members and the trade unions.

"It should also enshrine the principle of a federal arrangement which would lead to the re-admittance of all expelled socialists and organisations back into the Labour Party... "Such an approach would shatter

the plans of the right to pursue a rear-guard struggle to frustrate and delay the real involvement of workers and youth in a revived, socialist Labour Party."

The magazine also carries a major article on the lessons of the Syriza government in Greece, two years on from the July 2015 referendum which saw a massive victory for the anti-austerity struggle but which was then turned into a defeat.

- See [socialismtoday.org](http://socialismtoday.org)
- £3 an issue or £25 for a year

**Have you got news for us?** DEADLINE: Friday before publication date - urgent news: Monday  
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# Fight establishment's Grenfell insults: no to cover-up, safety for all!

**Paul Kershaw**  
Socialist Party London and chair of Unite the Union housing workers' branch LE/1111

Every day seems to bring a new insult to the survivors of the Grenfell Tower fire. They are still seeking assurances of local rehousing. Their landlord has charged them rent for burnt-out homes in error. A local therapy group was locked out of a community centre when locks were changed without notice. And when the council's attempt to hold a meeting on Grenfell behind closed doors - excluding press and residents - was overturned by a court order, the meeting was halted.

## For anti-cuts councillors and criminal prosecutions

There have now been some belated resignations - the leader and deputy leader of Kensington and Chelsea council. But London's Blairite mayor Sadiq Khan has called for the government to send in unelected commissioners to take over operations. The Socialist Party disagrees with this call. Local residents and workers need councillors who fight for them. Councillors not willing to do so should stand aside for candidates who are. And top of the list of demands: use the borough's £300 million reserves! In any case, responsibility goes higher up than just councillors - and we have seen no moves towards prosecutions.

## No to a rigged inquiry

The establishment is in full cover-up mode. The planned "inquiry" looks designed to put a lid on the affair. Not only does the judge appointed have a record of judgments in favour of social cleansing - his technical advisor, Sir Ken Knight, recommended against retrofitting sprinklers as "not considered practical or economically viable." Will he be investigating if his own advice makes

him in any way responsible? Jeremy Corbyn was right to challenge Theresa May, calling alongside Grenfell campaigners for the inquiry's terms to be widened and survivors to have a central role. A serious inquiry will need to look at reductions in regulation and the interlocking links between semi-public quangos and businesses that obscure accountability. Sajid Javid, now overseeing the Grenfell response as the government's communities secretary, was in charge of getting rid of "red tape" to save £10 billion. The Homes and Communities Authority had its regulatory remit cut back. Ex-property developer Anthony Preiskel was on the board of the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation which ran Grenfell Tower. He is also on the regulator's board. The Fire Brigades Union and general union Unite have applied for core participant status which would help put a working class voice in the official inquiry. But the need for a truly independent inquiry is becoming increasingly clear.

## Replace the cladding now

Stop testing cladding and take it down - this is the message from David Orr, chief executive of the National Housing Federation, the umbrella body for housing associations. "We are calling on government to halt the testing on cladding and shift its focus to making people safe... This process has powerfully demonstrated a systemic failure in construction, manufacturing and the way that regulation has been applied." But the government is refusing to give assurances about funding. Some will see Orr's statement as an attempt to shift responsibility away from landlords. But tenants and residents of tower blocks will agree that action cannot wait. All council and social landlords must take down cladding and publish full safety reports, and the government must make private landlords do the same.



> Reports: fighting for tower block safety around the country - page 11

> Letters: justice for Grenfell, safety for all - page 10

■ For free organising resources including sign-up sheets, leaflets and window bills, go to [socialistparty.org.uk/leaflet](http://socialistparty.org.uk/leaflet)

■ How working class communities can organise to fight for safety: read 'Justice for Grenfell and safety for all' at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)

# Tories' tuition fees wobble: fight for free education!

The Tories must "change hard" on their approach to university fees, according to First Secretary of State Damian Green. The government's number two man called for a "national conversation" on tuition. The Tories have near-zero youth support. Green still wants the working class to pay though. He says only taxing workers could cover the costs - and even so, free education would mean overcrowded classrooms. But that's not true. Britain's

billionaires and big businesses steal enough to fund high-quality, free education for all - and much more besides. The very fact that Green is talking about tuition fees reflects the Tories' precarious position. No minority government has ever lasted a full parliamentary term. Corbyn's anti-austerity manifesto enthused millions and pushed political conversation left. This too is behind the hypocrisy of Tory ministers calling for an end to

the public sector pay cap (see page 1). Michael Gove, Jeremy Hunt and Justine Greening are responsible for attacks on the same workers they now pretend to back. Of course, no capitalist politician wants to threaten profits with serious pro-working class reforms. But their fear is palpable. Big demonstrations and coordinated strikes can bring them down. Students and workers: unite and fight! **James Ivens**

# Blairite EU rebellion

## No to the bosses' Single Market

## Kick out the saboteurs

**The Blairites campaigned for Remain - and want to stay in the Single Market - to protect big business, not migrants**  
Tony Blair photo World Travel and Tourism Council/CC, EU flag photo Yanni Koutsomitis/CC

**Tom Baldwin**  
Socialist Party national committee

Jeremy Corbyn has had to sack three members of his shadow cabinet. They were among 50 Labour rebels who voted to remain in the European Single Market, against the party's instruction to abstain. The pro-free market amendment was put forward by arch-Blairite MP Chuka Umunna. Labour's right wing may have been temporarily silenced by Corbyn's successful election campaign. But this shows they have not gone away and are still organising to undermine his pro-worker leadership. Corbyn was right to face down this rebellion. But he must now go further in both taking on the Blairites and developing an alternative, socialist Brexit plan. The majority of working class and young people were rightly appalled by the anti-immigrant bile that

came from the official Leave referendum campaigns. For this reason, some understandably support efforts to 'soften' Brexit. However, the establishment's 'soft Brexit' has nothing to do with a principled defence of migrants. Umunna himself said in September last year: "If continuation of the free movement we have is the price... then clearly we couldn't remain in the Single Market." More recently he's stated that immigration could still be attacked while remaining a member. Many of the rebel MPs are supporters of 'Progress', the main Blairite organisation within Labour. They support the Single Market because it is a bosses' charter. It is a free-trade area with rules meant to assist capitalists by - among other things - undermining workers' collective organisation, encouraging privatisation, and blocking nationalisation. The Labour right is struggling to



# Hillsborough deaths: six charged thanks to determined campaign

**Dave Walsh**  
Hillsborough eyewitness and Liverpool Socialist Party member

More than 28 years after 96 people were unlawfully killed in the Hillsborough stadium disaster, charges are finally being brought against the policeman in charge on the day and five others. In the aftermath of the tragedy, the British establishment deployed the obscene tactics of blaming the dead who had been trapped by unsafe stands and police inaction. They tried to discredit the fans with the most terrible lies, making them seem inhuman and unworthy of sympathy. Disasters like Hillsborough happen because of the drive for profit and utter contempt for working

class people from those in power. Attempts at cover-ups are an inevitable consequence when a super-rich elite controls the state, the legal system and the media. We're already seeing the beginnings of a cover-up of the Grenfell Tower fire. **Truth** If we don't want to wait 28 years for the truth and for those responsible to be held to account, then we must fight for an independent workers' inquiry now. At the time of Hillsborough, I was a 22-year-old Liverpool season ticket holder. This qualified me for a ticket in the Leppings Lane pens where the crush occurred. But the day before the match I got a ticket from a friend for the seats above. I sold the one for the pens to

another Liverpool fan outside the stadium. He thought I was a tout and was expecting to pay a big premium. I only charged him the price on the ticket and explained why it was going spare. He was so pleased he gave me a big hug. When photographs of the victims were published weeks later, I scrutinised their faces to see if he was one of them. To this day I can't be sure. Like many people in the city I felt a deep sense of grief. I know very well how much pain and outrage was caused by the lies told in the cover-up. If it hadn't been for the utter determination over many years from the families and the justice campaign, then the truth would never have been told and nobody would have been held to account.

# Irish establishment humiliated as court finds Jobstown is not guilty



> Continued from page 16

We are demanding a full independent inquiry to investigate how the Jobstown charges were brought about. All the charges against the remaining eleven Jobstown defendants must be dropped. The earlier conviction of a 17-year-old protester in the Children's Court should be overturned. Working class people are supposed to passively accept austerity. The capitalist establishment wanted to use this trial to create a chill factor for anyone thinking of challenging the status quo.

Critically, they wanted to undermine the Socialist Party and Anti-Austerity Alliance (now called Solidarity) who played a decisive role in building non-payment of the water charges - something Sinn Féin and many trade union leaders were not prepared to do. The establishment is clearly worried about the growing influence of the socialist left. There have been important strikes in the last year. The burgeoning movement demanding abortion rights held mass protests on International Women's Day. There is growing support for separating

church and state. It all shows a desire for meaningful, radical change on the part of workers, women, LGBT+ and young people. The crisis-ridden system we live under is incapable of meeting such aspirations. This poses the necessity of building an anticapitalist, socialist left that can challenge the undemocratic, corrupt and rotten capitalist system itself. ■ Police lies, media smears, dawn raids - read the full article: 'Jobstown - a rotten stitch-up exposed' at [socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net)



## Birmingham bin workers' anger boils over into strike action



Tyseley depot picket line photo Bob Severn

At 10.45am on Friday 30 June, bin workers in the union Unite across Birmingham left their vans and depots to begin the first in a series of strikes against their employer, Birmingham council.

The dispute has been triggered by the Labour-controlled authority's plan to introduce a package of measures designed to cut the bin service budget.

The package includes the termination of the contracts of initially 122, now 113, full-time staff employed at Grade 3 level and then to reemploy some at a lower Grade 2 through a competitive process.

Unite members will continue the action with two-hour stoppages on designated days throughout July (3, 11, 19 and 27) and into August (4) to force the employer to back down over the proposals. However, even at

this stage it would provide a massive lift to the Unite members involved in the current action if GMB was to announce that it intends to ballot its members who are equally affected by these proposals.

**Ian Leech**  
Birmingham Central  
Socialist Party

### Tyseley depot

Solid strike action by Birmingham refuse workers against job cuts and bullying brought bin collections to a virtual halt on Friday 30 June. Many agency workers showed their solidarity by refusing to drive the bin lorries.

At the Tyseley depot, some agency workers walked off the job half an hour into the half-day strike, while others stayed on site but refused to go out in the wagons.

Pickets said the strike looked a lot stronger than previous strikes and there was no chance that uncollected bins would be sorted-out in 24-hours, as claimed by the council.

**Bob Severn**  
Birmingham South East  
Socialist Party

### Digbeth depot

The strike steward - who has worked on the bins for 33 years - said the council had closed the yard down for the rest of the day. Pickets there shared phone footage of the dispute from the Perry Barr depot.

**Dave Wright**  
Birmingham South East  
Socialist Party

■ See 'Birmingham bin workers' anger boils over into strike action' at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk) for more

## Surrey FBU pass no confidence motion

**Paul Couchman**  
Staines Socialist Party

be signed online here: [petitions.surreycc.gov.uk/SaveFireService/](http://petitions.surreycc.gov.uk/SaveFireService/)

In April, Surrey FBU voted to support local Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidate and Socialist Party member, Matt Clarke, in the May council elections. This was due to the solidarity shown by the Socialist Party to local firefighters in their defence of services.

The crisis in public services has reached an acute level when the workers in those services now have to declare a complete loss of confidence in the local authority.

Richard Jones, secretary of the FBU in the South East, told the Socialist: "These budget cuts are completely unacceptable and show, once again, how little regard the fire authority has for the safety of the public."

■ The FBU motion can be read in full here: [fbu.org.uk/publication/motion-no-confidence-surrey-county-council-s-fire-authority](http://fbu.org.uk/publication/motion-no-confidence-surrey-county-council-s-fire-authority)



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## BA cabin crew blacklisting strike starts

Mixed fleet cabin crew started a 16-day strike on 1 July. Up until the start of the latest strike, mixed fleet cabin crew had been on strike for 26 days.

The strike is over pay and the sanctioning of striking workers which as Unite say is tantamount to blacklisting. Sanctions have included cabin crew seeing bonus payments worth hundreds of pounds taken away and the removal of staff travel concessions.

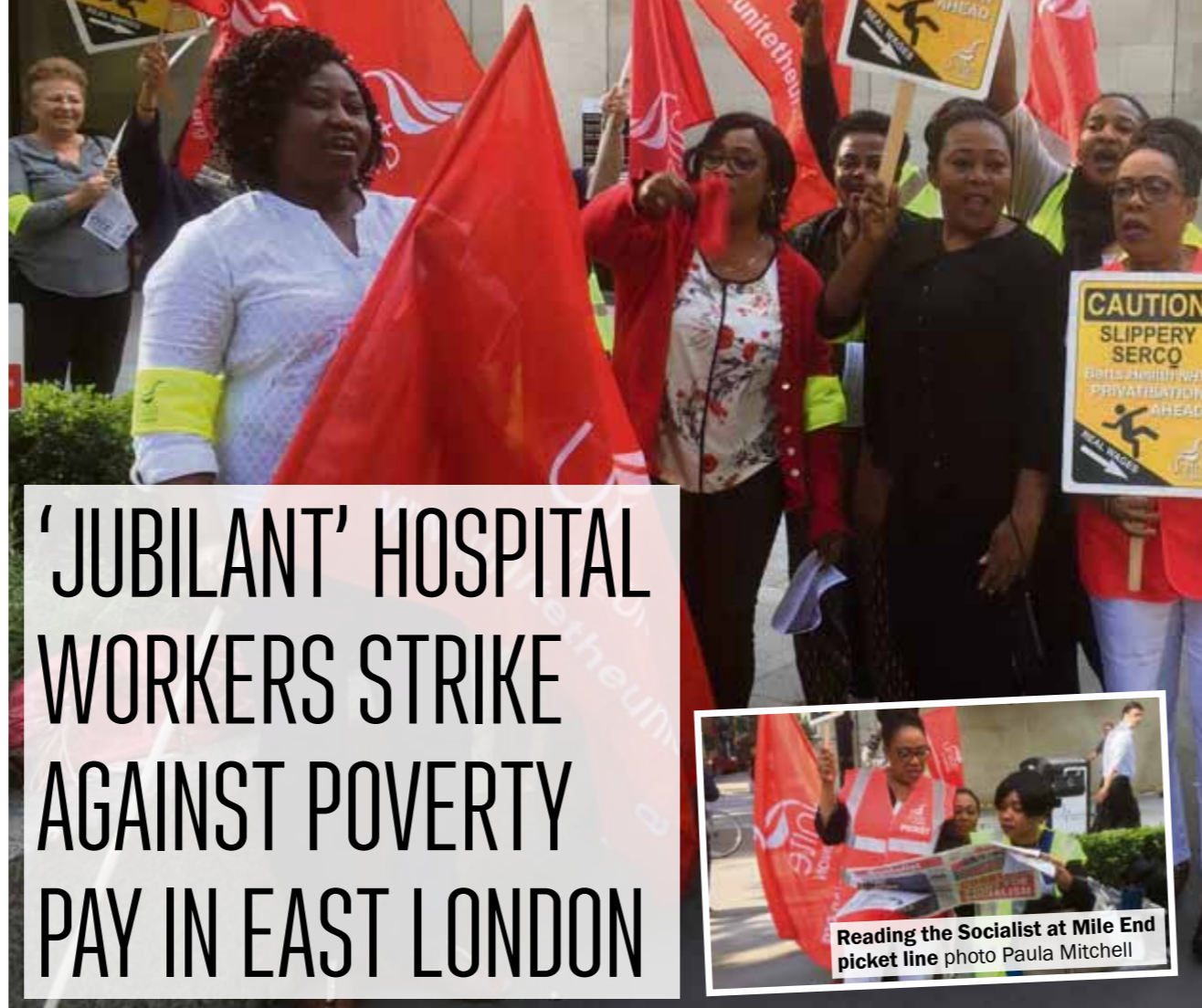
It is clear just from the full car park at Bedfont Football club where the strikers meet that this strike is very well supported. There's a very determined mood with 30 more mixed fleet cabin crew joining Unite just today. If anything the protest lines around Heathrow are bigger than ever.

The strikers took their protest on the road too, with a protest at the Qatar airline headquarters in Earls Court, west London on 5 July. And on 8 July strikers will be going on the Pride march in central London (see centre pages) and will also be attending the Durham Miners Gala.

**Chris Newby**



Whipps Cross hospital strike rally photo Mary Finch



**'JUBILANT' HOSPITAL WORKERS STRIKE AGAINST POVERTY PAY IN EAST LONDON**



Reading the Socialist at Mile End picket line photo Paula Mitchell

### Socialist Party reporters

On 4-5 July domestics, porters and security staff at Barts Health Trust in east London, members of Unite the Union, began a campaign of strike action to defend jobs and to break out of poverty pay with another 14 days planned.

This strike is very important, with the Tories on the rocks and under pressure over public sector pay. This strike could help to break the pay cap and give confidence to health workers everywhere to fight for better pay and to defend the service against cuts and privatisation.

Since December 2016 services such as catering, cleaning, security and portering have been run by private contractor Serco.

Serco profits from our NHS. Their CEO alone earns almost £2 million a year. A cleaner would have to work for almost 100 years to receive this amount. The strikers are fighting for a 30p pay rise.

On the first day of the strike,

at the Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel, already at 6am a crowd was gathering, women and men, mostly black and Asian workers, blowing horns and brimming with confidence. One striker said: "I only joined the union a month ago. This is a really big step



Royal London strike rally photo Paula Mitchell

for me. I'm exhausted. The work has got so hard. Now we have a union that will fight."

1,100 workers have joined Unite in the last few months as part of a hard-fought campaign to unionise and then fight for better pay and conditions. The record of the porters and

Mile End picket line photo Paula Mitchell

## Support the Merseyrail strikes against driver-only operation

**Hugh Caffrey**  
North West Socialist Party  
regional secretary

The Labour-run 'Liverpool city region transport committee', which oversees the local Merseyrail train service, still intends to take guards off the trains and introduce 'driver-only operation'. This is putting the profits of the train operator ahead of the safety of the travelling public.

We support the guards' trade union, RMT, taking 24-hour strike action against this on 8, 10 and 23 of July. Huge support exists for the guards' resistance to their removal, despite the intimidation and propaganda by the Merseyrail management and the Labour councillors involved.

We need a massive mobilisation to support the guards and demand that local Labour politicians drop their guard-cutting plans. We urge all readers on Merseyside to visit the picket lines to show your support, any time from 4am through the day, at Birkenhead Central, Liverpool Kirkdale depot, Liverpool Lime Street and Southport.

Labour's general election manifesto supported the renationalisation of the railways, albeit in a piecemeal manner. So why are Merseyside Labour councillors so determined to press ahead with driver-only operation, a policy based on privatisation and profiteering, not on public ownership?

The Socialist Party opposes all cutbacks and fragmentation of the rail network. We call for the renationalisation of the railways

under the democratic control and management of rail-workers and the travelling public. A socialist transport policy is the only way to meet the needs of people and the environment, based on a massive and sustainable expansion of public transport.

An RMT member on Merseyrail told the Socialist: "This dispute has now been going on for five months. At the heart of the dispute is the fight to keep guards on all Merseyrail trains so passengers can feel safe in the knowledge that a highly trained, safety-critical person is aboard their train and he or she can take control of any eventuality which may occur during their journey."

"This dispute isn't about who opens or closes train doors, this dispute is about keeping a second safety-critical member of staff on every train from origin to destination and from start to end of service. In a recent survey 89% of Merseyrail passengers stated they want to keep guards on trains but unfortunately Merseyrail has chosen to ignore that fact and they've continued on their march towards driver-only operation."

A "force majeure" exists within Merseyrail's franchise agreement with Merseytravel which prevents Merseyrail from losing out financially through any type of industrial action it may face. With this "force majeure" in existence the hard-working taxpayers of Merseyside foot the bill for a company which makes an annual profit of £17 million! The company therefore thinks it does not have to engage in any dialogue with the RMT. But this strike action will show workers won't accept this lying down.



Northern DDO picket line photo Socialist Party

## RMT conference opens debate on Labour and pledges to fight anti-union laws

### Socialist Party AGM delegates

This year's RMT annual general meeting (AGM) took place in the wake of Jeremy Corbyn's tremendous general election result. The elation of workers and trade unionists at the result was carried into the hall and reflected by delegates to the conference which ran from 25-29 June in Exeter.

There was a wide and varied range of resolutions debated and voted on including an important debate on the new anti-union laws which make it even more difficult for unions to take legal strike action. The increased ballot turnout requirement has already landed a blow against the union. London Underground members recently failed to achieve the required 50%

turnout in their strike ballot in defence of unfairly sacked colleagues. It was agreed that the TUC has failed to lift a finger against the iniquitous new laws and the RMT would seek a united front with other militant unions against the employers and support each other materially if they came under attack.

Jeremy Corbyn addressed the AGM, followed by Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell at a pro-reaffiliation fringe meeting.

### Labour

Following a closed session debate, a full discussion in branches and regions will now take place about what formal relationship the RMT will have with Labour.

This discussion will include the problems the union faces if we were to reaffiliate, including the outright

opposition from significant sections of the membership in Scotland, following the disgusting spectacle of Labour campaigning alongside the Tories during the Scottish independence referendum.

The different positions that are likely to be debated were outlined in two fringe meetings at the AGM. At one fringe meeting, some speakers called for the RMT to affiliate as quickly as possible.

Supporters of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) also held a fringe meeting at which the arguments were put that we should seek assurances from Labour on key political and organisational questions before affiliating. Several delegates (who, along with RMT's president, are banned from Labour membership after standing against cuts with the TUSC) asked why they

remain banned while the likes of warmonger Tony Blair, even after advocating a "strategic" Tory vote and Jess Phillips MP, who boasted that she would stab Corbyn "in the front", can be allowed membership.

The presence of the leader, deputy leader and chair of the RMT parliamentary group at the AGM suggests that RMT has significant influence even without a formal affiliation. RMT was the first to donate to Corbyn's leadership campaign and only Unite gave more.

In contrast, it was raised that at the present time Unite and Unison are giving millions of pounds to Labour while local Labour authorities are sacking their members as they cut jobs and services.

Around 30 delegates attended the TUSC fringe meeting and 22 copies of the Socialist paper were sold.

# PRIDE 2017: WE NEED A FIGHTING, SOCIALIST MOVEMENT FOR LGBT+ RIGHTS

**Michael Johnson**, from the Socialist Party's LGBT group, highlights some of the issues being discussed in this year's Pride celebrations and examines the lessons of the Russian revolution for the struggle for LGBT+ rights today.

## Lessons from the Russian revolution

The Russian Revolution is not typically held up as a significant event in the advancement of the struggle for LGBT+ rights. In fact, it's often seen as the opposite, given the terrible oppression that LGBT+ people faced under Stalinism.

The 1934 Stalinist slogan 'Destroy the homosexual - fascism will disappear' casts quite a shadow on LGBT+ rights in the USSR. But in this centenary year of the Russian revolution, it's important to look at the genuine and significant progress that was made in the early years after 1917.

Prior to the revolution, bans on homosexuality in Russia could be traced back to the 17th century and were particularly barbaric.

Gay men and women were put to death, women explicitly by burning. By the 18th century the government had banned gay men from the armed forces and in the 19th century sexual acts between men had been criminalised.

These laws were by no means unique to Russia. In the UK, male homosexuality was punishable by death by hanging until 1861 and remained criminalised until 1967.

### Decriminalised

Only a handful of countries worldwide had decriminalised homosexuality prior to 1917, starting with France in 1791 in the wake of the French revolution (though it must be noted that in 1960 France introduced indecent exposure laws targeting homosexual behaviour that remained for 20 years).

Even today, around 80 countries have laws explicitly against homosexuality or which are used to target LGBT+ people - a number of which include the death penalty. In 28 states in the US it is still legal to fire someone for their sexuality.

Immediately prior to the 1917 revolution, the law in Russia had been applied on a very selective basis, with friends of the imperial family benefiting from a selective tolerance.

But institutions like the Eastern Orthodox Church pushed the idea that homosexuality was a sign of corruption, decadence and immorality. While gay rights movements began to develop in other countries such as Germany, this propaganda meant very little was able to develop in Russia beyond fictional representations.

At around this time, under familial and societal pressure, Georgy



Georgy Chicherin photo German Federal Archive/CC

Chicherin - a flamboyant and openly gay man, already a committed Marxist who used an inherited fortune to support the 1905 Russian revolution and anti-war campaigning - undertook gay 'conversion therapies'.

It's unclear which therapies he attempted - at the time they ranged from psycho-analysis, to hypnotherapy, to surgical procedures and castration. Unsurprisingly, this was unsuccessful and Chicherin later described himself as self-accepting of his homosexuality.

Chicherin was jailed in Britain for his anti-war activities but his release was secured by Trotsky after the 1917 revolution. He went on to work closely with both Trotsky and Lenin, eventually becoming the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs.

This appointment was in 1918 - it would have been unthinkable in any other country at that time, even where there were more active LGBT+ rights movements. It would take until the latter part of the 20th century for other countries to have out politicians



London Pride 2012 photo Paul Mattsson

in similar positions.

Given this background, it was enormously significant that when the Soviet Criminal Code was established in 1922, male homosexuality was not included as a criminal act (female homosexuality and 'crossdressing' had never been explicitly outlawed but

were met with heavy repression). This was not, as some historians argue, an inadvertent omission or oversight. The Soviet minister of health proudly spoke in Germany of the abolition of the Tsarist laws against homosexuality, stating: "No unhappy consequences of any kind whatsoever

have resulted from the elimination of the offending [law], nor has the wish that the penalty in question be reintroduced been raised in any quarter."

Dr Grigori Batkis, director of the Moscow Institute of Soviet Hygiene, echoed this, saying: "Soviet legislation bases itself on the following

principle: it declares the absolute non-inference of the state and society into sexual matters, as long as nobody is injured, and no one's interests are encroached upon."

In 1926 it became legal to change your sex on passports and intersex and transgender people received access to medical care without state demonisation. The advances for women in the early days of the Bolshevik government secured lesbian and bisexual women with unprecedented freedoms.

100 years on and millions are marching in the wish that the US president could be close to being that progressive! These steps undoubtedly energised the fight for LGBT+ rights around the world at the same time as the revolution was breathing new life into the revolutionary struggle internationally.

### Social attitudes

But the negative social attitudes fostered during the repressive Tsarist regime could not disappear overnight, especially within a geographical area as large as the Soviet Union.

This perhaps explains accounts such as the (only recorded) raid on a party of crossdressers and gay men gathered for a marriage ceremony. This was justified by a single Justice Commissariat lawyer, despite the decriminalisation, as he felt public displays of 'homosexual tastes' may endanger 'suggestible personalities'.

However, so far research has not shown any criminal charges due to crossdressing or public displays of homosexual affection during this early period.

Lesbian and bisexual women, who had received praise for their contributions to the soviet military and police during the civil war, are reported to have received admiration as "energetic" participants in the revolutionary landscape. 'Masculinised' women were seen as politically conscious and valued citizens in Russia while in other countries similar fashions were met with increasing scrutiny as a sign of 'female emancipation'.

There is also some evidence for the beginning of a change, albeit slow, in social attitudes, facilitated by the government. The novel 'Wings' by Mikhail Kuzmin about same-sex love was republished in 1923 by a publishing house owned by the Soviet government.

Especially within the medical community, there seemed to be a push away from the Tsarist regime's religious, moralistic view of homosexuality. Instead the understanding was that homosexuals had biological 'deformities' and, far from their sexual attraction being a conscious, sinful choice, it was instead something that could not be helped.

This was generally coupled to an attempt to find a 'cure' for these desires, but did lead some to conclude that

homosexuality's 'inevitability' meant it might be a legitimate part of the 'human sexual spectrum.'

However, to a large extent, questions of sexuality were seen as issues that would resolve themselves once the economic and social foundations of the Soviet state had been laid.

There was no real official position of the Bolsheviks. Unfortunately this undoubtedly left the political and social progress LGBT+ people had made following the revolution at greater risk.

Homosexuality was re-criminalised by the Stalinist government in 1934. This was at a time when the regime was pushing the importance of the Soviet 'nuclear family'.

Male homosexuality in particular was focussed on as a symbol of 'bourgeois individualism', based on the idea that revolutionaries should put aside their own desires for the sake of the continued revolution.

At the same time, the government banned abortion, calling for an increase in the birth rate. The Stalin government, reforming its links with the Orthodox Church, conflated homosexuality with rape and paedophilia.

Georgy Chicherin, who had passed away following illness in 1930, became a victim of the Stalinist purges at this time. Most references to him were removed.

This was probably because of both his sexuality and his politics. Either way, the result is unfortunately of a leading Bolshevik and out and accepting gay man largely lost to history.

The increase of repression led to around 1,000 trials of gay men for sodomy every year under the Stalinist regime (with punishments of five years hard labour). The new laws seem to have been enforced beyond even the scale that they were under Tsarism.

The complicated record around LGBT+ rights following the Russian revolution is often treated as a simple one by capitalist historians: the revolution, in and of itself, led to repression for LGBT+ people.

### Liberation

This view serves to diminish the real lessons we can learn. The decriminalisation of sodomy was an indisputable step forward, giving a glimpse of the possibility for all kinds of liberation in a socialist society.

The subsequent reversal of these advances and the repression under Stalin show the importance of fighting for more than reforms which can be rolled back at any time. Instead we must fight explicitly for all advances towards liberation, along with organising to change society fundamentally.

To truly end racism, sexism and the oppression of LGBT+ people, we must continue to fight for socialism.



photo Paul Mattsson

London Pride this year has been beset by controversy. A number of posters it created were seen as advertising Pride as an event for straight people, treating gay men as fashion accessories, and recycling common homophobic bullying by calling negative things "gay."

At the same time, London Pride organisers were courting notorious corporations such as Barclays Bank, Starbucks and Vodafone as sponsors - an issue that has increasingly caused controversy around the world.

There are serious questions about the discriminatory practices of these companies against LGBT+ people, as well as their role in wider politics. This has led to protests against their involvement, such as at Washington Pride in the US earlier this year.

There are now discussions among parts of the LGBT+ community about the role of Pride events going forward. Pride marches initially marked the anniversary of the Stonewall Riots in 1969 in New York.

They quickly spread around the world as a day to display the strength and community

of LGBT+ people and have played a major role in the ongoing struggle for LGBT+ rights since, such as during the Aids crisis and struggle for marriage equality.

Despite what some may argue, the struggle for LGBT+ rights is not over. Within the UK, people in Northern Ireland are still fighting for marriage equality.

LGBT+ people still face harassment and violence, not just from strangers but in work and schools. We are more likely to experience mental health issues and a disproportionate number of LGBT+ young people are homeless.

Rather than try and entice corporations to sell things to take advantage of a mythical 'pink pound,' Pride events should be organised by the LGBT+ community.

Alongside celebrating the achievements made, they should provide a forum to develop campaigns on the issues that are affecting our community to ensure the fight for LGBT+ rights continues, rather than be swallowed by rainbow logos.



London Pride 2016 photo Sarah Sachs Eldridge

Letters



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

Debate desirable

As a relatively new member of the Socialist Party, I was recently initiated to the order of branch meetings.

I was pleasantly surprised to find my fears unfounded. What I did find is how well the right to freedom of speech is exercised! Each and every participant is allowed - more so, encouraged - to speak up. The platform welcomed all views. I found this apparent not only at branch meetings, also public meetings.

In my opinion, this is what sets the Socialist Party out against any other party: the right to freedom of speech and healthy debate.

Walter Allsop  
Coventry

company try to break a strike. Clearly, for the bosses, there are no morals when it comes to who they deal with for profit.

Mark Andrews  
Birmingham



photo Paul Mattsson

Magic money tree

During the election, the Tories kept on attacking Labour with the mantra that there is no "magic money tree." However, the DUP deal disproves this.

They got ten MPs elected, who the Tories have done a deal with to keep themselves in power by promising £1 billion of extra funding.

What I want to know is: where does this £1 billion come from suddenly if there is no magic money tree?

The Tories also went on about terrorism and Jeremy Corbyn. However they are quite content to be propped up by the DUP, which historically has links with Protestant paramilitary organisations.

The Tories have more faces than Big Ben.

Chris Fernandez  
Derby

Qatar's crimes

An interesting piece of news is that during the British Airways cabin crew strike which began on 1 July, the airline has applied to lease in aircraft and crews for cover. What is particularly of note is that 20 of these aircraft are to come from state-owned Qatar Airways.

It is fitting that a state which is being openly criticised for apparent banking corruption and links to terrorist finance is helping a major British

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



photo Mary Finch

Justice for Grenfell - safety for all

Nothing can quite prepare you for the sheer physical shock of seeing Grenfell Tower. It is burnt through and has the surreal air of looking as if it has been placed there by a film director.

But it is not Hollywood it is Latimer Road, and for the families and community affected it is a living nightmare. A hell on earth.

The pictures of the missing on walls make you cry, especially those of the children.

Young Londoners with a life ahead of them - of study, work, love, ups and downs, trips to the coast and just sitting in parks with those they care about.

Times are a-changing. People were disconnected from something not worth being connected to before. But when a real positive ally gives alternatives, people are more than ready to step up with ideas, passion and drive.

This applies everywhere from student unions to trade unions and local Labour Party branches, wherever arrogant right-wing types shut out anyone who disagrees with them.

I can never remember a more exciting time for so many to start to thrive and help destroy a crumbling capitalist establishment, and fight for socialist change. For the many and not the few in action.

Nick Slater  
Torquay

I have lived most of my life in tower blocks. They can be decent places to live, but now many are death traps. This must end. Now.

Steve Nally  
Oval, south London

My grandfather was civil defence officer for Jarrow in World War Two. Jarrow was one of the first towns to be bombed.

No one had planned for survivors. Granddad was faced with people who were bombed out. They were homeless and they had lost everything.

Grandad sent someone on a bicycle to all the local estate agents with instructions to collect all the keys to vacant houses. He dished out the keys to homeless people.

Grandad ordered Woolworths to open on Sunday morning. All the bombed-out people could have anything they needed. Woolworths sent the bill to the council.

Grandad had all the people bombed out on Friday night rehoused and re-equipped by Sunday lunchtime.

People came from London the following week, saw what Grandad had done, and approved it. They made it standard practice.

Surprising really that in 2017 the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea cannot do as well as my grandad did in 1939. Of course, my grandad was a socialist.

Charles James  
Portugal

The old saying 'a lie can travel halfway around the world before truth can get its boots on' is inadequate to describe the lies about the achievements of the Militant-led Liverpool council in the 1980s.

This is because the lies originated in the labour movement: Neil Kinnock's infamous speech at Labour Party conference in 1985.

I was a Constituency Labour Party delegate and vividly remember its reception. Immediate applause from those pre-warned. Disbelief and confusion from those not expecting treachery from the leader of the Labour Party.

In the 30 years since, that lie has completed many 'world tours' - but just occasionally truth catches up. In the Guardian on 15 June, a Simon Jenkins article about Grenfell Tower stated: "In the 1980s Liverpool's Militant movement asked Everton's inhabitants what should be done with their towers, the reply was pull them down and give us back the streets. It was done."

John Merrell  
Leicester

photo James Ivens

photo James Ivens

photo James Ivens

photo James Ivens

photo James Ivens

photo James Ivens

photo James Ivens

photo James Ivens

photo James Ivens

photo James Ivens

Stop the demolition of homes and communities in Haringey

Nick Auvache

A fight is underway to stop Haringey council's massive HDV (Haringey Development Vehicle) privatisation project which will raze whole areas of Tottenham and Wood Green in north London, leaving thousands homeless or displaced.

The campaign enters a new phase given the changed political situation with a very weak Tory government facing a turbulent period ahead.

This changed political atmosphere will give further impetus to the campaign to stop the HDV. So far, Haringey council, run by a rabid Blairite clique, has refused to listen to the campaign. It has refused to listen to local tenants and trade unions who have pleaded with the council to reverse its decision.

Labour

It has even refused to listen to the two local Constituency Labour Parties who have instructed their council to change course! This shows the strength of feeling against the council's plans, but it also shows the determination of Blairite council leader Claire Kober to push

ahead regardless of widespread opposition.

Incredibly, the company that the council has chosen to 'redevelop' the area not only has a reputation for blacklisting trade unionists but has now been exposed, not once but twice, for attempting to use flammable cladding similar to that used on the Grenfell flats!

It attempted this on projects in Conservative-governed Australia but regulations prevented it from going ahead. However, it has found friends in Haringey Labour council! Clearly we can't trust the private sector, or Blairite Labour, if we want safe, good quality housing.

Some 'rebel' Labour councillors have already been disciplined for voting against the scheme earlier on in the year.

Corbyn's policies

After the election there was speculation that the project would be shelved with the real prospect of a Corbyn-led Labour government coming to power soon.

This has not materialised and shows that any attempt to stop the HDV must also go hand in hand with removing the Blairites and replacing them with councillors who are genuinely committed to



Showing utter disregard for local residents, the cabinet of Haringey Labour council voted through - in seconds and in private - demolition of homes under its HDV plan photo C Newby

the ideas that Corbyn has been associated with, like defending and building more council housing.

In the run-up to next year's council elections it is vital that Labour candidates stand on a clear policy of no to HDV, no to privatisation and outsourcing and no to cuts.

It is equally important that

tenants' organisations, trade unions and community organisations flex their muscles in the meantime.

They should ensure that Labour candidates pledge to support these aims. But if councillors refuse to do so then campaigners should convene a conference to build broad support for standing candidates

themselves who genuinely represent Corbyn's anti-austerity, anti-privatisation ideas.

If the HDV project is defeated it will not only be a victory for working class people in Haringey but also a huge defeat for the Blairites and the capitalist system that they are so wedded to.

Newcastle tenants demand answers from Labour council

William Jarrett  
Newcastle Socialist Party

On 27 June I attended a meeting organised by concerned tenants of Your Homes Newcastle (YHN), an arms-length management organisation (Almo) of Newcastle City Council, at Cruddas Park tower in the city's west end.

Tenants revealed a shocking array of safety violations catalogued throughout Newcastle's tower blocks in the fortnight since the Grenfell Tower disaster, explicitly referring to them as being potentially criminally negligent.

Included among them were failures to install smoke detectors, faulty windows, lack of fire extinguishers, and doors which sealed a tenant inside of their home during a fire alarm.

A member of Newcastle council Labour group, Dipu Ahad, questioned whether the meeting was organised by actual tenants. But a BBC Look North film crew present didn't question the meeting's authenticity, and were keen to interview residents.

Councillor Ahad said that if the campaign was going to be

"hijacked"(!), then "we" - presumably Newcastle's Labour group - "can't help".

This drew the ire of Diane, a campaign organiser and YHN tenant. The possibility of rent strikes was also discussed.

The Socialist Party rejects all outsourcing of council housing, whether through Almos or private companies. Services must be returned in-house, and fully funded, for proper oversight and regulation.

I offered our solidarity and support to the campaign, and committed to undertake activity with them to hold YHN and Newcastle City Council to account to ensure safe housing for all.



photo Mary Finch

South London tower block residents plan safety campaign

Tower block residents from the Ashmole estate in south London joined Lambeth Socialist Party members to discuss building a safety campaign on 29 June.

One is an engineer who believes the tower's cladding testing results are likely to come back unsafe.

Local member Steve Nally has lived in

the tower for three decades. He is demanding that experienced fire-fighters carry out safety checks. Private contractors cannot have the same practical experience, and are suspect due to profit motives.

Steve and other Socialist Party members had visited flats to collect signatures for a letter to the housing association and council. As a result, four other residents came to our public meeting, and a fifth turned up after work. One had lost family at Grenfell.

Some remembered Steve for his work coordinating the local and national campaign against Thatcher's hated poll tax. John Reid, a Socialist Party member and RMT union rep, remarked that early poll tax campaign meetings were about the same size. By the end of the campaign, 18 million refused to pay!

There was a real mood for action. Residents there discussed organising for fire safety - but also problems with security, maintenance, service charges and rents. An organised residents' union could address all this.

We plan to hold a meeting in the block's stairwell to discuss demands and next steps with more residents.

James Ivens  
Lambeth Socialist Party

# WEAKENED TORIES FORCED INTO NORTHERN IRELAND ABORTION U-TURN

**Sarah Sachs-Eldridge**  
 Socialist Party  
 national organiser

**T**hursday 29 June 2017 saw a significant step forward for women in Northern Ireland (NI). Funding to cover the financial costs for them to access abortions in England was pledged by the Tory minority government.

The Tories' 'supply and confidence' deal with the ten DUP MPs turned a spotlight on Northern Irish politics.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Abortion Act that introduced free, legal abortion for women in England, Wales and Scotland within certain limitations.

It was understood by those who fought for this legislation that women should have the right to choose when and whether to have children and that the right to an abortion is a life or death issue. But no major party in NI supports extending it there.

Women in NI are denied access to abortions in almost all circumstances. When they come to England to access NHS services they are forced to pay for the service. Including travel, time off work, accommodation, etc, it can cost the two women who travel every week up to £2,000.

Anyone who performs an illegal abortion in NI could be jailed for life. Cases of rape, incest and fatal foetal abnormalities are not circumstances where abortions can be performed legally.

Health workers face criminal charges if they do not report women who present with complications caused by an abortion. These conditions remain, so the fight for abortion rights in Northern Ireland is not over.

Yet nearly 80% of people in NI believe abortion should be legal when a woman has become pregnant as a result of rape or incest, according to the 2016 Life and Times Survey. When the same survey asked if abortion should be a matter for medical regulation and not criminal law, over two-thirds of both Catholics and Protestants agreed or strongly agreed.

It was initially predicted that the DUP MPs could influence the Tories towards cutting women's rights.



**Socialists in Northern Ireland campaigning for the right to choose** photo SP Ireland

“**Anyone who performs an illegal abortion could be jailed for life... the fight for abortion rights in Northern Ireland is not over**”

This government is incredibly weak and that fragility is the key to understanding what happened - and to drawing lessons for the fight for women's rights. Theresa May won the vote on the Queen's Speech with a majority of just 14 votes.

When an amendment to the Speech calling on the government to fund NHS abortions for NI women from Labour backbencher Stella Creasy looked to be gaining support among some Tory MPs, there was enormous pressure to make a concession just to keep the show on the road.

Creasy withdrew the amendment when Tory chancellor Philip Hammond announced that Justine Greening, the women and equalities minister, would write to MPs "explaining that she intends to intervene to fund abortions in England for women arriving here from NI." This is estimated to cost around £1 million.

### Blairites

While it was Creasy who moved the amendment, it is the weakened state of the Tories that forced them to concede. That weakness was created by the surge behind Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity manifesto - which was absent from the material and campaigns of the anti-Corbyn wing of Labour to which Creasy subscribes.

Creasy has since been touring

media studios. In less than five minutes on the BBC's Andrew Marr show she made eight references to MPs working together 'across the house'.

This appears to be part of the moves towards a new alignment of the pro-capitalist wing of the Labour Party and the pro-EU Tories. But there is no future for women's rights in this. In fact in 2008 an attempt to extend abortion law to NI was scuppered by the then Blair government.

Undermining Corbyn is undermining the potential for an anti-austerity government that could start to transform the lives of women.

Blairites like Umunna and Creasy have been part of the campaign to remove Jeremy Corbyn and keep Labour as a party that can be relied on to defend capitalist interests.

That includes cuts and privatisations of public services that deny women access to health, childcare and housing; enormously undermine women's choice about when and whether to have children; and condemn women, children and men to poverty.

Across the world women's rights are threatened by unpopular or unstable regimes who use social issues to try to maintain power. However, women are fighting back. Last October women in Poland won a crucial victory as proposed legislation to impose a near-total

ban on already restricted access to abortion was overwhelmingly defeated by a women's strike.

A movement is rising. In January 2017, an estimated five million women, children and men participated in 673 Women's Marches around the world against Trump's inauguration, with an unprecedented 550 of them in the US.

### We can win

The huge demo in London is a warning against any attempt to curtail women's rights. The latest social attitudes survey confirms that mood with a record 70% saying an abortion should be allowed if a woman decides on her own she does not want a child.

Opposing the Creasy amendment could have provoked an enormous movement, which if it was properly built for and linked to the other struggles in society could bring the weak Tory government down.

The BMA doctors' union, following the tremendous strike by junior doctors, recently voted by two-thirds to support decriminalisation of abortion, in effect an extension of the 1967 Act.

This points to how the trade unions can be central to a new mass movement that uses the collective strength of workers to fight for women's rights and against austerity.

■ See full version of this article at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)

“**In less than five minutes on the Marr show, Creasy made eight references to working 'across the house'**”

# Transport strategy

## London's mayor is no visionary

**Andy Beadle**

Bus driver, Lewisham Socialist Party

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan recently released his 'Mayor's Transport Strategy' for public consultation.

His foreword opens: "Transport is a cornerstone of my vision for a fairer, greener, healthier and more prosperous city." He wants "a city where transport is affordable, reliable and accessible for Londoners." But can we trust billionaire-loving, Corbyn-undermining, Mayor Khan to achieve this?

The strategy document is filled with pictures of people strolling and cycling down wide, well-kept leafy streets, with lots of sunshine.

There aren't many cars in most of the pictures, but 36% of trips in London are currently by car. By 2041 he wants this to be 20%. This is long-term vision. One aim is for 2050. In fact, step free access to all tube and rail stations isn't scheduled even by then!

Khan hopes to replace car journeys with bus, cycle and walking trips. This extra exercise, together with a cleaner environment and lower road speeds will improve everybody's health. The aim is to stop all road deaths and serious injuries by 2041.

Socialists are very much in favour of a vision for the future of the capital, including a clear transport strategy. But Khan's "vision" is not based in reality and has no prospect of becoming a practical plan.

Over the last decade British governments (including Gordon Brown's, when Khan was briefly transport minister), have imposed savage austerity cuts on our public services because they decided to bail out the failing banks and capitalist financial system.

Even London is now being hit, with big cuts



photo Tom Page/CC

in government subsidies to public transport and transport price hikes.

Working people find it increasingly difficult to remain in London largely because of high house prices and rents.

Jeremy Corbyn's manifesto pledged to renationalise rail (as the franchises expire). Khan doesn't even have this limited plan.

Although a Labour mayor, Khan pledges to be "the most business-friendly" mayor yet and condemned tube workers' strike action against ticket office closures and cuts in station staff levels as "completely unnecessary".

It is impossible to balance the

idea of long-term planning for the benefit of all with the narrow interests of big business, where decisions are made by companies to maximise private profit.

- Khan should refuse to carry out the Tories' cuts to public transport and campaign in support of union demands for massively increased public investment in transport infrastructure
- Take private profit out of public transport - bring the bus and train operating firms and tube network into a publicly owned, democratic, integrated transport plan
- End May's austerity government



Mansfield Socialist Party's walking tour followed in the footsteps of the Pentrich Uprising photo Andy McQuillan

### Book review

## 200-YEAR MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE EXPOSING RULING CLASS

**Jon Dale**

Mansfield Socialist Party

Exactly 200 years ago a 17 year-old Nottinghamshire girl was murdered walking home to Papplewick village from nearby Mansfield. She had been looking for work. Three weeks later a former soldier was hanged for her murder.

Within two years a memorial stone was erected, inscribed: "To the memory of Elizabeth Sheppard of Papplewick who was murdered when passing this spot by Charles Rotherham July 7th 1817."

The Murder of Bessie Sheppard, by David Marshall, describes his 40-year investigation into this crime, completed in 2014. Why was Bessie killed - and why was the name of her killer commemorated alongside hers?

Marshall unearthed contemporary newspaper reports of the murder, trial and hanging. The more he researched, the stronger there seemed to have been a miscarriage of justice.

Today, Papplewick is a pretty village but when Bessie lived there with her mother and younger brother it was dominated by Robinson's cloth mills - which exploited child labour. Marshall comments: "Robinson was a very rich man. He was also, I concluded fairly quickly, a bastard."

New machinery threw handloom weavers into destitution, as well as soldiers returning from the Napoleonic wars who roamed the countryside.

Less than 24 hours after Bessie was brutally bludgeoned Charles Rotherham, a travelling scissor-grinder, was arrested on the outskirts of Loughborough, about 20 miles away.

As Marshall explains, police forces

at this time were in their infancy, set up in response to growing civil unrest. How and why did the police make such a remarkably quick arrest?

Marshall shows contradictions in witness reports, throwing doubt on Rotherham's conviction, and questions why he apparently confessed to the crime immediately after arrest.

Marshall makes a good case for Rotherham's defence. But if it wasn't him, who else might have killed her?

Newspaper reports of the time say Bessie's mother thanked the

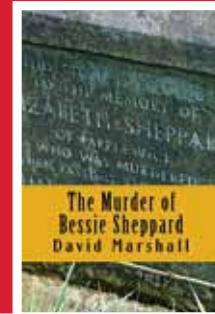
"nobility and gentry of the town of Mansfield and its vicinity for the many favours and kind assistance she has received since the murder of her daughter."

He speculates that Bessie had been working as a prostitute to support her family and that Rotherham's rapid arrest, conviction and execution conveniently prevented further investigation of the 'nobility and gentry', who raised the finance for the memorial stone and had Rotherham's name inscribed on it.

The local gentry might also have been keen to see a poor stranger found guilty of the crime as four weeks earlier, barely ten miles away, 200 to 300 armed workers marched from Pentrich towards Nottingham, thinking they were taking part in a national uprising against the government (see [socialistparty.org.uk/issue/953/25680](http://socialistparty.org.uk/issue/953/25680)). The leaders were awaiting trial in Derby gaol, later to be hanged or transported to Australia.

Justice, far from being a traditional right enjoyed by all, served the rich and well-connected. Working class people have had to fight for justice - and continue to do so, as the Hillsborough and Orgreave campaigns show.

**The Murder of Bessie Sheppard: A True Story by David W Marshall**  
 ■ request from [bookshop@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:bookshop@socialistparty.org.uk)





# EAST LONDON COMMUNITY DEMANDS ACTION AFTER RACIST ATTACKS

Moshin Ahmed  
Tower Hamlets Socialist Party

Over 100 local residents, including 20 who couldn't get in, packed the Berner Community Centre in Tower Hamlets, east London, on 2 July, angry about a number of recent attacks on local Muslim people.

Some of the attacks have been with acid, causing horrific burns. Others have targeted Muslim women by pulling off their veils.

The meeting was organised by residents from the Berner Estate, who invited the Labour mayor of Tower Hamlets, John Biggs, who replaced the previous mayor Luthfur Rahman, undemocratically removed through the courts by the Tories.

The mood of the meeting was that the council hadn't done enough to protect the community from hate crimes. Muslim people always appear to be the target of these attacks. They wanted reassurances from the police and the council. But Biggs blamed the funding cuts from central government.

## "Use the reserves"

Incredibly for a Blairite, he said: "We have to wait for a Corbyn government to scrap the cuts!"

But one of the independent councillors revealed that the council has millions in their reserves. Immediately, people were surprised and then demanded that the reserves be used to resource more police. But this demand was ignored by Biggs.

The Socialist Party would say, for example, why can the council not use its reserves to fund community wardens - as well as funding the much-needed services that have been savagely cut back?

The Socialist Party has been to the



photo Mina Boromand

forefront in campaigning for the Labour council to refuse to implement any more Tory cuts.

It's vital that the labour and trade union movement plays a key role in uniting working class people to ensure that the racists can't sow division and isolate and threaten the Muslim community. In the aftermath of the London Bridge attack, the far-right racists of Britain First have been provocatively going to the nearby East London Mosque, although every time being chased away.

There is a growing feeling of local people to get organised to defend themselves because of a lack of confidence in the council. The council should be pressurised to act by a campaign. This can include lobbying the council to force them to use their reserves and stand with the community against the racists and the Tory cutters.

In the 1990s in Tower Hamlets, the BNP (British National Party),

who won a council seat on the Isle of Dogs, were defeated by the mass mobilisation of young people and trade unionists, including occupying the site of their 'paper sale' in Brick Lane.

This mobilisation also called for 'jobs and homes not racism'. With the help of Youth Against Racism, supported by Militant (now the Socialist Party) local people organised a whistle alarm defence campaign.

We need to mobilise working class people in Tower Hamlets and throughout east London, where other attacks have happened, to defeat the racists, pressure the council to stop the cuts, and fight to defeat the Tory government.

**■ Tower Hamlets and East London Socialist Party meeting: Action needed against racist attacks - fight for services, jobs and homes. Thursday 6 July, 7.30pm, Oxford House in Bethnal Green, E2 6HG**

## From Militant to the Socialist Party - what you thought

Like many people who eagerly pre-ordered From Militant to the Socialist Party I have enjoyed reading its 600-odd pages.

The period covered by the book is really the period of my political awakening and for me, reading a Marxist analysis of the key events in this period really helped bring about a conscious understanding of

things that I had maybe had a 'gut feeling' about or sometimes failed to see what the 'big deal' was about.

As the book concludes, it deals with the first campaign I got involved with against cuts in 2005-2006 to Huddersfield NHS services where we elected a Socialist Party member who led the campaign to the local council.

I think this just goes to show how an understanding of the past helps us understand and contribute to the struggles of today, just one more reason every serious campaigner should read this book.

**Iain Dalton**  
**■ From Militant to the Socialist Party - £15, available from socialistbooks.co.uk**

## Socialist Party Fighting Fund

	£ received	£ target	April to June 2017 final chart
Northern	1,905	750	254%
North West	4,273	2,100	203%
West Midlands	3,852	2,600	148%
South West	2,660	1,800	148%
Yorkshire	4,357	3,300	132%
Southern	2,005	1,600	125%
East Midlands	2,252	1,850	122%
Wales	2,613	2,300	114%
Eastern	1,327	1,200	111%
London	6,260	6,100	103%
South East	347	750	46%
Other	3,414	5,650	60%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35,264</b>	<b>30,000</b>	<b>118%</b>

## Another record fighting fund quarter!

Ken Douglas  
Socialist Party national treasurer

Socialist Party members raised an outstanding £35,264 in the April to June quarter of 2017. This broke the record for the second quarter, which itself had only been set in 2016 - £7,300 was paid in over the last ten days alone.

This money was raised in the course of campaigning for Jeremy Corbyn in the general election, from countless protests and demonstrations against Tory austerity and from the many fundraising efforts of the branches.

## No rich backers

The Socialist Party has no rich backers, we rely on support from ordinary people - and they have responded to our programme for building opposition to the Tories and transforming the Labour Party.

Five branches raised over £1,000 with Liverpool topping the charts having raised £1,712 and Southampton hitting those heights for the first time, with a new fighting fund organiser.

There were very successful appeals at public meetings during the general election and after - £1,000 raised at PCS conference, £2,000 at Unison conference, £1,500 at the London book launch of From Militant to the Socialist Party, £400 in Leeds and £314 in Cardiff. Lancashire branch raised £109 with an appeal at their post-election public meeting, a real success for a small branch. Coventry East and West branches raised £620 at a joint public meeting.

Branches also found time among

all the campaigning to ensure that they smashed their target. Including car boot sales, 'quiz and curry nights' and selling rock cakes, record collections and t-shirts.

Dave Gorton, to ensure that Chesterfield branch hit their target, donated an extra 79p - a small donation but he said: "Well I could spend it trying to get Liar Liar to number one as a gimmick or I could put it into the fighting fund to pay for a few leaflets that may make a real difference."

This underlines that the fighting fund enables us to produce the leaflets, pamphlets, placards and posters that raise the profile of the Socialist Party and the relevance of a socialist alternative.

At the same time, the sales of the Socialist have soared over the past few months, surpassing the record sales of 2016 and showing increasing interest in and support for socialist ideas.

## 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

Like Socialist Party on Facebook

# Unison conference SOCIALIST PARTY ARGUES FOR A SOCIALIST BREXIT



photo Paul Mattsson

Mia Hollsing  
Unison conference delegate (personal capacity)

One of the important debates at the 2017 Unison conference was about Brexit. One year on from the referendum, there were a number of motions and amendments about what form Brexit should take and what role the union should play.

The Unison leadership was forced to acknowledge that the Leave vote was not purely about immigration, but in large part a vote against the establishment and austerity. Socialist Party members played an important role in this debate. There was also a debate about the single market, as the leadership backs continued membership.

I argued against this, explaining

that the single market is a neo-liberal free trade area based on the so-called 'four freedoms' - freedom of movement of people, goods, services and capital.

## Race to the bottom

I am an EU citizen and I respect the right of people to live and work where they choose, but I explained employers must not be allowed to use migrant labour as a way to drive down terms and conditions (as has happened under EU rules, and this would continue if we remain in the single market).

I also explained that freedom of movement of capital is what allows employers to move production abroad to increase their profits and that the rules around freedom of movement for goods and services forbid nationalisation of services.

I pointed out that Corbyn's programme for nationalisation of the railways, Royal Mail and energy companies would therefore be illegal under single market membership, and that we would also be unable to save the steel industry by nationalising plants such as Port Talbot in Wales.

What we need is not a 'soft' Brexit or a 'hard' Brexit, but a socialist Brexit and this means leaving the single market. These arguments were well received by conference, winning the debate. However, unhappy at the vote, the president took it another two times until they got what they wanted.

**■ See 'Unison conference: confident delegates take control, give Corbyn 'rapturous' welcome' at socialistparty.org.uk for more on Unison conference**

## Leeds: Nurses' union RCN says 'scrap the cap'

"It's time for all of us to take a stand, if we don't we won't have an NHS left" said one nurse through the megaphone at the RCN nurses' union pay cap protest in Leeds on 30 June.

Around 30 nurses in the RCN, officials and supporters took part in the protest. Nurses were angry about how the

NHS is being run down, and despite the RCN never having gone on strike before, 78% of the 55,000 members in the NHS consulted with said they would be prepared to strike against the pay cap.

The rest of the NHS and public sector unions should be preparing campaigns to coordinate strike action with the RCN. Given the

wobbles of Theresa May over whether the cap would continue, RCN members felt confident that they could win this demand.

The protest attracted a lot of media attention, but it was clear to all there that this was just the start of the campaign.

**Iain Dalton**  
**Leeds Socialist Party**



## What we stand for

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

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

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

Our demands include:

### PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

### 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.
- For the right to vote at 16.

### 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!

www.socialistparty.org.uk 02089888777

@socialist\_party Text 07761 818206 /CWIsocialistParty



## Victory... protest is not a crime!

# JOBSTOWN IS

# OFFICIALLY

# NOT GUILTY

**Cillian Gillespie**  
Socialist Party (CWI in Ireland)

“The news has just come through from the Central Criminal Court and I am the first to report it to the house.

“Deputy Paul Murphy: not guilty. Councillor Michael Murphy: not guilty. Councillor Kieran Mahon: not guilty. Frank Donaghy: not guilty. Michael Banks: not guilty. And Scott Masterson: not guilty.”

Mick Barry, Socialist Party member and Solidarity TD (MP), announced the verdict on the six Jobstown protest defendants on 29 June in the Dáil, the Irish parliament.

TDs from the parties of the capitalist establishment, most notably Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) Frances Fitzgerald and Labour leader Brendan Howlin, were visibly crestfallen.

It is a stunning blow to them, the garda (police), and the whole state

machine. Loyal egged on by the capitalist media, they orchestrated trumped-up charges of ‘false imprisonment’ of then-tánaiste Joan Burton and her assistant Karen O’Connell on 15 November 2014.

On this day, a peaceful protest took place in the deprived working class community of Jobstown, near Dublin, against the imposition of charges for water.

Burton, who backed the charges, was on a visit to the area. Protesters impeded the progress of her car over the course of two hours by sitting around it.

The protest was not an isolated one. The anti-water charges movement had exploded from below in the Autumn of 2014, reflecting the seething discontent against six years of austerity for working class people.

Added to this was disgust with Burton’s Labour Party. Having shamelessly lied to win the trappings of power in February 2011, it was dutifully implementing cuts, austerity taxes and bank bailouts.

Mass non-payment succeeded

only months ago in abolishing water charges for normal usage. Nowhere is this double blow more apparent than in Ireland’s supposed paper of record, the Irish Times.

The day after the verdict its front page story dealt with two tweets by Socialist Party member and Solidarity TD Paul Murphy towards the end of the trial. As opposed to the fact that Paul and five others were acquitted unanimously by a jury of their peers.

The Times argues that social media influenced the outcome of the trial. They are ignoring how two and a half years of vicious lies and propaganda against the people of Jobstown helped shape bias against the protesters, particularly among sections of the middle class.

They would like us to forget about the real outrage of the Jobstown trial: a succession of gardaí lied in their statements, and under oath on the witness stand. Clearly there was an attempt by the state to pervert the course of justice.

> Continued on page 4



Paul Murphy TD (centre) and fellow defendants surrounded by media after the not guilty verdict  
photo Eugene Coppinger

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