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## Editorial of the Socialist issue 1015

# 'People's vote' should be a general election

On 20 October hundreds of thousands marched through the streets of London demanding a 'peoples' vote' on Brexit. The motivations of those who marched were varied. Some were marching to show their internationalism and opposition to the 'little Englander' Tory hard Brexiteers, others because of worries about job losses and economic dislocation.

The central mobilising factor - which made this far larger than previous similar demonstrations - was the growing fear that the government's negotiations are going to end in a chaotic 'no deal' Brexit. A YouGov poll last week found only 1% of people think the Brexit negotiations are 'going well' and 71% believe they are 'going badly'.

No wonder. Despite May's claim that a Brexit deal is '95%' complete, nothing was achieved in last week's negotiations.

### Crash out

It is not in the interests of the European capitalist classes for Britain - the second largest economy in the EU - to crash out in a disorderly fashion and it is still likely that May will agree a deal she can at least put to parliament.

This would probably be some kind of 'blindfold' Brexit with most of the details still to be negotiated. Nonetheless, the competing interests of the capitalist class of Britain and the 27 EU powers, and the fear of agreeing a deal that could trigger a domino effect across the continent, means that even this is not guaranteed.

And if May does get a deal she can put to parliament, it is very uncertain whether it will pass or whether she will survive as prime minister. The only achievement of the last round of negotiations was to further infuriate both wings of the Tory Party by floating the idea of extending the transition period beyond December 2020.

The weakness of May's situation was summed up when the Brexit minister, Dominic Raab, agreed that she is clinging to power by a thread but not to worry because its "a pretty strong" one!

For the British capitalist class this is an escalating crisis, in which they have no reliable political representation to fight for their interests. A big majority of them would have preferred to remain in the EU, and are now campaigning to stay as close to it as possible.

They are desperate to avoid a Corbyn-led government and have hoped May would be able to achieve a form of Brexit they could live with where Britain continued effectively as part of the single market, including accepting all of its neo-liberal, pro-privatisation, anti-working-class rules.

However, their hopes of achieving this are being badly undermined by the Tory Brexiteers - with their utopian dreams of a return to Britain's past as a major world power - which they want to try and achieve via a further 'race to the bottom' in wages and working conditions. The frenzy against May by the Tory Brexiteer MPs is increasing, with declarations that she is entering "the killing zone" and should "bring her own noose" to the meeting of the Tory backbench 1922 committee on 24 October.

Rumours of the Brexiteer MPs triggering a no-confidence vote in the prime minister have been swirling for months but are now gaining in volume. It is also possible that another tranche of Tory cabinet members could resign, further weakening May.

No wonder millions of people are turning away in disgust from the sight of the government tearing itself apart over its varying versions of Brexit - none of which will be in the interests of the working class. Nor is it any

surprise that a significant section of the population are prepared to march to demand that the Brexit negotiations are taken out of the hands of the Tories and that the people should get to vote again.

There was no clarity from the organisers, however, about what a 'peoples' vote' should consist of. Some wanted a 'yes or no' referendum on any deal May negotiates, but others wanted an option to choose to remain in the EU.

## **Second referendum**

Socialists are not opposed to referenda in principle, including a second vote on an issue in some circumstances. Ultimately our attitude depends on whether holding one would help to increase the confidence and cohesion of the working-class majority.

However, at this stage any vote which included the option to reverse the result of the 2016 referendum would be seen as trying to reverse a democratic decision and a betrayal by many of the millions of working-class people - who voted for Brexit in a revolt against the establishment.

The 'peoples' vote' we are fighting for is not a second referendum but a general election. No Brexit negotiated by the Tories will be in the interests of the majority.

Corbyn should fight a general election on a manifesto for a socialist Brexit. This would mean negotiating in the interests of the working class.

His 'red-lines' would be opposition to all neoliberal pro-capitalist rules. On this basis he could make a call for international solidarity with workers across Europe.

Corbyn would, of course, need to seek a trade deal with the EU, but he would be in a far stronger position than May to achieve this on the basis of having won a clear election victory on bold, socialist policies - which would electrify workers across Europe. In addition, a Corbyn-led government would be able to use a programme of nationalisation to take the ability to inflict job losses, closures or reductions in pay and conditions, out of the hands of any corporations that move to take that path.

While many participants in last Saturday's 'peoples' vote' march were open to this approach, for the capitalist politicians who headed it, a Corbyn-led government with socialist policies is a nightmare scenario. Representatives of the pro-EU wing of the Tory party marched alongside pro-capitalist, pro-EU Blairite politicians and the leaders of the Liberal Democrats.

This was summed up by the pictures of Tory Anna Soubry and Blairite Chuka Umunna with their arms round each other. All of them see their role as defending the interests of British capitalism.

This includes fighting to remain part of - or at least aligned to - the EU single market with its neoliberal rules, but above all by doing all in their power to prevent a Corbyn-led government coming to power and, if it does, to prevent it introducing radical policies in the interests of the working class.

Despite mobilising a big crowd by calling for a peoples' vote, it is still entirely possible that some of these representatives of the elite - including those currently in the Labour Party - could end up voting for a deal proposed by May, if they judge she has made sufficient moves towards a 'soft' Brexit, and if they think that is necessary to prevent a real 'peoples' vote' - a general election.

## **New 'centre' party**

In outline the leaders of the 20 October march are the forces that could, in the future, make a new so-called 'centre' party - that is, a party that more accurately represents the interests of the capitalist class in Britain. The turnout will have given them a certain confidence.

However, they still face real difficulties. The mobilisation on 20 October was based on the fear of a Tory Brexit, but that does not mean support for the pro-privatisation, pro-war, neoliberal policies which are all these capitalist politicians have to offer.

The fundamental reason for the crisis of the major political parties in Britain is the crisis of capitalism which offers the working and middle class a diet of endless low pay, insecure housing and overwork.

For Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour left it is well overdue that attempts to seek unity with the pro-capitalist wing of the Labour Party cease. Democratising the Labour Party, including urgently introducing mandatory reselection, is vital to ensure that - if a snap election is called - Corbyn is not fighting the election surrounded by Blairite MPs who are openly plotting to prevent him being elected or, if he is, being able to act in the interests of the working-class majority, including fighting for a socialist Brexit.

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## **Rail safety - people before corporate profit**

# **Support RMT strikes against the elimination of guards on trains**

**Nick Chaffey, Socialist Party national committee**

For over two years private rail franchise companies across the country have undermined the safety of passengers through the attempted implementation of driver-only operation. Sean Hoyle, national president of the RMT transport union, has made clear the stand of guards: "We put safety before profit and oppose driver-only operation."

Passengers agree. They want safe travel with guards who are trained to deal with safety-critical incidents.

Speaking on Sunday Politics South, RMT Wessex regional organiser Mick Tosh highlighted a recent incident where passengers on a train without a guard were evacuated onto the tracks. "We had people on a line with a live rail. A guard would have made sure that didn't happen."

Recent reports showing a 17% increase in violent and sexual assaults on trains, are backed up by the union's own survey of guards showing 98% nationally have dealt with anti-social behaviour, and 50% of guards have dealt with such incidents on more than 20 occasions.

Dissatisfaction among the travelling public with private rail providers is growing by the day as fares rise on overcrowded trains that are more frequently cancelled. Almost a quarter of passengers into London have to stand during their journey. Complaints over South Western Railway's (SWR) operating performance led to a government inquiry and calls for renationalisation.

This dispute is rapidly becoming a political test for the policy of privatisation favoured by the Tory and Blairite Labour governments of the past. With rising fares and failing services at a time when government subsidies to the rail network have quadrupled, it is no surprise that questions are being asked as to the profits being made by Virgin, Stagecoach and other train operators.

Rail privatisation is characterised by a failure to invest and develop an affordable, modern, environmentally friendly, safe, integrated public transport system.

Support for renationalisation of the railways stands at 76% and was a hugely popular part of Jeremy Corbyn's election manifesto last year. Disappointingly, however, Corbyn's promise is currently limited to nationalising rail companies only when the franchises expire.

The task now is to mobilise maximum support for the RMT strikes, linked to the need for an immediate general election to end Tory austerity and privatisation. The Trade Union Congress needs to reflect this and mobilise support for the RMT strike action.

A campaign of coordinated wider industrial action to maximise pressure on the government and the call for a million strong march to mobilise support for an immediate general election could bring this weak and dived

Tory government to its knees.

If this was linked to the demand for the immediate renationalisation of the railways, with compensation paid to shareholders only on the basis of proven need, Corbyn could win.

Nationalisation of the railways must be developed with the full democratic involvement of railworkers and their unions, alongside the travelling public. It's on this basis that the ailing infrastructure can be improved and a 21st century service delivered to meet the needs of society, safety and the environment, not the profits of a few.

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## **Solidarity Saturday**

Members of the Socialist Party and supporters of the National Shop Stewards Network organised a 'Solidarity Saturday' to discuss with passengers about their concerns.

It shows that passengers have had enough and want an end to the chaos, cost and underinvestment of private rail. Campaign stalls were held in Salisbury, Winchester, Southampton, Portsmouth and Basingstoke.

Jane Ward reports from Salisbury: "The stall was extremely well supported by the public. As one person said, 'I certainly do not want to travel on a train without a guard, it's just not safe.'

"Many people were concerned about the safety of women travelling on late-night trains and asked who would help the disabled passengers - especially as the smaller stations on the Salisbury line were unmanned late at night.

"The people who stopped to talk to us were overwhelmingly in favour of renationalisation of the railways. They were fed up with paying the very high fare prices for a service that is getting worse. We were giving out 'Save the Guard on SWR' badges.

People took them to wear on the trains in support of the guards and to give a message to the SWR management - to express their anger at the plan to allow trains without guards."

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## **Railworkers speak out**

With driver-only operation disputes continuing on Merseyrail, Northern and SWR, an RMT delegate conference of guards to discuss coordinating the action in these disputes would help to strengthen the campaign.

RMT guards on SWR have shown enormous determination to fight for safety. 88% voted for further strike action in the last ballot. The five-day strike on SWR - the rail network's biggest franchise - is a serious escalation of this battle and raises important questions about how this fight can be won. The strike is taking place on 23-27 October with four more one-day strikes in November.

### **Here are railworkers' comments on the issues:**

"There had been a considerable drop in the number of disabled passengers on trains which had no guards. It sends a message that you need to be young, fit and healthy to travel on the trains."

**SWR train driver**

"The government's own Disability Advisory Committee has stated that unmanned stations and staff reductions is a toxic mixture."

**Mick Tosh, RMT Wessex regional organiser**

"There are 16 carriages currently out of use and there are no spare parts being held for them. The amount of servicing of the trains on the Salisbury line has been cut back by SWR. The engines are expected to do an extra 4,000 miles before they are serviced. As well as overcrowding, this has led to delays and cancellations."

### **SWR striking guard**

RMT members on Merseyrail are also fighting to ensure the safety-critical role of the guards remains, with Wirral RMT members passing this resolution at their meeting recently:

"Branch recognises the progress made in Merseyrail management conceding the principle of a second person on every train, but notes with alarm that there is no commitment to this being a safety-critical member of staff. Branch notes that this is to be discussed in negotiations.

Branch resolves that should negotiations have failed to reach agreement on retention of a second safety-critical member on staff on every train, by late November, then we call on the national executive committee to name the dates for a series of strike days in December.

Branch further resolves 1. For RMT to negotiate that Merseyrail Guards does not lose the operation of the train doors when Merseyrail's new fleet arrive on the network. 2. RMT must not negotiate any pay restraint for Merseyrail Guards to fund a safety-critical second person. 3. RMT must not negotiate any potential deal to the detriment of other grades."

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## **Huddersfield picket**

Striking RMT members on Northern (Arriva) rail organised a picket line in Huddersfield on 20 October. They were buoyed by solidarity support from South Yorkshire miners backing the Hillsborough Justice for the 96 campaign. There were also representatives from the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign.

This all coincided with the premiership match between Huddersfield and Liverpool that afternoon, when Huddersfield and Liverpool fans stood together in common solidarity against injustice, inequality and exploitation.

The RMT strikes will continue every Saturday against driver only operated trains for the next three weeks and possibly until Christmas.

**Mike Forster**

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## **Glasgow council workers - historic strike for equal pay**

Over 8,000 low-paid Glasgow council workers - organised in Unison and the GMB unions - made history on 23 and 24 October by striking for equal pay. It was the biggest strike for equal pay since the heroic struggle of the Ford Dagenham workers brought about the 1970 Equal Pay Act.

In a show of industrial power, strikers shut down schools and council services across the city. The morning picket lines were solid and there was a huge turnout of trade unionists across the city on a lunchtime solidarity march and rally.

The strikers are supported by their families, those they serve and care for, and the working class across Glasgow, Scotland and beyond. Socialist Party Scotland - which stands for the building of a mass working class party that fights all cuts - offers its 100% solidarity and support.

The strikers have served notice to this divisive Scottish National Party-run council that if it does not meet the demands of the trade unions after the two day strike, then Unison and GMB are completely justified in organising further strike action.

The council needs to understand that only by giving 13,000 workers and retired claimants what they have been owed for 12 years in wages and pensions, and by committing to a equality-proof job evaluation and pay grading scheme from now on, will this dispute end.

- Trade unions can send messages of support to enquiries@glasgowcityunison.co.uk
- Strike-fund donations to UNITY Trust. Sort code 60 83 01 Account number 20275789 - Drew Rigden, Treasurer Unison Glasgow City Branch, 84 Bell Street, Glasgow, G1 1LQ. 0141 5527069.

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## **3aaa collapses - 4,500 apprentices left guessing their futures**

**Fred Ray, Leicester East Socialist Party**

For the last two years I've been working as an apprentice through the training provider Aspire Achieve Advance or 3aaa. This all changed when the Education and Skills Funding Agency terminated all of its contracts with the company resulting in its collapse.

There is now a police investigation into fraud at 3aaa and 4,500 apprentices (including myself) are left guessing at what happens next. I'm lucky enough to still be employed, unlike the apprentices who were directly working for the company, who have found themselves jobless.

While it operated, 3aaa represented everything that's wrong with privatised education. They had enlisted me onto a course that they had no other students for with plans to hire a trainer if they were able to get enough to make it profitable. When no other students enlisted they decided to cancel the course.

I was being told that it wasn't profitable enough to provide the training I'd been promised in Leicester, while Peter Marples (the multimillionaire co-founder of 3aaa) was posing for photographs with sports clubs he'd given hundreds of thousands of pounds to!

After this I was placed onto a lower level course (from a Level 4 BTEC to a Level 3) which they did have a trainer for. Eventually I was able to get myself placed back onto the Level 4 course in Derby, where they did have a properly qualified trainer.

Months of my life were wasted by the greed of 3aaa. I'm now in a position where I can't be certain that the work I've completed since restarting the Level 4 qualification will have been for anything.

I've received a letter from the Education and Skills Funding Agency promising that I'll be able to "continue my learning" but have no guarantees of what that means.

Examples like this show that teaching for profit is a disaster for everyone involved - except the people on top who fund their vanity projects with our public money. Shutting down 3aaa hasn't fixed our broken education system.

In order to do that, we need to take education and training out of the bosses' hands and into our control.

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## **PCS legal win - build further pressure from below to defeat the Tories**

The PCS civil service union has won £3 million in damages following the union's challenge to the attempts by the Tory government to cut off its financial support from the DWP.

This follows the victory in the High Court in May 2016 when it was ruled that it was unlawful to have removed check-off (the union's ability to collect subscriptions directly from pay packets). Katrine Williams, a member of the PCS national executive committee and also a Socialist Party member, was one of the two union members who brought the legal challenge back then.

The work of the national union, the national executive committee and, most importantly, the tremendous work of reps on the ground in rebuilding the union when the Tories removed the ability of PCS to collect membership subs, was brilliant.

This work - to re-recruit 160,000 members onto direct debit - meant that the union emerged from this battle in a stronger position.

The key now is to turn this latest victory into one that fully compensates the union for the attacks waged on all government departments and arms-length bodies across PCS, not just the DWP.

The Chris Baugh for Assistant General Secretary campaign, which the Socialist Party supports, believes it's now vital to involve groups and lay representatives in discussions on submitting those legal challenges and how we can back this up with pressure from below.

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## Ladywood Primary school strike

### Teaching assistants join action

On 22 October teaching assistants (TAs) in Unison joined the 18-day strike by nine dinner ladies at Ladywood Primary School in Grimethorpe, Yorkshire - who are fighting against being made redundant.

The headteacher had proposed that TAs take over supervising meals to save cash.

The strikers were joined on the picket line by trade unionists and Socialist Party members from Barnsley and Sheffield.

To his credit, a Barnsley Labour councillor, Malcolm Clements, an ex-Unison convenor, attended. He said that the strike hadn't even been discussed in the Labour group!

Rather than backing the headteacher - saying the school is "well managed" - all Labour councillors should be publicly supporting the strike and questioning why over 300 parents and community have signed a petition calling for the head to go!

**Angie Waller and Alistair Tice**

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This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 23 October 2018 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

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## Universal Credit could trap women in violent relationships

**Helen Pattison, London Socialist Party**

The introduction of Universal Credit, under which families can lose £200 a month, has rightly provoked outrage.

Among its possible impacts, this week even the home affairs select committee - a body itself made up of pro-cut politicians - raised fears that Universal Credit would represent a "retrograde and backward step" in tackling domestic abuse.

This was down to the potential for the (often already limited) financial independence of women trapped in violent or controlling relationships to be removed.

Child benefit, which up until now has been paid directly to the primary carer for children (usually a woman), will be included in Universal Credit.

Women are often forced into financial dependence on partners because women's unequal pay as well as high childcare costs can make it cheaper for women not to work, whether they choose to or not.

Under the new scheme, one single payment will be made per household.

That means that, if the claim is made by a couple, only one partner will receive any money. This also applies to Child Tax Credit, Housing Benefit, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance and Working Tax Credit. In abusive relationships this can be dangerous.

## **Trade union pressure**

The precursor to child benefit, family allowance, was created under the pressure of the trade union and labour movement - particularly from working-class women - as part of the creation of the welfare state.

It was paid directly to the "individual citizens who were undertaking the rearing of the citizens of the future". This universal payment, made to anyone caring for children, gave some important financial independence to many women. The payment was also made directly to single mothers.

In the decades since its introduction campaigners have repeatedly had to fight to defend these payments.

The Con-Dem government introduced means testing for Child Benefit in 2013 for the first time, meaning it is no longer universal. And, thanks to Universal Credit, it will also no longer be automatically paid to the person mainly responsible for caring for children.

With two in five Universal Credit recipients set to lose as much as £52 a week, this attack isn't just limited to the question of how benefits are paid. It's about driving people further and further into poverty - itself a major barrier to people being able to flee violence and abuse.

The Socialist Party stands for the immediate scrapping of Universal Credit. We say no to the Tories' vicious 'two child' policy, which limits payment of child tax credit or Universal Credit to a family's first two children.

## **What we say**

We demand council house building so that every family can afford a roof over its head. We say benefits should provide enough money to live on. What's more, we call for free or low-cost childcare, the scrapping of zero-hour contracts and a minimum wage of at least £10 an hour - as a step towards a real living wage.

This would lay the basis for the ending of the disgrace of child poverty and help prevent women and children from being trapped by abuse.

All of these issues are being discussed across the women's and workers' movements because years of austerity have gutted the services that have been hard won, such as domestic violence refuges.

# Blairites plan to expand their very own academy chain

Josh Asker, Southampton Socialist Party

You would think that Labour politicians would be in favour of running schools that meet children's needs, unpolluted by the pursuit of profit and accountable to the communities that uses them. Well, these values are not held by Blairites who are at odds with Corbyn's plans to scrap the semi-privatised academy schools system.

The Cooperative group, which sponsors 37 Labour MPs, has plans to become one of the nation's biggest academy providers. One academy chain, Wakefield City Academies Trust, was accused last year of abandoning schools it managed and taking assets with them.

## Parent revolt

The Tories dropped plans that would see every school in England converted into an academy after it faced a revolt from parents and backbench MPs.

The schools system is in the midst of a funding crisis, unable to balance budgets at the same time as employing enough staff to meet the needs of their pupils.

One way that the government is attempting to force the academisation process is with financial incentives of up to 10% of a school's budget.

When the carrot doesn't work then they use the stick! When underfunded schools are deemed to be underperforming then they are threatened with forced academisation, most of the time without any consultation, let alone a proper democratic say for parents, pupils or staff.

Academies mean communities lose their ability to hold schools to account through school governors or the local authority. Academisation must be reversed. The Socialist Party backs workers' and parents' action against school privatisation.

Plans from Labour's shadow education secretary Angela Rayner to stop academisation are welcome. But a future Corbyn government will find it a hard policy to implement if the pro-academy Blairites carry on sabotaging Corbyn.

That's why the Socialist Party calls for mandatory reselection. Where MPs fail to uphold the views of Labour's anti-austerity membership then they should be replaced with ones that do.

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# Tories ensured Carillion meltdown went unchecked

Sam Witts, Birmingham Central Socialist Party

The story of the catastrophic collapse of Carillion took an even more shocking turn recently.

It has emerged that the private construction giant's two flagship projects - the Midland Met Hospital in Sandwell and the Royal Liverpool University Hospital - went ahead without any oversight whatsoever from the industry watchdog, the Infrastructure and Projects Authority.

Even more outrageously, the Guardian reported last week that this complete lack of accountability happened after senior civil servants working for Jeremy Hunt when he was health secretary in 2015, successfully lobbied the Cabinet Office to specifically exempt the hospitals' construction from public oversight.

In other words, Hunt and the Tories trashed the rulebook to make sure that their fat-cat pals in Carillion could do whatever they wanted with our hospitals without us knowing anything about it. No wonder the Carillion crisis has demonstrated some of the worst consequences of privatisation and capitalism.

## **Fat cat handouts**

For masterminding its demise, Carillion's former CEO Richard Howson got a hand-out of £688,000 plus a benefits package for a year after he left. And the interim CEO has been on an even higher salary of £750,000.

Meanwhile, over 2,000 workers have lost their jobs, construction of the much-needed hospitals remains at a complete standstill and the taxpayers are set to foot the £150 million bill to kick-start construction.

Carillion has also had to apologise for disgracefully blacklisting its workers for trade unionism.

This latest revelation rubs salt in the wound and shows how the bosses' representatives in government and big business will always collude to exempt themselves from any rules that limit their reckless exploitation and profiteering. They cannot be trusted for a minute longer.

We need a different system now, not when the current contracts expire. We need to nationalise the major construction companies, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need, i.e. not to the fat cats.

Only a socialist society - based on democratic workers' control and management of all major industry - will be able to put these injustices right for good.

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# **MPs revel in £2m worth of free foreign trips**

**Berkay Kartav, North London Socialist Party**

Over the last two years, 340 UK MPs have benefitted from more than £2 million worth of free overseas trips, a recent BBC report reveals.

More than half of these visits were funded by foreign governments. In particular, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan and Hong Kong, paid for nearly half of these trips. Pressure groups, such as the Conservative Friends of Israel and Labour Friends of Israel, have also contributed by funding the foreign visits of MPs.

Saudi Arabia leads the way by paying £200,608 to all the MPs who visited, covering their flight, hotel and meal costs. This theocratic government is known for its vicious repression of any opposition to its dictatorial rule. Saudi Arabian officials have now been forced to admit murdering opposition journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

Since 2015, Saudi Arabia has been waging a brutal war against Yemen, destroying cities and murdering civilians. The UK government is selling millions of pounds worth of British missiles and bombs to Saudi Arabia.

The close ties between the UK and Saudi governments are further fortified by diplomatic visits. Expensive gifts are presented by this oil-rich country to UK politicians. Philip Hammond accepted a £1,950 watch when he was foreign secretary.

Although Blairite MP John Mann says these diplomatic visits are "part of the job", foreign trips funded by authoritarian regimes only serve to legitimise the crimes perpetrated by these countries. Tory MP Leo Docherty alone has spent £26,895 during his foreign visits since the general election, mostly funded by Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

Tory and Blairite politicians turn a blind eye, without any hesitation, to the horrific crimes carried out by the states they have close economic ties with, unveiling how capitalism works on an international level. No wonder Tories are reluctant to criticise the barbaric murder Jamal Khashoggi.

The Socialist Party says political representatives should earn no more than the wage of an average worker. In the past, Labour MPs who supported Militant - forerunner to the Socialist Party - put this into practice.

They stood as workers' MPs on a workers' wage. Corbyn-supporting Labour MPs today should follow their example.

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## Them & Us

### Clegg in California

Facebook has hired failed politician Nick Clegg as head of global affairs. The Guardian said "when ex-politicians use their public profile to make millions, it feels like exploitation."

As a politician Clegg paved the way for trebling tuition fees and helped the Tories pursue vicious austerity when they couldn't muster a majority in parliament from 2010 to 2015. In a self-justifying article in the Guardian Clegg omitted to mention Facebook's paltry tax payments, privacy infringements, or his reported £1 million-plus pay.

Right-wing Labour MP Chuka Umunna came to Nick Clegg's defence after the Blairite himself landed £65,000 a year for 12 hours 'work' a month at a think tank.

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### Bonus embarrassment

After being asked about his £100 million bonus, Jeff Fairburn, the CEO of housebuilding firm Persimmon, walked off a BBC TV interview. Following an outcry, Persimmon's three-person senior management team agreed to give a proportion of their handout to charity taking home a mere £166 million between them.

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### Nurse pay

Nurses on zero-hour contracts at the Royal Free Hospital in London face hourly pay cuts of up to 91p according to the Ham and High newspaper. Already the nurses don't receive sick pay or holidays.

The hospital trust claims that nurses pay is topped-up to include the equivalent of other workers' annual leave. But some nurses estimate this latest cut will cost them £5,000 over three years.

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### Repeat racism

The police force that tasered its own race relations adviser, Judah Adunbi, has targeted him again. In January 2017 they supposedly mistook the Bristolian know as Ras Judah for Royston McCalla, a man wanted on drug offences (see 'Bristol police taser own race relations adviser' at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)).

According to Judah Adunbi, a police car pulled up next to him and the officers were giggling and laughing "hey Royston, Royston" and "are you Royston or are you Ras?"

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### Costly cuts

Support in education is not up to scratch for children with special educational needs and disabilities according to a Guardian investigation. 89% of parents that challenged inadequate support were successful at tribunal hearings. In August, Bristol parents proved that £5 million worth of education support cuts by the Blairite Labour council were illegal.

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# Welsh Labour leadership election: 'Corbyn candidate' must pledge end to austerity

Ross Saunders, Socialist Party Wales

The volatility of the political situation is obvious in Wales: by the time this year ends, every political party in the Welsh Assembly will have replaced its leader at least once. Even the Lib Dems - who only have one Welsh Assembly member and no MPs - changed their rules in order to put a new face at the head of their organisation.

But it is Labour's leadership election which will draw most attention. First Minister Carwyn Jones - a Corbyn critic - is stepping down in December and his replacement will occupy the highest position Labour holds in the UK state. The actions of whoever takes over could have a big effect on people's expectations of what Corbyn would do with power.

Two of the three candidates are from the right of the party. Vaughan Gething, the current health minister in the Welsh government, is prominently backed by Blairite Owen Smith MP, who spearheaded the 2016 attempted coup against Corbyn.

Eluned Morgan, the second more right-wing candidate, was a leading MEP when Blair led the party. Rather than fight the Tories and their cuts, Gething is proposing a new social care tax that all Welsh people would have to pay.

## Frontrunner

By far the front-runner, however, is Mark Drakeford. Over half of Labour's Assembly Members nominated him. Trade unions Unite, Unison and Usdaw are backing him too. Drakeford was a senior aide to Rhodri Morgan, the Welsh First Minister who famously claimed there was ["clear red water" between Tony Blair's policies and those of the Welsh Labour administration](#) he ran.

As a result, Wales was spared some of the privatisation that Blair meted out in England and there were some limited improvements in education, including the abolition of league tables. Drakeford backed Corbyn in the previous Labour leadership election.

Those who are hoping for a political revolution in the manner of Corbyn's victory in the UK Labour leadership elections, however, will be disappointed. Even 'Clear Red Water two' is off the cards. Those policies were enacted in an era of expanding budgets.

If he wins, Drakeford has said that he will run a "centre left" administration that "leans to the left". He is advancing a modest, bordering on timid, programme of demands such as the creation of "ethical standards" for the treatment of workers, something already agreed but hardly implemented by the Welsh government - nothing likely to strike terror into the hearts of exploiting companies based in Wales such as Amazon.

Drakeford is currently the Welsh government's finance secretary and has indicated he would, in his words, continue to "deal with austerity" - which in practice means implementing the cuts the Tory government demands - if he were elected as First Minister.

This would be a massive waste of an opportunity: Carwyn Jones always claimed that the assembly had no power to stop Tory cuts. But, in reality, the assembly could end austerity in Wales.

What's more, if it refused to cut services and instead coordinated the councils, health boards, fire authorities and other organisations below it to set budgets based on the needs that exist in Wales, spending council reserves and using borrowing powers - all the while building a mass campaign - it could potentially topple the Tory government.

Instead, like much of the Labour left, Drakeford plans to passively wait for Corbyn to win. This is a mistake. Only a movement on the streets and in the workplaces could make the victory of a Corbyn-led government certain, as well as defend it against the attacks of big business once in power.

The Welsh working class can't afford to wait.

## Decline

The decline of this ex-industrial heartland is sharp: the amount of wealth per head continues to fall further below the UK average (10% in the last 20 years, from 81% of average UK GVA in 1997 to 71% now) and public services are in crisis, with Wales regularly bottom in the international Pisa ratings of school standards. Cuts in the Welsh NHS routinely provide the Tories with ammunition for the Tories to attack Corbyn.

We need an immediate end to austerity cuts and bold socialist policies to rebuild industry and create real jobs.

We need an urgent discussion, too, about what form of organisation it would take to deliver those policies. Welsh Labour has just switched to a system of 'one member one vote' for the election of its leader.

The old system was a stitch-up which gave considerable power to the right-wing majority of MPs and Assembly Members. The new system gives a single vote to every member of the party and of the affiliated organisations. But it weakens the influence that trade unions have.

We need a party whose membership is open to all anti-cuts campaigners, trade unionists and socialist organisations. That would require changing more than a leader and a voting system, whatever its form, to create an organisation that can fight to end austerity and fight for socialism.

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## Join the fight for refugee rights

**Isai Priya, Socialist Party national committee and Refugee Rights campaign**

The unprecedented refugee crisis continues to affect millions of innocent people across the globe. On average, one person is displaced every two seconds. At the end of 2017, there was a record figure of 68.5 million people displaced across the world. Of these 25.4 million were refugees who were forced to flee their countries to escape war, conflict and persecution. This is 2.9 million more than the previous year and the biggest increase ever recorded by the UN human rights council.

People become refugees as a result of the effects of the capitalist system - a system based on exploitation and inequality. Right-wing governments' imperialist foreign policies continue to stir war and conflict which fuel the refugee crisis. The same governments then treat refugees as criminals, putting us in detention centres and scapegoating us for the lack of decent jobs, homes or services - which really result from their austerity policies.

The question of how to solve the refugee crisis is hotly debated and is a source of tense inter-imperialist relations within the EU. In war-ravaged Syria, the attack by the Assad regime on opposition-held areas is likely to further increase this humanitarian crisis in Europe. More than a million have already fled as a result of the conflict.

When the EU's European Commission met in September, far from discussing how it might assist those fleeing such horror, the agenda was instead focussed on fresh measures designed to stop refugees entering Europe. These measures included the creation of a special force of European 'border guards', which it said would number 10,000 by 2020. These armed border forces would have extensive powers to detain migrants and deport asylum seekers.

But no amount of border guards is going to prevent desperate individuals trying to reach safety.

It's vital to fight for the rights of the refugees. The Socialist Party supports the Refugee Rights campaign, which is organised by refugees demanding better living conditions. It's a campaign that links our plight to the struggles of the working class in Britain. The campaign's demands include the right to work for all asylum seekers, full funding for the NHS, a £10-an-hour minimum wage for every worker, and free education for all.

The idea to launch Refugee Rights first came from a Tamil refugee after his experience of being held in a detention centre. It was initiated by the Tamil Solidarity campaign, which fights for the rights of all workers and oppressed people in Sri Lanka.

Detention centres treat victims in an awful, inhumane way. In the UK, undocumented immigrants can be detained at any time. Britain is the only country in Europe without a statutory time limit for the length of time that an individual can spend in detention. This increases the already huge uncertainty and mental pressure felt by those detained. The feeling of not knowing what's next is itself a form of mental torture.

Britain has ten detention centres, two of which are 'short-term' holding facilities.

One is run by Her Majesty's Prison Service, but the rest are contracted out to private companies like G4S, Mitie, Serco, and the US-owned GEO group. The Home Office is paying hundreds of millions of pounds to these private companies, which make substantial profits from imprisoning innocent people.

Detainees are encouraged to work for £1 an hour - essentially slave labour. Meanwhile, the value of the contract awarded to Mitie to run the Harmondsworth and Colnbrook detention centre was worth £240 million. The contract to run Brook House, which was awarded to G4S, was valued at £90.4 million.

According to the Home Office, in 2017 over 27,000 individuals were held in detention centres, out of which over 12,000 were forcibly deported.

The Guardian newspaper has undertaken a series of surveys to find out about life inside detention centres - which are at the heart of Theresa May's 'hostile environment' policy.

The surveys found that many are left traumatised by their time in detention and have to pick up the pieces after periods of separation from children, friends and the community. Some of those detained are torture victims. Many are at a high risk of suicide.

Reports also suggest that these detention centres are even worse places to be locked up than prison. Many face depression and isolation. Most feel like their lives are left in a limbo. Some have been locked in their cell for as long as 13 hours. The vast majority are not told how long they will be held for or when they will be deported. Less than a quarter of those held have access to legal representation.

The capacity of these detention centres has increased dramatically since the year 2000, when detention centres could hold a maximum of 475 people. This number was increased drastically by the New Labour government of Tony Blair, and the capacity is now 3,500.

Outside detention centres, asylum seekers in the UK are refused the right to work and are forced to live on £5.39 a day.

A key demand of the Refugee Rights campaign is for the right to work for all asylum seekers.

History shows that no gains are ever just handed to us. Instead, they are won by working-class people demanding and fighting for change. Our campaign is led by refugees. But we believe it is necessary to build a united struggle of all working-class people, both to fight for the rights of refugees and asylum seekers and to win decent wages, conditions, housing and services for all.

That's why we are proud to have won the support of the general union Unite, which represents over a million workers. After delegates voted to back the campaign at the union's recent conference, Unite nationally is encouraging local branches to formally affiliate to Refugee Rights.

No solution to the refugee crisis is possible under capitalism. Enormous wealth exists within society - more than enough to fully provide for the needs of all people, wherever they come from in the world. The problem

is that this wealth is overwhelmingly concentrated in the hands of a tiny few. And it's this tiny few - the capitalist class - who profit from the exploits of war, poverty and imperialism which all too often drive people to flee their homes.

The only permanent solution to the refugee crisis is a fundamental change in society. We need to fight for a socialist society, both in Britain and internationally, in which people can safely live and work wherever they want and in which everyone's needs are met.

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## **Life as an asylum seeker in Britain**

**Menakamoorthy Sathiamoorthy, Refugee Rights campaigner**

After fleeing the war in Sri Lanka, I first applied for asylum in the UK in 2007. I am still waiting for my case to be resolved.

I have been allowed to work in this country while awaiting the outcome of my application, but this is not normal for people who are asking for asylum in Britain.

I hold a degree in computer science and I work full time in retail. I've applied for many IT jobs and have had many interviews. But I've always been turned down due to my residency situation. The time taken to process my asylum case has destroyed the possibility of using my degree.

I have had many relationships but have struggled to find stability because of the ongoing uncertainty about my residency status. Some people feel they don't want to commit to a relationship with someone who might be forced to leave the country.

This is heartbreaking to me and people like me. I have now found a partner who is able to accept me despite my situation. We recently tried to move in together and paid paperwork fees to an estate agent, only to be refused a flat because of my immigration status.

This whole system puts people like me under serious stress. Even though I am one of the 'lucky ones' who is able to work and pay tax, I am not eligible to rent property. I was eventually able to rent through my partner's brother.

I have spent over £30,000 fighting for my right to asylum against attempts to deport me to a country where I would be in danger. This is because, as I am entitled to work, I am not entitled to legal aid.

I have been unable to live a normal life for more than eleven years. In this time, I have never been allowed to visit any other country for a holiday, for example.

The immigration system isolates asylum seekers for years and destroys our lives. Justice delayed is justice denied. That's why I support the Refugee Rights campaign and Tamil Solidarity and am proud to be part of the fight for an end to these vicious policies.

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## **Misery for asylum seekers... Golden visas for the rich!**

Refugees, including those from countries in Africa and the Middle East, flee war, persecution and crushing poverty to seek sanctuary in Europe. In doing so, they risk imprisonment, enslavement and even death.

Having paid thousands of dollars to people smugglers, many face the peril of crossing the Mediterranean in overloaded and unseaworthy vessels. More than 34,000 have died attempting this route - all because there is no legal means to obtain refuge.

But for those rich enough, gaining residency or citizenship in Europe is not a problem. Fast-track 'citizenship by investment programmes' aka 'golden passports' or 'golden visas', are offered by virtually every government

in Europe. This includes the xenophobic Orban regime in Hungary, which constructed a razor wire-topped fence along its southern border to stop migrants entering.

Such schemes are also available in the US. In fact, Jared Kushner, one of Trump's senior advisers, is currently under investigation for alleged misuse of the 'golden visa' programme. It's ironic given the White House administration's threat to deploy the army to prevent a caravan of desperately poor Honduran migrants from entering the country.

Here in Britain it's 'open doors' for super-rich oligarchs from China, Russia and elsewhere to enter the UK. This is despite the Tories' notorious 'hostile environment' policy, with all its devastating human consequences including on the Windrush generation.

A golden visa will be issued by the Home Office for £2 million worth of investment. Recipients can then apply to settle permanently after three years if they invest £5 million and after two years if they invest £10 million.

To give just one example, this recently allowed Madiyar Ablyazov, the son of Kazakhstan fugitive embezzler Mukhtar Ablyazov, to obtain UK citizenship using his father's ill-gotten gains - with no questions asked!

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## Can you donate to the Socialism 2018 appeal?

**Ken Douglas, Socialist Party national treasurer**

We are asking all our members and supporters to donate to the Socialism 2018 finance appeal. We set ourselves a target last year of £30,000, which was surpassed with a record collection of £42,000. We have to ensure that we can maintain or improve our finances going into 2019 and this appeal is crucial to that.

The Tories are tearing themselves apart over Brexit but their programme of attacks on the NHS and on working-class living standards, jobs and services continues. They are determined to maintain the roll-out of Universal Credit, further hitting the living standards of the poorest.

However, despite the weakness of May's government, the trade union and Labour leaders are doing little to push the Tories from power.

The Labour Party continues to be 'two parties in one' and we continue to fight for a determined campaign to kick the Blairites out of the party before a possible general election. They remain as a capitalist fifth column, preparing to sabotage a Corbyn government in the future.

Nothing exemplifies this more than Labour's position on council cuts. Instead of refusing to implement the cuts, as we have argued, right-wing Labour councillors continue to do the Tories' dirty work: sacking workers, attacking trade union rights and selling off council assets and land to spiv property developers.

By contrast, the Socialist Party stands alongside all those groups of workers who have been forced to take action, many for the first time, such as Uber drivers and the Glasgow and Birmingham care workers.

We consistently put forward a programme to fight the cuts, transform the Labour Party and bring down the Tory government. Our arguments have been taken up by those inside and outside the party who want to see a fightback.

At the same time, we raise that lasting change can only be achieved through a socialist alternative.

Capitalism, based on private greed, is a system in crisis and is out of control. The rich continue to get richer - incredibly, eight super-rich individuals have now accrued more wealth than over half the world's population.

Whereas they could not spend that money in a million lifetimes, those resources alone could be used to begin to establish the basis for a decent life for all of us, for the 99%.

A proportion of the money raised at Socialism 2018 will go to assist the pioneering work of our comrades around the world. You can help the work of the Socialist Party and the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI - the socialist international to which the Socialist Party is affiliated).

Can you give £5, £50 or £500? Can you ask other members and supporters to donate? Every donation, no matter how small, will make a difference and all of it will go to building support for socialist ideas.

## Enthusiastic response to new podcast

As we go to press episode four of 'Socialism: the podcast of the Socialist Party' has just been published. Many were pleased to hear that the Socialist Party's publications are expanding to this new media. Sam thinks a podcast is "just what we need." Pedro added a simple "yes!"

Episode four is discussing the far right, following on from our three launch episodes on socialism, politics in Britain today, and antisemitism.

Our listeners are enjoying the content so far. Paul commented that it's an "excellent resource for the Socialist movement." Josie said that all the episodes so far have been "excellently produced and very informative."

We've enjoyed hearing about where you're listening. Adam said: "This is a great idea, look forward to listening to them while I work" and Nancy followed a suggestion in episode one - "I did indeed do it while washing up. It was fabulous and made domestic drudgery more bearable."

Kris points out you can listen anywhere: "Listen to socialist analysis at work, study and on the go!"

Hopefully the podcasts will be interesting and informative for all. And they can also be useful. When we published episode four William said: "I'm doing a Socialist Student lead off about this very subject, thanks!"

- Socialism is available on iTunes, TuneIn, Stitcher, Spotify, Castbox, Acast, Blubrry, Podbean, SoundCloud and MixCloud. It can also be found at the Socialist Party's YouTube channel
- Please subscribe, leave us a review, and email your thoughts - particularly suggestions for topics of future episodes or any questions you have about existing episodes - to [socialismpodcast@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:socialismpodcast@socialistparty.org.uk)
- See [socialistparty.org.uk/podcasts](http://socialistparty.org.uk/podcasts) for episode notes, including suggested further reading.

## Students and workers march for increased college funding

### Socialist Students

Over 1,000 teachers, lecturers and college students marched through central London on 17 October to demand the end to Tory cuts and austerity in education.

Organised by the University and College Union (UCU) and public sector union Unison, people mobilised from around the country to march and to lobby MPs in Parliament to demand the end of the harsh funding squeeze which has gripped further education (FE) colleges for years.

### "Where's our pay!"

Marching from Waterloo Place to Parliament Square, the streets were filled with chants of "Theresa May, where's our pay!" and "The money's there, we want our share!"

The youthful turnout of FE students lifted the mood of the marchers. Leaflets calling for the building of a united student and workers' movement to kick out the Tory government, as the only solution to the funding crisis, quickly disappeared from the hands of Socialist Students members.

Nearly a decade of Tory austerity and woefully inadequate funding for FE has meant job cuts, pay cuts, and the spiralling of workloads for teachers. Schools face identical problems.

The National Audit Office said in 2016 that by 2019-2020 schools will have to make funding cuts amounting to £3 billion, meaning increased class sizes, cuts to educational resources for children and more work, less pay, and worse conditions for staff.

At the same time, the rich have continued to rake in super profits while the lives of staff and the futures of children are thrown down the drain - the top CEOs in Britain in 2017 received an 11% pay rise!

## **Tory fears**

This march will only add to the Tories' fears that a new movement for education is spreading. Earlier this month, 1,000 headteachers marched through central London, effectively taking strike action, to demand an 8% increase in schools funding.

Socialist Students stands shoulder to shoulder with lecturers, teachers, support staff and students in all our schools, colleges and universities fighting for their futures. Students and workers, let's unite and strike together to kick out the Tories!

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# **Joining the Socialist Party has helped me understand the world and how we can change it**

**Nina Brown, Leeds Socialist Party**

Having been raised by lefty parents I felt strongly that I was 'political'. I voted for the Greens in every election since I was 18. I even put a Green Party poster in my bedroom window.

Overhearing how my parents talked about Margaret Thatcher made me certain that Tories were bad, war was bad and the environment needed saving. I was confident in these opinions, but thought that if the party that you put an 'X' next to every five years did not get into power what more could you do?

Cue starting uni and meeting my partner. We agreed on a lot of political ideas, but differed on some things. I challenged his opinions because I felt they were a bit extreme - he questioned whether mine would lead to meaningful change.

## **Political change**

I started going to Socialist Party meetings out of curiosity. In all honesty I wasn't entirely sure whether any of the ideas I heard could be achieved. Surely political change is made by 'politicians', not people on the streets?

Fast forward to Donald Trump's inauguration in January 2017, and to my - and many others - first ever time on a demonstration at the huge women's march in London that month. Being there was electric. I felt angry and empowered. I was outraged that this 'pussy-grabbing', homophobic racist got air-time, let alone presidential power over millions of people. I felt stunned that he had been elected despite Bernie Sanders being an option in the primaries.

It was on this demo that I first leafleted for the Socialist Party, and unknowingly bestowed one on Hilary Benn! I hope that he read it, but the continued cuts by Labour councils suggest that he did not!

I realised that putting an 'X' on a ballot paper every few years was just the tip of the iceberg. I feel that the political education that I've gained from participating in and speaking at Socialist Party meetings, going to demos, selling and reading the Socialist paper and doing campaign stalls enables me to understand the world, and all the ways people can change it.

When Jeremy Corbyn came out with the June 2017 general election manifesto I saw that things I assumed were just 'lefty dreams' were things that could be fully funded and provided for - and that this opinion was shared by the majority.

I've now finished uni and am working in York NHS district hospital, seeing how the Tory cuts are affecting the NHS every day. Nowadays, I urge people to realise the political power and tools they have, and I encourage people to fight for a fully-funded health service, nationalised public services and a socialist society.

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## Health services in meltdown - fight to save our NHS

**Zoë, NHS junior doctor**

In the last two years, infant mortality rates in England and Wales have risen for the first time in over a century. Shocking research by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health has predicted that infant mortality rates will be 140% higher than those of similar countries in 12 years if this disturbing trend continues.

Unfortunately these new predictions, although shocking, are not a surprise. Years of austerity under Coalition and Tory governments has resulted in cuts to vital public services, leading to a rise in poverty and decline in living conditions for ordinary people.

The NHS has been one of the hardest hit, with dozens of A&Es closed or downgraded since 2010. Shockingly, almost half of all maternity units were forced to shut temporarily during 2017, turning pregnant women away.

As an NHS doctor I see first-hand the impact that vicious Tory cuts have had on our health service. Every single day our beds are full. We're short on staff and patients are constantly being shuffled around the hospital (often onto wards not specialised in patients' conditions) in order to make room for the many sick people waiting in A&E.

NHS staff are working hours of overtime and missing their breaks to plug these gaps. But morale is low, staff are tired.

Of course it is not only the brutal cuts to the NHS that have led to this rise in infant mortality. The descent of more and more families into poverty, fuelled by the rise in zero-hour contracts and the roll out of universal credit, has seen more children born into families that cannot afford food or heating.

The fact that infant mortality is increasing in 2018, in one of the richest countries in the world, due to conscious decisions made by this government, is deplorable. Ordinary people are rightly furious and willing to fight back.

### **Coordinated action**

Earlier this year, staff at Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Trust won a major victory against privatisation through a series of strikes. Likewise, health workers at Mid Yorkshire Health NHS Trust also defeated the outsourcing of their jobs by threatening strike action. Coordinated action between patients and staff at Huddersfield Royal Infirmary has also seen major gains in halting the closure of large parts of the hospital.

This kind of coordinated action between staff, patients and the wider public plays an incredibly important role in the fight to save our NHS. However, to really reverse the damage that Tory cuts have done to our health

service, we need to see mass action across the country. Demonstrations are important - but ultimately we must bring together staff across the public sector for coordinated strike action.

United action such as this could bring this weak and wobbly government to its knees and put an end to the cuts and privatisation that are crippling our NHS.

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## **Newcastle Utd fans' campaign against owner Mike Ashley continues**

The second public meeting of the anti-Mike Ashley Magpie Newcastle United fans group was held on 3 October with hundreds of Newcastle United supporters again turning out to discuss the way forward for the Ashley Out campaign. The turnout was even larger than previously, reflecting the increasing desire to see an end to Mike Ashley's ownership of the club.

The meeting discussed the way forward for the campaign with contributions from the floor as well as a survey of eleven options for how to take the campaign forward. Speakers from the panel and the floor recognised that the anti-Ashley campaign represented more than just the fight against Mike Ashley as an individual, but was also part of a wider struggle to reclaim football from big business. Kevin Miles, chief executive of the Football Supporters Federation, spoke and questioned the idea that we should be hoping for a "better billionaire" and instead emphasised the need for a complete transformation of how football is run, towards a model in which football clubs are run by the workers and supporters of a club.

Local Socialist Party members will continue to support the Magpie group campaign in its struggle against Mike Ashley's ownership of Newcastle United as well as the wider struggle to transform football.

**Ryan Holmes, Newcastle Socialist Party and Newcastle United season ticket holder**

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## **Germany: Bavarian elections and huge anti-racist demonstration mark an historic weekend**

**Sascha Stanicic, Sozialistische Alternative (CWI Germany)**

According to the German media, an "historical event" took place on 14 October: the regional elections in Bavaria. The decline of both the CSU, the Bavarian counterpart of Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian-Democrat CDU party, and the SPD, the German former social democratic party, has historic dimensions and will have repercussions in the whole of Germany.

But there was also another historical event on 13 October - the 'Unteilbar' ('Indivisible') demonstration against racism and for social justice in Berlin, with around 250,000 participating.

This was one of the biggest mobilisations in Germany since World War Two, and a clear signal to all that the far right and right-wing populists may often be louder, but are not the majority.

The Merkel era has already begun to end. The results of the Bavarian regional elections have accelerated this process.

Nevertheless, the results were not the worst case scenario that had been predicted on the basis of recent opinion polls. It would have been a disaster for the German ruling class and government parties if the CSU had less than 35% and if Die Linke, the Left Party, had entered the regional parliament.

If it had won less than 35%, the CSU would not have been able to form a coalition with the Freie Wähler, the 'free voters', a small conservative party that has been in the Bavarian regional parliament since 2008.

This would possibly have led to a collapse of the federal German government. Now the ruling coalition parties, CDU, CSU and SPD have been given the opportunity to postpone its termination.

This does not alter the situation facing the Merkel government, hanging by a thread as its support dwindles. The latest poll shows it has just 39% support.

When did we ever have a situation where the leaders of all governing parties openly question whether they will still be in charge by the end of the year?

These events show that there is no general shift to the right in Germany. There has been a shift to the right of government policies, especially by the CSU and parts of the CDU, and right-wing populism has become stronger, resulting in a growing polarisation.

## **Far right**

The far right populist Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, capitalist politicians and the media have attempted to whip up fears about migration in order to win support. This is done to draw attention away from social problems and from those really responsible in the government and big business.

But there have also been daily solidarity actions in support of refugees - involving more people than there are AfD voters. There have been many mass protests against the far right as well as the struggles of tenants and health care workers for better social conditions for the majority of people.

The AfD's vote, while substantial, was below expectations in Bavaria. The CSU not only lost votes to the AfD, but also to the 'left' - the Green Party.

In this election, the Greens were able to collect the protest vote against the far right and the CSU's own right shift.

But the fact that some trade union members and workers voted for the AfD has to be a warning sign. It expresses the alienation of those workers from establishment politics, especially the SPD, but also shows that the social questions were not put centrally or were overshadowed by the issue of migration.

One reason for this situation is the trade union leadership's support for the ruling coalition on a national level. They should instead be organising an opposition on a class basis, with education campaigns inside the workplaces revealing the AfD for what it is - an anti-workers' party.

A important question now is what will the SPD do? For the SPD, the Bavarian elections were a disaster. For the first time since 1893, the party received a single-digit vote! Far from benefiting from the problems in the CDU and CSU, the SPD instead cannot get rid of its reputation for simply backing Merkel and getting 'nice jobs' for its leaders.

This is the reason for its steady decline. Many polls indicate that the SPD has lost a quarter of its support since the general election just over a year ago.

According to polls, a majority of current and former SPD voters want the party to be in opposition on a national level. Disastrous results in elections in the region of Hesse at the end of October could force the SPD to break up the national coalition. This could happen very soon, or around the three regional elections due in eastern Germany next year.

These polls are very probably going to be the next slap in the ruling coalition's face. Otherwise, another flashpoint could be next autumn's 'half-term evaluation' of the government's record, which is written into the coalition agreement.

No doubt attempts will be made to quickly form a Bavarian state government between the CSU and the Freie Wähler party, to create the impression of stability.

However, this could be ruined by the Hesse elections if the local CDU minister-president Bouffier loses his position. In that case, it is not impossible for the frustration with the Merkel regime inside the CDU to burst open at their national conference in December, in such way as would make it impossible for her to continue as chancellor.

## Die Linke

Left party Die Linke did worse than predicted in some polls. Nevertheless, it nearly doubled its vote compared to the last elections and managed to cross the 5% mark in bigger cities.

This undemocratic 5% barrier surely was a factor in complicating mobilisations of voters, because of their worries of wasting their vote against the CSU. But, in the end, the reasons for this weak result are not just to be found in the objective circumstances, but in the way the party has been presenting itself.

Die Linke has been stronger, in Bavaria and nationally, than it is today - especially in the early period after the economic crisis of 2008. But potential has been wasted because the party did not present itself as an activist-led and anti-capitalist force which is part of extra-parliamentary movements.

When you have the Die Linke co-chair Katja Kipping continuously advertising a 'R2G red-red-green' (SPD, Die Linke and Greens) national government, this will add to an impression of this party being a compromising governing force in waiting.

Die Linke in Bavaria could have entered its election campaign with clearer slogans, although in recent years it played an important role in the great mass mobilisations in the region. This includes a 40,000-strong demonstration in Munich against a new, extremely undemocratic and repressive police law, and in the campaign for a referendum to increase the ratio of workers to patients in healthcare.

This orientation towards movements and struggles is the right way to go, and if this had already been put into practise consistently throughout the last decade, Die Linke could have advanced further and have a stronger base.

But 'Aufstehen' ('Standing Up'), the rightward shift initiated by one of the party's two Bundestag leaders, represents a step in the wrong direction. Die Linke politician Sahra Wagenknecht distancing herself from the Unteilbar protest (against racism) the day before the regional elections cannot have helped the party.

The comments about the Unteilbar demo show a complete failure in political orientation. Wagenknecht said she would not attend, falsely claiming that one of the demonstration's slogans was 'open borders for everyone' and that this would marginalise those who were both against open borders and racism. But clearly making political concessions is central in the minds of the 'Aufstehen' leaders who aim to work within capitalism.

## What next?

Die Linke and the left need to face up to the question of how to proceed after the Unteilbar demonstration. For sure, a demonstration of that size cannot be repeated so easily and so soon.

But, there is the possibility of developing from this demonstration a real movement of left, trade unionist and socialist forces, which could be a pole of attraction for many thousands who have not been so far anyway organised or engaged, but who want to do more than just attend demonstrations.

We need local Unteilbar conferences and a large national conference, bringing together campaigns by tenant activists, health care workers, refugees, environmental activists and striking Ryanair workers (who were on the Unteilbar-demo). This approach could trigger a debate about what demands can unite the working class and the need to launch a movement to fight for them.

- Full article [at socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net)

# 1821 Cinderloo uprising: "The crowd thought it had nothing else to lose"

Dave Griffiths, West Midlands Socialist Party

I'd like to thank the Socialist for its review of the film 'Peterloo' about the slaughter of workers protesting in my home city of Manchester (see ['Peterloo film exposes bloody nature of capitalism'](#)). I look forward to seeing the film and the pamphlet on the subject produced by the Socialist Party.

It's important to not see this massacre as an isolated incident but as part of a wider picture. Where workers sought improved conditions, pay and political rights, employers and the state used brutal methods to repress them.

Recently, a group in Telford, Shropshire has highlighted events that took place in the county in 1821, known as the Cinderloo uprising. The very name indicates the national effects of the growing Chartist movement and the events of Peterloo two years earlier.

3,000 men and women from the mines and villages of the area marched through that part of Shropshire. Workers endured brutal conditions at the time, and were outraged by a local ironmasters' illegal pact to reduce wages by what was then a huge six pence.

As their march built, waiting for them were the Shropshire Yeomanry (a volunteer cavalry force). A magistrate read the riot act and gave them an hour to leave. But the marchers, armed with only tools and sticks, were having none of it.

The yeomanry were ordered to advance and to disperse or arrest the 'troublemakers'. But while they tried to make arrests, the crowd started throwing stones and slag. Those captured were set free and the yeomanry started shooting.

William Bird, an 18-year-old collier was killed outright, while Thomas Gittins was mortally wounded. Tom Palin, a colliery man from Hollinswood, was also shot and later hanged in Shrewsbury. The group researching Cinderloo believe he was about 24. He could have been working in the pits for 16 years before his death.

After the uprising, most ironmasters agreed to 'only' reduce workers' pay by four pence.

But it had a longer-lasting impact on the area. The discontent got more people talking about trade unions, about other events across the country.

## Brutality

Pete Jackson, one of the group researching the uprising (the Cinderloo 1821 Committee), said that the story runs contrary to the way we sometimes look at Victorian life in the area.

"This story highlights the brutality of the conditions they were working in. It goes counter to the image that the Ironbridge museums present of a twee existence in Victorian times of people hop, skip and jumping around - baking bread and all being happy.

"Actually, people from a very young age - some as young as six - were working 14 to 18 hours a day doing very hard physical work.

"The idea that people weren't going along with that and weren't thinking how wonderful it all was doesn't fit with the narrative of Telford as it is now.

"This was a whole community that saw itself under siege. These people had a hard existence. The women were part of the crowd, and young children were there as well. They were as raucous as the men. The crowd thought it had nothing else to lose.

"Tom Palin was just standing up for his mates, for the rights of people.

"This is a story for the future as well as the past. It's about the sense of community and the power they have when they work together."

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## 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, phone 020 8988 8771 or email [editors@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:editors@socialistparty.org.uk).

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

Views of letter writers do not necessarily match those of the Socialist Party.

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### Labour re-admittance

The Socialist issue 1010 carried correspondence between Socialist Party general secretary Peter Taaffe and Labour Party general secretary Jennie Formby (see ['The struggle to transform Labour'](#)).

Here, we carry an extract from a letter written by a local Labour Party activist in support of the Socialist Party's request for re-admittance to the party.

Dear Jennie,

As a Labour Party member I am writing to you as your exchange of correspondence was published in the Socialist newspaper.

With regard to your letter of 29 August 2018, I have the following comment: my friend Elaine Evans from Bolsover has stood as a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate, but did so with a heavy heart.

Elaine wrote to the Labour councillor asking him to agree to not implement Tory cuts, and explained that if he agreed then she would not stand.

No such assurance was received and therefore she stood against the type of people you are defending, who are in reality class traitors.

Recently, Tory minister Esther McVey told her party conference that Derek Hatton had re-joined the Labour Party and that this was a measure as to how far left the party had moved.

Given that purge was so long ago, and that I have friends in the Socialist party and regard them as jolly fine human beings, I would ask that you put it to the national executive committee and that we have a change of policy towards people who are socialists.

My branch in Chesterfield will debate this letter in November, and if your reply is received in time, that also.

Yours,

**Adrian B Rimington, Chesterfield**

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## Crime and Cuts

The pages of the Liverpool Echo seem to resemble the turmoil of Chicago during Prohibition: almost daily shootings and mayhem. Our city's mayor attacks the government for its crazed cuts policies.

But what is his solution? Urging MPs to try and get an 'urgent debate in Parliament about the policing situation in Liverpool' (Liverpool Echo 19 October 2018).

In the same pages Liam Thorpe reports the scandalous closure of St. John's Community Nursery because of cuts. The nursery has served the area of Dingle for decades.

The mayor has presided over six years of cuts and decried any suggestion of mobilising opposition to the government. His 'solution' is to bombard the government with letters and have a chat with his friend Lord Heseltine. The Tories' response? To pat his head and commend him for his compliance. We are witnessing the consequences.

Raise the issue of crime and cuts in parliament by all means, but it will be a dialogue with the deaf.

The slide into chaos and want will continue as long as this government, dedicated to enriching the already fabulously rich, remains in office.

It's time for councils to set needs budgets, and to mount a serious campaign, including industrial action, to force a general election and get Jeremy Corbyn into Downing Street.

**Tony Mulhearn, Liverpool**

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## Audio version of this document

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

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## 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!
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<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/28156>