

[Socialist Party](#) | [Print](#)

Editorial of the Socialist, issue 1003

Tories in crisis - Act now to get them out!

- For mass trade union-led struggle against the weak and divided government
- Demand an immediate general election
- For a Corbyn-led government with socialist policies

Theresa May is clinging to power by a thread. For the first time since 1982 two cabinet ministers have resigned within 24 hours, as the Brexit civil war has ignited into a full scale conflict. 'Unite behind me or get Jeremy Corbyn' was her desperate plea to the 1922 committee of backbench Tory MPs.

Her joke to them that she was 'thinking of going on a walking holiday' was met with howls of horror. Last time she did so she decided to call a snap election and it is the Tories fear of another - and the coming to power of a Jeremy Corbyn-led government - that is the glue that has, to date, prevented the utter implosion of their party.

The Labour and trade union leaders have a responsibility to urgently build a mass movement demanding a general election, linked to Jeremy Corbyn putting forward a socialist programme that would transform the lives of working and middle class people. Whether they are in favour of a 'hard' or 'soft' Brexit, the Tories are united on pursuing anti-working class policies designed to increase the profits of the capitalist elite. The chance created by the Tories' chaos must be seized! Otherwise it cannot be excluded that - against the odds - May manages to cling to power.

The Brexit statement which May tried to press gang her cabinet into supporting at Chequers - even taking away their phones and ministerial cars in the hope of keeping them in line - was given a cautious welcome by much of big business.

The overwhelming majority of the capitalist class would have preferred Britain to remain part of the EU, as the best means for them to maximise their profits. It is a sign of the profound crisis of British capitalism that its traditional party cannot be relied on to act in its interests. As the clock towards Brexit ticks down, however, the capitalists have been exerting ever-increasing pressure on the Tories to agree a deal as close as possible to BINO, 'Brexit in Name Only'.

May's Chequers proposal is far from everything that the pro-EU capitalists would like, but it nonetheless represented a qualitative step in their direction by agreeing a free trade area for goods.

It is unlikely that the institutions of the EU, never mind the 27 member states, would agree May's proposals as drafted. In particular, they fear that it could trigger a domino effect as right-wing populists across the EU used it to push their own demands, including further measures to limit cross-border migration. Nonetheless, the pro-EU capitalists calculated that if May could hold the line in her own party on the Chequers proposal, she might then also be able to force through further concessions required by the EU.

The Tory Brexiteers made the same calculation: hence Davies and then Johnson's resignations. Having fought for a popular base - in the Tory Party membership and more broadly - by whipping up nationalism, it was untenable to remain in the cabinet without being completely discredited.

The split in the Tory party is therefore now an open and gaping chasm. At this stage it is not clear if the Brexiteers will launch a leadership challenge in the short term. 80 Tory MPs are reported to have attended a pro-Brexit meeting on 9 July. It seems they would have the 48 MPs needed to force a confidence vote, but probably not the 159 they'd need to win it - and therefore force a leadership contest. And if they lose they could not constitutionally launch another no-confidence challenge for a year.

More fundamentally, all sides of the Tory party fear a leadership contest would lead to the Tory party tearing itself apart and Jeremy Corbyn coming to power. Nonetheless, despite the Brexiteers hesitations it is not ruled

out that events could quickly escalate. Wars, including civil wars, have their own momentum, which at a certain point can become unstoppable, as has been indicated by Davies' and Johnson's resignations.

At this stage May has stated she is determined to face the Brexiteers down, as she is being urged to do by the capitalist class. The Financial Times, voicing the view of big business, made that clear, arguing in its editorial on 10 July that: "Mrs May has recognised the only pragmatic approach to decoupling from the EU is a softer version of Brexit. To avoid the reckless outcome of a no-deal outcome, the prime minister should stand firm."

If the white paper on the Chequers proposal comes to parliament, however, it is clear that May could be relying on Labour votes to get it through. Labour should not prop up May's rotten government but instead demand a general election and vote accordingly. It is a campaign for a general election, and not for a second referendum, which offers a path to unite the working class and get the Tories out.

This should be combined with Corbyn going on a political offensive to campaign for, and build on, the anti-austerity programme he put forward in the snap general election - including the immediate introduction of a £10 an hour minimum wage, free education, rent controls, mass council house building and the real funding increases need to solve the NHS and social care crisis. This should be linked to nationalisation of the banks and major monopolies under democratic workers' control, as the only way to ensure the transformation needed is not sabotaged by the capitalist class.

It is also essential that he does not give into the pressure from the capitalist class - via the Blairite wing of Labour - to accept the neoliberal rules associated with membership of the Single Market. Instead, Corbyn should develop his current stance, calling for an internationalist and anti-racist Brexit in the interests of the working class majority, with trade deals negotiated from that starting point.

If Corbyn goes on the offensive he can be seen by millions of working class people as strong enough to take on and defeat the Tories in order to start to build a society for the many not the few, uniting workers who voted Leave and Remain in the process. Many of those working class people who are currently sceptical of whether he and his party are capable of fighting in their interests could be enthused and mobilised behind a programme to transform their lives after decades of austerity. If, however, he hesitates and retreats, May - despite everything - could cling on and support for Corbyn could ebb further.

At this stage keeping May in power remains the preferred option of the majority of the capitalist class. However, they are all too aware that it might be impossible to avoid a snap election. It would be naïve to imagine that their response to that would be to stand back and accept a Jeremy Corbyn victory, or if he won, the implementation of pro-working class policies.

On the contrary they will do all they can to sabotage such a scenario. Aiding them in doing so is not only the right-wing press but also the pro-capitalist wing of the Labour Party, who make up a majority of the parliamentary Labour Party and of Labour councillors.

A Blairite split before a general election, around a pro-neoliberal Single Market programme, cannot be excluded in a desperate bid to stop a Corbyn victory. And if the Blairites remain within the Labour Party, they will do so in order to sabotage a Corbyn-led government at the behest of the capitalist elite. A programme to transform Labour into a mass, democratic workers' party, including introducing mandatory reselection of MPs, is therefore a crucial - and overdue - part of the preparation for a snap election alongside building a mass movement to get the Tories out.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 10 July 2018 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

600 more retail jobs on the line: workers must not pay for the bosses' high street crunch!

Iain Dalton, chair, Usdaw Broad Left

Among the latest victims are almost 600 retail workers employed by Calvetron Brands, many in department stores. Hardly a day goes by in 2018 without more news of woes on the high street.

June saw a fall in UK high street spending for the fifth consecutive month, according to consultancy firm BDO.

A number of chains have collapsed completely since the beginning of the year. Others such as Marks & Spencer, [House of Fraser](#) and Carpetright have closed some stores as well.

35,000 jobs in the sector have gone or are at risk this year, according to Guardian calculations. Over 10% of high street shops are empty as of 2016, says the British Retail Consortium.

Administration

Staff kept on when their employer goes into administration find themselves in the 'enviable' position of selling remaining stocks until the administrators decide it's not profitable enough anymore, and then summary redundancy. Workers in Poundworld have no idea how long it will be before they are thrown on the dole.

Retail workers will be looking to their union, Usdaw, for a lead. In 2017, following the collapse of department store BHS, [Ushaw conference passed a resolution calling for nationalisation in future circumstances](#) - but the leadership has yet to really fight for this.

Strikes against the administrators and occupations to keep out the asset strippers can apply the pressure needed to force nationalisation. Usdaw must put the resources in to begin an urgent unionisation drive on our high streets.

Rates

Among the various explanations for this year's retail crisis, groups such as the British Retail Consortium have pinned the blame on business rates. The latest revaluation came into effect this year. The bosses' organisation reckons that retailers, making up 5% of the economy, pay 25% of all business rates.

This is because business rates are a property tax rather than a revenue or profit tax. Retailers require a comparatively larger town centre floor space than many other businesses. The British Retail Consortium and others argue this puts high street retailers at a competitive disadvantage, particularly to online retailers.

Business rates are becoming one of the main sources of local government finance as central government funding is cut by the Tories. There is a dangerous argument that could develop over councils pitting the jobs of retail workers against those of public sector workers.

Business rates are not a new phenomenon. What has changed most in the past decade has been the cut in corporation tax, which taxes profits. This has shifted the tax burden paid by companies more proportionately onto business rates, as part of a general drive to lower the taxes on big business.

Reversing the Tories' corporation tax cuts would be a first step to deal with this. Councils must also stop making the Tories' cuts by using reserves and borrowing, and fight for the necessary funding.

But ultimately, only public ownership and democratic socialist planning can guarantee secure, well-paid jobs for retail workers and the wider working class.

Britain bakes as water pipelines leak: profit holding back climate solutions

Simon Carter, East London Socialist Party

June was the driest month on record in south east and central southern England, while Scotland recorded its highest ever temperature of 33.2C in Motherwell. The winters of 2016 and 2017, and the thunderstorms in May of this year, witnessed serious flooding in Britain.

All these extreme weather events are consistent with the effects of global warming producing climate change.

But as we know, international agreement by capitalist leaders to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions fuelling global warming is woefully inadequate.

Even the UN's much-lauded Paris Agreement - which Trump rescinded the US's signature to - has no effective sanctions for those signatory countries who fail to meet their insufficient targets.

Investment

Equally inadequate is capitalism's investment in measures to manage global warming and climate change, such as flood defence and water conservation.

As the Socialist [pointed out in January 2016](#), the Tory government had cut flood defence spending by 8% - around £540 million since 2011. Mismanagement of land by agribusiness had also contributed to environmental vulnerability.

Likewise, in May 2018, [the Socialist referenced the Environment Agency](#), which concluded that serious leaks, rising domestic use, and massive consumption by an unsustainable energy sector mean much of England could see water shortages in the coming decades.

We also pointed to the profit-gorged private water suppliers which had failed to invest sufficiently to stop leaking pipes wasting billions of litres of water every day. 20% of piped water leaks out before it reaches our homes, and extracting too much water is drying up our river ecosystems.

Instead of fixing these problems the privatised water companies tell overcharged households to reduce water consumption - as if we're to blame for the problem. And the toothless regulator, Ofwat, has given water companies in southern England leak reduction targets that allow more leakage than existing levels!

Bringing these companies back in to public ownership - under the democratic control of workers and users, as part of overall socialist planning of the economy - is the only way to provide sufficient resources to invest in sustainable water sources and replace the crumbling infrastructure.

Minister's benefits lie: sack the Tories - and scrap universal credit

Karen Seymour, Mansfield Socialist Party

Work and Pensions Secretary Esther McVey arrogantly refuses to step down, after admitting to "inadvertently" misleading MPs about problems with the already unpopular 'universal credit' welfare restructure.

The head of the National Audit Office, Sir Amyas Morse, was forced to write an open letter outlining his concerns about universal credit, effectively accusing her of lying. Universal credit rolls six working-age benefits into one, supposedly to simplify the system - but in reality, it's about slashing the welfare bill.

Far from stating that the progress of the rollout should be accelerated, as McVey claimed, Morse actually said it should be paused until its many problems were addressed!

The Department for Work and Pensions' own survey shows 40% of universal credit claimants are experiencing financial difficulty because of it.

A significant number face eviction and homelessness. Food bank use has rocketed across the country. This policy is deliberately designed to wear working class people down, whether we are in work or not.

Labour's work and pensions spokesperson, Margaret Greenwood, has rightly called for McVey to be sacked. But Labour should also be calling for universal credit to be scrapped and replaced with a proper welfare safety net, living benefits without compulsion, and support to get people into work if that's what they want.

Super-rich

This could easily be paid for if the biggest companies, notorious for tax dodging, went into public ownership - and the super-rich faced proper, progressive taxes.

Esther McVey will not be pushed into poverty for the serious matter of misleading parliament, even if she does lose her ministerial job. But under the brutal sanctions regime, you can have your money reduced or stopped completely for such heinous offences as being three minutes late for a jobcentre interview!

As well as a mass programme of job creation and a humane benefits system, we need an immediate £10 an hour minimum wage without exemptions, and an end to zero-hours contracts and the gig economy which particularly exploit young people.

And as well as sacking McVey, we need this whole rotten government out!

Them & Us

New peer 'elected'...

The House of Lords has a new legislator, 'elected' with a crushing total of... 12 votes.

Charles Peregrine Courtenay, 19th Earl of Devon, was duly elected by his peers: 31 hereditary aristocrats. He will now hold office till he dies.

Lord Courtenay lives in a castle with a 3,000-acre estate including a deer park. He is a graduate of Eton and Cambridge and works as a barrister.

He will now be entitled to £300 a day just for signing in. And a vote on every law the Commons tries to pass. The Socialist says: abolish the Lords!

... union votes restricted

Meanwhile, civil service workers in the PCS union are voting on strikes to end years of pay cuts. They must hit big, undemocratic thresholds.

The Tories' anti-union laws mean all votes for industrial action have to happen by post instead of in the workplace. And now they are invalid unless there's a turnout above 50%. In effect, workers who miss the letter, or choose to let everyone else decide, are counted as voting against!

Determined organising can break these anti-democratic shackles. The Communication Workers Union and the University and College Union have both done it for national action.

But the people who agree these laws face no such minimum thresholds. And some of them can get seats - for life - on 12 votes! It's one law for the bosses, and another for workers.

Bosses' Brexit ransom...

Jaguar Land Rover has threatened 40,000 jobs if Britain leaves the EU's neoliberal single market and customs union.

The car maker made £1.5 billion profit before tax last year. Like the majority of big business, it is desperate to keep rules which help it shunt money, jobs and goods around the EU on capitalist terms. They are part of maximising the bosses' exploitation of workers.

BMW and Airbus have made similar threats. Using workers' livelihoods this way is a scandal.

But giving in to big business bullying won't work. Experience shows they'll take your handouts - and move anyway as soon as it suits them.

Jeremy Corbyn has rightly argued for a new customs union which protects such jobs without blocking nationalisation and state investment.

He must also tell bosses who hold workers to ransom they can expect summary nationalisation - with compensation only paid out to those who can prove they need it, not fat cats.

... migrant kids' ransom

And while the bosses hold workers to ransom by threatening to move factories, migrant children must pay the bosses' government a ransom to be allowed to stay.

The Home Office makes over £51,600 a day from charging the kids to register as British citizens, says immigration lawyer Colin Yeo.

The cost of applying is £1,102 - out of range for many destitute and persecuted refugee or migrant families. But the administrative costs are just £372!

Children not registered as British citizens risk detention and deportation, often facilitated by the EU. They can even be denied school trips and college places.

Of course, if you're a Hollywood actor marrying into the royal family, there's plenty of money for the fees. And you'll be fast-tracked. And get a free mansion in Kensington.

5 reasons to walk out on 13 July

Number five

Hit the streets against Trump and capitalism

Claire Laker-Mansfield, Socialist Students national organiser

As we go to press, Donald Trump is on his way to Britain. This billionaire bigot is hoping for a red carpet reception. But the most important 'welcome' he will receive will be on the streets. Students, workers and young people plan to throw him a party he won't forget.

Such is the government's concern about the potential for mass protest that, in austerity Britain, the Tories have already shelled out more than £30 million on policing and security.

Their nervousness is undoubtedly not restricted to the issue of Trump's personal safety. He will arrive to greet a government in the depths of crisis - potentially at the point of collapse. And the protests that he is met with

will not just be aimed at Trump the individual. We are organising against all that he represents. And that puts our own, crisis-ridden government in the dock.

Trump epitomises the rottenness of the capitalist system. His divide and rule, racist and sexist agenda goes hand in hand with tax cuts for the super-rich and attacks on workers' rights. Its intended effect is to distract working class people from those really responsible for, and benefiting from, austerity and hardship: the capitalist class - Trump's billionaire friends.

The system

We need to take aim at Trumpism, and at the system which generates it. The Tories are no strangers to whipping up bigotry and division. The Windrush scandal has shone a light on many of the appalling racist policies applied in Britain. As we take to the streets in protest our cry will be both Trump out and Tories out. And we will be demanding an alternative.

Capitalism is a system which thrives on hate and division, which is based on exploitation and oppression. That's why there is growing support for socialist ideas. We are fighting for a society for the 99%, one founded on solidarity and working class unity.

A socialist society would see the vast wealth and resources, currently in the hands of a tiny rich few, owned publicly and controlled democratically - so that we could plan the economy to meet the needs of all. Young Socialists is organising to help build a movement to kick out the Tories and fight for socialism. Join us.

- [Read an interview with a socialist student activist from the US](#)
- For a full list of protest events against Trump's visit see '[Walk out against Trump and Tories](#)'
- Also see the first four reasons to walk out: '[1 - Stop war, fight Trump, walk out on 13 July](#)', '[2 - No to Trump and Tory racism](#)', '[3 - No to Trump's climate change chaos](#)', and '[4 - No to sexism! No to Trump!](#)'

Interview with socialist student activist in the US

US: "We've had to build a huge culture of resistance"

In the lead up to the walkouts and protests against Trump's UK visit, Lily Branchett from Birmingham University Socialist Students interviewed Greyson Arbeider, a student activist in Ohio and member of Socialist Alternative (cothinkers of the Socialist Party in the US).

How has Trump's presidency changed young people's political outlook and activism?

The Trump presidency has definitely affected the political involvement of young people. I'm an example of that. I joined Socialist Alternative right after Trump's inauguration last year and after the first Muslim ban in January 2017.

It's created this sense of urgency that definitely didn't exist before. And a sense that we, the people on the ground, are kind of the last line of defence faced with an unjust administration.

That sense didn't exist during the Obama administration because there was always this sense that the White House would back us up in the case of an emergency, or the Supreme Court would back us up - like with *Obergefell v Hodges* in 2015, which was the Supreme Court decision in favour of marriage equality.

There was this mistaken idea that in the face of an attack on our civil rights the government would be a wall against that. And now it's clear that the government is perpetuating it and actually creating the crisis.

Do you think the March for Our Lives was a representation of that? What was it like on those protests?

What we witnessed on the March for Our Lives was unlike any other protest that I've been to. It was a culmination of decades of consciousness that I've actively been a part of. Millions of people, mostly young people, marched around the country for an issue that has plagued us for decades. Our generation is likely to be characterised by the years of 'active shooter drills' that we've been through for our entire lives.

After the Parkland shooting there was this collective jump in understanding that the government would never put through gun control without extreme outside pressure. And you can see that it still hasn't happened.

There was also another jump in consciousness - the widespread recognition that the National Rifle Association (NRA) money put behind both Republicans and Democrats is a major reason for their failure to act.

But at the same time, at those rallies, there was extreme pressure from the Democratic establishment to keep the energy of those young people - many who we met were self-described socialists - on safer political ground. A lot of the speeches from the leadership were largely based around the November mid-terms and registering to vote.

But across the country we found crowds of young people who wanted much, much more than that. It was an experience!

At a local level, what are people's attitude towards Trump and his policies?

It's not the same everywhere. But in every major city across the US, even as Trump is now the new normal, revulsion for him and his policies is probably the right word - and it has not ebbed.

When you talk to people on the street you don't get a casual reaction like "oh yeah I hate the guy", it's a physical response. People roll their eyes, they sigh, they run their hands through their hair. It's like they don't have the words to comprehend how deeply unsettling the administration is.

But like I said that's not the case everywhere. We've seen over the last year that the far right has been really emboldened around the country. And last summer we experienced the events of Charlottesville that resulted in the death of Heather Hyer [see ['Neo-Nazi violence in Charlottesville reawakens resistance'](#) at socialistalternative.org].

Those people have not gone away either. The Trump anti-immigrant rhetoric is like a war cry for them. When people say the country is sharply divided, that's kind of capitalist rhetoric because we've always been divided. But it is true that there is a giant gap between the way most people are leaning versus this right-wing fringe, which is now legitimised by a very right-wing administration.

Do you think the prospects for building socialist ideas have increased since Trump's election and also Bernie Sanders' campaign?

Yes, the prospects for building socialist ideas are getting better every day. Under the Trump administration, people don't know what's going to be taken away next. Things like universal healthcare and affordable housing are immediately politicised on those grounds. We've had to build up a huge culture of resistance to protect reforms like Obamacare.

But in building that resistance it becomes increasingly clear to people that what has been promised in the past by the establishment is not enough.

And people are more and more turning back to the ideas presented by Bernie Sanders' campaign in the 2016 Democratic primaries, which at the time many centre-leaning people viewed as ludicrous. Now those ideas are really being legitimised in the face of a right-wing administration to create a vision for what we need to fight for in the future.

Who is Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and what does her election represent?

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is a Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) member who won her congressional Democratic primary in New York City in a huge upset over ten-term incumbent Joe Crowley. Joe Crowley is not just any old Democrat, he was the favourite to take over from Nancy Pelosi who is the current Democrat leader in the House of Representatives.

Ocasio-Cortez represents the most popular train of thought on the left following Bernie Sanders - that the Democratic Party must be overtaken by progressives from the inside. But we've already seen the reaction of the Democratic Party - they have completely closed ranks, saying that she doesn't represent a trend and that she never could have won in the Mid-West, which we know to be untrue.

And the Democratic National Committee has already adopted a new rule that would prevent outsiders from seeking a Democratic presidential candidacy. That rule would essentially bar Bernie from running again.

And it's not unlikely to think they would change the rules again to keep DSA candidates out. Especially as socialist ideas are gaining more popularity. So in these times it's really crucial that we build independent movements that are capable of moving forward.

Ocasio also represents an emerging kind of politician - one that we've already seen demonstrated by Bernie and also by Socialist Alternative's own Kshama Sawant who was elected in Seattle and Ginger Jentzen who lost by a very close margin in Minneapolis. This type of politician that doesn't put themselves up for election but their platform.

Ocasio's supporters weren't voting for her name, they were voting for her ideas - Medicare for all, fully funded public [state] schools and universities, a universal jobs guarantee, housing as a human right, justice and immigration reform. People were voting for that. Which I think is the most hopeful part.

Socialist Alternative in New York was active in her campaign. We held a public meeting with her and we're really proud to have a good relationship with her and to have helped her campaign and look forward to working with her grassroots movement in the future.

- See '[Ocasio-Cortez stuns the establishment - now build a movement for socialist change](http://socialistalternative.org)' at socialistalternative.org

What needs to happen next in the anti-Trump movement?

The anti-Trump movement up to now has been a movement of sporadic reaction. Because every week there's a new attack on a minority group or on the working class generally.

Just last week the Supreme Court delivered a big blow to organised labour in the US, called the Janus decision, where basically the US is now open shop. And then Justice Kennedy actually stepped down so he'll be replaced by a Trump nominee which will carry on Trump's rhetoric for potentially decades. So much of the energy of the movement has been put into rapid response when this type of emergency occurs.

But it's also been a movement of reacting because a majority of the emphasis has been on waiting for the November elections where the supposed 'blue wave' is going to take the house and senate.

But even if the Democrats succeed in taking them both, which is still hotly contested, there's no guarantee that will stop the attacks on immigrants, LGBTQ rights, organised labour and other demographics that the administration frequently targets.

So the movement has to move out of the realm of the Democrats towards building independent politics and working towards a sustainable movement for clear demands rather than one of emergency reactions.

How important is international solidarity to the movement?

International solidarity cannot be underplayed. We've seen that most recently with the attacks on immigrants. The rhetoric of the right is that it isn't our responsibility to care for these people and that they're a drain on the US economy, which we know to be untrue.

The fact is that immigrants from Mexico and central America are fleeing violence that the US stoked in those regions. And as socialists our fight is not just for the American working class but for the international working class.

So it's really important in the fight for immigrant rights that we draw that out and we make sure that yes, we're fighting with the US working class, but we're fighting with them on the basis of international solidarity. We have far more in common with immigrants from other countries than we do with the American ruling class.

We've been watching the news coming out of the UK about potential student walkouts and even potential labour strikes for Trump's upcoming visit and... we're happy! It's good news for us. The more difficult for Trump things are made abroad, the more we can increase the pressure on the domestic front.

NSSN conference 2018: Mood for fighting action and coordination

Sarah Wrack

"I'm sick and tired of hearing that the trade union movement is on its way out," declared Linda Taaffe in opening the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) conference on 7 July. Part of the reason the lie can be told she said, "is the TUC itself. Where has the TUC been in the recent period?"

This set the scene for the meeting that followed, which made clear the ongoing relevance and strength of the trade unions, as well as a widely felt frustration with those right-wing leaders in the labour movement who hold back working class struggle.

The conference had been truncated to finish in time for England's quarter final World Cup match, but still the room was full, with working class fighters having come from far and wide to hear from each other and share experiences.

Howard Beckett, assistant general secretary of Unite pointed out that he was the first Unite speaker at an NSSN conference since the union agreed to affiliate to the NSSN.

"The NSSN is an example of how true solidarity works. Everywhere there's a dispute, the NSSN stretches out a hand of solidarity and support when our members need it most."

Terry Pullinger, deputy general secretary (postal) of the Communication Workers Union (CWU) spoke about the political change signalled by the swelling of support for Jeremy Corbyn. Young people have backed him because they rightly believe there's a need for politicians who fight for them. "But we know we can't just rely on politicians... We need unions to be the strong influence and we will always be necessary - whatever party's in government, workers' voices need to be heard."

Terry outlined the vibrant approach the union had taken to the recent dispute with Royal Mail, which he said has reenergised him and the union in general. "We had to be in every workplace, have a rep on every shift - it's workplace trade unionism that makes a difference."

Using social media videos and messaging, national union leaders could reach into every workplace, he explained. But the most important organising tools were things like 'gate-meeting days'. The result was a 90% Yes vote for action on a 74% turnout and the company backed down on its proposals before action even needed to be taken.

BFAWU bakers' union president Ian Hodson talked about the union's work 'organising the unorganised', particularly in fast food. Ian recounted outrageous stories of McDonald's workers being harassed after leaving abusive relationships, people with learning disabilities being told they have to put up with bullying from customers and the poverty pay resulting in workers living on friends' sofas for long periods. The strike action against these conditions is "the start of a new movement," he said.

Zero-hours

Similar conditions exist in retail, as explained by Amy Murphy, newly elected president of the Usdaw shopworkers' union. 60% in the sector are on zero-hour contracts.

The current high street crisis, which has seen a number of household names close or make big cuts, is adding to the problem: "Who suffers in the end? The workers." But, Amy pointed out, "there are 6.5 million trade unionists. If we stand together, we can make a difference and we will make a difference."

Joe Simpson, deputy general secretary of the POA union for prison, correctional and secure psychiatric workers, explained that prison officers have legally not been allowed to strike since 1994.

"Last year we went to the big court and now we're under a super-injunction - we're not allowed to do anything... since then we've been on strike four times!"

Joe argued that the anti-trade union laws in the 2016 Trade Union Act should be brushed aside by all unions: "Bad laws are meant to be broken."

He described the anger felt by many workers at the lack of a lead from the TUC on this and other issues that action could be coordinated around. "Every worker from everywhere in the UK needs to go on strike to protect what is ours."

PCS assistant general secretary Chris Baugh also highlighted the lack of leadership from the TUC, as well as the need for the left unions to act together regardless. "If the TUC is not prepared to provide leadership, we have to work together on how we use the enormous latent power of the trade union movement."

He pointed to a number of key disputes in the recent period that show the power of the unions - the RMT's struggle against driver-only operation, the Royal Mail dispute and the University and Colleges Union pensions battle, as well as the PCS's own current strike ballot on pay.

"This is in many ways the most important membership ballot in our 20-year history," Chris said. "The government doesn't think we can achieve the 50% threshold. But their approach has generated an unprecedented level of activity in our union."

Rob Williams, chair of the NSSN, discussed the potential role of the trade unions in social struggles on all kinds of issues, such as defending the NHS and stopping the far right, saying "the unions should be central to those struggles."

Rob called for everyone attending the conference to help build for the NSSN's lobby of the TUC congress in Manchester on 9 September. This will be "saying to the TUC 'we've got a militant strategy and we want you to take it up, but if you don't we'll put it forward ourselves.'"

President of the RMT transport workers' union Sean Hoyle agreed: "The NSSN could be the ones to say to the trade unions 'if the TUC don't do it, we will.'"

An excellent discussion followed these top-table contributions. Several speakers expanded on Rob's point about the role of the trade unions in combatting the far right and reaching out to migrant workers. For example, Hugo Pierre, Unison national executive committee (personal capacity), spoke about victories won by his union fighting for migrants' right to work, a point echoed by Lawanya of the Refugee Rights campaign.

Other campaigns in need of solidarity from the unions were raised too, such as the need to highlight the cruelty of the government's benefit cuts. Theo from Socialist Students and Leicester school student Bethany

both talked about organising for the protests against Donald Trump's UK visit and the need for young people and older workers to fight together.

Following just two days after the 70th anniversary of the foundation of the NHS, the ongoing battles to defend the health service also featured. Tom Hunt explained the successful campaign to save Chatsworth rehabilitation ward in Mansfield, where he is a nurse. He said that NSSN support was vital in getting a quick response, media coverage and giving confidence to a workforce where none of the staff except him had been on a protest before.

Dave Byrom spoke about another recent NHS victory - against 'wholly owned subsidiaries' in Mid Yorkshire where a successful strike ballot forced the bosses to think again. He said: coordinated action works - that's been shown at local level time and time again. Nationally we could immediately ballot all branches threatened with wholly owned subsidiaries."

Many speakers expressed thanks to the NSSN for support in particular disputes and workplaces - from recycling workers in Hull to housing workers, to teachers and lecturers.

Moe, one of several London bus drivers attending the conference, explained why he had initiated the motion that led to Unite affiliating to the NSSN. "I came to NSSN conference and listening to it gave me a big boost in confidence."

A stand-out contribution to the meeting came from Richard, a 'McStriker' from Watford. "Working in McDonald's really is as shitty as people say." He contrasted his own living conditions - 26 years old and unable to afford to leave his parents' home - with that of fellow 'Watford lad' Steve Easterbrook, CEO of McDonald's, who lives in a mansion in the US and uses a private jet to get around.

"On 1 May me and my colleagues went on strike and for the first time took some of the power back from McDonald's... I've just had my first taste of fighting back and I'm hungry for more."

This will be the experience of an increasing number of workers - young and old alike - as more and more are forced to struggle for their jobs, pay, terms and conditions. As Howard Beckett said in his introduction, "there is power in the unions - and it's time for us to use it."

Big victory for Wigan NHS strike against privatisation

Becci Heagney, North West Socialist Party organiser

In an outstanding example of how privatisation in the NHS is not inevitable, striking workers in Wigan have forced their NHS trust to drop all plans for outsourcing cleaning, catering and domestic services.

Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Trust were attempting to move staff to a wholly owned subsidiary company called WWL Solutions. However, workers were not willing to accept this step towards privatisation and what it would mean for both their pay and conditions, and patient care.

After a series of strikes, including first a 48-hour strike and then a five-day strike, NHS unions Unison and Unite had announced a seven-day strike starting 17 July.

The strike received huge backing from people both in Wigan and nationally throughout the NHS. Patients, staff and members of the public overwhelmingly support the NHS as a publicly owned and run service and don't want to see further privatisation.

It was announced on 4 July that Wigan Council has stepped in to provide the extra funding to the NHS trust and it has been agreed that all plans for privatisation will no longer go ahead.

This victory highlights that NHS workers are willing to fight to defend jobs, pay and services, where a lead is given. Importantly it shows that when you fight, you can win - and this is something that health unions in other areas and nationally should take stock of.

National action

A national programme of strike action throughout the NHS would be supported and could push back the privatisation agenda, win a decent pay rise for staff, and even bring down this weak Tory government.

It also shows that where there is the will, local government can step in to prevent cuts and privatisation in the NHS.

Labour councils should now come out completely against privatisation and cuts in the NHS, particularly by opposing the 'sustainability and transformation plans' which require local government support.

It's one example of what can be done now, instead of just arguing we need to wait until a future Labour government.

Campaign in full flow to squeeze out every last Yes vote in pay ballot

Katrine Williams, PCS national executive member (personal capacity)

The PCS civil servants' union pay strike ballot ends 23 July. In the time left we need to squeeze out every last vote.

Reps gathered at the union's headquarters on 4 July reported a greater level of activity than anything else in recent memory. Town meetings, leafleting, workplace membership meetings and one-on-one discussions all testify to the efforts being made to turn out the vote.

From 30 June, phone banks have been in operation. Members are being contacted to ask if they have voted and reminded of the importance of voting. Chris Baugh, PCS assistant general secretary, will be taking his turn on the phone line, saying: "I want to do my bit to secure a Yes vote and to engage with members in this historically important ballot where literally every vote counts."

In a complementary exercise pre-recorded messages have been sent out to remind members of the importance of their vote and to ask them to let the union know when they have voted. Although this is a postal ballot, the union is using all available technology to maximise the vote.

In parallel with the push for a massive Yes vote, further talks have taken place with the government. The three civil service unions (PCS, Prospect and the FDA) met with David Lidington, the minister for the cabinet office, on 27 June, to challenge the lack of discussion over the government's pay remit guideline - the pay cap. Two scheduled meetings with the unions were cancelled and the guidance (capping pay increases to 1-1.5%) was sent out to departments.

This contemptuous approach to the unions and consultation has upset the other two unions. Prospect and the FDA joined the PCS in denouncing the pay limit as unacceptable - a welcome display of unity between the unions. Positive noises about the withdrawal of the pay remit have now been met with equal contempt by the government, which is ploughing on regardless.

Leafleting continues across Sheffield with increasing numbers of members reporting that they have voted and voted Yes! The mood is good and one of optimism.

Work continues this week with more planned in Sheffield and at a meeting of the town committee in Leeds where leafleting of the big sites was agreed. The Yorkshire and Humberside regional committee has also taken place. Rep after rep reported a positive response and details of a more targeted approach to ensure we capitalise on the members who have not yet voted and want to.

Marion Lloyd, PCS national executive committee

We have done three 'desk drops' for the pay campaign and one building has been leafleted four times. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has been leafleted by Socialist Party members. Similarly the Ministry of Defence and Department for Work and Pensions offices have been leafleted by PCS branches and the Socialist Party.

We have not seen this amount of work for a ballot before and we are getting a good response from members.

Roger Thomas

Glasgow reps have been organising meeting after meeting, speaking to thousands of members. The mood is determined. Phone-banking has begun picking up volunteers to be reps in sites that haven't seen a rep for years.

Scotland members are responding well to clearing the 50% threshold imposed by this hated government.

Dave Semple, PCS Scotland chair

As a retired member I have liaised with the PCS Midlands regional office and active union members. They have met and coordinated plans to leaflet offices in Birmingham across different civil service departments to ensure the message concerning the pay campaign reaches every member possible. A chart was provided on the offices to be targeted during a two-week campaign, showing dates and times which included morning, afternoon and early evening shifts, with members willing to cover each shift.

Also phone numbers to contact members at each location. Every active member turned up in a high visibility vest. We created a carnival atmosphere which caught the attention of staff coming or going into the offices. We had an excellent response and got new members for the union.

Bill Murray, ARMs

Reps in Dundee have worked extremely hard leafleting and organising members' meetings during the ballot. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with members saying that, although they are covered by the employee deal, they will still be voting Yes to ensure their colleagues get the pay rise they deserve as well.

Sarah Spencer, DWP Dundee

We think the campaign is going well, had the best off-site meeting for a long time. Most of the members I have spoken to said they voted Yes or will be doing so. We just need to do the systematic work now to make sure they do so.

Nick Doyle, HMRC Portsmouth

Reps in Wales have got really stuck into delivering the vote and getting the message across that we cannot win it without members actually getting their ballot papers into the post box.

The amount of leafleting, meetings, rallies phone-banking and the vital detailed work in talking to our members individually to keep encouraging them to vote is unprecedented. We will keep encouraging everyone to keep up this active pace of work right up to last day to post ballot papers.

Katrine Williams, PCS Wales chair

- All quotes in a personal capacity
-

Hackney traffic wardens strike for better pay and protection at work

Unite the Union member

Unite the Union members employed as parking enforcement officers by APCOA Parking in Hackney, east London, began six days of strike action on 9 July.

The company is a council contractor which wastes no time in trying to make profits off the back of the workers. The union has previously had to organise strike action to win a pay increase up to the London Living Wage rate, despite the council promising that all contractors would pay the rate.

Strike action also won improved sick pay, which is vital taking into account that the workers are out in all weathers and are frequently assaulted. Workers have given examples where they had knives held to their throats. One worker on the picket line spoke about how even going to get a coffee during a break is stressful when in uniform.

Now the workers have been forced to take strike action after the employer refused to negotiate a pay rise. This is despite turning up to conciliation service Acas, confirming that they had the authority to negotiate on pay and asking if the union would suspend the action if the employer made a pay offer.

The talks concluded with APCOA saying that they needed to consult with the council. Rather suspiciously, it was after this point that APCOA then refused to negotiate further.

This is not a company short of money - a fact that the company has no problem sharing. Pinned up on the staff noticeboard is a newsletter from the CEO proudly boasting of the €68.1 million that the company made last year.

The company is trying every trick in the book to undermine the strike - including increased rates for strike breakers and paying for lunches!

Summer of discontent on the cards in Huddersfield bin workers' dispute

Michaela Bower, Huddersfield Socialist Party

50 bin workers, union members and supporters came together for a march on 6 July from the waste depot to Huddersfield Town Hall in protest against bullying and racism by management, and a refusal to allow bin workers to take leave for holidays and medical appointments.

They then held a rally outside with speakers including Angie Waller from Unison and Mike Forster, secretary of the Huddersfield Socialist Party.

Kirklees bin workers walked out from 3-9 July after voting unanimously for industrial action after talks with the council collapsed, and the mood on the picket lines was strong.

With a lack of recruitment of new workers, the current workers have been struggling to keep up with the rounds, especially with 8,000 of a planned 30,000 new homes built in Kirklees in the last few years. Kirklees Council did make an offer before the strike of additional agency staff. However the workforce know that what is needed is guaranteed jobs with acceptable conditions, so this offer was rejected.

After the successful rally, the workers then held a meeting and voted overwhelmingly in support of an indefinite strike from 31 July should the council fail to meet their demands.

The bin workers reported that those who had been refused time off included an instance where a workers' daughter was being taken to hospital after breaking her leg. The worker, like any concerned parent, wanted to go to the hospital to be with his daughter and comfort her, yet this was refused.

If the council dares to say there isn't the money to hire new staff, then they will be reminded of the £1.6 million the council recently received as a bonus - for cutting their budgets!

Should the indefinite strike go ahead from 31 July, Huddersfield Socialist Party will be setting up a support group for the bin workers, working alongside the local trade union council, and taking in donations and running stalls to help support the striking workers.

This looks like it could be a hot summer of discontent in Huddersfield, unless Kirklees Council removes the bullying and racist managers, and invests money in the refuse services to allow workers to do their jobs properly and safely.

Tyneside shopfitting plant lays off 61 workers

Elaine Brunskill, Northern Socialist Party regional secretary

At the start of their day shift at the end of June, management at HMY retail group dropped a bombshell on their workforce when they announced 61 redundancies - all of their production workers.

The company intends to continue trading, but with production from outside Britain.

The company, which manufactures retail furniture, has blamed the redundancies on "difficult market conditions over the last couple of years."

Workers at the plant explained: "Some of the lads have worked here for 30, 40 years." Also, because the factory is located in Burnopfield, Tyneside, which is a semi-rural location, many people from the surrounding area work there.

In some cases two, three or more family members work alongside each other. This is going to have a devastating impact.

Mistakes

For many years workers at the plant have felt that management has made mistakes.

A couple of years ago the workers went on strike (see '[HMY Radford shopfitters strike against penny-pinching company](#)'). It was the first strike action at the factory for 33 years, and was about pay and conditions.

Workers are angry and dismayed at the lack of information coming from the company. There are rumours that production will be closed by the end of August.

There is also anger at the way workers have been treated. In December workers from the plant were laid off. Then when they were reinstated in the new year management had the audacity to ask if they'd had a good Christmas!

Another time the company held a garden party for all the workers. Then immediately afterwards workers were laid off! There was a feeling that the workers who'd been laid off had paid the price for the party.

One of the workers who will be laid off commented: "Currently we all feel that we're waiting in the middle of the road for a bus to come along and hit us."

At this stage the workers feel stunned. Collectively they have given years of service - but for bosses and their rotten capitalist system this counts for nothing.

Unite conference sees union go in a fighting, socialist direction

Kevin Parslow, Unite policy conference delegate (personal capacity)

Unite policy conference in Brighton on 2-6 July was notable for delegates urging its leadership to take the initiative on the big issues facing workers: Brexit, fighting austerity, racism and the far right.

At conference, Unite's leaders responded but it must take its words into the movement in the fight to bring down this weak and hated Tory government.

That was the conclusion of the Brexit debate, [reported in the previous issue of the Socialist](#), where delegates saw the opportunity to fight for a workers', socialist Brexit. But there is also a fear for jobs, with the executive council (EC) statement passed calling for mobilisation against any deal that threatens workers' interests.

Unite's many members in the manufacturing industry will be looking for this to be put into practice.

A motion moved by Socialist Party member Danny Hoggan on the cuts in local government was overtaken by another EC statement. The major difference between the two was the omission in the statement of a call on Labour councils to pass legal 'no-cuts' budgets.

Nevertheless, the EC statement was only carried by 207 votes to 134, reflecting a large section of the conference wanting to put further pressure on Labour councillors to defend workers from austerity.

And while a balanced statement on 'gender identity' was agreed, general secretary Len McCluskey and other leading Unite figures were criticised from the floor for signing an open letter published in the Morning Star that was one-sided in condemning violence in the current debate.

Len promised conference he would clarify the position of Unite in a reply (see ['Liberation struggle is class struggle: the fight for trans equality'](#)).

Socialist Party members played an important role in the conference in giving substance to the hunger for action for better lives.

Young workers

Neil Moore, chairperson of Unite's youth committee in Ireland and a member of our sister party there, explained how young workers in the hospitality industry have been fighting back. Taking a cue from the struggles of McDonald's and TGI Fridays workers, they are getting organised and fighting greedy and bullying bosses.

Unite branches were also urged to affiliate to the Refugee Rights campaign; hopefully, Unite's EC will develop links on a national basis too.

And Mick Cotter, chair of the London Print Branch, successfully moved support for 'Los Mineros' the independent Mexican Mine and Metal Workers' Union, in the week following the victory of Lopez Obrador in that country's presidential election.

Socialist Party members in the union welcome the continuing steps forward made by Unite in policy and will continue to develop these in a fighting, socialist direction. Unite should work with other unions and those prepared to fight to oust this rotten government.

Pressure building on Merseyside councillors to stop fire service cuts

Hugh Caffrey

Firefighters on Merseyside are resisting further devastating cuts to the fire and rescue service being implemented by the Labour-run fire authority as it passes on Tory government funding cuts. £1.9 million is being cut back by closing fire stations during nights, while £25 million is held in the reserves of the fire authority and £100,000 a year is spent on a 'scab army' to undermine the Fire Brigades Union (FBU)!

The 60-odd attendees at the Merseyside FBU's campaign launch public meeting were outraged at this. As FBU regional secretary Mark Rowe explained, the fire service locally was in a pretty poor state going into 2010 after six years of New Labour attacking and deregulating the service.

Since 2010 the cuts have been devastating, "now way beyond crisis point", said Mark, with firefighter numbers by 2020 to fall from 927 to 580, engines from 42 to 22, six stations already closed and five to be shut overnight.

Already fire deaths locally have trebled, with smaller fire crews now facing even more dangerous situations.

Firefighters have tried to help the fire authority deal with the government cutbacks, voluntarily going to 12-hour-day shift patterns they didn't want, doing more community work on fire safety, taking shorter breaks and a voluntary pay cut that takes salaries below the national rates, and changing working practices to keep specialist appliances running. The response of the fire authority has been to take all this and demand more.

"The cuts are government led but we're angry that despite everything we've done that Merseyside Fire Authority have seen fit to attack our terms and conditions, the Labour controlled fire authority has refused to honour national agreements on overtime payments. We say to them, pay the overtime rates and get the engines back on the run."

To add insult to injury, in Greater Manchester the metro-mayor Andy Burnham eventually stepped in with extra funds to resolve a similar situation, but on Merseyside there is no sign of such a shift from the fire authority.

Instead the fire authority has imposed night-time closure on Crosby, Aintree and Kensington fire stations, and intends to close Liverpool city centre and Wallasey fire stations overnight from the near future.

Since 2006, over £1 million has been spent by the fire authority on payments to a scab army, inducements to people to undermine the Fire Brigades Union.

The fire authority at all points has been a Labour-run body, but has behaved worse than some Tory authorities. The current Labour chair of the fire authority was a Tory councillor in the past, before crossing the floor to Labour!

Mark reported that the West Midlands fire authority backed down on changes to contracts after a 90% vote by firefighters for industrial action. "It's not too much to ask for, from a Labour-run fire authority", said Mark, that it abides by national agreements between employer and union. The cuts are government led but there is £25 million held in reserves.

Government guidelines for the proportion of reserves to be held have been reduced to 5%, yet the Merseyside fire authority reserves equal 40% of it's annual budget! The reserves should be spent on stopping and reversing the cuts, to make it safer for the public and firefighters.

Mark concluded by explaining the need to convince the 18 members of the fire authority to change tack, through lobbying, petitions and leaflets, and demonstrations.

Contributions from the floor mostly expressed rage at the councillors, especially in the wake of Grenfell, and the fire at the Echo Arena carpark in Liverpool which needed a turnout of firefighters from across the north-west to tackle due to the cutbacks already.

Socialist Party members spoke early and met with widespread agreement. Tony Mulhearn from Liverpool called on the fire authority councillors to resign and make way for people willing to conduct a struggle in defence of the FBU.

Mark Hazlehurst from Wirral Socialist Party reported that in six months of campaigning in Wallasey to keep the fire station open 24/7, over 2,000 petition signatures have been collected, "ramping up the pressure on the councillors", which has had an effect, with a motion opposing the downgrade put to the Labour-run council by one of the fire authority Labour councillors!

Mark called for strong local campaigns in every community where a station is threatened, to build big public meetings, and get posters in every shop window: "With universal public support, let's harness that".

Fifteen of the 18 councillors on the authority are Labour, with seven of those up for re-election next year, and so reselection as candidates this year, including the fire authority chair. "Let's write to those councillors and their wards asking them to outline their position", said Mark, "and if they won't then we should move to deselect them or stand against them in next May's elections."

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 6 July 2018 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Sheffield tram workers strike against 'derisory' pay offer

Alistair Tice

"Liberating" is how one Unite union member described his first day on strike against Supertram's "derisory" pay offer.

Supertram is Sheffield's light rail tram system operated by Stagecoach who also run buses in the city.

Around 180 drivers and conductors, all members of Unite, are taking strike action today (9 July) and on 12 July, the first strikes in the 24 years since Supertram first operated.

"They never thought we'd actually go on strike" said one picket. But it's not just about pay, it's about how management treats its staff. One striker said: "There's more managers than trams and there's 32 of them."

Conductors are on around £18,000 a year and drivers around £23,000, still less than the national average wage and much less than comparable train and tube drivers.

Unite submitted a 50p an hour one year pay claim. Supertram offered 26p in Year 1, 26p in Year 2, and a Consumer Price Index rise in Year 3 of a three year deal. This was unanimously rejected and 91% of union members voted to strike.

The strike has been solid, hardly any staff have gone in, with few trams running. Stagecoach bus drivers, also Unite members, refused to drive the replacement bus services so the bosses have had to bring in managers and buses from outside South Yorkshire.

Their scab buses say "Magic bus" on the livery but they haven't conjured up many passengers!

After overwhelmingly rejecting a second "smoke and mirrors" pay offer, Unite named a further three days of strike action to follow on 20-22 July which is the weekend of Sheffield's 'Tramlines' music festival.

As one striker said: "Tramlines without trams!" With 40,000 extra visitors to the city expected, Supertram stands to lose hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Unite expects that the strength of the strikes and threat of lost revenue will force the company to improve its offer.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 9 July 2018 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Stop the FLA - No to racism

Jobs, homes and services for all

On 14 July another 'Free Tommy' demo called by the 'Democratic' Football Lads Alliance will take place - this time to welcome Trump! The Socialist Party will be participating in the counter-protest.

A resolution on countering the FLA has been moved by Socialist Party members in several trade union bodies and it is important that the debate on the issues raised in it continues after 14 July.

The resolution:

This union notes that:

- 1) The 9 June 'Free Tommy' Democratic Football Lads Alliance demonstration in London saw an estimated 15,000 people take to the streets. The demonstration to defend 'free speech' saw clashes with the police and Robinson supporters giving the Hitler salute in Whitehall.
- 2) The counter-demonstration called by Stand Up To Racism was small and relied on the police for protection.
- 3) When any far-right organisation tries to get a foothold they must be countered. Where they organise they can give confidence to a racist minority to carry out racist attacks. In Leeds, after the DFLA marched, a mosque and a Sikh temple were set on fire. Racism in all its forms must be opposed.
- 4) Many people will be alarmed at the size of the 9 June Free Tommy demo and could be put off participating in small counter protests that rely on the police for their defence - police who on other occasions have been used to kettle students and force anti-racist protests off streets to allow the far-right to march.
- 5) On 14 July the supporters of Tommy Robinson are marching again in central London, while Donald Trump is in Britain.

This union agrees that:

1) If the far-right attempts to invade a local community it is essential that we fight for a massive mobilisation of the community to defend itself. The trade unions can be crucial in this. With an energetically-built campaign in the workplaces we can mobilise members. Trade unions should provide stewarding instead of relying on the police to keep people safe.

2) Crucially, trade union action can hold out hope and an alternative to those small numbers of people who may be attracted to far-right ideas. While some of the people that give their support to organisations like FLA, DFLA and 'Britain First' subscribe to the racist rhetoric expounded by their leaders, the people demonstrating are not all 'fascists'. A lot of them are angry young working class men, deeply alienated by austerity and by decades of capitalist neo-liberal policies. They have been betrayed by all the establishment politicians, in particular abandoned by the betrayals of Blairite New Labour that has pursued pro-capitalist policies of cuts, privatisation and austerity-lite in councils and in government.

3) When Jeremy Corbyn put forward an anti-austerity manifesto in the 2017 general election a million previously-Ukip voters switched to vote Labour. While up to 15,000 marched to 'Free Tommy' on 9 June, in March 2011 three quarters of a million marched under the banner of the TUC when people believed the trade unions were going to fight austerity. Tens of thousands have marched to save the NHS, and will demonstrate against Trump. 4) If the trade unions mobilise with energy and with clear demands to fight for jobs and homes and to kick out the Tories, we'd have hundreds of thousands on the streets and could cut across the appeal of far-right leaders.

This union therefore further agrees:

1) It is essential to build an anti-racist workers' movement that fights for jobs, for council homes, for pay, benefits and decent public services.

2) We resolve to open up a debate in the trade unions about the slogans and tactics necessary to defeat the far right, putting the resources, authority and power of the organised working class at the centre of a mass anti-racist, anti-austerity movement.

3) We resolve to contact other trade union bodies with a view to calling/supporting a trade union event on 14 July to fight for jobs, homes, services and education, against Trump

4) Our union is affiliated to/has donated to Stand Up To Racism. We believe that SUTR should not make decisions about actions without first consulting with the trade union backers and we agree to write to SUTR to that effect.

5) To write to the TUC to demand it launch a 'jobs, homes not racism' campaign to unite the wider trade union movement and to campaign effectively against the far right. This should include workers taking all legal steps (up to and including strike action) to disrupt all attempts to organise for the purposes of extending the rhetoric of the FLA and DFLA or any similar organisation.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 10 July 2018 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Women's Lives Matter launched in Leeds to fight domestic violence service cuts

Nina Brown, Leeds Socialist Party

After it was reported that services protecting women against domestic violence in Leeds have been cut by 59%, we helped call a public meeting to launch 'Women's Lives Matter' in Leeds.

Members of Leeds Socialist Party have been actively supporting the Women's Live Matter campaign in Doncaster against cuts to South Yorkshire Women's Aid as reported in the Socialist.

The Leeds meeting aimed to share ideas, gather information, and start planning how we can secure more than just scraps of funding. 19 people attended, including workers from the services facing cuts, women who were previous service users, a Labour councillor, NHS workers, teachers and other campaigners.

Socialist Party member Amy Cousens, who played a key role in the Doncaster campaign, introduced the discussion. On average two women a week are murdered by a male partner or ex-partner. A further three kill themselves to escape abuse.

Domestic violence is Shelter's single most quoted reason for homelessness. And 1,000 women and children were turned away from refuges in a six-month period in 2017. These were just a few of the harsh realities of austerity Amy highlighted.

The Labour councillor, Al Garthwaite, stated that supporting domestic violence services was a priority, and described those currently available. She expressed frustration with austerity, but called for passionate fundraisers like those in the room to fund the services instead.

We asked why she was happy asking us, service users and working people, to source funding for vital, life-saving services. Garthwaite maintained the council has asked the government not to make it make these cuts. She insisted there was nothing more she could do.

How about using reserves and borrowing powers to cover the gap - and building a campaign to fight for funding instead of just begging?

Throughout the meeting there were insightful contributions. From service users who had not spoken at meetings before, to organisers from successful campaigns such as 'Save Fearnville Fields'.

We discussed ideas such as addressing period poverty by fighting to improve wages and making feminine hygiene products affordable for all women - in comparison to a pipeline scheme for free tampon dispensers in schools.

The meeting decided to set up a Facebook group for those interested in being involved. We plan to leaflet about the current threats to services, and coordinate further meetings and actions.

Ultimately, not investing in public services - domestic violence support, the NHS, education, with living wages - is a false economy. We need a societal shift to socialist policies.

Corbyn's 2017 manifesto gave us a glimpse of this: mass council and social housing, a £10 an hour minimum wage, a fully publicly funded NHS. Alongside campaigns like Women's Lives Matter, we hope to work towards a society that invests in services and people; to create a society where all women's lives matter.

Service users and families protest learning disability service cuts

Around a hundred service users and carers protested outside Rotherham Town Hall against the council's decision to close its Learning Disability centres.

During what was a lively demonstration most of Rotherham's councillors were lobbied by campaigners in an attempt to save the centres but the Labour-controlled council rubber-stamped the decision that was approved by the cabinet in May. This decision is short-sighted and unfair. It will leave vulnerable people without the care and support that they need.

A number of members of the public asked questions of the cabinet member for adult social care while scores of supporters packed the public galleries with others having to be accommodated in the council chamber and

one of the committee rooms.

A campaign is being run by families and carers in a desperate attempt to get Rotherham Council to reverse its decision. The local newspaper's letters pages are regularly full of letters from people who are angry and feel let down by the council. An online petition attracted 1,000 signatures in a day and campaigners are planning a summer of protests. They are giving a voice to those who are often unheard.

M Reed, Rotherham

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 4 July 2018 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

NHS Leeds: Campaigners halt outsourcing... for now

Iain Dalton, Leeds Socialist Party

Campaigners had a big reason to be cheerful at the events marking the 70th anniversary of the NHS in Leeds. The trust at Leeds Teaching Hospitals had announced that they "will not be transferring any staff into a wholly-owned subsidiary during the financial year to March 2019."

This is the second time the trust has delayed making a decision on establishing the subsidiary, following its earlier decision at a special meeting this March to have further consultations.

That consultation has seen staff opposition, including a Unison strike ballot. Unfortunately, it failed to reach the Tories new 50% membership threshold, but showed strong opposition with 90% of those who voted agreeing to strike action. A re-balloting of certain sections of staff would have, in all likelihood, produced a successful strike vote. Unite the union were also preparing for a strike ballot.

Socialist Party members have collected thousands of signatures opposing the establishment of a wholly-owned subsidiary in Leeds, as well as taking the campaign of opposition into the wider trade union movement.

Leeds Teaching Hospitals is not a semi-autonomous Foundation Trust and therefore has to seek permission from the government to set up a wholly-owned subsidiary. With no timetable for this at present, the trust's decision also represents an attempt to kick the can down the road.

John Ingleson, chair of the Leeds Teaching Hospitals Unison branch said: "We know there will be many more challenges in the future and we will not be taking our eyes off the ball. But for now the branch is breathing a sigh of relief. We are sending out a huge thank you to all members involved in raising these concerns, and also to the good people at Keep Our NHS Public and Leeds TUC who helped raise the public profile of the campaign."

Yes to NHS - No to PFI!

Nick Hart, Wolverhampton and Black Country Socialist Party

On 5 July, nearly 100 local residents and trade unionists came out to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the NHS but also to protest outside the half-built Midland Metropolitan Hospital in Smethwick.

The hospital was planned to replace both Sandwell and City Hospitals, meaning fewer beds and health workers covering West Birmingham and Sandwell. The £350 million PFI (Private Finance Initiative) contract to build and manage the hospital was won by Carillion, which went bust earlier this year. The result was construction workers being laid off overnight as work was paused.

The new hospital was originally scheduled to open later this year. It's now expected that it won't be completed until at least 2022, with medium to long-term planning of services left in limbo.

As speakers at the protest pointed out, when the prestige Paradise office and retail development in Birmingham city centre hit the buffers in the wake of Carillion's bankruptcy, a new contractor for the building works was found. If that's doable for a project that will help big businesses in the city, why not for services used by local residents?

It's welcome that Jeremy Corbyn has pledged to scrap PFI contracts if Labour is elected. To truly end the rip-off and make the money available for spending on frontline services, this should be done without compensation to large shareholders.

Labour councils, such as those in Birmingham and Sandwell, should act now and use their supervisory powers over local NHS trusts to halt and reverse privatisation plans, so we can make the NHS the publicly owned and publicly run service that it was founded to be.

Fighting fund target smashed - now plan for next quarter

Tories fractured... election possibility... give us the resources!

Ken Douglas, Socialist Party national treasurer

Socialist Party members raised a magnificent £8,453 in the final week of the fighting fund campaign for the April to June quarter, with the London region raising £2,500 and North West £1,500 in the last few days. With this last huge effort we reached our national target, raising a grand total of £30,606.

The Socialist Party has no rich backers. We depend on the support of ordinary working class people to finance our day-to-day campaigning.

Our members raise fighting fund by campaigning on the streets, with fundraising events and also through donations to our website.

In the weeks leading up to the recent NHS demo in central London and the NHS 70th anniversary celebrations, our members clearly tapped into a huge mood of support for the health service, anger at the Tories and enthusiasm to build for mass action to get them out.

We are calling on the trade union leaders and Jeremy Corbyn to fully mobilise that support which, so far, they have failed to do.

Issue 1000 success

Our campaign to sell a thousand extra copies of issue 1000 of the Socialist also helped as Socialist Party branches held many extra sales that week and raised more fighting fund as a result.

For example, Swansea and West Wales branch raised £424 over the course of the week, while selling 230 papers. Overall an extra 1,755 copies of that issue have been sold.

Branches also held many fundraising events to make sure that we hit the national target. Lewisham/Southwark branch held a BBQ after the NHS demo and a sale of Roger Shrikes' books raised £284.

Southampton raised £101 from a Beefest BBQ and book sale, and Leicester £67. Also, Leeds branch raised £55 with a book sale.

Cardiff West raised £98 selling sandwiches at the recent branch organisers' school held there.

East London raised £58 with a clothes party and Tower Hamlets £60 with a guided walk around the places in central London that Karl Marx frequented.

Car boot sales continue to be a useful source of funds - Swansea branch raised £104 and Waltham Forest £70 on theirs.

We have to make sure we maintain this momentum on the fighting fund going into the July to September quarter. With the current turmoil in the Tory party there could even be a general election in the next few months!

We have to make sure that we have the funds to build support for a socialist alternative and for a Corbyn government that carries out socialist policies.

Issue 1000 drive shows sales potential

John Dolan, North London Socialist Party

Our branch organised a lot of extra sales activities for issue 1000 of the Socialist, which meant we almost trebled our normal weekly sales.

In addition to usual activities of Saturday stalls, tube sales and selling at local demonstrations (such as the housing lobby of the Haringey council cabinet) we added extra street and tube station sales, with varying levels of success.

One planned tube sale had to be cancelled due to train delays!

Branch members sold issue 1000 at work, on trade union activities, the trades union council and at a festival.

Two members also did a public sale immediately after work, selling 13 copies in under an hour. There were many school students around at that time, and our branch is planning to return to this area to leaflet for the Trump walkout and other protests on 13 July.

The week showed the potential to increase the regular sales in our branch area.

Audio version of this document

[To hear an audio version of this document click here.](#)

What the Socialist Party stands for

The Socialist Party fights for socialism – a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also oppose every cut, fighting in our day-to-day campaigning for every possible improvement for

working class people.

The organised working class has the potential power to stop the cuts and transform society.

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

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

Our demands include:

Public services

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, public services and benefits. Defend our pensions.
- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.
- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and 'free schools'!
- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs - free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!
- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

Work and income

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

Environment

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and 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.
- 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, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
- Fight for Labour to be transformed into such a party: deselect the Blairites!

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 and single market. For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!

Audio version of this document

[To hear an audio version of this document click here.](#)

<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/27634>