

Tories smashed in Euros - Now get them out

May ends in June!

Tory prime minister Theresa May is going. With ten leadership candidates announced and rising, the nasty party is tearing itself apart before our eyes.

Once one of the most successful parties on the planet at representing the rich and powerful, the Tories are shattering, reflecting the crisis of British capitalism.

For a governing party to come fifth in the European elections, with less than 10% of the vote, is an utter humiliation.

Millions of working and middle-class people have faced devastation at the hands of Tory governments over the last decade. Pay restraint, benefit cuts and closure of public services have been the norm.

Now we have a chance to get the Tories out. This has to be the overwhelming priority for trade unionists, anti-cuts campaigners, climate strikers and 'no to Trump' protesters in the coming weeks and months.

Instead, however, the establishment media and - criminally - the pro-capitalist Blairite wing of the Labour Party are concentrating their fire not on the Tories, but on Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, arguing that the EU election results prove he has to start campaigning for a second referendum to reverse Brexit.

Corbyn-led government

Many of these MPs - supporters of the Tory-lite policies of Tony Blair - have made clear that they do not want a Corbyn-led government because they fear it could challenge the interests of the capitalist elite.

It is not ensuring the election of a Labour government that motivates former Blair spin-doctor Alistair Campbell - who admitted voting Lib Dem in the Euro-polls - or Labour deputy leader Tom Watson, but defending the interests of big business.

If Corbyn was to follow their recommendations it would severely damage the prospects for a Labour government. The working-class [vote for Brexit in 2016 was a cry of rage against the capitalist establishment](#) and the misery being inflicted on the majority in the wake of the 2007-08 economic crisis.

If Corbyn was seen to be acting at the behest of that establishment to reverse the result of the referendum it would finish him in the eyes of an important section of working-class voters.

The only way to cut across the division that exists between working-class 'Leavers' and 'Remainers' is to launch a serious campaign to demand a general election now, linked to a clear socialist programme in defence of the interests of the whole working class.

What do the EU election results really represent?

The reality of the EU elections in Britain is not the same as the simplistic picture being painted in the capitalist press. Clearly many used their vote to express their views for or against Brexit. Nonetheless this was not a second referendum. Firstly it had a far lower turnout. Just over 16.5 million people voted, a small increase on the last EU election, but less than half the number who voted in the 2016 referendum. More than 60% of people expressed their frustration with the whole situation by staying at home. The surges - both to the Brexit Party and to parties that campaigned as pro-Remain - have to be seen in that context.

Nonetheless in a distorted way these elections did give another indication of the deep-seated anger at the capitalist establishment that has delivered a relentless squeeze on living standards. And, in a warning to Corbynism, this time Labour was not able to capitalise on that anger but was punished by it.

The fragmentation of politics and the long-term decline in support for 'traditional' parties has been shown most markedly in European elections. A vote for a distant and largely powerless EU parliament (which the country has now voted to leave) is not comparable with a general election where people are voting for the next government on a 'first past the post' system. You have to go back to 1999 for the combined Tory and Labour vote in the EU elections to top 50%. The 2014 European election was pre-Corbyn, in the era of Ed Miliband's 'austerity-lite' policies. Labour scraped second with 24% of the vote. This time, however, Tory and Labour's combined vote was less than 25%.

Revenge of Remain?

However, the root cause of this is not - as Tom Watson and co argue - Corbyn's failure to take a pro-Remain position. Undoubtedly, the Liberal Democrats and Greens made gains partly by trying to claim the pro-Remain banner. This should not be exaggerated, however. In total 3.36 million voted for the Liberal Democrats, for example, compared to 6.8 million in the 2010 general election. Just four years later, in the EU election of 2014, the Liberal Democrats were all but annihilated - reduced to just one MEP - as voters punished them for their role in the hated Con-Dem coalition government. Both this election and the recent council contests indicate that, unfortunately, enough time has passed for memories of their crimes in government to fade, allowing them to partially re-establish themselves as an acceptable protest vote. Nonetheless, it does not follow that they will automatically have a similar surge in a general election.

On the other side the Brexit Party - who came first with 5.2 million votes - was a protest against all the Westminster parties' failure to deliver for the majority, starting with their failure to 'deliver Brexit'. The Brexit Party is led by Nigel Farage - an ex-Tory, ex-stockbroker who has called for the privatisation of the NHS - the establishment's favourite 'anti-establishment' figure. While its leader is an avowed right-wing populist, however, the party contested the EU elections with no policies at all and tried to pose as the party of working-class people. It is clear that, alongside a large number of Tory voters, there were also traditional Labour voters who switched to the Brexit Party - like the former Labour councillor who lost his job when [the Redcar steelworks closed in 2015](#). The Brexit Party came first in every region apart from London.

This is not a new phenomenon. [In the 2014 EU elections Ukip topped the poll](#) with 4.3 million votes, 27.5% of the vote. It was not, however, able to make significant inroads into Westminster. This time the rump of Ukip, which had moved in a more openly racist direction, was reduced to 3.3% and losing all its MEPs, showing the extreme instability of right-wing populist forces. The far-right racist 'Tommy Robinson', aka Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, lost his deposit in the North West.

A big part of the vote for the Brexit Party was previous Ukip voters, but this does not mean that the workers' movement can write them off. On the contrary, around a million of those who voted for Ukip in 2015 are estimated to have voted for Corbyn in the snap election of 2017. No doubt the majority of them voted for the Brexit Party last Thursday. Working-class anger at the capitalist establishment is looking for an effective outlet. Particularly where there is none available on the left, sections of the working class can, [as in other countries across the EU](#), vote for right-populist forces.

On the other side, in this election, there were undoubtedly sections of working-class Labour voters who - alarmed by the right-wing nationalist rhetoric of Farage and many Tory leadership contenders - voted for explicitly Remain parties in order to show their opposition to Brexit.

On several occasions Corbyn has made correct points about the real divide in the country being between the 'many and the few' not how you voted in the EU referendum. In general, unfortunately, these speeches are not heard above the voices of the pro-capitalists who make up the majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party and who are now, as Unite general secretary Len McCluskey has correctly warned, using the EU election results to ratchet up their offensive against Corbyn and his left policies. The woeful performance by [the arch-Blairites who split to set up 'Change UK'](#) is likely to encourage their co-thinkers to stay in Labour, at least in the short term, and work to undermine Corbyn from within.

And it will never be possible to cut across the divisions in the working class on Brexit with some 'correct' speeches. It is necessary to show that you are prepared to lead a serious struggle in the interests of working-class people against all the forces of the capitalist establishment, including those in your own party!

Transform Labour

Had Corbyn [set out from the beginning to transform Labour](#) under his leadership into a workers' party with socialist policies it would be seen very differently today by workers who are now becoming disillusioned. Doing so would have required transforming the structures of Labour so that it was brought under the democratic control of its working-class members and supporters, particularly via the trade unions, and a return to the kind of federal structure Labour had when it was founded.

This should have been combined with a [campaign to replace Blairite MPs and councillors](#) with those who were prepared to stand up for the interests of the working class. Crucially it would have meant demanding that Labour councils cease implementing Tory austerity and instead stand up for their local communities and refuse to implement cuts. It is no coincidence that in the recent local elections all of the 21 councils where Labour lost five or more seats were in heavily Leave-voting areas. It reflects both the scepticism of many Brexit-supporting workers to Labour's approach, and the deep-rooted anger at Labour councils cutting services, which was part of the fuel for the Brexit referendum fire in the first place. Imagine if a series of Labour councils were now carrying out a policy of mass council housebuilding, [as Liverpool City Council did when Militant, forerunner of the Socialist Party, played a leading role](#) in it during the 1980s? Enthusiasm for affordable, secure council housing would undoubtedly be uniting leave and remain voters in a way that correct speeches cannot.

Unfortunately, up until now Corbyn and the left Labour leadership have mistakenly prioritised compromise with the pro-capitalist wing of the party, rather than fighting to transform Labour into a workers' party. The fighting socialist programme of such a party would include a clear commitment to negotiate [a Brexit in the interests of the working class](#). This would have meant 'red lines' of opposing all pro-privatisation anti-working class EU laws and making an appeal for solidarity to workers across Europe.

It would also mean pledging to nationalise British Steel and Honda Swindon under democratic working class control, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need, along with any [other companies who carry out closures and job cuts](#) in the name of Brexit or otherwise. We argue that such measures would need to be combined with [nationalisation of the major corporations and banks](#) to take the levers of power out of the hands of the capitalists, who will inevitably attempt to sabotage a Corbyn government.

The EU elections are a serious warning of the risks Corbyn and McDonnell are running with their 'strategy of compromise' that could squander the potential opportunity their leadership has created. Nonetheless, despite everything, a Corbyn-led government could still be in power within months as a result of the meltdown in the Tory Party, particularly if Corbyn fights a general election on a radical left manifesto. If Corbyn was to win a general election it would send shockwaves through the capitalist classes of Europe. Winning at the ballot box - however - would only be the beginning. A Corbyn-led government would face major Brexit disruption, a likely global economic crisis, and - above all - a capitalist class determined to prevent it acting in the interests of the many not the few.

All of those problems could be overcome but only on the basis of [building a fighting, democratic workers' party armed with socialist policies](#). That must be the main message to draw from the May elections.

- Euro-elections in Scotland and Wales: [Labour punished by working class over Brexit fudge, cuts and national question](#)

Euro elections 2019: establishment parties thrown into turmoil

Populist right and Greens make gains

Robert Bechert, Committee for a Workers' International

As the European ruling classes feared, the Euro elections have confirmed the turmoil that exists throughout the continent. If there is one trend then it is one of unstable change.

This was reflected in some countries in a surge for Green parties, helped by the recent popular movements demanding action against climate change, and on the opposite side a growth of right-wing nationalist and far-right parties.

In country after country traditional ruling parties suffered massive losses, as did a number of the new formations that have sprung up in recent years. Of course in many ways the most striking result was the six-week-old Brexit party coming top of the polls in Britain while the 'governing' Conservatives came fifth with 9.1% of the vote, the lowest share in their over two-hundred-year history.

At bottom the election revealed the deep mistrust and alienation from ruling parties and official institutions. This is not simply the result of the European Union's fundamentally bureaucratic pro-big business policies, but also many Europeans' bitter experience of stagnant or falling living standards since the economic crisis that began in 2007-08.

Already that has caused upheavals in countries like France, where the former traditional ruling parties have crumbled, and Italy where completely new parties are currently governing.

Crisis

In many countries the initial reaction to the crisis was resistance to the ruling classes' attempt to make the working and middle classes pay the price of the most serious economic recession since the 1930s. This resistance took different forms ranging from demonstrations, strikes, social struggles, and the growth of often new parties on the left which at least promised to stop austerity and to take some action against the super-rich.

However, in most cases these parties did not carry out what they said, or implied, they would do, and in a number of countries the consequences were seen in these elections. The most shameful and spectacular case was that of Syriza in Greece which came into government in early 2015 promising to end austerity, but which, within a matter of months, capitulated.

The Syriza leaders implemented cruel austerity measures despite themselves organising a referendum in July 2015 in which a majority of Greeks said 'No' to the austerity demanded by the EU leadership. One result of this capitulation was that Syriza gained just over 26% of the vote on May 26, compared with the over 36% it won in the two 2015 general elections. The conservative New Democracy party topped the polls.

A similar outcome was seen in Spain where Podemos, founded at the start of 2014 from the Indignados movement that began in 2011, scored 20.6% in the first general election it contested in December 2015. However, the leadership's lack of a clear socialist policy, and increasing willingness to work with the pro-capitalist leadership of the Spanish social-democratic PSOE, has since dented its support. Podemos, in alliance with the United Left, won just 10.1% in this election, half its 2015 score.

Partly this reflected a surge in support for PSOE which won 32.8%, sharply up from the 23% it gained in 2014 and also up compared to April's general election. In Germany support for Die Linke, the Left Party, dropped for similar reasons.

In many countries right-wing nationalists and the far right have stepped in to try to take advantage of this situation, using populist slogans and soundbites. These right-wing demagogic opponents of the EU have been helped by the fact that most leaders of European trade unions and 'left' parties support the EU, either as part of their general pro-capitalist policies, or because they mistakenly think the EU's existence is a step away from nationalism and maintains a peaceful Europe.

This is the background to these elections seeing in a number of countries a strengthening of the far right, with Salvini and the Lega in Italy scoring 34.3% of the vote and topping the poll, as did Marine Le Pen's 'Rassemblement National' (the renamed National Front) when it beat President Macron's En Marche to the top spot.

In some countries, such as Denmark, far-right parties did not do well. In the Netherlands, while Geert Wilders' PVV lost all its four MEPs, the new right party, Forum for Democracy, won three. Significantly in the simultaneous Belgian general election the right-wing nationalist New Flemish Alliance, which has been in government, saw a sharp drop in its support in the Flemish region as the far-right Vlamms Belang more than doubled its vote to 18.5%.

However, Belgium also saw a polarisation to the left with the former Maoist (and now in reality 'soft' left) Workers Party (PTB/Pvda) winning 12 seats in the national parliament, with 8.6% of the vote, more than half of the combined vote of Belgium's two language-based 'socialist' parties. But the votes for parties like the PTB/Pvda are unstable. In the neighbouring Netherlands the PTB/Pvda's ally, the 'Socialist' Party, saw its vote drop from 9.6% to 3.2%, while the Green Left's vote rose to 10.9%.

Unfortunately the Socialist Party in Ireland also suffered a setback as its vote in the Dublin seat dropped to 4,967 (1.36%), compared to 29,953 five years ago, and 50,510 (12.4%) in 2009, when Joe Higgins won a Euro seat.

Polarisation

This polarisation was seen in many countries, often accompanied by a higher voter turnout. Thus in Austria the governmental crisis sparked off by the IbizaGate video saw all the major parties enjoy a rise in the number of actual votes they won even if their percentages did not increase.

These elections mean a period of uncertainty in many countries, starting in Britain. But Britain is not alone. The big drops in votes for the German ruling parties raise the question of whether the coalition there will continue until 2021. The German Social-Democratic Party (SPD) suffered its worst percentage vote, 15.8%, since the 1887 election when it was still an illegal party.

Some capitalist commentators have been relieved that, in France, Macron's party was a narrow second behind Le Pen's. But the fact remains that the French president's own party was only supported by 22.4%, roughly the same percentage that backed him in the first round of the 2017 presidential election.

Macron has no solid base, something seen in the continuing strength of the 'gilets jaunes' (yellow vests) protests. While the French left had a poor result - Mélenchon's 'France Insoumise' gained just 6.3% - there is still a potentially explosive social situation which can result in further movements.

These elections, particularly as they generally had a low participation rate - for example, 50.1% in France - do not show the full picture. They are snapshots of a moving situation, and in this case snapshots of just a part of the whole picture.

In a number of countries the votes for the Greens did represent a search for an alternative, particularly by the young and the middle class. However, many of those looking to the Greens today will be disappointed by them tomorrow.

Greens

In Germany they have no problem forming coalitions with Merkel's pro-capitalist party and previously helped Schröder's right-wing SPD government carry through neoliberal austerity measures. Most Green leaders see themselves as working within, rather than challenging, capitalism.

What is clear is that growing numbers in Europe are rejecting the old order, whether it is in their own countries or in the shape of the EU. There is a developing mood that the system is rigged against ordinary people, that their views and welfare are ignored as the rich get richer, along with growing opposition to what is rightly seen as rule from above, whether it be governments or big corporations.

This is an explosive mixture which does not just herald movements within countries but also clashes between competing nations. The EU will not simply remain a single united bloc. The rival capitalist classes have their own agendas, and other capitalist world powers, whether it be the US, China or Russia, will also intervene in pursuit of their own interests.

Against this background the Euro elections offer both positive possibilities and a warning. Positively they showed again how the old order is being questioned and that there is a search for an alternative. Negatively it showed that unless the workers' and socialist movement can offer an alternative, and seriously struggle for it, then reaction will seek to exploit the situation to build support.

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Euro-elections in Scotland and Wales

- Labour punished by working class over Brexit fudge, cuts and national question

Wales: massive anti-establishment vote

Dave Reid, Socialist Party Wales

In Wales, the main victors were the Brexit Party and Plaid Cymru. Leave voters from both Labour and Conservative went to the Brexit Party, who won 32.5% of the vote, about the same as in England.

Remain voters went to Plaid Cymru (20%) and the Lib Dems (15%). Most Labour Remain 'deserters' voted for Plaid and Tory 'Remainers' for the Lib Dems. Welsh Labour's 15% (finishing third behind the Brexit Party and Plaid Cymru) represents its worst result in Wales since 1910.

The vote for the Brexit party in mainly working-class areas should act as a wakeup call to Corbyn supporters to break from the Blairites.

Farage has seized on the failure of the Westminster politicians to deliver Brexit, hiding his right-wing ideas to win the votes in these elections of working-class people angry at the capitalist establishment.

This is the same dissatisfaction revealed by the 2016 Brexit vote, with an even more angry twist.

The Guardian report of Farage's visit to Merthyr revealed some of the potential support for a workers' party fighting with a clear socialist message among Brexit Party voters.

One Brexit Party supporter was quoted: "Now I seem to think that Labour is just getting in bed with the Conservatives, and they are the upper middle class. I honestly think Brexit is the new working-class party for poverty-stricken towns."

Of course, Farage remains silent about his support for Thatcherite anti-working class policies and even more austerity.

Plaid and Remain

Plaid Cymru is claiming a big victory, coming second to the Brexit party and beating Labour for the first time ever.

It increased its vote by a third from 2014, but Plaid leader Adam Price's claim that "Wales is now a Remain nation" is not so clear. Parties that were clearly standing on a Remain platform won 43% of the vote overall, with clear pro-Brexit parties winning 37%.

The turnout in Wales was also 37%, less than half that of a general election and the 2016 EU referendum itself.

In Plaid's rural heartlands in the north west and west it topped the polls or came second. But in the South Wales valley areas, that Plaid has to gain to win the 2021 Welsh elections, there were clear majorities for pro-Brexit parties.

The election came 12 days after the 2,000-strong All Under One Banner Cymru march for Welsh independence in Cardiff on 11 May - attracting much wider layers of support than in the past, including large contingents of working-class youth.

Both the Cymru march and the surge of support for the Brexit Party show the enormous discontent that exists with the political establishment and the yearning for change.

The limited devolution settlement of 1997 has delivered very little for Wales. Welsh Labour governments have privatised less than the Tories but presided over the running down of public services after ten years of austerity. They have abjectly failed to stand up to the Tory government in Westminster and protect working-class people from the cuts.

And for the Tories, the main capitalist party and the official opposition in the Senedd (parliament), the results are its worst in history in Wales - less than 7% of the vote.

Scotland: Labour finishes up in fifth place

Matt Dobson, Socialist Party Scotland

The European elections in Scotland showed a similar polarisation to the rest of the UK on Brexit. Working-class voters again showed their discontent and disillusionment by staying away from the polls. Although turnout was up slightly from 2014 it was still only 35%.

The Scottish National Party (SNP) campaigning on the slogan - "Scotland's for Europe" - won 30 out of 32 local authority areas, three seats for the first time and 38% of the vote. The pro-remain Lib Dems regained the seat they lost in 2014.

The Brexit Party won a seat and came second but actually only won 15% of the vote (Ukip won a seat in 2014 with 10%). The Scottish Tories were a casualty of the polarisation and the crisis following May's resignation coming below the Lib Dems with 11.6%.

Worst result

Scottish Labour suffered its worst national election result in Scotland since 1910, polling 9.3%, trailing in fifth place. For the first time Labour has no MEPs, finishing behind the Brexit Party in Dundee and former heartlands like South Lanarkshire.

In Glasgow, despite coming second, they only achieved 15% despite winning there in 2014.

As well as its failure to offer a clear socialist position on Brexit, Labour is still being punished for a wrong position on the national question by opposing a second independence referendum and self-determination.

In Labour-run councils it is carrying out cuts and is not seen as genuine fighters against austerity despite the Leonard leadership putting forward some radical left policies.

Scottish Labour leader Richard Leonard is coming under pressure for failing to make any impact since elected, with Labour also struggling in Westminster polls. Westminster MP Paul Sweeney - who regained Glasgow North East for Labour in 2017 - attacked the Euro-election campaign after the result, demanding the party commit to backing a second referendum and come out clearly for Remain.

The pro-Remain Scottish Greens with 8.3% did not experience any surge and ended up with an identical share of the vote to 2014. This can partly be explained by the Greens increasingly being seen as 'SNP-lite', backing SNP austerity budgets in Holyrood and in Glasgow.

SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon claimed after the result that this was an endorsement of the SNP's 12 years in power. But that is not the reality on the ground, with rising working-class anger towards the SNP.

The SNP leadership is facing greater pressure from a section of their base to demand a second independence referendum from Westminster, likely to be refused by a new Tory leadership.

Labour's dire result shows the need for the Corbyn left to remove the Blairite right wing, change its position on the national question, and put forward a fighting strategy of no cuts budgets in councils.

Overall the European elections showed the massive political vacuum that exists for a force to fight for the working class in Scotland with socialist policies.

The Green New Deal we need is socialism

Theo Sharieff, Socialist Party youth and student organiser

Since the beginning of 2019, young people have been walking out of their schools and colleges to demand urgent action from the politicians on climate change. Millions internationally are searching for solutions to the climate crisis.

It is in this context that some politicians, such as left Democratic Party congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio Cortez (AOC) in the US, a self-declared socialist, have raised the idea of a 'Green New Deal', gaining support from many workers and young people, and including many measures which socialists would strongly support.

AOC has tabled a resolution to the US congress that calls for the federal government to drive a conversion to 100% green and renewable energies, and to create millions of 'high wage jobs' through state investment into public works. This idea has been taken up elsewhere, including here in Britain.

The Green New Deal harkens back to American President Franklin Roosevelt's 'New Deal' of the 1930s, which was a package of state investment into public works and industry following the depression of the 1930s.

It was an example of 'Keynesian' economic measures - broadly referring to government intervention into the economy in order to stimulate demand with the aim of 'fixing' capitalism - although it began to run out of steam by the late 1930s.

In essence, they are policies which seek to find solutions to capitalism's problems within the confines of the limits of capitalism itself.

Some capitalist economists argue that it was these kinds of Keynesian policies which created the post-war upswing, a period of huge economic growth for capitalism globally in the 1950s and 1960s.

But it was in fact the other way round - it was the post-war economic boom, the product of unique historical economic and political conditions following World War Two, which gave the capitalist class room to implement Keynesian measures.

Today, the situation is completely different. We are living through a drawn out crisis of British and world capitalism with big business and their political representatives - the Tories and the Blairites here in Britain - doing all they can to make the working class pay for their crisis through austerity and cuts.

Capitalism does not have even the wiggle room it did in the post-war period to easily allow for the huge level of investment required for a Green New Deal today.

'Neoliberal' policies were the capitalists' response to a changed economic situation after the end of the post-war boom to allow big businesses to recover their profits in a period of decline for capitalism - meaning the driving down of wages, privatisation of public services, and deregulation of financial markets.

This has taken on an even sharper character since the 2007-08 crash, with austerity leading to increased suffering, misery and poverty affecting working class and young people over the last decade.

That's why fighting for Green New Deal policies raised by the likes of AOC - achieving carbon neutrality by 2030, public investment into new industries and technologies and the creation of millions of decent jobs on trade union rates of pay - means fighting capitalism, and for a socialist Green New Deal.

Corporate taxation

Some advocates of the Green New Deal argue that increases in corporate tax rates and the creation of 'green bonds' by central banks could fund the plans.

But the capitalist class internationally would put up massive resistance to such measures, including, but not limited to, moving their assets abroad.

Even with big cuts in corporation tax rates in western countries in recent decades, giant corporations like BP, Centrica, Amazon, Starbucks, Apple, Vodafone, etc, have avoided paying taxes altogether, or only marginal amounts, through Byzantine global accounting arrangements in order to retain mega-profits.

That's why a socialist Green New Deal would mean nationalising the giant energy companies, alongside the remaining commanding heights of the economy, under the democratic control and management of the working class.

This means the top 150 monopolies in Britain, as well as the banks and finance companies which control an estimated 80% of the British economy.

This would allow for a state monopoly on foreign trade, and the introduction of measures to prevent flights of capital.

By placing these key industries under the democratic control of the working class, it would be possible to develop a socialist plan of production to meet the needs of workers, young people, and the environment.

This would not only allow putting an immediate end to the pollution caused by the fossil fuel giants, which are invested in by the banks and speculators, but to democratically direct the wealth hoarded by the big banks and giant corporations.

Such huge resources could be invested into renewable and green energies - to step up research into new technologies and integrated public transport systems - all with democratic workers' oversight as the transition from carbon energy to green energy is made to guarantee no loss of jobs or pay.

By nationalising the construction companies for example, a mass programme of council house construction could be launched to build millions of carbon neutral homes and generate thousands of jobs.

Understandably, many workers who are currently employed in the fossil fuel industries may look at proposals for a Green New Deal with a fear for their job security and livelihoods.

This is reflected in America, where the largest trade union federation, the AFL-CIO, wrote an open letter to sponsors of the Green New Deal.

Although the letter generally accepts the need for a switch to renewable energy to fight climate change, the right-wing leaders of the AFL-CIO also say that the Green New Deal "is far too short on specific solutions that speak to the jobs of our members and the critical sectors of our economy... and makes promises that are not achievable or realistic."

This is why it is so crucial that we fight for the working class and the rank and file of the trade unions to play the leading role in the climate movement.

A programme of creating alternative green jobs on trade union agreed rates of pay and conditions, and for the retraining and reskilling of workers currently employed in environmentally damaging industries to guarantee no loss of jobs, would cut across the fears of green measures.

Internationalism

Obviously, climate change is a global issue which cannot be ended within the confines of any single country.

The fight for a socialist Green New Deal in any one individual country would need to be accompanied by an international appeal to the working class and young people to struggle to end capitalism and for the socialist transformation of society globally.

Of course, individual capitalists across the globe in many countries may recognise the gravity of the situation and may even speak out publicly about the need to fight climate change. But the question is - does the capitalist system they rule over have the tools necessary to fix the situation on a global scale?

Capitalism is a system in which the creation of profit from the unpaid labour of the working class results in the owners of big business reigning supreme, with the capitalist classes of nations competing against each other for markets, labour and raw materials, to make as much profit as possible.

Would the capitalist class in the US, for example, be willing to sink the billions of dollars of investment required to develop and transition to 100% renewable energy with no prospect of short term returns in profits?

As long as their international rivals continued to rake in super-profits from the fossil fuel industry and the continued plundering of the earth's resources, there would be a huge disincentive on the capitalist class of any one individual nation to push forward the development of new environmentally friendly infrastructure and energy.

Even if it came to state investment in green energy, the powerful and dominant fossil fuel wing of the capitalist class would be hugely threatened by the rise of a new green energy industry as a point of competition to their supremacy in the capitalist market and would fight to undermine it every step of the way.

This is why fighting for a socialist Green New deal would have to be part of a struggle for socialism internationally - to take the reins of the economy out of the hands of the capitalists and establish an international economic plan for the needs of the environment.

Workers' power

Here in Britain, the first crucial step towards achieving a socialist Green New Deal would be to kick out the Tories - the government of the rich which exists to protect the interests and the profits of the big polluting companies which are responsible for climate change in the first place.

Campaigns to get councils to pass climate emergency declarations are a good starting point for building the movement in our local towns and cities. But action is what is required now - not words by austerity politicians.

The Tories are extremely weak and divided. If Labour councils used their massive reserves and spending powers to refuse to vote for Tory cuts delivered from Westminster and set no cuts budgets, mounting campaigns locally to turn Corbyn's anti-austerity message into action, the Tory government's collapse could be hugely accelerated.

These anti-austerity no-cuts budgets could incorporate elements of a socialist Green New Deal - such as mass programmes of carbon neutral council house construction, funding for fully integrated local public transport, and a restoration of funding to waste management and recycling services.

National action is also crucial. Only by building working class action - including strikes which shut down production and hit the capitalists where it hurts, in their pockets - can these things be achieved.

The trade union movement in Britain with its combined six million members (collectively making it the largest organisation in the country) could play a huge role in leading such a struggle.

Greta Thunberg, who started the school student strikes in Sweden, has said she is in favour of general strike action by the trade unions to bring about the changes we need.

Such a movement could force the Tories to call a general election and deliver a Corbyn-led government on an anti-austerity programme.

That programme - which includes a £10 an hour minimum wage, scrapping tuition fees, a mass programme of council house building, and the re-nationalisation of the railways and energy companies - would be vociferously opposed by the capitalist class.

But what frightens the capitalists even more is the potential for such measures to embolden the working class underneath Corbyn to push him further than he intends to go - to a full socialist programme.

They will mobilise everything in their arsenal to undermine him at every stage, including the pro-austerity, pro-war, pro-capitalist elements of his own party - the Blairites.

Corbyn must take action against these right-wing backstabbers in his party now rather than later to fight the inevitable sabotage they will attempt to enact.

This would open the opportunity for Corbyn and his supporters to re-found the Labour Party, and throw its doors open to all socialists, trade unionists, anti-austerity fighters and climate crisis campaigners - to transform it into a genuinely mass, working class party.

Vital to winning a socialist Green New Deal is building a workers' movement that fights the capitalist class every step of that way - to kick out the Tories, and to defend a Corbyn government from the attacks of big business through socialist measures, and for the replacement of the system of capitalism with a socialist alternative that can plan for the futures of workers, young people, and the planet.

Climate change strikes continue to resonate

Build for action against Trump visit

For a fourth time in successive months, young people, mainly school and college students, took to the streets in cities and towns across the UK on 24 May (part of an international day of action) to protest against the lack of action by government and big business to halt potentially catastrophic climate change.

The call to protest against Trump - the world's number one climate change denier - when he visits the UK next week, was also embraced by students.

Socialist Party members and Socialist Students have helped build for and participated in all these protests.

We are assisting students to establish democratic student unions and to link up with workers organised in trade unions - whose potential industrial muscle can achieve political change - together in a united campaign.

At the same time we fight for a programme of socialist measures - including nationalisation of public transport, major industries and agribusiness, in order to globally plan production in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way.

Below, the Socialist carries some reports on the 24 May action.

- Read more: ['The green new deal needed is socialism'](#)

Leeds

Around 600 students joined the fourth #youthstrike4climate in Leeds, assembling outside Leeds Civic Hall in a direct response to the council passing a Climate Emergency motion one month, then voting to fund infrastructure for airport expansion the next!

As the petition launched prior to the strike states, "why isn't the council using the estimated £50 million for this on measures consistent with the goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2030, such as creating green jobs by upgrading the environmental efficiency of council and school buildings. Or investing in green public transport?"

Tanis Belsham-Wray, secretary of Leeds trade union council and Socialist Party member, emphasised the need for students to link up with the trade union movement, and the need for developing a plan to create an environmentally sustainable economy with decent high-quality, well-paid jobs.

After calling for the big energy companies and others to be taken into public ownership to achieve this, Tanis said: "As a socialist, we say let ordinary people make these decisions, let's have democratically elected bodies in our workplaces, schools, colleges and universities, that link together and decide how things should be run to meet the needs of the many and not the interests of the few."

Students were also angry about the upcoming visit of Donald Trump. The #YouthStrikeAgainstTrump on 3 June initiated by Leeds Socialist Students received much interest.

Linked to this was the setting up of a student union in Leeds, with 16 students from six different schools across the city, both to organise against Trump's visit and the increasingly hostile attitude of school authorities towards the climate change strikes.

Along with demonstrators wanting to join Socialist Students, 22 copies of the Socialist were sold as well as the recent climate change pamphlet.

Iain Dalton Socialist Students Yorkshire Organiser

York

The school student strike in York attracted at least 300 students. It was the youngest so far, with some primary school students marching and speaking from the platform.

The atmosphere was positive and determined with speaker after speaker showing a desire to challenge the status quo and demand a better future.

Michael Robinson, a 14-year-old student from Millthorpe School, speaking from the platform, announced a meeting to discuss how to link schools together to build a more concerted and better organised campaign to fight climate disaster.

This meeting had been organised by a young student from the same school, Hani Sannuga, and is sponsored by York trade union council.

York TUC will continue to sponsor meetings in safe places for the school students to get together and discuss strategies.

The meeting that followed the rally had a wide-ranging discussion around climate change. It agreed on a set of aims for the following meeting, which included: to have all York schools represented in the group, to discuss the solutions to climate change at that meeting, to demand that York council produces a plan to go carbon neutral and sticks to it, to talk up the issues of climate change in schools, and to start climate change school clubs.

London

A cheer rippled through the crowd in central London when Socialist Students took to our mic and reminded everyone that Theresa May was standing down.

We went on to say we needed to get rid of all the Tories, and protest Trump's visit, because they are representatives of big business who are destroying the planet and our chances of a decent future in pursuit of profit.

A surge of students came up to us for leaflets after asking for details of the Trump walk out and how to get organised at their school.

Helen Pattison

Nottingham

Over 200 young people came to Nottingham's #youthstrike4climate. There were notably more school students than on previous strikes.

They asked searching questions about socialism and the organisation of the strikes. They agreed that capitalism would not solve the crisis and that the strikes needed to have more concrete and clearer demands. They were very interested in what socialism really is.

Some asked if we were the organisers and when I said no, they asked if we wanted to be. I said that we absolutely wanted them to organise themselves and that we were there to support them and talk to them about our ideas.

I said that the strikes were led by self-appointed organisers and that we did not think that just getting young people together for the strikes was enough.

I said that the strikes should be democratically organised and that they should form school and student unions to take the movement forward. They were very interested in this idea.

The students saw straightaway the link between protesting Trump's visit and protecting the environment. A number said that they would come to the anti-Trump protest on 3 June.

We are planning to get a group of students together, build for the next climate strike and hold a meeting straight afterwards.

Clare Wilkins Nottingham Socialist Party

Exeter

Hundreds of school students marched and rallied in Exeter - the biggest yet. The mood was very buoyant but there is an urgent need for unifying this movement with the labour and trade union movement as a force with the potential to change society - before the unrelenting greed of capitalism destroys the planet.

60 'Socialist change not climate change!' and 'Dump Trump!' badges were sold.

Sean Brogan Exeter Socialist Party

Newcastle

Given that it was an exam period, there was a large turnout for Newcastle's climate change protest, numbering in the hundreds, with an especially large representation from students who were at GCSE stage or younger. The energy of the young people was excellent.

Members of the Socialist Party were the first to turn up with a megaphone, so we implemented an open-mic policy.

One of the young people had earlier been spotted by police on CCTV using spray chalk. The police implemented a stop-and-search, and it looked like they were going to arrest him.

A Socialist Party member raised his plight with the students and encouraged them to surround the officers.

As students started chanting "let him go!" the police were clearly embarrassed and it seems he's been let go without charge.

The protest marched from the Civic Centre to the Monument at the centre of Newcastle. Our socialist chants and demands received a good response from the more working-class students on the demo, with some students filling out our join cards and expressing an interest in campaigning with us.

Later that evening one of the school students got in touch with us to say that she and her friends were facing school sanctions for going to the protest. Socialist Party members met her the next morning to discuss possible action.

Sam Morden

- [Interview with school student threatened with sanctions](#)

Birmingham

200 school students took part in a march with many shouting for change and action. Sadly, the organisers failed to raise what this change should be and the solution for climate change itself.

Birmingham Socialist Students took part calling for 'socialist change not climate change'. Every demonstrator was given our leaflet.

We raised the need for the public ownership, under worker's democratic control, of the major companies which produce most of the world's carbon emissions.

We also linked the upcoming Trump UK state visit to the climate protests - and how the billionaire class representatives are enablers of climate change by putting profit before the needs of people on the planet.

Connie Edginton, Birmingham Socialist Students

Liverpool

300 young people, mainly students on strike, protesting against climate change joined older people and other local activists to march through Liverpool city centre chanting demands.

All the speakers were school students who spoke about the need for urgent action to reverse climate change.

The Socialist Party has strenuously called for socialist policies which can reverse the damage that capitalism has done.

Neill Dunne, Liverpool and District Socialist Party

Brighton

Upwards of 800 school students marched in Brighton to protest climate change. Many of the students on the march were discussing Theresa May's resignation, announced only hours beforehand.

It is clear that the Tory government offers no solutions to this crisis and there is a big mood developing on the demonstrations for system change. Socialist Students says this change has to be socialist change.

We called for the nationalisation of the massive corporations that contribute overwhelmingly toward climate change, but also for a mass movement to kick out the Tories who represent the super-rich owners of big business.

Conor Rosoman Brighton and Sussex Socialist Students

- [Visit socialiststudents.org.uk/resources](http://socialiststudents.org.uk/resources) for help with setting up a student union at your school or college
-

Blistering UN report condemns Tory austerity - workers' action can end it

Tom Baldwin, Bristol South Socialist Party

The final United Nations report on austerity Britain pulls no punches in describing the scale and depth of poverty.

UN Special Rapporteur Philip Alston exposes the Tories' "systematic immiseration of a significant part of the British population."

It's full of hard-hitting statistics. One in five people live in poverty in the world's fifth-largest economy.

Child poverty levels rising to an expected 40% "would not just be a disgrace, but a social calamity and an economic disaster rolled into one."

The results will be sadly familiar to readers of the Socialist. They describe people choosing between eating and heating, children going to school hungry, and people forced to sell sex or join gangs to escape destitution.

The report charts the rise in food banks and homelessness, and describes how "living in poverty can also take a severe toll on physical and mental health."

Its damning conclusion is that Britain is heading towards conditions imagined by Thomas Hobbes in 1651, with the lives of the least well-off "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

The role of pro-market policies is clearly exposed. The report has sections on cutting benefits, decimating legal aid, shrinking local government funding, privatisation, and Universal Credit.

Attacks on welfare are creating "a digital and sanitised version of the nineteenth-century workhouse, made infamous by Charles Dickens."

The uncaring response of the Tories is laid bare. "In the face of these problems, the government has remained determinedly in a state of denial." They don't even measure poverty consistently, let alone address it.

The UN represents capitalist governments around the world, dominated by the most powerful countries. It is rare to see them even criticise a government like Britain's, and the report will not result in action from them.

But working-class people cannot tolerate a situation where "great misery has been inflicted unnecessarily."

This report should be a spur to follow up May's resignation with a fight to get all austerity politicians out - Tories, Blairites and the rest.

We must end poverty with socialist policies to take the wealth out of the hands of the super-rich, rather than allow society to be run in the interests of billionaires who profit at our expense.

The UN and Tories will not act for us - the trade union leaders and Jeremy Corbyn must call mass workers' action now.

Them & us

Queen for EU

Almost every major institution of world capitalism lined up behind the bosses' European Union and its forerunners. The queen, however, has long maintained her usual aloof silence on the matter.

Now diplomatic cables from 1988 published by Germany's Spiegel magazine reveal the monarchy also backed the anti-worker single market. The German ambassador reported the queen's support.

Elizabeth II joins Thatcher, Blair and Obama; the UN, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund; the main British bosses' organisations CBI, BCC and IOD; and the vast majority of the billionaires and bankers. Even the pope has praised the neoliberal project.

Perhaps the only remaining establishment organisation which has not openly declared for the EU is the Scout Association.

Work till you die

The number of people over 70 still working has more than doubled in the last decade of austerity. The 135% rise means the proportion of over-70s at work has also grown, from one in 22 to nearly one in 12.

Volunteering group Rest Less, which requested the data from the ONS, points out the health benefits of continuing some level of work into retirement.

This is no doubt true. But charity Independent Age notes that one in six pensioners now live in poverty - and numbers are rising.

Continued, fulfilling work should be a choice available to all. So should a restful retirement. Neither is on offer with poverty pensions and wages. Take the wealth off the super-rich - fight for decent jobs and homes for all, with living wages and pensions.

Save steel jobs: Demand socialist nationalisation

Alistair Tice, Yorkshire Socialist Party

On Wednesday 22 May, British Steel, the UK's second biggest steel firm, was taken into compulsory liquidation by the Insolvency Service.

The company's collapse puts 5,000 jobs at risk, 4,000 in Scunthorpe and 800 in Teesside, with another 20,000 jobs threatened in the supply chain.

The next morning's front pages of two local newspapers graphically described what this will mean for local communities. The Scunthorpe Telegraph pictured a desolated steel plant closed in Redcar in 2015, with the headline: "Don't let this happen to us!"

The Teesside Gazette ran a black-tinged front page with an image of a lone steelworker, accompanied by a quote about how the industry had again been "shafted by heartless private investors and a government unwilling to pull their finger out."

The "heartless private investors" in British Steel's case are Greybull Capital, the private equity company that bought the steel plants from Tata Steel for just £1 in 2016, at the height of the last steel crisis when 5,000 jobs were lost in the industry in a single month.

Greybull 'saved' 4,000 jobs, rebranded Tata into British Steel, and returned it to profit within 100 days, a seeming success story.

But this was achieved at the expense of the workforce, with 10% of the jobs going and a pay cut in the first year.

After two years of profits, British Steel returned to making losses from mid-2018, required a £120 million government loan to meet its carbon emissions bill from the European Union, and at the High Court this week the judge said that it has debts of £880 million and would run out of cash at the end of the week! The company's request for a further £30 million loan was refused because the government was advised that it would be illegal under EU state aid rules.

Greybull shouldn't get another penny anyhow; it has form when it comes to failed takeovers. It 'rescued' Monarch Airlines, the Comet electrical chain and others, all of which collapsed, putting several thousand staff out of work.

And while British Steel has been going bust, Greybull has been charging 9.6% interest on loans to it and has taken £20 million in fees and interest in the last year.

This is the reality of 21st century capitalism. So it's welcome that some steel trade union leaders and Jeremy Corbyn have called for the government to consider nationalisation to save the industry and jobs.

Tim Roach, general secretary of the GMB union, has raised nationalisation as an option. Steve Turner, assistant general secretary of Unite the Union, has called for public ownership until a buyer can be found.

Jeremy Corbyn has said: "...the government must act to take a public stake in the company to secure the long term future..."

The Socialist Party believes that they should be shouting for nationalisation from the rooftops. No trust can be put in another private takeover.

Nationalisation enjoys massive public support. A just-released YouGov poll has 46% supporting nationalisation with only 18% opposed.

This is a national emergency with 25,000 jobs at risk. It would actually be cheaper for the government to pay limited compensation (not to fat-cat owners, but on the basis of proven need) and subsidise the industry for a period, than the costs of paying for 5,000 redundancy packages and dole payments for another 20,000, and the loss of workers' taxes, not to mention the depression of local economies.

Not just that, if steel is nationalised then the government could use its procurement powers to secure contracts to supply the steel at guaranteed prices for infrastructure and construction projects.

Rail track, housing, hospitals and schools all need steel. A massive new wind farm is being built in the nearby Humber estuary that needs steel for the masts and blades.

So not only would steel jobs be saved, but new jobs can be created as part of a mass programme of public works.

And if nationalisation of the steel industry breaks EU rules, then what better issue from which to make the socialist case for leaving the capitalist EU, in the interests of working class people.

That was the message that Socialist Party members took to the main entrance of the Scunthorpe steel works early on Thursday 23 May, joining a solidarity protest called by local window cleaner and Labour activist Stuart Maw, who had been interviewed on the Jeremy Vine radio show the day before.

Stuart told us that he'd called the protest because on hearing the news of British Steel going bust, he thought to himself: "What can I do, I have to do something, all I can do is make a placard saying 'honk your support' to show the workers that they have public support and solidarity."

And the response shows that just like four years ago, the local community can be mobilised in their thousands, because the steel works is the heart of the town and without it, Scunny will be another Redcar.

But the steel trade unions need to take action, not just wait for a new buyer to turn up. That means petitions, yes, marches through the town, yes, but it must also mean preparing for an occupation of a strategic site or sites on the steelworks to demand socialist nationalisation and public investment.

Theresa May will be gone soon and the Tory government could collapse at any time. The Tories are so weak that with bold and determined leadership the trade unions could force even a Tory government to at least nationalise British Steel.

And even if that was only 'temporary', a Jeremy Corbyn led government could make that permanent and bring the rest of the steel industry into public ownership as well.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 24 May 2019 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

PCS conference: defeats for union officialdom and steps taken to rebuild a fighting left opposition

Marion Lloyd, PCS national executive committee (personal capacity)

For nearly 20 years PCS Left Unity has been the dominant political force in the civil servants' union and Socialist Party members have played a major role.

More recently, PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka has increasingly concentrated power in his hands with support in the union's full-time officialdom and from elements within Left Unity.

The tensions this process has created within Left Unity became apparent in the lead up to the PCS national conference which took place in Brighton 19-23 May.

Immediately preceding the conference, despite a huge effort, PCS [unfortunately failed to achieve the 50% threshold](#) for the second year running to win a statutory ballot for strike action on pay, with a 47.7% turnout. This followed sharp differences within Left Unity over [the tactics that were required to win the ballot](#).

Again taking place just before the conference was the election for assistant general secretary. Socialist Party member [Chris Baugh, the incumbent and official Left Unity candidate, was narrowly defeated](#) by Independent Left candidate John Moloney. A situation [brought about by Mark Serwotka and his supporters](#) splitting the Left Unity vote by backing a non-Left Unity full-time national officer.

This election brought to the surface differences in Left Unity: over the top-down control exercised by the union officialdom against the assertion of control by the lay structures.

Immediately before the conference, Serwotka told departmental groups the new assistant general secretary should speak at their conferences. The groups refused to replace Chris Baugh as their speaker. This show of

defiance led to a climb down by Serwotka, claiming his instructions had been misinterpreted. When asked to publish all relevant correspondence to the national executive committee Serwotka refused to do so.

Pay debate

Conference opened with a pay debate which noted the failure to secure the statutory threshold. The executive committee's motion endorsed the approach and tactics pursued in 2019 and committed to a further ballot on the same basis at an appropriate time later in the year. Opposing this was a motion by Chris4AGS supporters.

This argued for a comprehensive, open-ended analysis of the 2019 ballot and for wide consultation on the tactics for 2020.

Although the motion was carried on a card vote (For 62,676, Against 60,991 and 5,686 abstentions) the closeness of the vote reflected the divisions in the left - the leadership struggled to find supporters to speak from the floor.

In a further debate, conference overturned the leadership in carrying a censure motion. This was over the executive committee's handling of [Mark Serwotka's signature to a letter in the Morning Star](#) about the Gender Recognition Act. The letter was described by the Guardian as an attack on transgender activists and felt by many to be contrary to union policy.

A well-attended Socialist Party meeting heard from Chris Baugh and Socialist Party deputy general secretary Hannah Sell on: 'Where now for PCS as a fighting union?' The financial appeal raised £700. There was agreement around steps to be taken to reclaim Left Unity as a fighting, democratic, inclusive rank-and-file organisation.

Left Unity retreat

How far the Left Unity retreat from its founding principles has gone was brought home when delegates, on their way to the Left Unity rally, were handed leaflets by prominent Left Unity national committee members announcing Mark Serwotka's re-election campaign.

The Socialist Workers Party, who were first in the line of those handing out leaflets, had no answer to the question: "What democratic process did this go through?"

Serwotka, astonishingly given his backing for a non-Left Unity candidate in the assistant general secretary campaign, spoke at the rally and made clear that the pre-emptive announcement of his candidature was exactly that.

The Left Unity national committee members handing out the Serwotka leaflet are obviously expecting some sort of coronation but this will not be acceptable to most activists who will demand a democratic election process to determine who will be the Left Unity candidate.

The 2019 PCS conference will be seen as a defining conference where activists sought to challenge the control exercised by the union officialdom and its echoes in the lay structures.

The push back against these developments was evidenced in the standing ovations given to Chris Baugh at the conference, the near defeat of the platform on pay, the censure on the Gender Recognition Act and the angry reaction to Serwotka's contemptuous announcement of his candidature for re-election over the heads of the activists.

Determined Sellafield nuclear workers' industrial action continues

Brent Kennedy, Cumbria Unite Community and Socialist Party

The confidence and determination of the [low-paid Mitie workers at the Sellafield nuclear site](#) in Cumbria is rising with every day on strike and with every gesture of solidarity from other workers.

They are fighting not just for a substantial wage rise but also to have their union, Unite, recognised.

After three ten-day strikes, a meeting attended by about 100 of the 180 strikers voted to escalate the fight with a two-week strike from 2 June.

At a meeting in Carlisle called by Cumbria Unite Community branch to organise solidarity, Mitie worker Debbie Matthews and Unite organiser Michelle Smith revealed the dirty, dangerous and bullying reality behind the glossy, hi-tech image of the biggest industrial site in the country.

"We work in the same environment as the skilled workers but without the training and protection. I've had to clear out cupboards containing used protective masks and I worked in a building full of asbestos. Even some of the Sellafield direct workers haven't had hot water to shower or wash their hands after the toilet." Science hasn't brought civilisation to Sellafield!

A male and a female security guard had been told to stand in one place for hours without a toilet break. One suffered the indignation of peeing into a bottle, the other eventually suffered the humiliation of wetting themselves but then having to carry on working and travelling home by train.

"Another girl went into premature labour because of the bullying. I had months off due to the stress. For a long time I've worked seven days a week, because the basic pay simply doesn't cover the bills. The wage has only gone up £3 in 20 years."

Mitie have offered a wage rise of just 24p above the minimum wage. The local GMB union accepted this, as they have accepted all these shameful conditions for years. But having suffered the results of 'social partnership' these downtrodden workers have become militant.

Debbie says: "I moved to Unite three months ago. Since then, Unite has backed us up more than the GMB in 14 years. Solidarity? We're like a family now. Now we've got a voice we're getting braver. We're like an army. We get up at 3am for the picket line with a song in our hearts! After getting the solidarity from the Sellafield workers and contractors we go home skipping and dancing."

Michelle sees a bigger potential strength in the Sellafield workforce, and this strike has shown them it. "The Mitie members have a big participation, it's member-led, with meetings of 60-70 since last August and mass picketing. The motto is, if you're on strike, you're on the picket line - not in bed."

This was echoed at their recent strike meeting where the Sellafield Unite branch gave support and the convenor said: "Your strike has set a new benchmark for us - this is the best organised strike I've seen here in 40 years."

Kirkby factory workers walk out over unfair dismissal

Neill Dunne, Liverpool and District Socialist Party

On 20 May I attended the picket line for an unfair dismissal at Colloids factory in Kirkby. A Unite the Union shop steward claims he was singled out and targeted for unfair dismissal.

He said that he was sacked for not wearing personal protective clothing while entering the shop floor to hand in a sick note!

A culture of no helmets and/or hi vis vests had seeped into the workplace culture so this shows that a union rep had possibly been targeted to be made an example of while other cases have been ignored. Unite has

supported this strike and intend to see this fight on till the end.

With other workers concerned at the nature of the sacking, staff have now asked for forms to join the union for possible legal protection in the future.

The strike has gained support from local activists and has now lasted over a week. There is now a big effort to get a big turnout when the company's CEO arrives soon.

The strikers want to see the Unite rep reinstated with a member of staff demanding: "A warning is all that is needed, and consistency with the disciplinary process with nobody singled out for harsher treatment is important in any workplace."

Wales train fleet workers to strike against transfer to private company

Ross Saunders, Socialist Party Wales

RMT transport union members in train fleet maintenance in Wales are planning to strike against a threat to their job security, pensions, pay and terms and conditions.

A resounding 98% voted in favour of strike action on an 80% turnout, which should give confidence to union members everywhere that with the right approach it is possible to defeat the Tory anti-union laws.

Members will begin an overtime ban on the 3 June and the first 48-hour strike on 8 June because new franchise holder 'Transport for Wales' wants to transfer the workforce to contractors, especially Stadler and Spanish firm Construcciones y Auxiliar Ferrocarriles (CAF), rather than include them in the firm employing all other rail workers.

CAF is currently involved in locking out workers in New Zealand. Union members here are correct to fight against being handed over to companies like CAF without assurances and the whole trade union movement should rally to support them.

The union campaigned for the service to be taken into public ownership and said it was "appalled and angry" that the Labour-run Welsh Government not only handed the franchise to private company KeolisAmey (which run it through the Transport for Wales front in order to give the impression that it is publicly owned) but also opted to privatise the Network Rail workforce too.

It's now trying to outsource this group of workers to subcontractors without guarantees on job security and conditions.

Underinvestment

The RMT is in a powerful position. Thanks to decades of underinvestment by the private companies that run Wales' railways (particularly the hated previous franchise holder, Arriva Trains Wales), the trains and track are far below the standard needed for a reliable modern rail system and rely on maintenance workers to keep the literally creaking infrastructure moving.

Last October - just a month into Transport for Wales' tenure - a third of trains were put out of action by bad weather. Maintenance workers are angry that their reward for the extra effort they put in to get the trains moving again last autumn - including during rugby internationals when 100,000 people can travel to the city - is being rewarded a few months later with an attack on their job security.

Arriva had the highest subsidy per passenger per mile of any rail company in the UK and one of the worst records on cancellations and delays. Passengers partied in an event called through social media when Arriva's tenure was over, but they are now accusing Transport for Wales of having "gone Arriva on us".

It's a far cry from Transport for Wales chief executive James Price's claim that "the service will be unrecognisably better for people" and "one of the best in the world."

The problems on our railways won't be solved unless we tap in to the experience, knowledge and expertise of railway workers who know the business best, and let them control and manage the service in conjunction with passenger representatives and the wider working class in a publicly owned railway system.

No problems will be solved by handing them over to the most profit-hungry of private companies, who have proved time and again their willingness to sacrifice the interests of passengers, the workforce and service for short-term gain. Everyone who travels on the railways should support the action of RMT members: they're fighting for us all.

India: Modi victory underlines need for real socialist fightback

India's general election has returned the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to government. Confounding expectations, the far-right, Hindu-nationalist force even increased its vote.

BJP leader Narendra Modi has presided over brutal repression, in particular of oppressed castes. His economic policies have not delivered jobs for workers and youth, or relief for struggling farmers.

But rather than presenting a clear alternative to these failures, opposition parties limited themselves to simply contradicting Modi's bigoted scapegoating and strongman methods. In the vacuum right populism can make gains.

The traditional left - Stalinists, Maoists and social democrats - has all but disappeared. Years of 'lesser evil' support for 'progressive' capitalists have discredited them and obscured any elements of a socialist alternative.

A powerful, mass, working-class and poor people's party, with a fighting, socialist programme based on an independent class alternative, is yet more urgent.

- [Read the full analysis at socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net)
-

Trump out - Tories out!

Portsmouth Socialist Party

Tens of thousands will take to the streets of London on 4 June to protest against the visit of US president Donald Trump. During his state visit he will also attend - at the invitation of doomed prime minister Theresa May - D-Day commemorations in Portsmouth, angering many.

The sacrifice of D-Day soldiers and others in the fight against fascism during World War Two led to the election of a reforming Labour government in 1945, by returning servicemen and women, determined not to see a return to the capitalist crisis and austerity of the 1930s.

To see May and Trump show their respects is the height of hypocrisy after overseeing a decade of austerity that has thrown many veterans further into poverty, with cuts on pensions, benefits, housing and the NHS.

The great-great grandchildren of these veterans, also hit by austerity, are joining the fightback by leading climate strikes. They are helping to build the protests against Trump in Portsmouth alongside local trade unionists.

These world leaders, 'masters of the universe', are masters of hypocrisy. Their claims to defend democracy and act for the many as voices for peace and prosperity are shallow lies to hide the reality. Representatives of the super-rich, their policies are for imperialist plunder and profit, if necessary through war and sponsoring dictatorships.

For workers and their families in Portsmouth, including those working in the armed forces and defence industries, their policies of austerity have led to massive cuts in jobs, particularly at Portsmouth BAE dockyards, pay, pensions, benefits, education, the NHS and council services.

Growing poverty, food banks and homelessness is the outcome. For armed forces personnel returning from conflict, cuts to mental health services has left many of them suicidal and living on the streets.

Portsmouth trade unionists, students and socialists have come together to sign a joint letter of protest opposing the visit of Trump saying: "Trump's system is one of war and militarism, exploitation and misery, racism and misogyny.

"We stand for a system based on solidarity and the belief that together, united as a class, working people can surmount the international problems caused by the elites like Donald Trump - from climate change to capitalism itself."

This letter has raised the call made by the Socialist Party for an immediate general election to bring down the Tory government which invited Trump: "An immediate general election, putting an anti-austerity Jeremy Corbyn led Labour government committed to socialist policies in power, is the only way to deliver for the many not the few."

Only on the basis of a socialist world can we hope to see an end to poverty, racism and war, where the world's resources can be used in a rational way through democratic workers' control and planning to meet the needs of all and the planet.

Fight the far-right - fight for socialist policies

Neill Dunne, Liverpool and District Socialist Party

Liverpool and District Socialist Party members were part of the counter-demonstration against right-wing racist Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, aka Tommy Robinson, when he attempted to hold a Euro-election rally in the Bootle Dock area on 19 May.

His 30-40 supporters were eclipsed by around 250 counter-demonstrators who drowned out his hateful speech.

Some scuffles broke out when his supporters acted provocatively from behind (and in front) a police cordon.

Two hours later he took his rally to Huyton, Knowsley, on the opposite side of the city. But this time he had far bigger crowd of about 300 supporters while there were only 75-100 counter-demonstrators.

Addressing the counter-demonstration was Labour Mersey Mayor Steve Rotheram and Knowsley Labour MP George Howarth. But the mood was sour.

There was a sense of bewilderment at how both politicians talked of 'socialism' as a tool for battling hate speech, when all the while they've been brazenly raising council tax, privatising services, and implementing cuts in a grotesque lack of opposition to austerity measures.

This has allowed the far-right and right-wing populists to opportunistically capitalise on poverty-stricken communities which are desperately looking for answers to pressing social problems.

Knowsley has already seen prejudice taken out on BAME communities with the horrific killings of Anthony Walker in a park and a Sri Lankan shopkeeper.

The Socialist Party has continuously called for Labour councils to refuse to implement devastating cuts and demand more funds from central government via mass campaigns.

A no-cuts strategy could mobilise communities towards socialist ideas and reduce the large turnouts for the far-right.

This is the reason why I've stood against right-wing Labour councillors in Knowsley, to offer a socialist alternative.

The solidarity that Rotherham and Howarth call for is needed. But their ideas and actions will not achieve it.

Robinson - founder of the racist English Defence League and now advisor to Ukip leader Gerard Batten - failed to win a seat in the north west.

And despite much media coverage, he got only 2.2% of the vote and lost his £5,000 deposit.

Batten lost his seat as did all of Ukip's MEPs after the increasingly far-right party slumped from 26.6% (the biggest party in the 2014 Euro-election) to just 3.3% of the vote.

Teignmouth: hands off our community hospital!

Sean Brogan, chair, Unite Community South Devon branch (personal capacity) and Exeter Socialist Party

Teignmouth people took to the streets again protesting against the threatened closure of their community hospital. This was the ninth march and rally - exhibiting a never give up attitude!

Having already lost two wards, the hospital is slated for complete closure despite the high demand for its services.

The Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has closed nearly every community hospital in Devon. In its so-called 'consultation' the CCG chose to show our hospital in the worst light - having seen maintenance deliberately run down over the years.

At the rally, the hypocrites of both the Tory Party and Lib Dems (ie the Tory second eleven) called for it to be kept open, despite having started the closure process when in coalition!

I condemned them both and called for a general election and the abolition of the 2012 Health and Social Care Act - a privatisers' charter.

The march was well supported by South Devon Unite Community branch and the local Labour Party.

Birmingham Pride - revitalising political struggle

Corinthia Ward, North Birmingham Socialist Party

Birmingham Socialist Party members joined the thousands of people taking part in this year's Birmingham Pride parade.

Pride - an event which originates from the 1969 Stonewall Riots against police attacks - has a rich political history against oppression of LGBTQ+ people.

However, you would not know this by looking at the groups in this year's parade. From TSB bank to Cadbury and private solicitor firms giving away free goodies, and the fact that the cost of the evening events go up to £70 a ticket!

Despite trade union blocs being present they were towards the back of the parade after the corporations and even the West Midlands Police.

Socialist Party members tried to bring politics to the event, linking the needs of LGBTQ+ people to the austerity attacks by the Tories and local councils on public services.

We raised the demands for affordable, council housing and a fully funded NHS with access to adequate mental health services.

Over 1,000 leaflets were handed out - being snatched out of our hands as it was the only political material being given out on the day! Many, especially young people, engaged with us about the effect of cuts on not only fellow LGBTQ+ people, but also on the wider community they live in.

This shows that people are eager to see Pride as more than just a rainbow celebration of being LGBTQ+.

Pride should be used to fight back against oppression and as a platform to promote socialist policies.

Why I joined the Socialist Party

The unheard voices of Gosport

Peter Winter, Portsmouth Socialist Party

My name is Peter Winter. Throughout my life in Gosport, I have seen and experienced first-hand the effects of austerity on my generation and those that came before.

The cuts to my education, which still continue for me in the youth services I work for, made everything seem as if it was crashing to a halt. My family served in the navy, police force and care industries, so I naturally came to work in care as well.

I can say that due to the cuts life is getting harder for those just trying to make ends meet. I work as an activities coordinator, youth worker, and tutor just to survive. I want eventually to work with the NHS as an art therapist.

I've been speaking with some others of my generation in Gosport to discuss, in our opinion, what is happening and what should happen in the years to come.

Mass poverty - estimated by the Resolution Foundation as 23.2% at risk of poverty in the UK - is perceived as a massive injustice committed by the Tories. Alongside this, councils have cut youth services by about £70 per child since 2010-11 - 70% of the budget - according to Labour analysis.

It is blatant that the government does not care for people struggling with mental health issues. Ellie H pointed out to me that Theresa May lit up Downing Street in green to mark the beginning of mental health awareness week. Meanwhile, her government has cut millions from mental health funding in real terms.

Ellie and Jay B agreed the Conservatives have put the working class in dire circumstances. Workers have to watch our friends and family struggling from month to month, year to year. Where has all the money gone from these cuts?

Shannon L asked "why were the cuts needed within the sectors the Conservatives chose?" They seem to focus on what the working class relies on, such as funding to attend further and higher education. For many students now, their 'bursaries' are their parents' income.

A shared fear is the deprivation of the NHS. We demand public ownership of a health service for the people. There is also the fear of prices continuing to go up as wages remain the same, below the living wage.

And the people I spoke to also had a lot to say about Donald Trump visiting Portsmouth - the other side of the harbour to Gosport - for the 75th anniversary of D-Day. Shannon and Izzy W felt May's government had tried to put everyone in Britain in an alliance with a sexist, homophobic, racist president.

On the subject of Trump taking part in the anniversary, it was seen as a disgrace on all of the working-class people who fought in World War Two who were told it was to end the persecution of millions.

Persecution is all Trump has done as president. He has carried on all the vicious anti-worker policies of US capitalism, while further persecuting minorities such as LGBT+ people, further victimising and humiliating women, further oppressing thousands of migrants and asylum seekers, and more.

Many in our generation view Trump as "playing games with the lives of millions of people," to quote Shannon. The Tories are selling us out, auctioning off our services and livelihoods, backed by the Blairites, while May holds Trump's hand in the process.

I became aware of the Socialist Party mid-2018 while looking into political parties and their policies and how they could affect me. In addition to Labour, the Socialist Party seemed the most logical option.

I want to help people, to give back to my community. By joining the Socialist Party I am now able to, through activism that I believe can shape our world into a better place.

- Join the Socialist Party: socialistparty.org.uk/join

Obituary: Pauline Dunlop (1947-2019)

It was with great sadness that we learned of the death of our good comrade Pauline Dunlop. The messages already posted on social media testify to the esteem in which she was held.

Pauline was a stalwart socialist and Labour councillor who supported Militant, forerunner of the Socialist Party. She played a leading role in the [1980s struggle to defend Liverpool from Thatcherism](#).

In her capacity as deputy chair of personnel, she played a key role in liaising with the local authority trade unions who, in the main, gave massive support to the 47 socialist Liverpool councillors.

She was courageous and unflinching in her defence of the socialist policies determined by representatives of the city's working class through the District Labour Party. Her speeches espousing support for those policies, and the necessity of socialism to replace capitalism, both in party meetings and the council chamber, were models of clarity.

Pauline was present on all the great demonstrations organised in support of the council. On many she could be seen carrying the banner bearing the immortal words "better to break the law than to break the poor."

While Neil Kinnock's Labour leadership ferociously opposed such a brave, uncompromising sentiment, Pauline was one of the strongest advocates for its practical application. She was, without question, a warrior in defending the 'city that dared to fight'.

She will be sadly missed. We send our condolences to Pauline's family.

Tony Mulhearn, president, Liverpool District Labour Party, 1980-86

Obituary: John Boots (1942-2019)

We are sad to report the death of long-standing Hillingdon Socialist Party member John Boots, who has died aged 76.

John first became politically active during the [great anti-poll tax movement of the 1990s](#). He remained a convinced socialist and active in many local campaigns over the years, including the successful campaign against the transfer of Hillingdon Council housing stock to private landlords.

He attended his party branch regularly, and also our regular Saturday sales of the Socialist newspaper, until the last few years when his health started to deteriorate. But he remained passionate and steadfast in his socialist beliefs.

An engineer by trade, John would read widely on a range of subjects, and was also the practical handyman of the branch, never failing to help sort comrades' household problems.

He was not one to be fobbed off by authority and would rage against the greedy capitalists whenever he came across injustices.

John is remembered with great fondness and humour. For someone born on 14 July - when 230 years ago the storming of the Bastille political prison began the French revolution - we will honour his memory by remembering why we are all involved in revolutionary politics.

Rob Diment, Hillingdon Socialist Party

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!
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<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/29172>