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# the Socialist

Issue 1104

8-14 October 2020

formerly **Militant**

## TORIES PUT PROFIT FIRST

# GAMBLING WITH OUR JOBS AND LIVES

JAMES IVENS

**R**oll up, roll up, and place your bets - at the great pandemic wheel of fortune! Red, you win the virus; black, you lose your job. Don't fancy the odds? Too late! The government has made a wager on your behalf.

Or how about a hand of lockdown poker? Stop the spread or open the economy; packed queues at work or social isolation at home - it's dealer's choice! Unfortunately, only Tory ministers are permitted to deal. Sorry - house rules!

And here's the secret: the house always wins. While workers risk whiplash following the back and forth on pandemic restrictions, it's our livelihoods - and our lives - the bosses and their politicians are gambling with.

The world feels like it's spiralling into chaos despite most of us doing our best to stop it. But while we suffer the risks and the restrictions, the dole queues and the disease, the capitalists are still cashing in.

Billionaires in the US sucked up another \$845 billion of wealth during the pandemic's first six months. Union buster Jim Ratcliffe, Britain's richest man, has moved to Monaco to dodge tax.

### Winners and losers

If you feel like you play the game but never win, you're right. If you feel like the restrictions and exemptions can be arbitrary and unfair, you're right.

So the rules of the game need to change. Workers and our unions have the power to change them.

Instead of employment roulette, we demand work or full pay. Instead of coronavirus lottery, we fight for workers' control of workplace safety. Instead of one rule for us and another for Dominic Cummings, we call for democratic oversight of lockdown measures by unions and communities.

The capitalist casino issued billions of free chips to big business when the bosses' luck turned. We know the resources are there. We just need to build a movement to fight for them.

For public ownership and democratic planning, not capitalism's Covid casino. Join the Socialists, and together we can beat the house.

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STUDENTS FIGHT BACK >>> p2 AND 11

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The Socialist is written, read, sold and bought by ordinary workers, trade unionists, young people and Socialist Party members. We want you to write for the Socialist.

Send us reports of your workplace and community campaigns, short letters on working-class issues, or ideas for other articles.

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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."  
**Karl Marx**



## Cardiff student protest demands: 'refund our fees!'

**ELIN WILDING**  
CARDIFF SOCIALIST PARTY

Students in lockdown Cardiff protested on Sunday 4 October to demand the refunding of student fees for this year, and the abolition of tuition fees entirely. Around 70 students attended in spite of the Welsh weather. The mood was angry and has been for the last week. The demonstration was called by a student and backed by Socialist Students. Students have been lured back to campus with promises of freshers' events and face-to-face teaching - which has been an unrealistic notion since the pandemic began - only to find that they are now at the forefront of the 'Tory blame game' for spreading Covid-19. Instead, they will be stuck inside to stare at a screen for £9,250 a year, when they could have stayed at home and saved thousands of pounds on rent. Speakers included students, Cardiff Trades Union Council, and Socialist Students member Campbell Wallace: "We have all experienced, or are currently experiencing, the damaging effects of paying £9,250 a year for tuition... They tell us that students meeting in large groups is the problem. "Yet weeks ago we had Tory ministers telling us to 'eat out to help out'. We see Rishi Sunak posing for photos with a bevy in his hand at the pub, making us think this is OK. Coronavirus rates go up, yet for some reason, students get the blame." Every student that spoke expressed the same frustration and anger at the situation universities and the government have put them in. Once the speeches were over, nearly everyone at the protest began queueing up to speak to the Socialist Party. They wanted to sign our petition to scrap tuition fees, as well as expressing interest in an upcoming meeting organised by Socialist Students this week.

## Southampton students oppose unjust collective punishment

● For democratic oversight of Covid-19 measures by elected staff and student committees

**SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST STUDENTS**  
The University of Southampton had planned to "hold all students equally responsible" for a party that took place in Chamberlain Halls on 29 September. This was a gathering that most residents of that block did not attend - many were not even aware of it taking place! Socialist Students deem this suggested blanket punishment unjust, and agreed we wanted to put out a statement expressing our support for the students unfairly affected. The university has now backtracked and students affected have received news that only the people in attendance will face consequences. While we are pleased with this news, we still thought it was a good opportunity to show our solidarity. We agree and acknowledge that Covid-19 restrictions are essential in order to curb an outbreak of the virus. However, as students, we have largely been encouraged to go about our university experience as normal. The majority of students have some teaching on campus, and first-years have all been given the green light to move into halls as they would in other years. In a time where people are trying to form new friendships, and adapting to a new environment, we think it was unfair to expect students to have reported the party. It's important for us that in the future we're not treated unfairly in circumstances like these. The majority of us try to take every precaution to be safe and reduce the risk of Covid-19 spreading. We hold the university management responsible for the situation developing. Staff employed in halls of residents to support us have been put in an impossible situation. The focus should be on continuing to test all students and staff regularly, and to give support and resources for mandatory isolation periods. University management has shown that it is incapable of providing this. We call for the democratic oversight of Covid-19 measures by elected staff and student committees. Vilifying a large group of students - most of whom were not present at the party, or even aware it was happening - is only going to cause tensions within the university community. We call for solidarity between students and staff - to fight for free, safe, and high-quality education.

## Under the microscope

**Tory areas dodge lockdown**  
Wealthy areas and Tory seats are avoiding local lockdown, according to health officials' emails leaked to the Times. Matt Hancock, the health secretary, decides which areas should go into lockdown during a weekly meeting. But there is no threshold for Covid-19 infection rates to trigger this. Richmondshire in North Yorkshire, which includes Rishi Sunak's constituency and is among the least deprived areas in Britain, has avoided lockdown despite an infection rate of 73 new cases for every 100,000 people. This is a higher rate than Wolverhampton, Chorley, Lancaster, and Oadby and Wigston, which all remain under local lockdown.

**One-third of bosses plan lay-offs**  
Over a third of UK employers plan redundancies in the next three months, according to a YouGov poll of managers. This is evidence that the government's so-called 'Job Support Scheme' isn't working. Then again, Sunak himself said "I can't save every job."

It's not too late to extend furlough and this is what unions should be fighting for. It's not too late to save jobs! Nationalise those firms threatening redundancy under democratic workers' control.

**20,000 cases at Amazon**  
19,816 Amazon workers in the US have contracted Covid-19 since March, the company reports. At the same time, Amazon's profits have soared. Last quarter they achieved record profits of \$5.2 billion.

**Vaccination - don't get your hopes up**  
Less than half of the UK will get a Covid-19 vaccination. Many of us, encouraged by the government, have been 'holding out for a vaccine'. The head of the government's Vaccine Taskforce says that hope for the whole population to be vaccinated is "misguided."

She also says there will be no vaccines for people under 18 - only for those over 50, health and care workers, and the vulnerable. Big pharma has huge resources and fat profits. Nationalise it to guarantee vaccines for all. Distribute them under democratic working-class control.

**Tory NHS disruption hypocrisy**  
"We could be looking at tens of thousands of avoidable deaths within a year" - these are the words of the Tory former health secretary, Jeremy Hunt. The NHS that he - until recently - presided over, has found itself overwhelmed and unable to cope during the pandemic. Despite promises to introduce weekly testing across Britain - for NHS staff - this has not happened. "Failure to do so creates a real risk that the NHS will be forced to retreat into being a largely Covid-only service during a second spike," Hunt says.

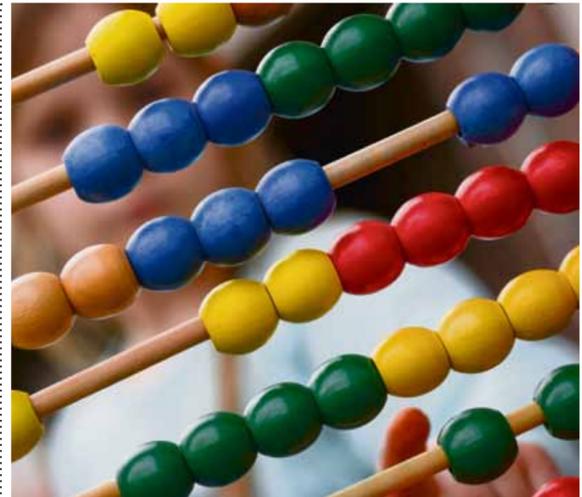
If the NHS hadn't faced years and years of austerity and privatisation, it would be much better placed to cope. Renationalise it, fully fund it, and give the staff a 15% rise!

## Massive testing 'glitch' caused by privatised fragmentation

**ANNON**  
COMPUTER PROGRAMMER,  
NORTH LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Public Health England mislaid 15,841 positive Covid-19 results that needed reporting and contact tracing, due to what Tory ministers described as a "glitch." Reportedly, the thousands of missing entries were due to lab results being fed into Excel spreadsheets - and overflowing the maximum number of rows allowed. For a whole week, new case numbers were reported at around 7,000 per day, while thousands of extra cases beyond the software's row limit were silently truncated. Incredibly, the government has announced that the problem has been solved by increasing the number of spreadsheets involved.

The use of Excel spreadsheets for a mission-critical system is the IT equivalent of building it out of elastic bands and duct tape. A properly engineered solution would have the testing machines feed their results directly into the NHS database. Standard, free, open-source databases such as MySQL or Postgres routinely handle millions of rows, can be updated from multiple locations simultaneously, and can be read by multiple people simultaneously. This is not rocket science, it is standard IT practice. This is how NHS hospitals process 800 million biochemistry and haematology samples per year. But the privatisation of testing - outsourced to companies such as Deloitte, Serco, Sodexo and G4S



- created a fragmentation of incompatible systems. The tried and tested public systems were bypassed. The seams are held together with 'CSV' files and Excel spreadsheets. This system is run in the interests of the profiteers. It is incapable of testing the required numbers, incapable of providing the results in a timely manner, and incapable of delivering them to patients, GPs and contact tracers. The "glitch" has meant that tens of thousands of coronavirus contacts were not reached and told to isolate before they had the chance to spread the virus to many more people. This latest debacle illustrates the

ineptitude of the capitalist market, and the need for a socialist system organised for public health, not private profit.

## Contact tracer speaks out: privatised system 'in chaos'

**AN NHS CONTACT TRACER**

On Saturday 3 October, at 2pm, I got a text from NHS Professionals: "CALL TO ACTION we have an urgent requirement to fill additional shifts this weekend. Please log on to book into shifts." I did book four hours on Sunday. For most of the summer, I had very few people who had tested positive for Covid-19 assigned to me to call during shifts, and very few shifts available to book. The past few weeks I've had a few more shifts and three or four calls to make. On Sunday I had 20! Each call normally takes 30 to 45 minutes, but most aren't answered and go to voicemail. There were no shifts available on Sunday to book for Monday or Tuesday. But Monday afternoon, I got another text: "URGENT: Test and Trace

### Stop press: local tracing cut back

As the Socialist was going to press, contact tracers had been told not to inform local health protection teams of positive cases who work or attend any educational setting. Apparently, single cases in these settings - obvious risks for wide spread of the virus - are no longer followed up locally! As an individual, I can't know whether there's a single or multiple cases in a school or workplace. That's why it needs escalation, so local follow-up can stop the virus spreading. Even if local teams still somehow receive notification of multiple cases, they will lose the advance warning provided by single cases.



**The use of Excel for a mission-critical system is the IT equivalent of building it out of elastic bands and duct tape**

ineptitude of the capitalist market, and the need for a socialist system organised for public health, not private profit.



**Contact tracing should be a locally based, properly funded public service**

shifts available for today evening and throughout the day tomorrow." The privatised and centralised Serco/Sitel system seems to be in chaos. Just about everyone except the government now agrees with what the Socialist has argued from the start - contact tracing should be a locally based, properly funded public service. Where has the much-vaunted 'efficiency' of profit-run big business got us?

# Socialist Party

## WHAT WE STAND FOR

The Socialist Party fights for socialism - a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also oppose every cut, fighting in our day-to-day campaigning for every possible improvement for working-class people. The organised working class has the potential power to stop the cuts and transform society. As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) which organises across the world. Our demands include...

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

**ENVIRONMENT**  
● Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and un-recycled waste.  
● Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.  
● A democratically planned, low-fare, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

**RIGHTS**  
● Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.  
● Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.  
● Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.  
● For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.  
● For the right to vote at 16.

**MASS WORKERS' PARTY**  
● For a mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

**SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM**  
● No to imperialist wars and occupations.  
● Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.  
● A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.  
● No to the bosses' neoliberal European Union and single market. For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!

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# Spooks step up surveillance of left

DAVE CARR

“MI5 confronts terror threat from left-wing extremists,” screamed a headline in the Times on 3 October. This right-wing propaganda is designed to tar socialists with the same brush as the far-right and jihadist organisations.

In fact, earlier this year, MI5 - Britain's domestic spy agency - took over from the police the main responsibility for dealing with domestic terrorism because of the increased threats from neo-Nazis. Indeed, the same Times article goes on to admit that “Whitehall sources emphasised the left-wing anarchist threat was a tiny fraction of cases compared with Islamist and far-right threats.”

Individual terrorism - the use of violent conspiracy rather than mass movements to achieve political aims - is not a strategy pursued by genuine Marxists. Marx, Lenin and Trotsky all criticised the counter-productive, pseudo-revolutionary methods of ultra-lefts who went down that road.

However, that hasn't stopped MI5 throughout its sordid history infiltrating, informing on and subverting workers' organisations and socialist parties, in order to defend the capitalist state and profit system.

Indeed, the modern British state has always pursued counter-revolutionary methods against the workers' and socialist movement. The Socialist has published many articles giving historical examples of such police surveillance.

More recently, it has been revealed how police agent provocateurs infiltrated, unsuccessfully, the Socialist Party and its predecessor Militant, and our broad anti-racist campaign Youth Against Racism in Europe. (See 'Police spies and the workers' movement' by Socialist Party general secretary Hannah Sell, at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk).)

Socialist Party members will soon be giving evidence and making statements at the recommenced Pitchford Inquiry into police spies - despite not being able to question those spies, and the inquiry not delivering its report until 2023.

As Hannah concluded in the aforementioned article: “No amount of police infiltration of left-wing organisations will prevent future mass movements - they will take place because of workers' and young people's own experience of austerity and the inability of capitalism to meet their aspirations.”

Despite the recent revelations in the media of dirty tricks conducted by undercover police spies, and despite the fact that former Tory prime minister David Cameron had to apologise when it was revealed that undercover spies had been involved in the loyalist paramilitary murder of Belfast lawyer Pat Finucane in 1989, the Johnson government has recently introduced a 'licence to kill' bill.

Under the terms of this bill, undercover MI5 operatives and agents can carry out crimes - including torture and murder - with impunity. In fact, MI5's use of such violent methods was upheld by the investigatory powers tribunal last year. Now, the government wants to firm this up in law.

MI5 poses as the agency protecting the British public from terrorism and defending 'democracy'. In practice it has failed miserably on both counts.

Firstly, on preventing terrorist attacks - ask the relatives of the victims of the Manchester Arena bombing if they are satisfied with MI5's role. Secondly, this year's much-delayed publication of a parliamentary report on Russian state interference in British public life concluded that Britain's spooks had taken their eye off the ball.

Of course, Boris Johnson prevented publication during last year's general election as it exposed that UK-based Russian oligarchs - well-connected to Putin and the Kremlin - were generous funders of the Tory party.

The report also warned that “members of the House of Lords have business interests linked to Russia, or work directly for major Russian companies linked to the Russian state.” This is the Russian state widely held responsible for the poisoning of its political opponents, including those living in Britain.

## Film: 'Sick'

# 'They've got people looking in the wrong direction'



LINDSEY MORGAN  
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

'Sick' is a heart-wrenching drama/documentary that uses the real stories of benefit claimants battling, and sometimes losing to, the system to claim Personal Independence Payment, and also work capability assessments for Employment Support Allowance.

The film starts with a monologue by 'Ted' - a mentally ill claimant, teeth worn down by stress - talking with the person who went to his assessment with him. He talks about how the government has made us the enemy, and the serious and dreadful consequences of trying to get evidence for the assessment.

He talks about writing a diary, which claimants are advised to do for two weeks, to write down all the ways their disabilities impact their daily lives. This is the case for many claimants, particularly those with learning disabilities - who may not be able to get any support with the forms due to overstretched services.

Ted - who says his “head is a shed,” and struggles with being able to write, let alone explain the complex ways life is impacted by mental illness - is dead by the end of the film, as he was in his real life.

A series of stories are told throughout the film - of workers losing their jobs and fighting suicide, of “pills prescribed to obliterate the misery,” of carers desperate to get money to pay for what their loved ones need but often are refused. Stories all too familiar to most of us.

The film is an incredibly distressing and difficult watch, including for those of us who have had these battles. Waiting a year for specialist

therapy, being found fit for work twice with zero points, and eventually having to take my case to tribunal, meant that the film stirred up the anger and distress I felt at a system that could have killed me.

Cruelty is built into the system; not just the benefits system, but capitalism itself. It coerces workers, as it says in the film, to accept any pay, any conditions. In the capitalists' view, anything is better than being a claimant: ‘take any job, any hours - if you don't, this will happen to you.’ But as Ted says, “it doesn't have to be like this.”

Years of Tory rule and the billionaires' press demonising disabled people have meant that “disabled people, once a source of compassion and care, have become an object of suspicion, discrimination and contempt.”

This is barbarism on a grand scale. The bosses want people looking in the wrong direction - blaming the disabled, blaming the unemployed, blaming workers - rather than pointing the blame squarely at a system which pitches us all against each other.

Claimants have, as shown in the film, blamed assessors and Department for Work and Pensions decision-makers for not getting the money they need to live. As the public face of the system, this is understandable.

But what the film also points out is the need for solidarity and working together. PCS, the civil service workers' union, as well as the Socialist Party, call for ending these assessments immediately. Doctors' and other specialists' evidence should be enough, without making at-risk people jump through hoops that when they fail, can lead to malnutrition and suicide.

There should be work or full pay for everyone. As unemployment soars, and many more are made disabled by Covid-19 or further austerity, the need for a fair benefits system will be more pronounced.

The trade union movement, community organisations, unemployed workers and young people must fight together collectively to replace the harsh benefits system. To make it thorough and permanent, we must fight for a socialist system, where everyone's needs are taken care of.

The money is there, as Ted said: “Look at that. A hundred billion pounds, just like that. Out of fresh air they did a thousand billion to get the bankers out of trouble and yet they're putting me and lots of other poor bastards to all this. They've got people looking in the wrong direction.”

• Search 'With Subs SICK' on YouTube to watch the film



PHOTO PAUL MATTSSON

## SOCIALISM TODAY

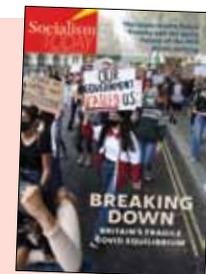
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October issue includes...

- Breaking down: The fragile equilibrium cannot last
- Results fiasco: Should there be exams anyway?
- Leon Trotsky and the revolutionary party

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PAUL MATTSSON

## Probation Service: 'angry, frustrated' staff need fighting lead

### A PROBATION HOSTEL WORKER

The criminal justice system was already stretched to breaking point before Covid. Massive redundancies have left prisons understaffed, with inexperienced officers dealing with prisoners with complex needs.

And the Probation Service has also taken a hit with cuts and privatisation of certain sectors. Parts of probation dealing with low-risk offenders are being taken back into the public sector, because offending rates went up when they were privatised.

Probation hostels work with high-risk offenders, usually violent or sexual offenders, and were not privatised - although maintenance of buildings and equipment is contracted out.

We can wait months for showers to be fixed and spend hours chasing jobs. Contractors often come 50 or 100 miles to fix something that should take less than half an hour, only to discover they haven't brought the correct part.

In one hostel, a corroded gas pipe was discovered. The pipe was directly beneath the duty office and could easily have caused an explosion.

Private contracting is the most inefficient, dangerous and environmentally unfriendly way to maintain the service. Risk assessments are written by management and staff are expected to sign.

We need to insist on union oversight but the leadership of our union, Unison, is very weak. Staff feel patronised by management posters

around the hostel thanking them for being heroes during the pandemic.

Most high-risk offenders leave prison on parole and spend three months in a hostel, where staff monitor their risk and support their move back into society. Many hostels around the country are in converted buildings, often Victorian. Some bedrooms have two or three residents.

Because of Covid, single occupancy of rooms has been introduced, potentially causing a backlog of prisoners waiting to be released. This has been partially overcome by moving offenders on after one month into a B&B, with far less supervision.

However, the funding for B&Bs came to an end at the end of August. Maintaining single occupancy of rooms over a long period of time is unsustainable. It is likely that management will demand further cuts in staff pay and conditions to pay for it.

Staff are angry, frustrated, and some are frightened. They feel helpless without a lead from their union. But all that could change. Like the gas pipe, battles could explode unexpectedly.

### The Socialist Party says:

- Fight for a democratic, fighting union leadership
- Full funding for safe probation accommodation
- Put the justice sector fully in the public sector, under democratic workers' control and management

# Tories' ludicrous refugee detention plans

## Fight for jobs and homes for all - defend the right to asylum

STEVE SCORE  
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

It would be absolutely ludicrous, if it wasn't so serious, for the victims of war, dictatorship, and torture who flee to this country seeking asylum.

The Tory government has discussed measures to transfer asylum seekers to processing centres in various offshore destinations - including Moldova, Morocco, or even as far as Papua New Guinea or Ascension Island in the South Atlantic, press leaks have shown.

The government discussed the possibility of putting asylum seekers on oil rigs or using old ferries as prison ships. Most ridiculous of all was the proposal to use wave machines to stop small boats of potential refugees arriving over the Channel!

These discussions are prompted by the nearly 7,000 asylum seekers who have risked death on unsafe boats to get to the UK this year. This is an increase - because, as a result of Covid-19, it is now even more difficult to get here by safer routes. They are still driven by desperation to escape persecution and war at home.

But there has been no increase in the overall number of applications for asylum - 32,400 in the year to June - the same as last year, and less than in 2016. Around half have had their initial applications accepted to obtain refugee status.

These are tiny numbers in a country with a population of 67 million. They are also far fewer than other countries such as France and Germany. In fact, the vast majority of displaced people never get to Europe and instead remain in some of the world's poorest countries.

Meanwhile, the richest thousand people in Britain are worth around three-quarters of a trillion pounds. There is no need for anyone to live in poverty - we just need to take the wealth off the super-rich.

### Inhumane

The government is attempting to follow the draconian and inhumane Australian system of sending asylum seekers to Pacific islands.

But the Australian government deliberately intercepts boats in international waters in order to avoid the legal and human rights obligations

that come when asylum seekers arrive in your country. The UK government would have to change the law to remove those rights in order to transfer people legally.

The Tories are attempting to shore up their low poll ratings and divert attention away from their catastrophic handling of coronavirus. They are exploiting the misery of asylum seekers to find scapegoats for the cuts in services and living standards resulting from their policies and from the capitalist system.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said in her Tory conference speech, that there would be new laws - to deny asylum to those who use "illegal" routes into the UK, and to stop "endless legal claims" from asylum seekers.

Rather than allowing more safe and legal routes to get here, or having a genuinely fair appeals system, the Tories prefer the approach of 'send them anywhere but here'. As it is, many have to wait years for appeals to be heard, often in appalling living conditions, with £5.39 a day to live on.

The situation that faces millions of refugees worldwide was highlighted recently by the fire on the Greek island of Lesbos. 13,000 were left without shelter when fire devastated a refugee camp that was crammed with more than four times the number it was meant to accommodate, in terrible conditions.

Following the fire, unlike some other European governments, the Tories refused to take any of these refugees - even children.

### Divide and rule

Tory divide-and-rule attempts must be opposed and the right to asylum fought for. Detention centres should be closed and deportation ended. All workers, including asylum seekers, should have the right to decent housing conditions, the right to work, and enough to live on.

Fighting together is the only way to win decent living standards for all. How can the Tories argue that the money isn't there when they have found billions to defend the profit system during the pandemic?

The long delays in processing applications should be ended. We demand that elected committees of working-class people, including from the trade unions and migrants' organisations, have the right to review asylum cases - and the allocation of resources to ensure that local services are adequately funded.

Past and present UK governments bear their own part in the responsibility of worldwide capitalism for imperialist wars, civil war and poverty, which trigger huge displacements of population. Solving these problems means fighting for socialism here and internationally, so the vast resources of the world can be used to provide for the needs of everyone.



PAUL MATTSSON

## ● Tate strike suspended



After 42 days of industrial action by members of the PCS union against redundancies at the Tate gallery in London, the strike has been suspended.

It comes after several meetings which secured some improvements for members in a revised offer from management.

PCS says: "We are clear that the cuts across the arts and culture sector are a result of the direct failure of government. We, along with our sister unions, continue to fight for the future of our sector demanding the

government fund our arts and culture institutions fairly, on behalf of workers and the public.

"We continue to oppose redundancies and fight for our members, across the culture sector. With redundancies announced at the Victoria and Albert Museum, Historic Royal Palaces and the Royal Collections Trust, it has never been more important to join PCS.

"We would like to thank all those who supported our members during the strike."

## ● Ikea day of action



Protests were held at six Ikea stores on 3 October, demanding the reinstatement of sacked shop steward Richie Venton, and full average wages for all sick workers.

Members of a multitude of trade unions participated in the simultaneous shows of solidarity, as well as

the National Shop Stewards Network, several trades councils and Socialist Party members.

As a next step, the Reinstatement of Richie Venton campaign has organised an online rally Thursday 8 October at 7pm. See reinstaterichieventon.com for more.

## ● York couriers' strike



Deliveroo riders in York have demonstrated outside restaurants to protest pay rates.

The couriers have also not been accepting deliveries on a number of days saying they can be kept waiting for up to 40 minutes to collect the food - which they don't get paid for.

Speaking outside restaurant chain Five Guys, one Deliveroo courier said: "We are not paid our waiting times - and that is not good enough.

In some cases riders will only be making one order in an hour and earning less than £4. How are you supposed to raise your children or pay your rent on that kind of money?"

The workers are members of the IWGB union's couriers and logistics York branch, which said it has tried negotiating with regional managers, and has sent a letter to the Five Guys CEO "to no avail".

# Equity 'Panto Parade' demands more support for arts workers

**JAMES IVENS**  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY, EQUITY UNION NORTH AND EAST LONDON GENERAL BRANCH (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

A parade of pantomime dames and theatre workers marched through London on 30 September to demand emergency funding for the arts. The entire live performance sector has closed with little or no support.

Actors, designers, directors, stage managers, technicians, and more pounded through the West End to show tunes. One protester's placard read: "22 years a stage manager - it's not just my job, it's my life!"

Dames lifted their fists at Trafalgar Square and Downing Street. Marchers chanted: "Theatres should shut! / Oh no they shouldn't! / Oh yes they should!" - you get the picture.

Performing arts union Equity and technicians' union Bectu called the demonstration, alongside industry group #WeMakeEvents and campaign group ExcludedUK. The National Shop Stewards Network was among supporters, marching in solidarity with a banner. The core demands of the 'Panto Parade' were:

- Extend furlough and the 'Self-Employment Income Support Scheme' to next year
- Give access to those who haven't been eligible - an Equity survey found under 40% of members have received government support
- Government-backed insurance for theatre and live events
- Subsidies for theatre tickets while social distancing remains

Socialist Party members in Equity agree with these demands. We would add that the spasmodic, dysfunctional character of the pandemic market means many arts organisations are already doomed. The only



way to save and rebuild the industry is by extending public ownership - a model which already exists in the union's 'Performance for All' policy document.

This is the first independent action Equity has called in recent memory, and a very good first step. It should signal a change in approach to more combative campaigning by the union.

Equity's general secretary-elect, Paul Fleming, gave an energetic

speech which asked: "Who do we as a society think should be an artist? All we're saying right now is: people who can afford to do it."

He was, however, followed by a major theatre producer who praised the campaign's "unity" between employers and unions. Our interests happen to coincide on this issue - but this temporary "unity" must not set the tone. The impresarios' profits are based on poor pay, conditions and job security for most workers.

# Say no to finance capital-backed luxury tower block in Enfield

**PAUL KERSHAW**  
UNITE UNION HOUSING WORKERS' BRANCH

A 29-storey residential skyscraper which fails to meet 'affordable housing' targets has been approved in the outer London borough of Enfield, in the teeth of protests from housing campaigners and resident groups.

This is one of a series of planning decisions in London that will please super-rich developers but present no hope for the homeless and badly housed.

Situated next to a busy dual carriageway that children will have to cross to reach play areas, the tower will have no social-rent homes or even homes at the higher London Living Rent.

Campaign group Better Homes Enfield say nine out of ten of the homes would be unaffordable to the majority of local people, only 8% would be at 'London Affordable Home' rates.

In Enfield, 5,000 children live in temporary accommodation, 11% of households are officially recognised as living in overcrowded conditions, and first times buyers have to stretch to spend eleven times their salary.

## BlackRock

The scheme is backed by BlackRock, the world's largest asset manager and 'shadow bank', it is larger than the world's largest bank, with over \$7 trillion in assets under direct management, and another \$20 trillion managed through its Aladdin risk-monitoring software.

It wields huge political power, which is no doubt why it thought it worth paying Tory ex-chancellor George Osborne £650,000 a year for working just four days a month. According to the Financial Times, its boss Larry Fink is the highest paid in the sector, raking in about \$24.3 million last year - plus about \$50.8

million in stock awards: the pay-out to the politician will seem like chicken feed.

Labour councils are elected to stand up to corporations and fight for working-class communities. In Enfield they should speak out for social housing. If they fail in this, they should be challenged in elections by candidates who will.

The deepening housing crisis in the UK reflects government support for finance and a woeful lack of social house building. Labour was committed to a mass programme of council house building under Jeremy Corbyn, but Keir Starmer has refused to commit to continue that policy.

It is now more urgent than ever to take over the banks and finance companies that were rescued in the financial crash and launch a programme of house building at truly affordable social rents.

**GLENN KELLY**  
FORMER UNISON NEC MEMBER

Socialist Party member Hugo Pierre has got 31 Unison branches to nominate him, and therefore will be on the ballot paper for the union's general secretary election. This means that 1.4 million Unison members will have the chance to vote for a socialist, anti-cuts programme, as workers fight for their lives and livelihoods during the Covid pandemic.

The nomination process showed that there is a clear desire among the activists in the union for a change from the 'business as usual' of the last 20 years under outgoing general secretary Dave Prentis. For the first time, candidates not backed by the current union leadership have the nominations of two service group executives and three regions, and Hugo has the support of the national union's black members committee.

Hugo and his supporters believe that there is an opportunity to seek to agree a candidate on an agreed programme to challenge Christina McAnea, who has emerged as the main candidate of the bureaucracy ahead of fellow assistant general secretary Roger McKenzie.

As Unison's head of health, she justified the pensions strike sell-out after the massive 30 November 2011 strike, saying: "This is the government's final offer... we always knew this would be a damage-limitation exercise aimed at reducing the worst impacts of the government's pension changes."



**The failure to respond to Hugo's proposal of a single candidate on a joint manifesto shows that neither McKenzie or Holmes are serious about what is necessary to transform Unison into a really fighting and democratic union**

Hugo has written to two of the other candidates, Paul Holmes and Roger McKenzie, to propose that a meeting be organised to see if, between them, a single candidate on a joint manifesto could be agreed.

"I believe it is vital that we maximise the forces in the union who are desperate for the union to change; to open up, in my opinion, the possibility for a fighting and democratic union capable of meeting the challenges we face in the current economic crisis. In this election it is clear that the impression will be there that the 'left is split', with Jeremy Corbyn giving his backing to Roger, John McDonnell declaring his support for Paul, and many socialists backing myself.

"So, despite our disagreements now and in the past, it must be in our interests, and those of the members looking for change, to try and see if we can ensure a united campaign around a single candidate and

# Unison general secretary election HUGO PIERRE'S FIGHTING PROGRAMME TO TRANSFORM THE UNION



Hugo Pierre (second left) supporting Tower Hamlets council workers on strike

PHOTOS ISAI PRIYA AND PAUL MATTSOON



programme needed to transform the union".

To this end, Hugo concludes: "I would like to propose that in the short time left open to us we seek to reach agreement on a single candidate and on an election programme. I openly state now that if we can agree to a single candidate and an agreed minimum set of demands then I would be willing to withdraw from the election".

Unfortunately, neither Roger McKenzie nor Paul Holmes has accepted this appeal. Even more disappointingly, Paul Homes went as far as to attack the idea, describing such a genuine and open approach as "backroom deals". This is at odds with his position in the 2015 election when Socialist Party member Roger Bannister made a similar offer to the two other candidates standing against Dave Prentis, Heather Wakefield and John Burgess.

Even though the attempt was unsuccessful - and Prentis was re-elected with less votes than the combined score of the opposition candidates - at least meetings were arranged to see if an agreement could be reached, with Paul Holmes attending alongside John Burgess as his representative!

The failure to respond shows that, unfortunately, neither McKenzie nor Holmes are serious about what is necessary to transform Unison into a really fighting and democratic union. So Hugo is continuing his campaign and appeals for others to join him in, fighting for:

- National strike action on local authority cuts and for an end to leaving branches to fight alone
- That Labour councils should set no-cuts needs budgets instead of passing on Tory cuts
- The union should withhold union funding from Labour councillors or MPs attacking members' jobs wages and conditions
- For a national fight to win the full NHS pay claim up to and including national strike action
- For an end to privatisation and bringing back all privatised services in-house
- For the election of regional officers, regional secretaries, national secretaries, and assistant general secretaries
- Reinstatement of the right to campaign for branches and members of the union and an end to political witch-hunts that have been a feature of the Prentis regime

Rules introduced by the Prentis leadership to clamp down on democratic debate in the union mean that candidates for union elections cannot 'invite or accept' support 'in money or kind' from any entity which 'is not provided for in Unison rules'. This article has been produced without the authorisation of any of the candidates mentioned in it, in order to comply with these requirements.

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HANNAH SELL  
SOCIALIST PARTY GENERAL SECRETARY

A decade ago, following the worldwide financial crash, a Financial Times editorial congratulated capitalism on a bit of luck that "the left" was "missing in action in what should have been its finest hour. In the deepest global downturn since the second world war, no blueprint for a fundamentally different method of organising the economy has been proposed."

Capitalism was in a dire crisis, resulting in the impoverishment of many millions of people worldwide, but ruling elites had a crumb of comfort to cling to, the hope that their system would survive because of lack of a mass alternative.

While it survived, it did not recover. It was shaken by mass movements - including general strikes in several European countries and a revolutionary wave that swept North Africa and the Middle East. Nor did the 'great recession' that followed the financial crash give way to healthy growth. On the contrary, all of the underlying fault lines which led to the 2008 financial crash remained.

Worldwide trillions of dollars were pumped into the financial system to prevent collapse. This, however, was 'socialism for the rich'. The bankers and financiers that had triggered the crisis were rewarded while the working class in Britain, the US and elsewhere suffered the longest period of pay restraint since the 19th century.

Wages stagnated and levels of investment in developing science and technique remained at historic lows. Instead, the 'masters of the universe' rewarded themselves. In the US for example, Fortune 500 companies (the top 500 US companies) have repurchased more than \$3 trillion worth of their own shares.

These buybacks were used to reward big shareholders and fatten executive pay packages. Meanwhile, levels of corporate debt soared. Even before the Covid crisis erupted, capitalism was an ailing system heading towards a new global downturn.

#### Pandemic impact

The pandemic has been a huge additional shock, laying bare the sickness of capitalism. Once again, a handful at the top have done very nicely out of the prevailing misery. In the US the wealth of 643 billionaires has increased by a third since the start of the pandemic, equivalent to \$4.7 billion a day.

At the same time, 50 million Americans have experienced losing work and 37 million do not have enough to eat. More than 200,000 have died from Covid-19, with the poorest sections disproportionately affected.

Vast sums have been pumped into the economy by governments - far greater even than 2008 - in an attempt to put a floor under the crisis. And once again that has had a certain effect, but will not prevent a devastating global economic slowdown, which can only be worsened by the developing second peak of the virus.

While there has inevitably been some recovery from the unprecedented economic slump that took place when most countries were in lockdown, attempts to paint that as a vigorous 'V-shaped' recovery are laughable.



**In this profit-driven capitalist society, however, the priority is saving profits not lives or livelihoods**

On 10 April, this year, the World Bank estimated that global production was 20% lower than it would have been without Covid-19. By September, Goldman Sachs estimate it had soared; but remained a gigantic 8% below where it would have otherwise been.

This is a far deeper crisis than in 2007-08. Back then, the major capitalist powers cooperated in order to defend their system. As the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) - the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated) predicted, since then, inter-imperialist tensions have enormously intensified.

The crisis of capitalism and the decline of US imperialism - which while still the most powerful country on the planet is no longer able to 'call the shots' - has led to the situation today, where the crisis is exacerbated by the lack of a coordinated international response and growing tension between the different regional blocs, above all China and the US.

The severity of the crisis, combined with the already unhealthy debt-laden character of many companies, has resulted, for example, in predictions

from the European Commission that one quarter of all European companies with more than 20 employees will be facing insolvency by the end of the year, even without the consequences of a new upsurge in Covid-19 cases.

In the economically developed countries, capitalist governments have racked up massive debts to help keep such companies afloat via various subsidies and loans.

They cannot afford to do so indefinitely, however, and at some stage will try to make the working class pay for the debts they have accrued.

The capitalists are also worried about the political consequences of their actions. That is what Tory Chancellor Rishi Sunak meant when he talked about it being 'unhealthy' for the furlough scheme to continue for too long because it stops workers getting used to the 'jobs market'.

The Tories, like all capitalist governments, want workers to accept the misery of unemployment as a 'natural disaster' that cannot be prevented. The Tories inadequate replacement for the furlough - the Job Support Scheme - will not prevent a huge leap in unemployment. It will not be accepted as natural though. Millions will put the blame squarely on the Tory government and the capitalist system it defends.

#### Capitalists' 'luck' running out

Right now, the strategists of capitalism globally may be hoping that they will have the same bit of luck in the coming decade as they had in the last: the absence of mass workers' parties offering a clear socialist alternative to capitalism. There is every prospect, however, that this time their luck will run out.

Over a decade of capitalist austerity has undermined the authority of all the institutions of capitalism, leaving the global elite in a far weaker position today than a decade ago.

In a number of countries, the capitalist politicians who have been able to win elections are right-wing populists - like Trump and his 'Poundland' version Boris Johnson - and are not reliable representatives of the interests of big business.

The Tories selected Johnson as the only candidate they thought could win them a general election victory. He fortuitously did so. But despite the size of his majority, the government is very weak and crisis-ridden, and has made countless U-turns.

From having been the golden boy of the Tory party rank and file, according to ConservativeHome, Johnson is

# WORLDWIDE CAPITALIST CRISIS DEEPENS - STEP UP THE FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM



Black Lives Matter and climate change school student strikes are a foretaste of mass working class movements to come PHOTOS JUDY BEISHON (ABOVE) AND PAUL MATTSSON (BELOW)



now ranked 24th out of 25 members of his cabinet, with only the education secretary Gavin Williamson, faring worse.

Johnson could be out on his ear before long, but the deeply divided Tory Party has no unified idea of who should replace him or what they should stand for.

#### US capitalist chaos

A clear majority of the US capitalist class would prefer Democratic Party candidate Joe Biden to win a decisive victory in November's election.

Biden, however, offers nothing for working-class Americans other than not being Trump. Even before the extra layer of unpredictability added by Trump's Covid-19 diagnosis, the outcome of the US election was highly unsure. It is certain, however, that it will open up a new period of crisis and instability for US capitalism.

If Trump claims victory, particularly if he hasn't clearly won, the protests against him will dwarf the women's rights marches which followed his election in 2016.

If Biden wins, Trump is likely to claim the election was rigged, further whipping up his support base, including far-right armed gangs like the Proud Boys. These forces, while dangerous, remain relatively small, but there is nonetheless a growing polarisation in society, with many stripes of right and far-right groupings growing in confidence.

That does not mean, however, that the right will be the dominant force in US society in the next period. Clearly mass movements would erupt against a second Trump term.

However, a Biden presidency would not lead to social peace. Like Obama and Clinton before him, Biden would act to defend the interests of the capitalist class. Against the background of an economic and environmental crisis, mass working-class movements would be on the agenda. More than 70% of millennials in America say they would vote for a socialist, reflecting a search for a left alternative among broad sections of US society.

Right now, of course, there is an almost global absence of mass left parties of any kind. The wave of global struggle in the aftermath of 2008 threw up attempts to create such parties in numerous countries - including the election of Corbyn as Labour leader, which he rightly put down to the effects of the financial crisis.

Support for left-wing presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders in the US came from the same cause. Corbyn

has, however, now been replaced by Keir Starmer, who is quickly moving to jettison Corbyn's anti-austerity programme, saying that Labour must "fundamentally rethink" what to "offer the electorate".

Sanders is campaigning for Biden. Syriza - the anti-austerity party elected in Greece in 2015 - went on to capitulate to the institutions of capitalism and to implement austerity. At the same time, the majority of trade union leaders worldwide have failed to lead serious struggles in defence of their members' jobs, pay and conditions.



**Capitalist austerity has undermined the authority of all the institutions of capitalism, leaving the global elite far weaker...**

There are therefore serious obstacles to fighting back, but they have not prevented struggle taking place. In recent months alone there have been numerous powerful mass movements, made up largely of the working class and poor, in different countries around the world.

Black Lives Matter has swept the US, Britain, and many other countries. Lebanon, Belarus, and Thailand are among the countries where the elites have been shaken to their foundations as a result of uprisings from below.

Capitalism in the coming years is going to offer a diet of unremitting impoverishment - including mass job losses and evictions, plus instability and environmental destruction.

In response, there is no question that wide sections of the working class and young people will struggle in defence of their interests, sometimes in semi-spontaneous movements, sometimes forcing the trade union leaders into battle. Against weak capitalist governments they can win victories - as the A-level students in Britain recently demonstrated.

Finding a 'fundamentally different method of organising the economy' is going to be urgently posed. The failure of the last round of attempts to create new left parties flowed ultimately from their leaderships' attempts to compromise with the defenders of capitalism, rather than fight for fundamental socialist change. The need to

fight for the independent organisation of the working class in every battle, including mass parties that stand for the socialist transformation of society, is clear.

The Covid-19 crisis has demonstrated beyond doubt the lie of the last Tory government that there is no 'magic money tree'. To save their system the Tories - like capitalist governments around the world - found unprecedented sums of money overnight.

In this profit-driven capitalist society, however, the priority is saving profits not lives or livelihoods. In the US, for example, the government Paycheck Protection Program gave out more than \$500 billion in loans to businesses over six months, allegedly so the government could save jobs. They saved a puny 2.3 million jobs, while 40 million workers filed for unemployment. That works out as over \$500,000 per job!

In Britain, Sunak tells workers to get used to the 'new normal' of unemployment, but takes a very different approach to big business. EasyJet, for example, was given access to more than \$750 million in government money in April, even though the airline had paid out nearly \$230 million in dividends to shareholders just a month earlier.

#### Socialist programme

Only by taking decisive socialist measures will it be possible to harness the enormous wealth, science and technique that capitalism has created through the labour of the working class, to start to meet peoples' needs, and to safeguard the environment.

That would require breaking with profit-driven, ailing capitalism and taking the major corporations and banks which dominate the economy into democratic public ownership, allowing the development of a democratic, socialist planned economy in Britain and internationally.

The priorities of a socialist economy would be decided democratically. Instead of filling the coffers of corporate chief executives, priorities would include providing a real, living income for all, mass building of high-quality and carbon-neutral housing, and creating and expanding decent public services, health care and education.

As the Financial Times made clear back in 2010, the capitalists fear above all that such socialist ideas - put forward by the Socialist Party and CWI worldwide - will gain mass support. In the coming era their fears will be realised.



PHOTO SAVE GLENFIELD HEART CENTRE CAMPAIGN

## Leicester: Don't let them close our hospital

STEVE SCORE  
SAVE OUR NHS LEICESTERSHIRE CO-CHAIR

When Boris Johnson falsely announced his government would build "40 new hospitals" at Tory conference a year ago, it turned out that in fact only six trusts were to get much delayed routine investment.

One of those was Leicester, promised £450 million for hospital "re-configuration". The Save Our NHS Leicestershire campaign has been warning ever since that these plans involve the effective closure of one of the hospitals, in an area that serves over a million people.

The Leicester General Hospital is to be closed as an acute hospital, but will have a few non-acute services on

site. Most of the land will be sold off for 'redevelopment'.

On this basis, the public consultation, which began on 28 September, has gone to great lengths to avoid the word 'closure', in order to disguise what is really happening from the public.

Socialist Party members play an important part in the campaign, established to continue momentum after the victory of the Save Glenfield Children's Heart Centre campaign (see 'Victory at Glenfield shows people power can save our NHS' at socialistparty.org.uk). The campaign is producing material, both physical and online, and planning events to explain what is happening.

You may wonder whether the

middle of a pandemic is the right time for NHS bosses to begin a public consultation. No face-to-face public meetings or engagement can be carried out, excluding a large part of the public. The 1,700-page consultation document does not mention coronavirus or take account of the needs resulting from future waves of pandemic.

The plans might be OK if there was sufficient expansion of capacity and the number of beds to cope with a rising and ageing population, but there isn't. NHS bosses say the rest will be absorbed by an expansion of services in the community, but there are no details or explanation of where the money will come from for that.

## Socialist Party: Campaigning for the NHS



Just some of the events where the Socialist newspaper was sold in the past week...

### Leeds - NHS isn't failing, private companies are

The Socialist Party received a warm response from the public when out campaigning on the NHS on 3 October. Five of those who came up to the campaign stall donated £5 each to our Fighting Fund.

We called for a properly funded

NHS, with a 15% pay rise for NHS and care workers. We also called for an end to NHS privatisation, including nationalising Covid testing and tracing.

One nurse who signed was furious that the NHS was getting blame for the failures of test and trace: "It's not us that are failing, but private companies like Serco and G4S who are being paid exorbitant sums to jeopardise people's lives and livelihoods."

IAIN DALTON

### Coventry - NHS workers don't feel safe

Grim weather didn't stop dozens of residents and NHS workers signing the Socialist Party petition to scrap

hospital parking charges on 3 October. One woman, whose granddaughter is a nurse, told us she thought the parking charges were "absolutely disgusting".

Most NHS workers who signed took our 'fight NHS low pay' leaflet, which explains the crucial role trade unions can play in fighting for decent pay.

Increasingly, NHS staff are telling us they are seriously worried that Covid outbreaks will spread around staff. Several workers told us they just do not think their workplaces are safe.

The editorial of the Socialist pointed out the need for democratic working-class control of health and safety - see 'Covid restrictions expose Tory splits' at socialistparty.org.uk.

ADAM HARMSWORTH



PHOTO PAUL MATTSSON

## Waltham Forest: Council picks over 60 sites for mass gentrification

### Protest 24 October

NANCY TAAFFE  
SAVE OUR SQUARE CHAIR

Our campaign in Waltham Forest, east London has been running for five years. So far we have held the developers at bay. But neoliberal politicians are exploiting the Covid crisis to drive their plans through.

The council is pressing on with their monster development in the square, so Save Our Square is organising a socially distant, open-air, public meeting on Saturday 24 October.

We believe that the council's 'consultation' - running until 14 December - will be like all the other consultations, a sham.

Over 60 different parts of Waltham Forest have been earmarked for 'redevelopment', within the next 15 years as part of this consultation, or have already been demolished and built on.

Turn up to the protest either on your own or in a group of six. Wear facemasks and bring hand sanitiser.

We will be collecting names from the different campaigns of people who want to be part of a mass stand

for council elections in 2022. We are looking for names of community campaigners, trade unionists and socialists.

We are not interested in the established political parties, as where they are in power across the country they too are using this neoliberal redevelopment model.

We want the tenant whose child has lost play space on an estate. We want young adults angry that their youth club closed down.

Help us prepare for a mass challenge in 2022, because consultations are now just tick boxes.

Many of these developments won't have started by 2022. If we win councillors from the community, we will press from inside and outside the council chamber for them to stop.

If you are from the Homebase campaign, come with a sign saying that. If you are opposed to the demolition of the old Wood Street Library building, bring a sign saying that. If you are from an estate that has been privatised or your play area has been built on, bring a sign saying the name of your estate.

● **Protest: Saturday 24 October, 1pm, Walthamstow Town Square**

### People stopped every time we mentioned 'class'

Nancy Taaffe had this to say when Waltham Forest Socialist Party was out campaigning on 3 October.

We just kept on about the working class suffering, paying for the crisis. We demanded full sick pay for all those zero-hour workers.

We called for Serco to be booted off

the testing contract. And we called for a programme of public works to create jobs.

It felt like every time we mentioned the words 'working class' on the mic, people came to the campaign stall. And we met three people who wanted to find out more about Socialist Party.

# £9,000 for education by Netflix

## Now is the time to join Socialist Students



Birmingham

### ● Warwick

After two days of leafleting on a path towards a local supermarket, Warwick Socialist Students lead a successful introductory open-air meeting. We discussed the attacks on students from profiteering landlords and university management, and the Tories who blame students and young workers for the failings of the profiteering capitalist class.

Attendees understood young people are being used for profit, with their physical and mental wellbeing fallen by the wayside due to poor funding for mental health services and little test-and-trace facilities.

We asked, 'who would fight for students?' Some wanted to give Labour leader Keir Starmer the benefit of the doubt. But another fresher said: "He only seems to get worse."

We will meet next week to discuss 'What is Marxism' and hope to start a series of campaigns to fight for students. Fees and rent refunds will be key demands.

But we also want better funding for mental health, better access to academic resources and study spaces - an issue which affects working-class students most - and no cuts to university workers' wages or teaching time for students.

As was stated at the meeting, university management and landlords have organised to get our money, we need to organise to fight back.

MICHAEL MORGAN

### ● Cardiff

Over 100 students gave their contact details to find out more from Socialist Students in Cardiff over four days of campaign stalls. Students who had never taken an interest in campaigning before, signed up to fight for a refund of rent and tuition fees.

"We're getting mainly recorded lessons by our lecturers. I could have watched them at home, instead of shelling out for a crap room in a tower block and another £9,000 for education by Netflix", quipped one student.

We shot out emails, texts and phone calls to build for the all-Wales

joint Socialist Students and Socialist Party online meeting on 1 October. 50 members and students gathered to hear Socialist Students national organiser Theo Sharieff on how youth can fight back.

By the morning, we'd already had an application to join the Socialist Party come through the website - a good start to the term.

Cardiff Socialist Students got its teeth into building for a protest to scrap fees on 4 October (see page 2).

### ● Birmingham

University of Birmingham Socialist Students organised our second street meeting on 30 September.

The determination and interest of students overcame the challenge of organising safe, outdoor meetings during Covid.

This week's street meeting was 'What is socialism?' We also discussed the worry and anger of many students, who are disappointed at the mismanagement of campus return, and the carelessness and cynicism of government and bosses in planning it.

This was not a theoretical discussion, but practical. For young students today, an alternative to capitalism is not merely a fancy thought experiment, but rather a sharp necessity.

Socialist Students has met first-year students who instinctually want a political alternative to austerity and

cuts, and are willing to organise to make that a reality.

LLUIS BERTOLIN

### ● Leicester

Socialist Students was at both uni campuses in Leicester, campaigning for free education and signing up people. The mood was dominated by anger at tuition fees and a desire to fight.

Working-class students talked to us about the problems of being cooped up in halls with little face-to-face time. Several people are interested in finding out more about the Socialist Party, and even more want to get involved in Socialist Students and our campaign against tuition fees.

While the campuses were quieter - freshers was mainly online - we had longer conversations with students who have grown up with austerity, now being blamed for Covid spreading.

LINDSEY MORGAN

### ● Middlesex

At Middlesex University, Students were angry. Many told Socialist Students they felt like unis were opened to make high rents.

We need to build unity between students and staff. University management, vice-chancellors, landlords and the Tories can't be trusted with our health and education.

HELEN PATTISON

Join the student fightback  
**JOIN** socialist students  
[socialiststudents.org.uk/join](http://socialiststudents.org.uk/join)

## Defend Bracknell Community Services

TERRY PEARCE

BRACKNELL DEFEND OUR COMMUNITY SERVICES  
CHAIR (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Cooper's Hill Centre is a well-used and loved community asset - the Socialist Party says no to bulldozing it. Young people and many groups of older residents and those relying on public transport use it.

Where will they go now? Local people need community meeting places, not yet more unaffordable housing.

The Look Out play area had always been free of charge until Bracknell Forest Council introduced a £10 fee.

Due to public pressure, this has been reduced to £5.

But it's still unacceptable. Local children's charity 'First Days' described this as social cleansing, with poor families penalised. The Socialist Party say remove all charges.

Bracknell Forest Council privatised the management of leisure services in 2018, giving the contract to Everyone Active. Only two years into a ten-year contract, the council is bailing out this failed provider with up to £2.5 million.

Return the management of Leisure Centre, Coral Reef and Downshire Golf Complex back to the council, no more privatisation!

## Final total: £73,586 raised - Now let's do it again

The final figure for the total raised in our Fighting Fund campaign April-September was £73,586, 107% of our target.

On the very last day of the campaign alone we received £907 as donations flooded in. Donated on the last day of campaign were £100 from Ella in Birmingham, £50 from Bill in Lancashire and £20 from Jonathan in Wolverhampton.

Thanks to £50.14 raised from Socialist Party campaign stalls in Hackney supporting the NHS staff campaign for a 15% pay rise, another £45 from a watch party of the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN)



## SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q2-3: APRIL-SEPTEMBER 2020				FINAL CHART
Northern	3,131	2,063					152%
North West	4,243	3,163					134%
East Midlands	6,789	5,088					133%
South West	6,283	4,950					127%
London	15,891	12,650					126%
Wales	6,924	6,325					109%
West Midlands	7,494	7,150					105%
Eastern	3,439	3,300					104%
Yorkshire	7,239	7,013					103%
Southern & SE	6,504	6,463					101%
Other	5,649	10,588			53%		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>73,586</b>	<b>68,750</b>					<b>107%</b>

lobby of the Trade Union Congress (TUC), and a fantastic £445 collected from the Socialist Party Southern region members.

Finally, thanks go to Eddie for his monthly £5, and to the thousands of

pounds and pennies dropped into our collecting tins, for making this a very special campaign. Our new campaign target is £25,000 by the end of December. Let smash that too.

● [socialistparty.org.uk/donate](http://socialistparty.org.uk/donate)



# Non-fiction: 'Why I no longer talk to white people about race'

## Ideas to fight racism?

ISAI PRIYA  
SOCIALIST PARTY BLACK AND ASIAN GROUP

**W**hy I no longer talk to white people about race' by Reni Eddo-Lodge, written in 2014, is a personalised, honest and thought-provoking read about racism in Britain. Reni gives ample examples, backed by statistics, of the unshakeable truth that institutionalised structural racism exists in all aspects of the lives of black and Asian people in Britain.

This review looks at the 2017 updated edition. Since 2014 we have witnessed the election of Donald Trump and the rise of populism and far-right parties in European elections. These events, together with the war in Syria, the peak of the refugee 'crisis', the sad tragedy of Grenfell, and the huge support for Jeremy Corbyn's policies, have changed the discussion in Britain on the question of race (and other issues).

If the book had been written this year, it might have had a different viewpoint and emphasis. We are living in a period of sharp turns and sudden changes, where huge events are taking place. The Covid pandemic and the current economic crisis have sharply exposed the class and race inequalities that exist within capitalism.

### Black Lives Matter

The global movement around Black Lives Matter saw tens of thousands of young people, of all backgrounds, coming together to oppose racism and to fight against injustice. That is the music of the future - a glimpse of what is possible.

In this situation, Reni's book can be used as a tool for discussing the different ideologies on the essential question facing us today: How do we end racism? What is the force in society that can end it? And how can we unite those experiencing exploitation and oppression?

It's not just the cover of the book that is black and white. In summary, the author also sees racism as a black and white question. She repeatedly explains that she doesn't want white guilt, and that the term 'whiteness' is used in a political context rather than being an attack on all white people, but that is, in fact, what the book does. She identifies the problem as the system, but that system for her is white middle-aged men.

Given the history of imperialism, slavery, and the fact that the system is run, in the main, by white men, it is understandable why she might draw

that conclusion. But racism is embedded in the economic and social system we live in, and that system has a name - capitalism.

Capitalism is a system based on the exploitation of workers; a system that is oppressive and discriminatory, and divides us on the lines of race, gender, sexuality, etc, in order for profits to be made from our misery.

The first and largest chapter of the book deals with Britain's history of racism and the conditions faced by black and Asian people now. What's missing from this chapter is an analysis of the root cause of racism. And it also omits a big chunk of working-class history, and the role the trade union movement played in fighting racism in Britain.

The 1963 Bristol bus boycott, for example, pushed management back and forced the trade union leaders at the time to take on the issue of fighting racism.

In May 1993, just a few weeks after Stephen Lawrence was murdered, over 8,000 joined a demo called by Youth against Racism in Europe and other organisations. Mainly local young people, black and white, marched past the headquarters of the British National Party (BNP) demanding that something be done to rid the area of these racists. Within two years the BNP's headquarters had been shut.



**The advantage of being a socialist is to have a Marxist understanding of the development of class, capitalism, the root cause of racism, and how to end it**

Reni mentions that history is written by winners, but who are these winners? It is those in power, the handful of billionaires who control the majority of the wealth and resources in the globe. It is the interests of the economic system which they control that have dominated history books and the education system.

It's often not just black history that is not sufficiently taught in schools, but the history of the working class in struggle.

Capitalism is a system in crisis. The rights and gains won by the working class are under constant attack by the ruling class, and the working class

will struggle to improve their living conditions. The fight against exploitation and oppression is not going to go away. Neither are the capitalists going to give up power voluntarily. To maintain their rule, they use all the tools and institutions of society to redirect anger and blame against minorities.

We are influenced by what we see, hear and read - most of which is owned by the capitalist media. Anti-migrant propaganda, for example, can have an impact on social attitudes, including those of black and Asian people who are genuinely concerned about the impact on insufficient local services.

Reni uses the term 'scarcity mentality' - but that is precisely what the ruling class wants people to think: it's not us, blame them - the migrants. However, the solution to lack of resources is not to blame migrants, but to unite and fight for an increase in investment. There is enough money available to provide services for all who need them - as the pandemic has shown.

### Marxism

The advantage of being a socialist is to have a Marxist understanding of the development of class, capitalism, the root cause of racism, and how to end it. The book and the author lack this analysis and perspective. As a consequence, the argument as to why racism exists is constrained by the framework of capitalism. This leads to a conclusion which ultimately blames whiteness, and promotes privilege theory and identity politics.

These are raised thoughtout the book. As Marxists, we understand the multiple oppressions that exist in society. People are oppressed on the basis of class, race, gender, etc. But the source of all oppression is rooted in class-based society, of which capitalism is the prevailing system.

The pandemic has shown that it is the working class who are the essential key workers. It is our labour that runs the economy. As Karl Marx said, the working class are the "gravediggers of capitalism" - the force in society that can get rid of capitalism.

As Malcolm X said, "you can't have capitalism without racism". We need to build a united mass working-class movement to fight racism and capitalism.

Black and Asian people face many barriers and disadvantages because of the colour of their skin. The use of language such as 'white privilege', however, can be very divisive and cut across the unity that



is precisely needed to end systemic racism.

Black and Asian workers have been disproportionately affected by the economic crisis of 2007-08 and the current one. But the working class as a whole has been hugely affected. A white working-class person struggling to make ends meet, affected by cuts to services, low pay, the housing crisis, the underfunding of our NHS, and the lack of job prospects, will not feel that their whiteness brings them any 'privilege.'

For capitalism to survive it needs to exploit and oppress all working-class people, and it is the capitalist class that derives the material advantages and privileges from that. Reni herself points to the opportunities of the rich in the chapter on class and race.

She says that we can't wait for unity to happen. That is true. But individual action such as talking to different people about racism in your

workplace and social circle is not going to get rid of racism. For that to happen we need to build a mass movement on a far larger scale than the BLM movement. That needs to be linked with the workers' movement on a class programme which includes pay rises, housing for all, free healthcare at the point of use, and public ownership of the large industries which dominate the economy, based on the democratic control and management of workers themselves.

For a fundamental change in the system, we need to take the power from the ruling class: that means a revolution to overthrow capitalism involving a united working-class movement. That's how we can end not only racism but all discrimination - replacing capitalism with a socialist society free from exploitation and oppression.

• 'Why I no longer talk to white people about race', Reni Eddo-Lodge, £8.99, Bloomsbury

# Free Siyanda Mngaza



SIYANDA

## CAMILLA MNGAZA

Siyanda Mngaza is currently serving a four-and-a-half-year prison sentence for defending herself against a racially motivated hate crime.

Siyanda worked for the South Wales Fire Service in human resources - recruiting fire fighters. She had never been in trouble before.

In May 2019, at a campsite in Brecon, Wales, she was attacked, without provocation, by a family group she was socialising with. One of them pushed Siyanda. The other two started to hurl racial slurs and threatened to kill her.

The woman - and two men nearly twice Siyanda's age - ran towards her and began to punch her. Siyanda defended herself, resulting in a slight cut to the forehead of one of the attackers.

Siyanda herself was beaten badly - with stamps and kicks to her head and upper body. She was knocked unconscious.

When she came to, they were no longer hitting her. But she saw them beating up her partner and tried to help him. Fortunately, Siyanda's partner stopped them attacking her again, which allowed Siyanda to hide behind parked cars.

Siyanda asked for help at nearby tents. Someone told her to go to the nearby pub. As she reached the end of the campsite, a policeman pulled up in his car and arrested her.

Siyanda explained what had happened, but instead of protecting her, the police treated Siyanda like a criminal. They did not investigate the hate crime. They even allowed her attackers to continue to verbally abuse her after she'd been arrested.

The police put Siyanda's aggressors to bed at the camp site, as they were

highly intoxicated. They held Siyanda at Brecon police station for 20 hours.

When I collected her, the investigating officer said: "We have five witnesses saying you injured someone deliberately. You need to help us find potential witnesses and provide proof that you were attacked."

Siyanda's CT scan at the hospital showed:

- Concussion
- Musculoskeletal sprain of the trapezia and throat
- Contusion of the left eye
- Injury of the sternum and anterior right ribs
- Soft tissue injury of the scalp

But we discovered at the trial that the police had not provided the Crown Prosecution Service with photographs of Siyanda's injuries - including a footprint on her face. The investigating officer told the court that his supervisor had told him not to obtain Siyanda's medical records and not to continue to investigate the hate crime.

The witnesses - all friends and family - stated no one had touched Siyanda. But the jury saw the photographic evidence and heard the shock confession by the investigating police officer. They still found Siyanda guilty of grievous bodily harm with intent and she was sent to prison.

Self-defence is no offence. Siyanda does not belong in prison. We are building a campaign to get Siyanda released - and to ensure that no one else has to suffer from institutional racism in future at the hands the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and the judicial system.

● Please affiliate your trade union branches, your trade union councils and your trade unions nationally to the Free Siyanda campaign at [freesiyanda.com](http://freesiyanda.com)



## DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

● Send your news, views and criticism, in not more than 150 words, to [editors@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:editors@socialistparty.org.uk) - or if you're not online, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT

● We reserve the right to shorten and edit letters. For legal reasons, we need your full name, address and phone number - but confidentiality will be respected if requested

# THE SOCIALIST INBOX

## ● All the president's doctors

What a marvellous healthcare system is in place in the US! At least six doctors to the patient, cutting-edge medicines, and when you're discharged you go home to 24/7 professional health care. Oh wait! This first-rate care isn't even available to those who are able to fork out for health insurance.

ELAINE BRUNSKILL  
GATESHEAD

## ● Test-and-Trace payment when?

The Tories may have announced Test-and-Trace support payments from 28 September but don't think you can actually get a payment. The Tories have dumped the responsibility for payment onto under-resourced local authorities which were not prepared. In some areas, don't expect to even be able to apply before mid-October.

A LOCAL AUTHORITY WORKER

## ● Pandemic pandemonium

I was hoping for leadership from our government during the pandemic, but this did not happen and many people died who could have been saved.

My children were at home with me, which we liked, but there was and always is, the fear of being infected.

I'm recovering from brain surgery and have not been able to have face-to-face meetings with support services or even my GP. Everything is done over the phone, which is better than nothing, and needs must.

I'm very worried that one of my daughters is back at college, which has cases of Covid, and another is back at work and doesn't feel safe. Management has asked for meetings and feedback, but ignores what staff say.

We are all worried about the economy and whether my youngest daughters will even be able to attend uni. The exam fiasco is such a mess and will most likely have ripple effects for years to come.

I feel that my daughters may need to live with me forever as I'm not sure how anyone can earn enough to privately rent.

JANINE HILL  
TEESSIDE

## ● Youth to blame?

I won't blame the young people who were told to go to work.

I won't blame the young people who were told to go to school.

I won't blame the young people who were told to get the bus but stay safe.

I won't blame the young people who were told to eat out and go to the pub.

I won't blame the young people who were told to go to the zoo and theme parks.

The government has the audacity to tell the young to think of their grannies after the care home fiasco.

RACHEL LAVERICK  
BLYTH

It's absolutely appalling that students and young people generally are being blamed for the increase in

Covid. It's mostly young working-class people working in the service industry, forced by extreme economic hardship to work or starve in many cases.

And work has the most minimum of health and safety measures in place or checked - apart from some strong union-organised sites. And often they live in more cramped conditions, more at risk in a number of ways.

So little is said about the unsafe opening of schools and the impact of over 60% back in workplaces.

We could have been back to a mentally and physically safer way of living, which I'm also desperate for. But this government - in cahoots with some of the too-silent, and accepting union leaders - is doing deals with useless private companies that are pissing away our money, and literally killing us.

There are ways to organise or back up campaigns and fight for our future.

For students or education workers to work together with parents and carers and get people safe, collaborate and organise for the best of our lives. Not this.

We can live better, be better and create better. But not alone. Wherever you are, you have more power than you think. We have more power acting together.

ARTI DILLON  
LONDON



# 'FROZEN CONFLICT' REIGNITES IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH ENCLAVE

Only socialism can halt endless wars and sectarian divisions created by capitalism



Azeri soldiers during the bloody 1992 conflict, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, between Armenian and Azerbaijan governments over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh PHOTO ILCAR JAFAROV/CC

CLARE DOYLE  
COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL

The latest flare-up in the long-running dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh started on 27 September. Dozens have been killed and hundreds wounded in and around the enclave, but it has also taken on regional and even global dimensions.

The so-called autonomous enclave, with a population of less than 150,000, is high up in the Caucasus Mountains surrounded by Azerbaijan. A major conflict developed over control of the area between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 1988, as President Gorbachev introduced reforms - 'Glasnost' (openness) and 'Perestroika' (restructuring) - aimed at preventing the collapse of the Soviet Union.

There had been two demonstrations in Armenia with a million protesters - more than a quarter of the population. The threat of general strike action, and an actual strike in Nagorno-Karabakh of more than a month, extracted a promise from



**The CWI supports the right of nations to self-determination while defending the... rights of small nations and minorities within nations**

Gorbachev of the investment of a vast sum of money into the economy.

Peter Taaffe, political secretary of the Socialist Party, wrote an article at the time entitled: 'Splits at the top, upheavals from below.' "Gorbachev's concessions", he wrote, "may temporarily mollify the Armenians, but they will not solve the central denial of the democratic right of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh to determine its own fate."

### Bloody toll

Five years of fighting followed with over 30,000 dead and one million displaced - the majority Azeris. A peace agreement, brokered by a number of European powers, was eventually signed in Minsk in 1994.

Legally, control of Nagorno-Karabakh was to be accorded to Azerbaijan, but the Armenian majority in the enclave continued to administer it, and some Azeri territory between the enclave and Armenia itself was also occupied.

Known as a 'frozen conflict', it is also one of the world's oldest, and sporadic fighting can break out at any time. A five-day war in 2016 saw

hundreds of deaths. In July of this year, at least 16 people were killed, including an Azerbaijani general.

The spark for the present conflict remains obscure, so do details of what planes and tanks have been destroyed by whom. The Armenian ambassador to Russia, with whom his country has a 'security pact', alleged that Turkey sent 4,000 mercenaries from Syria to fight alongside its armed forces. President Erdogan of Turkey, who supports mainly Turkic Azerbaijan, denies this, but claims to have killed "a large number of ethnic Armenian mercenaries" on its territory. Both countries have declared martial law and mobilised troops, the Armenian government claiming to be acting in self-defence.

On 4 October came reports of heavy aerial bombardment of Nagorno-Karabakh's capital, Stepanakert, with the use of precision guided missiles and drones as Azerbaijan forces tried to cut off the enclave from Armenia (with which it has no border). An Azeri commentator told Al Jazeera news agency that Armenia was out to drag Azerbaijan into all-out war.

Nagorno-Karabakh, known in



**On a capitalist basis, the likelihood of clashes between nations and within nations is ever-present**

Armenian as Artsakh and formerly also populated by Kurdish people, is now of great strategic importance for the supply of energy from Russia to Europe. Gas and oil pipelines run through its territory.

Recently, the UN Security Council announced emergency talks. This was "amid fears the fighting could spread to new fronts and draw in other regional actors". As the Guardian's journalist, Michael Safi, put it: "A prolonged war could drag in Russia, which sells weapons to both countries, but has a military alliance with Armenia, as well as Iran, which has a sometimes fraught relationship with Azerbaijan". Russia has military bases in Armenia, a country of just two million inhabitants (Azerbaijan has over ten million).

As relations between Putin's regime and the European Union have deteriorated, first over Ukraine and more recently over Belarus and the Navalny poisoning, securing an alternative to the Nord Stream 2 European pipeline acquires greater importance for Russia.

The Financial Times commented: "Russia, which leads mediation



efforts alongside the US and France, said it would use its influence with the former soviet nations to seek a ceasefire". However, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan is opposed to peace talks under Russian mediation.

Turkey's president has seized the chance to take on Russia in yet another arena, in part to divert attention from economic difficulties within his own country.

Exploiting nationalist and religious sentiments, Erdogan is also playing on the bitter history of conflict with Armenia and western support, particularly French imperialism, for Armenia.

Turkey, despite buying weapons from Moscow, is already confronting Russia in a proxy war in Syria as well as in Libya. As the Economist said: "They run the risk of fighting a third one in the Caucasus". Turkey's further involvement in Azerbaijan's war could risk 'overreach'.

The United Nations Security Council has called for an immediate ceasefire around Nagorno-Karabakh and a peace conference, as has Angela Merkel. But neither has little more to suggest than a return to the 1994 agreement.

President Macron of France, where there is a sizeable Armenian community, has called for "dialogue" over Nagorno-Karabakh. He accused Turkey of "warlike" rhetoric and of encouraging Azerbaijan to reconquer Nagorno-Karabakh.

Turkey's military forces are undoubtedly actively involved. Macron is already at loggerheads with Turkey over the Libyan civil war, and oil and gas claims in the Mediterranean.

Facing domestic social and economic problems, Macron has attempted to play a role as international trouble-shooter - in relation to Lebanon, Belarus, Libya... Recently, he telephoned Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump on consecutive days.

France, Russia and the US are co-chairs of the Minsk Group of 13 countries set up by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1992 to find a peaceful solution over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Iran has made an offer to broker peace talks to end the conflict. It borders both combatant countries and, perhaps surprisingly, given religious affiliations, has better relations with Armenia than with Azerbaijan.

In oil-rich Azerbaijan, President Ilham Aliyev runs a dictatorial regime. As elsewhere in the former Soviet Union, he is surrounded by super-rich oligarchs. He has little concern

Armenia and Azerbaijan were both independent republics within the USSR, having become part of it in the early 1920s. Nagorno-Karabakh was originally designated as Armenian, but Stalin, when he was People's Commissar of Nationalities, actually reversed the decision awarding it to Azerbaijan.

After the break-up of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, both countries became independent, restoring capitalism and annihilating state ownership and planning. For more than five years they were at loggerheads over Nagorno-Karabakh with tragic consequences.

The clock of history cannot be turned back. It shows that, on a capitalist basis, there is no end to conflict between nations. "Unless tensions cool," said the Financial Times, "this particular frozen conflict could get very hot indeed".

for his own people, let alone those of Nagorno-Karabakh, the majority of whom live in poverty.

Over the years he, like Erdogan, has diverted discontent at home by whipping up hostility towards Armenians. In January 1990, a seven-day pogrom was conducted against Armenians in the capital Baku, during which Armenians were beaten, murdered, and expelled from the city. In the present conflict, Azerbaijani civilians have been encouraged to march against Armenians.

'Der Spiegel's' website reported on 28 September that last July, after clashes with Armenia, riots broke out after "tens of thousands demonstrated in Baku for war with Armenia... The protests at that time were directed not only against the enemy Armenia, but also against the country's own leadership... For Aliyev this was a warning signal. Shortly afterwards he dismissed his foreign minister". Now Azerbaijani civilians have been encouraged to march against and fight Armenians.

### 'Leftist Youth'

On the other hand, there are those like the 'Azerbaijani Leftist Youth' who denounce the spread of nationalist propaganda and vast military spending of both governments in the context of severely underfunded educational and welfare services.

It argues for equal redistribution of resources to counter the accumulation of "more and more daily misery".

"People on both sides", they write, "Have suffered and endured through pandemic and economic recession... It is long overdue that we, Azerbaijani and Armenian youth, take the resolution of this outdated conflict into our hands... not the men in suits, whose aim is the accumulation of capital... It is very important to revive

political, grassroots initiatives, comprised of ordinary local citizens, that will re-establish peace talks and cooperation."

They oppose any further mobilisation of the country's youth into the "meaningless" war and attempts to "deepen hatred between the two peoples". They argue for rebuilding the "trust between our societies and the youth". They reject nationalism and argue for "mutual respect, a peaceful attitude and cooperation".

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI - the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated) supports the right of nations to self-determination while defending the cultural, language, and religious rights of small nations and minorities within nations.

On a capitalist basis, the likelihood of clashes between nations and within nations is ever-present. In the international climate of today, with deep economic and humanitarian crises brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic, national and international tensions are exacerbated. Socialist ideas must come to the fore in campaigns against war and for the rights of all working people.



## Germany: "Heroes" strike to demand a pay rise



SOL members march with public sector strikers in Berlin PHOTO SOL

ANGELIKA TEWELEIT  
SOCIALIST ORGANISATION SOLIDARITY (CWI, GERMANY)

Public sector workers in Germany's hospitals, kindergartens, civil service, refuse operations, as well as public transport workers, have started 'warning strikes' in support of their wage demands.

Ver.di, the public sector union, is demanding a 4.8% rise, or a minimum of €150 a month extra, for public sector workers. In the local transport sector, the dispute is over working conditions.

The mood is angry. As in other countries, only a few months ago politicians praised frontline workers, especially those staff in hospitals, care homes, kindergartens, and public transport, for their heroic work during the first Covid-19 wave. Now they say they want a pay freeze, fuelling anger.

Shortly before the bus and local train drivers were to go on strike, the representative of the employers said that the strikes are "an attack on the public". This has had a mobilising effect on the workers - on 29 September, 90% of all bus and local train staff nationally took one day of strike action.

In the public sector, hospital workers are very angry. Over the last five years, various struggles have taken place in many hospitals, mainly on the issue of a lack of staff. Many nurses, but also cleaners and other hospital staff, are overworked and underpaid.

It was not rare for workers to raise the need for a €500 a month pay rise in discussions before the union made its formal demands. Some activists feel that the demands now on the table are not enough. While inflation is officially low, with prices for cars and other 'big item' purchases going down, food and rent costs are rising at a much faster rate.

### Bosses' propaganda

There is a lot of bosses' propaganda making the case that many workers in other sectors are threatened with job losses, and that, in the public sector, jobs are safe. This is part of the general argument by the government and bosses - that workers will have to tighten their belts because of the crisis.

Unfortunately, some of the statements by the trade union leaders are not adding clarity. While union leaders say that there needs to be recognition of the role of frontline workers - many also state that they agree that demands need to be lower because of the crisis.

Socialist Organisation Solidarity (Sol, CWI Germany) is intervening in the strikes. We argue that instead of billions being put into the pockets of big companies and the rich, there needs to be massive investment into public services - like the hospitals, kindergartens - and also 'free' public transport in order to limit the environmental damage caused by cars and other vehicles.

In some areas, members of Sol are at the forefront - mobilising for the strikes in their workplaces. Sol is actively helping to build a network of combative activists inside the trade unions. We argue that the trade unions need to build on the mobilisations for the current wage round.

To win these demands, while also building a general movement against the cuts that are likely to come soon, for adequate staff levels, and for an end to private profiteering in those sectors.

This is not simply a trade union struggle; the employers are representatives of all the main political parties running the local councils and public transport. The main establishment parties are coming out against the strike.

The leader of the employers' association denouncing the strikes is an SPD (Social Democratic Party) mayor. Generally, the Left Party (Die Linke) is supporting the demands of the trade unions. However, its leaders are moving towards the right, and want to be in the next national government together with the SPD and the Greens.

Dietmar Bartsch, the leader of Die Linke in the national parliament, called the strikes "unreasonable". He is not giving full support to the union's demands, although he has said the employers should be prepared to make a compromise.

Bartsch's statement has damaged the strikes. The whole of Die Linke should, in words and in action, wholeheartedly help to build support for the strike movement.

£1/£2 solidarity price

socialistparty.org.uk



# the Socialist

Issue 1104

8-14 October 2020

formerly **Militant**



Discuss the ideas to fight for our future at:

## Students!

You have been on the streets over the summer standing up against racism and class inequality. You forced a U-turn out of the government over A-Level results. But now the battle is on for the right to a decent education and a future. The Tories and the capitalist system only promise unemployment or at best low pay, student debt and the continuation of the housing crisis. Getting organised is urgent – and with that comes the need for ideas. That's why Socialism 2020 is a must for students.

At Socialism 2020 the workshops will include:

- Sunday 22 November 2-4pm: **Campus chaos – a crisis made by capitalism**
- Saturday 21 November 2-4pm: **is the working class still the agent of socialist change?**
- Monday 23 November 11am-1pm: **How can LGBT+ liberation be won?**
- Saturday 21 November 11am-1pm: **Lessons of the Black Panthers**
- Sunday 22 November: 11am-1pm: **Jobs crisis! The fight for work or full pay** and much, much more!

## SOCIALISM

online forum over four days 20-23 November

Agenda, tickets, info: [socialism2020.net](http://socialism2020.net)

020 8988 8777

2020



Cuts to teaching time, limited resources and underpaid university staff are not the natural outcome of coronavirus, but the result of the capitalist market funding model. Overcoming the campus crisis starts with getting organised. This rally will discuss how we can fight for student and trade union democratic oversight of all safety measures that are taken, to make sure they're in the interests of students, staff, and society, not the bosses' profits.

and at

**NATIONAL STUDENT RALLY OVER ZOOM**  
Sunday 25 October 1pm



Scan QR code to register



A SOCIALIST RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC CRISIS  
▶▶ [socialistparty.org.uk/coronavirus](http://socialistparty.org.uk/coronavirus)

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS  
▶▶ see column on p3

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