

Tory second wave shambles

LOCKED DOWN

HARD UP

FIGHT BACK!

• Work or full pay • Health before profit

ELAINE BRUNSKILL
SOCIALIST PARTY NORTHERN REGION

As areas across the country face further lockdown measures there is growing frustration, anger and anxiety.

Under Chancellor Sunak's recently announced 'Job Support Scheme', workers furloughed due to coronavirus restrictions will only receive two-thirds of their pay.

But workers will still have to pay 100% of the rent. And when we buy groceries we won't be able to offer just two-thirds of the bill!

Adding insult to injury, evidence points to new restrictions being too little, too late to stop a killer second wave. The government's expert Sage committee warned last month that an immediate two-week lockdown was imperative.

"Not acting now to reduce cases will result in a very large epidemic with catastrophic consequences in terms of direct Covid-related deaths and the ability of the health service to meet needs." The Tories ignored Sage, implementing only one of its five urgent recommendations. In or out of lockdown, big business profits come first!

Night after night, local news here in the North details the growing Covid-19 numbers. Within the space of three weeks, the daily total more than trebled.

In Newcastle, more than one in 200 people has tested positive - and rising. The number of Covid-positive students at Newcastle and Northumbria universities, within a stone's throw of each other, has drastically increased - to over 1,600.

People are worried our area will end up in the strictest category of England's three-tier lockdown system. There is a lot of apprehension about the impact of Tory plans.

This includes local authorities, who are complaining bitterly about the lack of communication from Johnson's government. Meanwhile, Westminster has told councils they must share responsibility for controlling the spread, but without giving them adequate resources.

This is the same trick the Tories played with

austerity, having local councils dutifully wield the axe for their cuts. Councils should have refused that and fought instead for more resources. It's even more essential that councils and unions fight for full financial support for workers and public services now.

> Continued on p2

- Maintain and extend the furlough scheme: work or full pay!
- Councils must fight back! Organise with unions and communities to demand full funding for jobs, incomes and services
- For democratic workers' and community control of health and safety measures
- For socialist planning, not capitalist market chaos

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

AS SCHOOL CASES SOAR - IS CONTACT TRACING 'NEAR BREAKING POINT'?

Contact tracer speaks out: reduced follow-up and emergency hiring

AN NHS CLINICAL CONTACT TRACER

My job is to interview by phone people who have received positive results anywhere in the country. I am a 'tier-two' clinical contact tracer (the name has no relation to England's new lockdown tiers).

As part of this, I used to have to 'escalate' cases who attended workplaces, schools or universities. This meant sending their details to the 'tier-one' contact tracers - local 'health protection teams' - for a more detailed containment response.

As I'm writing this, a week has passed since my instructions suddenly changed (see exclusive 'stop press' report in the last Socialist). Escalating single cases had to stop.

My worry is that schools won't find out until they have two or more cases, by which time the virus could be spreading through multiple households.

Of course, I could be wrong.



Perhaps tier one now has alternative ways of finding out about that first case, and will contact the school more quickly?

Either way, the instruction states that "single cases in these settings are no longer followed up by the Level 1/ local HPTs." Why not?

Overwhelmed?

And with no explanation for the abrupt change, it adds weight to the idea that tier one might have been overwhelmed by the number of cases since term started.

After this change, another email from NHS Professionals - presumably sent to other tier-two clinical contact tracers too - asked if I wanted to apply to become tier-one. Then a further email arrived, saying any unsuccessful applicants to become tier-two earlier this year could now start almost immediately, depending on how many hours they can work.

As so much has already failed, unless the Department of Health comes up with an explanation, I'm assuming these show a system strained to near breaking point.

Track and trace must have local, democratic, community and workers' control, with all the resources needed, to stop the spread of Covid-19. The privateers - Serco, Sitel and Co - must be kicked out.

Even more delay in stopping school transmission?

MARTIN POWELL-DAVIES
TEACHER AND NATIONAL EDUCATION UNION ACTIVIST

School staff and parents fear the worst. Public Health England figures show that the highest test-positivity rates are now in the 10-19 age group, but schools are still expected to remain open with full class sizes, even in 'tier-two' and 'tier-three' lockdown areas.

Now we learn that the national contact-tracing callers are no longer directly reporting cases to the local health protection teams who do the follow-up in schools. Is this because a more efficient system has emerged, or is it just another example of the government failing to take the risk of Covid transmission in schools seriously?



Striking NEU member

Are schools now expected to rely on parents to tell them if their child has a positive test result? What if they don't, or don't do so quickly? Is it then down to schools to tell the local health protection teams? Wouldn't this mean even more delay before health protection teams know what's happening in their area? And in any case, what's the reason for not following up single cases? Are health protection teams expected to wait until there's a wider outbreak before acting on it?

More delay means more risk and less chance of stopping the virus spreading. Isn't this just adding more opportunities for things to go wrong with a test-and-trace system that desperately needs strengthening, not making worse? We need answers - and fast.

National Education Union must launch action now

JANE NELLIST
COVENTRY NEU

With growing case numbers in schools for both staff and students, which in turn leads to high numbers isolating, the National Education Union (NEU) urgently needs to make a stand.

We want the education of our students to be paramount, but we are not prepared to put at risk the health and safety of staff, students and communities. We need to force the government to act now.

Covid-19 will not be controlled by hope and good intentions. It needs a strong union that is ready to use all of its democratic power - including ballots for strike action. Calling all-members meetings in schools to discuss the situation should be a vital immediate step.

We have some of the largest class sizes, and the smallest classrooms, in Europe. Social distancing has been impossible to maintain in many

schools. Cramped corridors, the lack of toilet facilities, and windows that don't give sufficient ventilation add to the problems.

Five tests

The full reopening of schools in September was always going to create huge risks, especially without the NEU's 'five tests' firmly met - much lower case numbers, national plans for social distancing, fully functional test and trace, whole-school containment strategies, and protection for the vulnerable.

With no 'Plan B' and no confidence in a government that was reeling from one disaster to another, it was a critical error on the part of the union's leadership not to stand firm. The NEU nationally should have made clear we would refuse to comply with a full return, unless full resources and a defined trigger for 'blended learning' and reduced class numbers were in place.



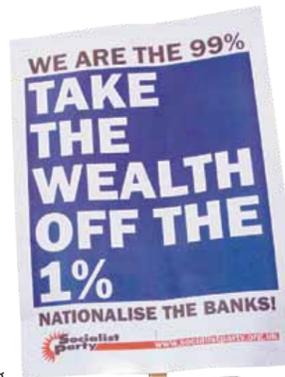
Under the microscope

Global billionaires are worth more than ever in history, reports UBS. Their collective worth hit \$10.2 trillion this July. That's a 27.5% surge since April for 2,189 fat cats, while billions of us suffer pandemic and depression. The previous record was \$8.9 trillion in 2017.

Supermarket giant Tesco plans to pay out £315 million to shareholders - after receiving £249 million in local tax breaks. The half-year dividend is 20% bigger than last year, and comes alongside £1.2 billion profits.

Redundancies have soared to the highest level since 2009, during the Great Recession, reports the ONS. And unemployment hit 4.3% in the three months to August - a three-year high, up from 4.1% the quarter before.

Youth unemployment could more than triple, hitting Thatcher levels by year's end. That's 17% of 18 to 29-year-olds - same as 1984 - reckons the Resolution Foundation.



PIC PAUL MATTESSON

Growing anger and frustration at lockdown economic uncertainty

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

There is a lot of uncertainty about the future. I spoke to a factory worker who has worked at the same factory for decades, since leaving school. Now the company is making him redundant as it has scaled back production due to the impact of the last lockdown from March.

Already in the North East, unemployment is the highest in the UK, and there are warnings of much worse to come. What chance does anyone being made redundant now have of getting another job - never mind one on anything like decent wages and conditions?

Another worker I spoke to, employed in hospitality, had tested positive for Covid. For this young worker and many others, there are fears that any further restrictions will be the final nail in the coffin for droves of pubs, clubs and cafes.

Across the North East, 56,000 people work in hospitality, according to Gateshead council leader Martin Gannon. Very many of these workers are already on minimum-wage, zero-hour contracts.

There are also growing fears that Rishi Sunak's pitiful Job Support Scheme may not even kick in till the middle of November or start of



December. How will people survive till then with no income?

Just three weeks into the first lockdown, 1.5 million people across Britain had to go a full day without food because they had no money. Around three million reported someone in their household had gone hungry, according to the Food Foundation.

This government is stumbling from one crisis to another. There is growing anger and frustration that Johnson makes policy announcements, then goes Awol.

Sunak's supposed 'safety net' has so many holes, even more workers will undoubtedly crash through. Already, for those living on minimum wage, there is too much month at the end of the money.

The constant refrain of Johnson, Sunak and Co is that they 'can't help everyone'. This isn't good enough. If their profit-hungry system can't provide for us, we need to fight for an alternative. Growing numbers of workers and young people are concluding that socialism is the only alternative that can offer a decent future. They're right.

Three-fifths of households claiming in-work benefits have had to cut down on food and basic needs. Almost two-thirds receiving Universal Credit or working tax credit accrued more debt, says Save the Children.

The poorest districts in England are almost four times as likely to face lockdown restrictions, according to Guardian analysis. Abysmal living and working conditions caused by poverty are to blame.

900,000 more children have applied for free school meals since the coronavirus crisis hit. They join 1.4 million who were already struggling to eat, finds the Food Foundation.

Care homes in England are waiting a week or more to get Covid-19 test results, finds the FT. Delays make it impossible to effectively contain the virus.

23% of people suffering mental health issues have to wait three months or more for NHS treatment. Some don't receive support for four years, says the Royal College of Psychiatrists.



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.

WORK AND INCOME

Trade union struggle for an immediate increase in the minimum wage to £12 an hour without exemptions as a step towards a real living wage of at least £15. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings. Scrap zero-hour contracts.

All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.

An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension.

Scrap Universal Credit. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion. Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network. A 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

ENVIRONMENT

Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and 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!

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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Students not to blame for unsafe uni conditions



LENNY SHAIL
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

Over the last few weeks, the capitalist media has expressed outrage at students and young people holding parties, socialising, or even just queuing in large numbers.

Covid-19 restrictions are essential to curb the virus. However, it is the government, universities and businesses who have largely told students to go about university life as normal.

Many students still have at least some teaching on campus. And university managements have told first-years to move into halls as they would in normal times.

Meanwhile, the government's drive to restore profits led to long queues - and, particularly during 'eat out to help out', rammed restaurants. There were 64 million meals claimed during the scheme's first three weeks alone, says booking service OpenTable.

According to the capitalists, as long as there is a till and a card machine present, it doesn't count! But when it comes to hundreds of thousands

of teenagers uprooting themselves from all around the country, they are not allowed chances to make new friends or socialise.

This is unrealistic and even mentally damaging. All humans need and will naturally seek social interaction.

Many universities own huge amounts of property - buildings, open land and sports fields. These could be used creatively to provide safe, socially distanced social events like sports, games and parties, with masks, gloves, sanitisers and other precautions provided.

Coventry

In the absence of this, one incident in Coventry has drawn particularly widespread coverage. This followed a video of 200-odd students gathering in the common area of the Arundel House accommodation block. What the establishment media often neglects to report is that these students all live in the same block anyway - a block that holds about 800 in total.

At some unis, each massive block is supposed to be its own bubble! At others, each crowded flat is supposedly its own bubble - but many

students still have to share facilities with seven or more people. It seems the government doesn't apply its 'rule of six' in this context.

Either way, the idea that 800 students could somehow isolate themselves in a single, crowded building, akin to a prison in size and space per person, is ridiculous.

Socialist Students and the Socialist Party support those students facing victimisation. Student and staff unions should support them too. University management must scrap these punishments.

The complete insufficiency of the government's privatised test-and-trace system is also at fault. Making unis safe means mass testing of students and staff, and a locally based, publicly owned, fully funded contact-tracing system.

Arundel House, where the gathering took place, is privately owned. It would not make the landlords any money if students had stayed home.

Meanwhile, Coventry University reported a £17.5 million surplus last year. Newcastle University has even paid police to harass student housing areas rather than using that money to support students!

If halls parties are dangerous, and teaching is almost all online, then clearly their only concern is getting their rent and fees. Universities, businesses and landlords have shown no interest in providing a safe and liveable environment. We call for elected staff and student committees to have democratic oversight of university coronavirus measures and planning of safe social events.

SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

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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"It's not fair" - lockdown students demand free education

Below we print edited extracts from a letter which **Peggy Owens** of Cardiff Socialist Students has sent to Welsh first minister Mark Drakeford.

Students have been unfairly blamed for the recent surge in cases, and urged to go back to university - moving away from home - only to find themselves in an isolated and dangerous position. With rising debts and insecure housing, they are also left vulnerable to the financial consequences of the pandemic.

With multiple U-turns from the government, it is no surprise that people are now confused about what they can and cannot do. However, the singling out of students feels particularly cruel, and frankly discriminatory. Government rhetoric has unfairly blamed students for the recent surge in cases, when in fact it is government mismanagement which has led to one of the worst death tolls in the world.

Students have been coaxed into moving into halls or student accommodation with the lure of 'in-person seminars and lectures', only to find all of their education will be delivered online. They could have stayed at home and stayed safe, but instead they are forced into a busy student environment where viruses spread like wildfire.

Not only this, but they are now being threatened with a Christmas away from their families - quarantined in halls of residence. It's not fair.

For some, higher education is now similar to being in prison. Locked in halls in Manchester and Swansea, students are having to spend their first weeks of university in confinement with no emotional or educational support.

With this quality of teaching and

experience available, students have a right to be angry, I think. I currently live with a student who is shielding and was almost faced with eviction - after he was promised a no-detriment policy on his course, only to find out this only applied to third-year students.

To address the situation in which we have been placed:

1. I propose that tuition fees are refunded completely because we are not getting the education and university experience we were promised. The Tories have shown that the money is there - why can't higher education be free for all?

2. There should be mass testing for students. Some people are shielding in university, and scared for their lives.

3. There should be free accommodation for those who are isolating, and students' rights as tenants need to be strengthened.

4. There should not be cuts to courses, jobs or staff pay - these should be funded by the government.

Student debt is a deterrent to students from lower-income backgrounds, especially in the current climate where job prospects are so poor. Meanwhile, we have a shortage of many essential staff - shouldn't we be encouraging young people to go to university to become teachers and nurses of the future?

• **Read a fuller version at socialiststudents.org.uk**

The Socialist Party demands

- Scrap all fees and debt - for a living grant for all students
- Trade union struggle to stop all cuts and closures
- Mass testing of all students and staff
- Democratic control of Covid measures by staff, unions and students



Protesting in Cardiff 4 October

Students speak out: isolation and uncertainty reign

• 'Hollow and empty' higher education

Hollow and empty is how I would describe the first week of my higher education.

It's hard to be focused on a screen when there are constant notifications of people having one technical problem or another. The question of where all the money's gone becomes more and more relevant in my mind. It certainly couldn't have gone into IT; the IT is shit.

Hollow and empty is also how I would describe the eyes of my poor lecturers. They stare into the camera, counting the names on the screen, before having to muster all their enthusiasm to ask "can everyone hear me," while furiously typing the same into the live chat. Hollow and empty is our reply.

I feel sorry for my lecturers. They've been put in a situation that they haven't asked for and are trying to make the best of it. But the fact remains that we've paid their bosses full price for a full education, and hollow and empty is what we've got.

Students all over the world have a right to be angry now. What I've seen around my (admittedly nearly empty) campus, and among my flatmates, is an amazing amount of resilience.

These people have come from all over on empty promises. We have been taken advantage of by a university management which doesn't care about us, but only about the money we can provide. Until we force the universities to stop thinking of their students as cash cows, we'll have the right to be angry.

ROBERT OWENS
SOUTHAMPTON UNIVERSITY STUDENT

• My whole floor is isolating - without help

The first couple of weeks of university have gone as well as many expected.

I am a first-year, currently in isolation alongside a large proportion of my fellow students. Many of them want to go back home already, and in hindsight wish they hadn't left.

Two of my three flatmates were alerted by track and trace after freshers, and then tested positive a few days later. This has meant the whole of my flat has had to stay inside for 14 days.

The uni has said it will give support, but not really specified in what way - apart from online learning. It's been a struggle to get hold of food as delivery is all booked.

They told us to get other students to help. This has been difficult - freshers was very different, and flat parties are out of the question for most of us, so it has been difficult to make connections.

Also, my accommodation isn't handling it well. With over 1,000 people in a small city block, cases here are through the roof. My whole floor is isolating!

The rush to get us back in for fees

and rent has caused a massive spike in student cities. A lot of us are worrying - what happens now?

The options are: keep us locked up for the foreseeable future, or send us home to spread the disease further. Both terrible options that could have been avoided.

JAKE GEORGE
NOTTINGHAM TRENT STUDENT



Students all over the world have a right to be angry now. What I've seen around my (admittedly nearly empty) campus, and among my flatmates, is an amazing amount of resilience

• FE students 'stuck in awful, endless limbo'

Further education students across the nation are stuck in a confusing, awful, seemingly endless limbo, filled with U-turns and dead ends. In any college you go into (if it's open, of course) there's a sense of dread.

Cases are rising again, and they're higher than before, but I'm still set to be in classes with around 23 other students next week. It's not a question of if a student is going to catch something, but when. If not me, then who?

And how long until it's a wild-fire again? When the cases were in the low thousands we were told we couldn't sit our GCSEs. Now they're nearing 12,000 we're expected to carry on with business as usual? It's a great idea, isn't it?

But of course we all want to go back! Zoom meetings have turned our brains into mush, and I haven't sat in a classroom since March. Most people are finding it impossible to learn. We need normality.

But we've been robbed of our chance for normality. I don't want to be the Tories' collateral damage in their new scheme, 'Pretending Coronavirus Doesn't Exist'.

We were all looking forward to it, too. After we said goodbye to all of our secondary school friends, we were told that 'college is more about making even better friendships'. But how can we?

This just adds to the list of ways the government has failed us. It's that list that's turning young people away from 'mainstream' politics. The utter despair and lack of faith that each student has must lead to something greater.

CHARLIE PANDIT
LONDON FE COLLEGE STUDENT
• **Building a movement for free education, see page 11**

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?
editors@socialistparty.org.uk

Unite votes to cut affiliation fee to Labour

Union should support anti-cuts candidates



LEN MCCLUSKEY PHOTO PAUL MATSSON

Unite the union's executive council has voted to cut its affiliation fee to the Starmer-led Labour Party by 10% - the equivalent of 55,000 affiliated members. It is reported that the BFAWU bakers' union is also considering such a move. This represents an important step in how Unite and the wider trade union movement is reacting to the defeat of Corbynism in Labour. But it should also be the starting point of a necessary broader debate about how workers are politically represented in this crisis-torn period, when Starmer's victory is more and more blocking off political channels.

Under Len McCluskey, Unite was the main backer of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of Labour, acting to stiffen the left against the constant attacks of the party's right-wing, particularly in fending off the unsuccessful coup against Corbyn in 2016. However, that bridgehead wasn't consolidated through reversing the Blairite counter-revolution that had stripped away trade union power and mandatory re-election and control of MPs and councillors.

As a result, Starmer's election was a decisive blow against the Corbyn left. The political consequences are becoming ever clearer. As millions of workers fight to protect themselves from Tory Covid incompetence, and the bosses' redundancies and 'fire and rehire' attacks on pay, terms and conditions, the Labour leadership is entwined in national unity partnership.

As Starmer said last month, he will support "whatever measures the government takes" because "in the end this is not about party politics. This is about getting the nation through this virus, so if the government takes action I will support that, we will

support it and I will support their message."

But workers precisely need alternative policies that ensure that they don't pay the price for the pandemic and the economic fall-out. Unite's decision must be followed up by a discussion on how such a programme can be put forward to working-class people, as Starmer moves to consolidate his grip on Labour.

Len says that he wants "the transforming (of) our country into a better place for working people". But under Starmer's leadership, Labour won't be "the party of change and ideas, of redistribution and fairness" that he refers to. Incorrectly, he suggests that Starmer can be influenced by being the "angel in his ear". But Starmer's election was the victory of the capitalist establishment in once again securing a reliable tool that can be utilised to replace the Tories in office, when necessary, for their class interests.

In light of Starmer's election as Labour leader, the RMT transport workers' union national executive committee voted to support the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition resuming standing candidates again, "in the new conditions of a Starmer leadership and the continued implementation of austerity cuts by many Labour-led authorities".

A concrete next step that Unite could take would be to approach the RMT, together with other unions affiliated and unaffiliated to Labour, to begin discussions on how to develop an anti-cuts electoral challenge next May. Such an alliance on an anti-austerity socialist programme would begin to raise the sights of workers as they look to fight for their lives and livelihoods.

If the Unite leadership does not take this path, there will be many Unite members, alongside other workers and young people, who will be prepared to do so - determined to find a means to fight for a socialist programme at the ballot box.

support it and I will support their message."

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A number of Labour mayors are demanding that Tory Chancellor

support "whatever measures the government takes" because "in the end this is not about party politics. This is about getting the nation through this virus, so if the government takes action I will support that, we will

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University workers ballot for action against in-person teaching

BEA GARDNER
SOUTHAMPTON UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE UNION
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)

University workers are escalating disputes over unsafe campus reopening plans as cases soar in university cities.

The University and College Union's (UCU) position is that all teaching should be online as the default until the 'five tests' are met, including a comprehensive plan of testing and a reduction in overall infection rates.

On 30 September, a higher education sector conference for the UCU voted overwhelmingly in favour of balloting for industrial action at institutions which continue to enforce in-person teaching.

Since the conference, UCU branches in Leeds, Birmingham and Warwick have all entered formal disputes over unsafe conditions and are preparing to ballot for strike action.

At Northumbria University, where over 770 students have tested positive for Covid-19, the decision of

UCU members to ballot for industrial action was enough to push management to move all teaching online, having previously refused. Other branches which have entered into disputes have had a similar response, with online-only teaching now the default at all Liverpool, Manchester and Newcastle universities.

However, while the move to online teaching is an important step forward to ensure the immediate health and safety of university staff and students, it is not a long-term solution. It also does not resolve the appalling situation of student accommodation outbreaks, where students are now trapped. (See pages 4-5)

Up until now, campus trade unions have been systematically blocked from critical decision-making meetings regarding return plans. The escalated actions show that management can be forced to change their approach. Campus trade unions, in conjunction with students, must now organise for the necessary resources and democratic oversight to make universities safe.



NEU Special Conference: A fight for safety in schools is urgently needed

ALEX MOORE
PLYMOUTH NEU DELEGATE (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

A National Education Union (NEU) special conference of over 550 delegates, representing nearly half a million educators, took place on Zoom on 3 October.

There was general agreement on the main two motions, along with some strengthening amendments tabled by the national executive committee, on 'Winning in the workplace' and 'Building a fair education system'. These included improving support for both supply teachers and workplace reps, and opposition to performance-related pay and the government's intention of "restoring SATs and a largely unmodified examination system in 2021".

The main debates were over proposed rule changes contained in the executive report to conference.

A debate took place over the leadership's proposal to reduce the size of the national executive committee and, as a consequence, reserve more seats for women. Delegates from the Education Solidarity Network (ESN) - the left grouping within the union that includes the Socialist Party - spoke in opposition to the move.

The ESN argued that this change would do nothing to make the leadership genuinely more representative, particularly of low-paid women working as support staff. It could also dilute lay democracy by making it harder for voices critical of the leadership to be elected. Although there was an overall 56% majority in favour, it did not meet the required two-thirds majority needed to change the rules.

That outcome may reflect the feeling among many reps that I discussed with that the union has been operating in too 'top-down' a manner. Yes, we've had some impressive



PHOTO WWW.VPEREMEN.COM/CC BY-SA

national Zoom webinars but there hasn't been enough open debate and dialogue about the action we need to take to defend members and education.

Sadly, that feeling will only have been strengthened by the way debate was curtailed on the conference motion which was of most immediate relevance to most NEU members - on 'Covid-19 and safe return'.

Given the growing crisis in the number of cases in schools since the start of term, the motion originally tabled by the national executive committee majority called, too vaguely, for "more detailed contingency plans for possible local or wider school closures by being clear about the infection/R-rate thresholds at which schools/colleges in an area should close or move to smaller class sizes". However, amendments that called for the union to set clear thresholds for when this should happen were placed low down the order of debate by the conference business

committee. As a result, they were never voted upon.

But the mover of the main motion did make it clear that amendment 1.4, to be moved by Socialist Party member Jane Nellist from Coventry, was not accepted by the executive. This amendment set down clear thresholds, and also added the call for action to protect staff at higher risk - which was absent from the motion. Debate on this 'Covid-19 and Safe Return' was then finished early when allocated conference time was still available.

In their pre-conference video message, the joint general secretaries rightly called for reps' meetings to be held in high-rate areas to discuss exactly what steps needed to be taken. But the outcome of special conference still leaves school reps and local officers unclear as to exactly when the union will back action to enforce smaller class sizes where local infection rates are dangerously high. That needs urgently addressing now.

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN USDAW

At the behest of General Secretary Paddy Lillis, the national executive committee of Usdaw, the retail and distribution union, has overturned its previous decision to delay the elections (see 'Ushaw elections: Defend members' right to participate' at socialistparty.org.uk) despite most union branches not meeting due to Covid. This means the elections will now form a key contest in the battle over the direction of the union.

Under Lillis, the union's full-time leadership has been missing in action, while the bulk of the membership - key workers in retail, distribution and manufacturing - have been working on the front line throughout the pandemic.

Prior to the pandemic, Lillis steered the union into support for the new pro-big business leader of the Labour Party, Keir Starmer. Like 'Sir Keir', Lillis has been likewise pursuing a policy of 'national unity'. Lillis has called for a new version of the failed 'partnership' approach - 'triple-partite' working with the Tory government and big business.

And the results of this approach?

- Agreed procedures with the bosses' organisation CBI for how to try to protect retail workers, which in many cases aren't fully implemented, with no strategy by the union to enforce these, leaving individual reps to fight battles on their own.

- A failure to take seriously the attempts of some supermarkets, the capitalist press, and Tory and Labour MPs to overturn current Sunday trading legislation, which meant the union was inactive until the Tory government started seriously considering the proposal.

- A failure to support members who have tried to challenge the bosses - such as Usdaw executive committee member and Ikea Glasgow convenor Richie Venton, victimised for challenging attempts to attack sick pay, without a word of support from Lillis. And the Manchester Debenhams'

Ushaw elections: the battle for a fighting union



PHOTO RICHARD GROVES

Napo AGM 2020: Celebrating probation victory and preparing for challenges ahead

NAPO AGM DELEGATE

Napo, the union of probation workers and Cafcass (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service staff), held its first online annual general meeting (AGM), and the first since the 'reunification' of the probation service after a costly and devastating part-privatisation.

Napo members fought valiantly for the reversal of privatisation, but that victory is not the end of serious issues for probation.

The AGM began with an entirely inadequate speech from Frances O'Grady. She stated that the new Job Retention Scheme was not good enough, but would help protect jobs. This in no way justifies her photo-shoot alongside Chancellor Rishi Sunak and the head of the CBI as it was unveiled!

When asked: "What can be done about a decade of pay cuts in the public sector?" she offered almost nothing concrete aside from adverts



PHOTO PAUL MATTHEWSON

in newspapers to 'up the ante'. Much more should be expected from the leadership of a movement with the real potential to fight and win decent pay.

Submitted motions expressed concern at micromanagement, deprofessionalisation, horrendous workloads, and staffing shortages. This doesn't just come from privatisation, but also from a decade of real-terms pay and funding cuts that have impacted the whole public sector.

Unfortunately, this AGM missed a third of the motions including two titled 'Black Lives Matter'. These will now need to be discussed another time. Disagreements arose during the debate over the crucial branch restructuring put forward by the national executive committee. Many felt the NEC had not properly consulted with branches and the lay membership. Limited AGM time was taken on this avoidable issue, and the vote was lost by 78%!

A Socialist Party member called for

urgent resources for Cafcass. Years of low pay has caused high staff turnover. Last year some Band 1 staff said they could not afford Christmas presents without overtime! Workloads are high and pressure on family court advisers is unrelenting. For years, calls for decent funding from Napo and even Cafcass management have fallen on deaf Tory ears, causing increasing harm to staff and to the service of safeguarding children.

We are entering a very unstable political era, where the Tories will stretch public finances like never before.

A gigantic fightback from the trade union movement is vital. Napo's work must involve working in solidarity with other unions, because unity is strength, and together this movement of six million trade unionists can win.

Socialist Party members in Napo will work with all members willing to develop a socialist caucus in the union for this cause.

Stop Royal Mail's profit-driven plans to force postal workers to share vans

ROYAL MAIL WORKER

As we are entering a second wave of Covid-19, senior Royal Mail managers have taken a reckless decision to reintroduce shared vans, on a so-called voluntary basis. But the Royal Mail view of voluntary would not be our view of it.

There are reports from around the country of managers pressuring members to share vans, and this at a time when there's been a huge increase in Covid cases within units. One member has tragically lost his life from a cardiac arrest linked to Covid. Mac, who worked at the Nottingham mail centre, leaves a wife and four children.

Gary Clark, CWU branch secretary, says:

"Around 18 postal workers have died from Covid in total. Luckily, I have had none in my own branch but I am seeing a large increase in confirmed Covid cases, including



PHOTO PAUL MATTHEWSON

Bathgate which has ten, and another 15 are self-isolating. That's over 25% of that office who either have it or are self-isolating.

"This is a completely reckless act by management, which we believe

is due to them cost-cutting to make profits, and preparing for the increase in post as we head towards Christmas.

"Royal Mail should hire a large fleet of vans, but instead it has put our members' health and safety at risk, and their families and other workers too.

"We have launched a campaign around this, encouraging our members to refuse to share vans and follow our guidance around health and safety. If a unit is unsafe they should seek support from the CWU."

This has been happening at a time when we are in national negotiations with Royal Mail around a number of outstanding issues linked to the strike ballot we had, and this action will clearly have an impact on these talks.

We must clearly put our members' safety before Royal Mail's chase for profit and, if required, ballot for industrial action.

Unison: The Socialist is backing Hugo Pierre - for a fighting socialist general secretary!

Hugo Pierre, a Socialist Party member, is standing as a candidate for Unison general secretary. The Socialist will be running a series of articles over the coming weeks on 'why the Socialist is backing Hugo' and looking at aspects of his programme (right).

Rules introduced by Unison 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'. These articles are produced without the authorisation of Hugo Pierre, in order to comply with these requirements.

The ballot will run from 28 October to 27 November 2020.

- National strike action on local authority cuts and for an end to leaving branches to fight alone
- Labour councils should set no-cuts needs budgets instead of passing on Tory cuts
- The union should withhold 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
- Reinstate 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



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ARE COOPERATIVES THE ANSWER TO A FAILING CAPITALIST SYSTEM?

Following a decade of recession and austerity, and as the profit system wreaks havoc with lives and livelihoods during the Covid-19 pandemic, more of the left and trade union movement in Britain and internationally are turning towards cooperatives as a way to save ailing firms and jobs.

On a broader level, some argue that cooperatives are a possible alternative to the domination of global capitalism.

Niall Mulholland, East London Socialist Party and an executive member of the London Federation of Housing Cooperatives (personal capacity), asks if this is the case.

It seems all wings of the labour and trade union movement have renewed interest in cooperatives. During Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party, cooperatives were given considerable emphasis in a document looking at an 'alternative model' to capitalism. The party's 2019 election manifesto promised a significant expansion of cooperatives.

Richard Wolff, "America's most prominent Marxist economist" (New York Times Magazine), advocates 'workers' self-directed enterprises, as the way towards 'economic democracy' for the working class.

At the other end of the spectrum, Keir Starmer, a keynote speaker at the recent conference of the Cooperative Party, which is affiliated to Labour, advocates the 'Co-op Councils model', which is described as "a network of over 30 Labour councils piloting models of service-user or community control".

The International Cooperative Alliance, formed 125 years ago, defines a cooperative as "an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise".

According to the World Cooperative Monitor (2019), more than 12% of humanity (over one billion people) are part of any of the three million cooperatives in the world. The largest 300 cooperatives employ 280 million people across the globe (10% of the world's employed population).

The UK has a diverse co-operative movement, involving over 7,100 co-ops, ranging from local shops, football supporters' trusts and credit unions to Woodcraft Folk, worth £37.7 billion to the economy. A recent addition, Student Cooperative Homes, aims to provide "permanently affordable homes formed by students who democratically manage the property they live in".

In Europe, three countries, Finland,

Ireland and Austria, have over half of the population in cooperative membership. In Africa, one in 13 people are members of a cooperative. Countries with the highest proportions of populations in cooperative ownership include India (242 million) and the USA (120 million).

There is no doubt that many cooperatives have played a positive role, improving the conditions and lives of millions of working-class people and the rural poor, fostering solidarity and a collective approach.

This is in sharp contrast to the boss's exploitation, alienation and greed intrinsic to capitalism. But do co-ops represent 'bottom-up socialism', as some argue? Can they grow to become a viable alternative to capitalism, on a national and global scale?

These are very old debates. The cooperative movement finds its origins with 'Utopian socialists' like Comte de Saint-Simon and Charles Fourier, in France, and Robert Owen, in Britain. In revulsion at the horrors of the industrial revolution, they attempted to draw up plans for how society could be better organised.

Utopian socialism

They believed that rational argument, producers' cooperative models, and gradual reform would be more efficient than capitalism. Owen postulated that producers' cooperatives would gradually spread, leading to a classless communist society. He established the New Lanark community in Scotland, which included a factory, homes and a school.

Another titan of the cooperative movement, William Thompson, drew on Owen's ideas for plans for a cooperative community in his native Ireland, but he disagreed with Owen's paternalistic approach and courtship of rich and powerful patrons.

Thompson argued for democratically organised and run communities, suited to the limited resources of the largely working-class cooperative movement, and for workers eventually



Co-op sugar mill at Maharashtra, India PHOTO SHAKHERSO/CC

securing ownership of the community's land and property. His views won out at the Third Cooperative Congress, held in London in 1833.

The cooperative movement, however, subsequently grew mainly in the form of trading, consumer and finance businesses. The modern co-operative movement in Britain considers the 'Rochdale Pioneers' as its prototype.

In 1844, a group of 28 artisans, working in the cotton mills in Rochdale, established the first modern cooperative business by pooling their scarce resources to access basic goods at a lower price.

Similar cooperatives were formed across Britain and began to spread internationally. By the early 1860s, there were over 250 retail co-ops in Britain, and by 1864 a co-op store operated in Africa.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the founders of scientific socialism, were enthusiastic about the emergence of producers' cooperatives. Writing for

the International Workingmen's Association (IWMA), in 1864, they said of the cooperatives: "The value of these great social experiments cannot be overrated. By deed instead of argument, they have shown that production on a large scale, and in accord with the behests of modern science, may be carried on without the existence of a class of masters employing a class of hands..."

Today, some advocates of cooperatives argue that a 'cooperative socialism' can emerge from the growth of co-ops. This echoes the 'revisionist' ideas of the German socialist, Eduard Bernstein, in the late 19th century. He argued that the spread of trade unions and cooperatives was proof that capitalism was slowly evolving towards full democracy and socialism, from within, and that revolutionary socialism was not needed.

But Marx and Engels had already described the limitations of cooperatives, which were restricted in scale and by "individual wage slaves' private efforts". This meant that "the cooperative system will never transform capitalist society.

"To convert social production into one large and harmonious system of free and co-operative labour, general social changes are wanted, changes of the general conditions of society, never to be realised save by the transfer of the organised forces of society, viz., the state power, from capitalists and landlords to the producers themselves" (IWMA, 1866).

Marx and Engels shared Fourier

sectors, can show the potential and material benefit of co-ops. They can pose questions about an alternative to the capitalist system.

But, as Marx pointed out, co-ops cannot operate independently of the capitalist system: "The cooperative factories of the labourers themselves represent within the old form the first sprouts of the new, although they naturally reproduce, and must reproduce, everywhere in their actual organisation all the shortcomings of the prevailing system" (Capital, Vol.3).

These "shortcomings" include the pressures of competition and marketing in a profit-driven market economy; to cut costs, skimp on quality, hold back wages and the number of employees, and so on. Co-ops may be cooperatively and democratically run, but they exist in the capitalist market and are governed by the 'logic' of market competition.

Covid downturn

Cooperatives tend to become more popular during periods of capitalist crisis and as the profit system's institutions and ideology lose authority. As we enter depressed economic conditions arising from the market system's calamitous response to Covid, thousands of firms, big and small, will fail.

In some cases, turning them into workers' cooperatives will be posed, where employees see no other alternative to save jobs. Socialists are sympathetic to these initiatives, but the lessons of previous attempts need to be studied by the workers' movement.

After the economic collapse of Argentina in the early 2000s, many workers took over their factories and formed co-ops. But after a while, many of these were consumed by the logic of capitalist relations.

In an interview, a co-op worker lamented: "We took it over. We were so excited. We made our wages equal. All the old alienation came back, and now it just feels the way it used to feel."

State-sponsored cooperatives operating under the constraints of capitalism also face fundamental contradictions. 'Socialism in the 21st century' in Venezuela saw the Hugo Chávez government encourage the setting up of 280,000 cooperatives and 'mixed enterprises' from 2002 to 2008.

Such measures, along with a limited redistribution of oil wealth, improved the lives of many of the poorest people.

But the decisive sectors of the capitalist economy remained untouched, and capitalist relations inevitably dominated the economy. Bribery and corruption was rife in many state and municipal bodies, and many of them registered as co-ops to take advantage of government subsidies.

Capitalist logic

Co-ops may be formally cooperatively and democratically run, but seeking to succeed on the capitalist market means that they are governed by the logic of competition.

'A Manifesto for union co-ops', launched in 2020 by Union-Coops UK, calls for "a fully unionised, worker co-operative, owned and controlled by those who own and work in it". The union co-op model, developed in the United States in recent years, is an attempt to link co-ops to the wider workers' movement.

It also indicates recognition of the need for organised labour in co-ops, where class tensions find expression. These are laudable aims. But the analysis made over 150 years ago by Marx remains valid:

"The experience of the period from 1848 to 1864 has proved beyond doubt that, however excellent in principle and however useful in practice, cooperative labour, if kept within the narrow circle of the casual efforts of private workmen, will never be able to arrest the growth in geometrical progression of monopoly, to free the masses, nor even to perceptibly lighten the burden of their miseries... To save the industrious masses, cooperative labour ought to be developed to national dimensions, and, consequently, to be fostered by national means... To conquer political power has, therefore, become the great duty of the working classes." (Marx, 1864 *Inaugural Address to the Working Men's International Association*).

The socialist reorganisation of society, on a national and international level, including the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the modern economy under democratic workers' control and management, is the starting point for the realisation of the development of society towards the 'classless, communist' dream of the early cooperative pioneers.

● For a detailed critique of Robert Owen, read 'Socialism: Utopian and scientific' by Friedrich Engels, with a new introduction by Socialist Party member Tony Saunois. £6, including postage. Available from Left Books. leftbooks.co.uk - 020 8988 8777.

From cooperatives to neoliberal economics

As a cooperative grows bigger and its operations more complex, there is relentless pressure to find capital for development, to 'professionalise' the management, and to find ways to skirt around cooperative members' democracy and participation.

In the 2000s, the UK Cooperative Bank imitated its private rivals and recklessly expanded. In 2014, overburdened with buyouts, the Co-op Bank was forced to demutualise, seeking private capital to keep afloat.

The Co-op Group, the parent body of the bank and many other retail and services, was badly exposed and suffered huge financial losses. For a time, the very future of the Co-op Group seemed in doubt.

Since 2017, the Co-op Bank has been 100% owned by a group of hedge funds and private equity firms. Last August, the bank announced that it will cut 350 jobs and close 18 branches, blaming low interest rates and the Covid-19 crisis.

In a worrying sign, the Co-op Group announced that from 2021 it will cease funding of the 'Co-op News' print journal (founded in 1871) and stop "providing other unrestricted funding to Co-op Press". Yet, at the same time, the Group can find up to £100 million on a 15-year 'sponsorship' deal with the Oak View Group, for the 'naming rights' to the developer's planned 23,500-capacity arena in Manchester.

The Mondragon Cooperative Corporation, the world's largest federation of worker cooperatives, which originated in the Basque country in 1956, is another case in point. Recently, Mondragon was included in Fortune Magazine's list of "enterprises that are changing the world". Fortune praised Mondragon for being



PHOTO THE COOPERATIVE/CC

a "financially sound business while putting people before profit."

However, a few years ago, Mondragon ran into serious problems. As the cooperative grew from the 1960s onwards, it gradually changed many of its initial goals in an effort to compete and develop 'economies of scale' in a competitive capitalist world.

In order to get managers with specific skills, Mondragon hired from outside firms and had to pay competitively. The one-worker/one-share/one-vote rule, common to many co-ops, also changed at Mondragon, leading to economic inequities in the co-op.

Mondragon co-ops started to hire outside non-member workers with neither secure employment, co-op benefits, or decision-making power. The co-op corporation also invested in financial sector 'products', such as

hedge funds.

These changes came home to roost in 2008, during the global financial crisis. Fagor, the Mondragon 'flagship enterprise', employing 5,642 workers at 13 manufacturing plants in five countries, was forced into bankruptcy after over-extending itself. Thousands of members were laid off, and non-co-op members were sacked, without any benefits.

Mondragon argued that it did attempt to save as many members' jobs and co-ops, as possible, relocated Fagor jobs to other co-ops, and has not jettisoned all of its co-op principles.

But the partial collapse brought home the degree to which capitalist relations were able to penetrate Mondragon, and its increasing reliance on the financialised neoliberal model of capitalism.



PHOTO AMANDA SLATER/CC

The Triumph Meriden cooperative

In 1974, facing huge job losses, workers at the Meriden Norton Villiers Triumph motorcycle manufacturing site, organised an occupation which lasted two years.

This workers' struggle impressed the new Labour Trade and Industry minister Tony Benn, and a workers' cooperative was formed.

But the undercapitalised Meriden cooperative was exposed to the cut-throat competition of world capitalist markets, a UK recession, and a high pound damaging export sales. Subject to these capitalist 'laws', the debt-laden co-op went into decline and folded.

Building a movement to fight for free education

● Cardiff

We gathered in the heart of student-dominated Cathays to discuss how we can organise to demand a refund of our fees for this disrupted year, and how we can build a movement to fight for a refund for every year - for free education!

It was entirely predictable that unless the virus was contained in the wider community, the number of cases in the university would rise rapidly when they reopened. We are disgusted that university management lured students to campus with promises of in-person teaching and 'face-to-face' freshers' events.

"They waited for us to pay our fees and sign our tenancy agreements - knowing that we were likely to spend a lot of time in front of a screen, and not a lot of time elsewhere."

On 9 October, as expected, figures emerged which confirmed that infections in the university had more than doubled to 75, compared to the day before. Students support demands to keep university workers safe.

At our protest, Alex, a first-year history student, compared the Tory government to the aristocratic world-war-one generals who sent soldiers over the top in a war for profits. "They cut funding for healthcare to the bone and built a system based on the gig economy that gives us no security. We couldn't have been worse-prepared for the pandemic. How can you isolate when you're overcrowded into shared flats?"

Rhys said, "They're trying to blame people in general, but young people in particular, for going to the pub and spreading the virus - but it was only a couple of weeks ago that they were urging people to 'eat out to help out!'"

Charlie, a first-year archaeology student, agreed - "Rishi Sunak has the gall to urge people in the arts to refrain. Given their incompetent handling of the pandemic, it's the government that needs retraining - or replacing!"

If decisive action had been taken when the virus first hit, our university experience could have looked very different now. Workers and students



Swansea

CLASS OF COVID V CAPITALISM

National rally over Zoom
Sunday 25 October 1pm

Find Socialist Students on Facebook to get the Zoom link

Young Socialists
youngsocialists.org.uk

socialist students
socialiststudents.org.uk

have got to seize the initiative and take control of deciding what safety measures are necessary, and be prepared to take action to fight for those measures.

CARDIFF SOCIALIST STUDENTS

● A force for change in Swansea

EVAN VAUGHAN

SWANSEA SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Across the UK, the anger amongst students has been rising as the Tory government continues to tumble and U-turn its way through the Covid-19 crisis. Chiefly on student's minds is the vast reduction in university services without any reduction in fees. Universities like Swansea have gone from in-person lectures and access to all of the university services - to online streaming and waiting lists for booked study spaces.

In Swansea, we organised a socially distanced meeting of students to discuss their anger about what's going on, but also to think of ways we can move forward. Although small, there was real enthusiasm amongst the students to get something done.

Freshers voiced their anger at being shoved into student housing with people they don't know and not being able to meet anyone else - changing from what should be a period of meeting new people into a six-person flatmate lottery. Students later into their time at university voiced their concern that Swansea University won't be able to provide the required services to complete their degrees with satisfaction.

Despite this, Swansea University has turned a deaf ear to the genuine concerns of their students. This is why Socialist Students, in Swansea and across the country, are holding meetings like this - to tap into the frustrations of students across the



Cardiff

country and build it into a force for meaningful change.

● Student fury in Manchester

THEO SHARIEFF

SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Students from both the University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University were furious about being effectively lied to by both the Tories and university management. They were angry that they had been told universities were ready and able to provide socially distanced face-to-face teaching. In reality, that was never guaranteed as a result of years of cuts on the campuses and the tuition fee funding crisis.

"They've lied to us just to make sure they got our rent and our tuition fees", one student said. When we explained that Socialist Students wants to fight for a tuition fee refund for this year and every year after - in effect scrapping fees altogether, paid for by the government - students immediately agreed.

And they agreed with us again when we further explained that the best way we can win free education

is by building a united student and workers' movement that challenges the very existence of the capitalist system itself - a system which offers no future for young people whatsoever.

● Bangor: No job cuts - we need staff more than ever!

MICHELLE FRANCIS

BANGOR SOCIALIST STUDENTS

The vice-chancellor of Bangor University has decided that his, currently unused, property is more important than the livelihoods of the people who work for him - and also more important than the lives of the students who pay him.

The University plans to cut 200 staff - 120 of these jobs are support staff and 80 are academic staff.

Now is not the time to be cutting jobs. We need staff more than ever. Students need the support to make it through isolation, many are getting more and more depressed, and are confused about what they should be doing.

There is not enough support here in Bangor for all the students in this

time of crisis - and now the university has decided it wants to cut student support even further. It's ridiculous!

As part of the Socialist Students' campaign for democratic public ownership of the universities - we demand:

- Universities to open their books so we can see exactly where our money is going
- Bring all services that have been privatised back in-house, or face mass action by students and staff.
- Cancel student debt and replace student loans with student living grants
- For rent control to end rip off rent - no charge for unused rooms

Socialist Students are calling socially distanced protests this week - campaigning for a fees refund and free education.

- Southampton - Friday 16 October 1pm - Highfield Campus
- Coventry - Tuesday 20 October 12pm - University Square
- Birmingham - Wednesday 21 October 4:30pm - Opposite Starbucks at Bournebrook Pavilion

● More from students on the campuses on pages 4-5

Oliver Campbell - Still fighting for justice

TERESA MACKAY

IPSWICH SOCIALIST PARTY

30 years since the unjust conviction of Oliver Campbell, campaigners are still fighting for justice. Nearly 85,000 people have signed a petition calling for a fresh appeal into Oliver Campbell's conviction of the murder of a shopkeeper in east London in 1991.

Oliver spent 11 years in various prisons after 'confessing' to the murder in a police interview. The last two years of his sentence were in Hollesley Bay, Suffolk. He has lived and worked in the county since his release in November 2002, just months after the 'Rough Justice'

documentary exposed the injustice he had suffered.

The jury never heard police evidence that his co-defendant named another man as the gunman shortly after being charged. The gunman was said to be 5'10" whereas Oliver is 6'3".

Oliver has learning difficulties and the mental age of a nine-year-old as a result of a brain injury when he was a baby. The police did not take this into consideration and behaved very aggressively towards him during questioning. This was initially carried out in the absence of a solicitor and an appropriate adult. If he were on trial now he would probably have

an intermediary as there is now legislation to protect people like Oliver.

Anyone who knows Oliver recognises that he is incapable of committing any crime, let alone one as serious as this, as he is kind and helpful - he is known as the 'gentle giant'. He is still on licence which means he cannot travel abroad and is subjected to closer monitoring by police. He said in an interview with a local newspaper: "I went into prison innocent; I came out innocent, and I've been innocent all the way through."

He said the conviction "has messed up my life for a long time. It takes up your life for a lifetime. I could've had a full-time job, a relationship, had

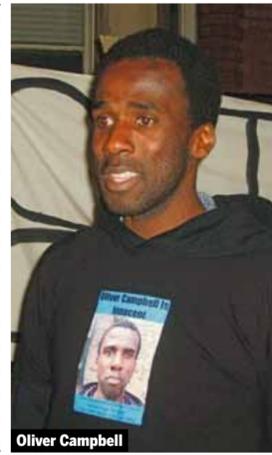
kids, a family life and travelled the world. I've lost all that.

"There are lots of people who have looked at my case and have said I shouldn't have been convicted. In my view this is a complete miscarriage of justice.

"Anyone who worked in the prisons where I was knew that I was innocent."

His solicitor, Glyn Maddocks, and barrister, Michael Birnbaum QC, have once again forwarded a detailed appeal to the Criminal Cases Review Commission urging them to refer it to the Court of Appeal as they felt that "much of the police questioning was misleading and unfair." There is an Early Day Motion backing Oliver's campaign.

Enough is enough. After 30 years, Oliver's name must be cleared sooner rather than later!



Oliver Campbell

Fighting Fund - we're off to a good start

A special thanks this week goes to Morris in South West London who has donated £400 to our Coronavirus appeal, and has started off our October to December Fighting fund campaign with a real bang.

The campaign brings in much needed money to provide us with the resources to expose the way the

Tories are gambling with our jobs and our lives, and to raise our Socialist alternative.

Thanks also to a £100 donation from Birmingham North Socialist Party branch, and to James from Swansea for £5 with the message "Solidarity".

Thanks to C Byron, who donated £25 with the message "Keep on for the workers." Finally, thanks to two £10 monthly donations from steadfast supporters.

With over £800 received in the last week, we're off to a good start!

Fund the fightback

DONATE TODAY

- Visit socialistparty.org.uk/donate
- or call **020 8988 8777**
- or make cheques payable to Socialist Party, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT

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- Labour councils: a potential counter-power to the Tories?
- Lessons for today of the new left formations - Podemos, Syriza, Corbynism, Sanders

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- Lessons of the Black Panthers
- Police racism - how do we end it?
- Revolt or reform - how was slavery abolished?
- Privilege and oppression? Ideas to smash racism
- How do we defeat the far right?

MARXISM TODAY

- The Communist Manifesto
- Socialism - utopian and scientific
- Revolution Betrayed: what happened in the USSR
- How do we get from here to socialism?
- Is the working class still the agent of socialist change?
- Friedrich Engels - 200 years after his birth, are his ideas relevant to fighting sexism?

FOR AGENDA, TICKETS, INFO:
socialism2020.net

Obituary: Raph Parkinson 1958-2020

Socialist Party members in Liverpool and elsewhere, and Unison activists, members and staff, are shocked and saddened by the death, as a result of coronavirus, of our comrade Raph Parkinson.

It is a sign of his unassuming nature that few people are even aware of his full name, Raphael Peter Parkinson; he was just plain Raph to us all.

On leaving school, Raph started working for Merseytravel, where he first joined Nalگو, the union that was later to merge into Unison, and became a Nalگو representative within a short time of starting work. Following that, he worked for Liverpool City Council, and continued his trade union activity for many years before working for Unison itself.

During the 1980s he was impressed by the determination of Liverpool's Militant-led Labour council to defend jobs and services in the city, and to build houses to get working people out of slum property, so he became involved with Militant himself. This was no mean feat. In Raph's community in Liverpool 8, the Black Caucus, fundamentally hostile to the council, had a degree of influence, and the leadership of the Nalگو branch in the city council was prone to exhibit hostility to the council campaign. But Raph was firm to his principles, and was unaffected by such pressures.

When Unison introduced reserved seats, later to become black members' seats, on its National Executive Council (NEC), Raph was in the first cohort to be elected, and held his seat for a number of years.

His mild, soft-spoken manner belied his determination. He fought hard for his socialist ideals within

the union, particularly in combatting racism, and was instrumental in getting the union to support the campaign against racism on the football terraces, Show Racism the Red Card, initiated by Militant supporters. Raph was an ardent Liverpool supporter but, unusually for Merseyside, was also a keen cricketer, a legacy of his Caribbean heritage.

Raph's work on the NEC was not all plain sailing. On one occasion he chaired a disciplinary panel that eventually expelled an active fascist from Unison's ranks. The hearings for this case were 'lobbied' by members of the British National Party, in a continuous attempt at deliberate intimidation.

As a Socialist Party member, Raph spoke out against the leadership of Unison when it took action against four party members in what came to be known as the 'Three wise monkeys' case. He was particularly angered by the false accusations of racism levelled against them, and was ecstatic when the employment tribunal and the employment appeal tribunal upheld the case of the four.

The recent dispute within the Committee for a Workers International unsettled Raph, and he stepped back for a brief period of reflection, before deciding that the party leadership in Britain was correct, coming back into full membership.

Raph's last act as a party member was probably to ring Hugo Pierre and wish him success in the forthcoming election for the general secretary of Unison.

We send our condolences to Raph's family, and in particular to his partner Laura and his sons Joel and DJ.

ROGER BANNISTER



UNISON NORTH WEST

I just can't believe the really sad news that my friend and comrade Raphael Peter Parkinson has died. Such a great, principled fighter who always had your back. He was never afraid to speak up for and defend the right ideas, even when these were unpopular.

I first met Raph in the heat of the struggles of Liverpool city council in the mid-1980s. He stood squarely with the 47 councillors and argued for a class position, and

never backed down from that. We later fought together as comrades in our union, Nalگو as it was then. I was really proud when Raph became the first person to hold a black members' seat on the Unison national executive council (NEC). He was a pioneer in that role, something I can only hope to emulate following in his footsteps.

Raph was a proud socialist fighter, steeped in the traditions of Marxism. Hearing the news of his untimely

death is heartbreaking. But it's giants like Raph that will continue to inspire us.

Of course, like all of us he had his faults, supporting Liverpool being the main one! But he had great banter, and of course passion for that and his love of music.

RIP Raph, and condolences to all his family.

HUGO PIERRE
NATIONAL BLACK MEMBERS' REP ON UNISON NEC
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)

DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

Send your news, views and criticism, in not more than 150 words, to 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

● EasyJet go begging

Hannah Sell's article 'Worldwide Capitalist Crisis Deepens' (socialistparty.org.uk) exemplified the Tories' 'magic money tree'. 'EasyJet was given access to more than \$750 million in government money in April'. Since, The Times has stated, 'EasyJet will report its worst financial performance in its 25-year history with the pandemic and subsequent travel restrictions... sending the short-haul European airline plunging to losses of at least £1.25 billion.' And that's with the aid of the government's largesse!

This is symptomatic of the weakening of the British economy before Covid-19. 'EasyJet was already on the back foot after a tough winter reporting

half-year losses, which included only the first month of lockdown, of £193 million.' While Johan Lundgren, its chief executive, claimed 'EasyJet has adapted and risen to the challenges presented by the pandemic', he also suggested another 'begging bowl' appeal: 'The UK government urgently needs to step up with a bespoke package of measures to ensure airlines are able to support economic recovery when it comes.'

This is a partial rewriting of history. In February, when it became clear that Covid-19 had reached Europe, the Tories continued to allow unlimited access to returning airline passengers from countries with Covid-19 infections, without any quarantine requirement. This daily access for tens of thousands of arriving passengers continued throughout the national lockdown.



It was the refusal of UK passengers intending to go abroad, cancelling their flights, which impacted on the airlines. Regrettably, quarantine restrictions were only introduced when the government eased the lockdown.

As Hannah stated at the beginning of her article, capitalism 'got lucky' with the 2008 financial crash. This time the onset of recession has been exacerbated by the pandemic. The organised labour movement needs to ensure the capitalists' luck runs out.

JOHN MERRILL
LEICESTER

● Homes without water

Hundreds of thousands were without water supply in London after an infrastructure failure. Since moving to London I've lost count of how many water storage tanks I have removed while boarding people's lofts. I have been telling them that these storage tanks were fitted when the infrastructure was in its infancy and there was intermittent water supply and pressure.

When nationalised, the infrastructure was vastly improved and meant a constant supply with decent pressure. Hence me telling people I could remove the storage tank if they needed more room in the loft as the mains pressure and supply were very reliable.

Since privatisation, the infrastructure has deteriorated through lack of investment, and if it continues to deteriorate, I'm guessing people will be calling me back to refit the 80-gallon tanks.

MARTIN REYNOLDS
WALTHAM FOREST

● "I think Marx is right"

This is the second year I've taught The Communist Manifesto to university students as part of a first-year module on Marx. This year, I have noticed how students are far sharper to the inequalities in society, and are engaging with social theory as a tool to answer the pressing questions and issues they see in society.

It is quite amazing to see how events of this year - including the health and economic crisis, the A-level algorithm fiasco, and continued police brutality as highlighted by the BLM movement - are

Transport for London funding crunch

TUSC says to Mayor Sadiq Khan: 'It's time to stand up to the Tories'

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) national steering committee has called on London Mayor Sadiq Khan to stand up to the Tory government and refuse to carry out any more cuts, as a new funding crisis faces the city's Transport for London (TfL) authority.

TUSC has consistently argued that local authorities have the potential power to compel the Westminster government to provide the necessary funding for decent public services. And, sitting at the centre of the city's arteries, there is no more powerful local authority than TfL, led by the London Mayor - if only there was the political will to fight.

TUSC national chairperson Dave Nellist, a Labour MP from 1983-1992, and a former backbench colleague of Jeremy Corbyn, said:

"The coronavirus pandemic has drastically reduced TfL's finances, but not society's need for a reliable, accessible and safe public transport system for London. For example, TfL transports a quarter of a million children to school every day. How would the city function without that service?"

"In May the government provided emergency funding for TfL but that runs out on 17 October. Now TfL is saying that it needs £1.83 billion to cover fare revenue losses and other costs to maintain safe, socially distanced services to March next year, and a further £2.94 billion for 2021-22.

"TUSC supports the call for the government to fully fund TfL. It is an outrage that, because TfL no longer

receives a regular operating grant from central government, it has become more reliant on fares income than any other major transport authority in the world.

"But lessons must be learnt from the deal agreed in May. Then, unfortunately, London Mayor Sadiq Khan blinked first, suspending the Zip Card allowing free or discounted travel for under-18s and use of the elderly Freedom Pass at busy times, and hiking fare rises above inflation. This time he must stand firm for funding without any strings".

RMT national executive committee member Jared Wood, representing London Transport workers on the union's governing body, said:

"Our union's policy is clear. We are calling on the government to fully fund TfL and London Underground. Passengers should not suffer a cut to services. Those who rely on free travel should not pay for the crisis in TfL funding. The aim of improving the accessibility of public transport in London must not be sacrificed either.

"And workers who have kept the tube and other transport services in London moving throughout the Covid pandemic must also not be made to pay for the crisis through attacks on their jobs and conditions".

Dave Nellist concluded: "TUSC's analysis of the TfL accounts shows that, like other authorities, it has the ability to maintain spending through using borrowing powers while fighting for proper government funding. The mayor has a choice. He does not have to accept government demands



for cuts or fare rises to keep the tubes and buses running. Following the replacement of Jeremy Corbyn by Keir Starmer as Labour leader, TUSC has agreed to resume contesting elections

against Labour politicians who go along with austerity measures. It's time for them to stand up to the Tories - or face the prospect of a challenge at the ballot box by those that will"

● An RMT petition calling on the government to fully fund TfL and London Underground can be signed online at rmtlondoncalling.org.uk

● TUSC has produced regular information on local authority finances including a comprehensive briefing document - Preparing a No Cuts People's Budget (2016) - detailing how councils' reserves and borrowing powers could be used to produce arguably legally compliant no-cuts

budgets (available at tusc.org.uk/txt/355.pdf).

With an average debt maturity profile of 18 years, and identifiable future revenue streams in a post-Covid landscape, TfL is well placed to use its 'unsupported borrowing' powers to maintain a statutorily required balanced budget and avert

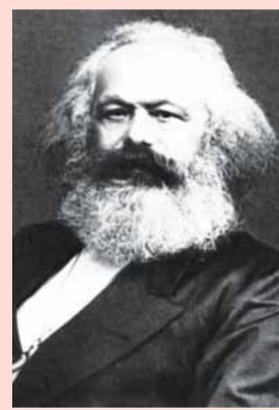
a possible Section 114 'technical insolvency' notice while negotiating for government support. Cuts are not inevitable. The London mayor has a choice.

● For more information and video clips about TUSC see tusc.org.uk
● For interviews and any other requests, email info@tusc.org.uk

affecting the consciousness of young people.

Last year, students in the class engaged with Marx's ideas in an abstract way. This year, they were eager to apply Marx to their current situation, and discussed the continued presence of class struggle in modern society. After reading The Communist Manifesto, a student from the former Soviet bloc, who said she would previously have rejected socialism, said: "I don't think what we had actually was communism, what Marx says makes a lot of sense. I think Marx is right."

A UNIVERSITY TEACHER



● 'Frankenfood'

Chlorinated chicken carcasses that mask deadly pathogens, growth hormone-injected beef linked to breast cancer... the yummy!

These are some of the Frankenfood products heading our way if, as expected, the Tories post-Brexit free trade bill passes its first hurdle in the Commons this week.

Back in 2017, the then environment secretary, Michael Gove, said that any post-Brexit trade arrangements would not be allowed to lower food and animal welfare standards. But hypocrisy is endemic to the Tories, especially when striking a trade deal with the White House.

SIMON CARTER
EAST LONDON

● Fire Service "chronic underfunding"

Hereford and Worcester Fire Brigades Union (FBU) has published a response to the Fire and Rescue Authority's Community Risk Management Plan. The FBU response seeks to learn the lessons of the Grenfell disaster, the Manchester

Arena bombing, the Covid-19 pandemic so far, the 2018 wildfires in the area, and recent local flooding.

The FBU response runs to 33 pages and is thorough and clearly argued. It identifies "chronic underfunding" of the "adaptable, immediately responsive and effective service".

The clear call is for more funding, more firefighters, and more national co-ordination. Firefighters have stepped into other roles in the course of the pandemic,

assisting the overstretched staff of the NHS.

After Grenfell, we were solemnly told it must never happen again. But almost nothing has been done to help the estimated 600,000 people who still live with unsafe and potentially flammable cladding on their tower block homes.

In addition to the many other issues covered in the FBU response is the issue of pensions, where the FBU calls for retirement at 55. It identifies the 2015

pension currently in use, as not fit for purpose.

It is well worth contacting your local FBU and finding out directly how the Socialist Party can work alongside its members.

PETE MCNALLY,
WORCESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

● A dangerous ignoramus

Trump and his ilk drone on about 'making America great again'. Well, they were certainly great at ethnic cleansing of Native Americans. They were also great at slavery. And they were pretty good at bombing the sh... out of little Vietnam and Cambodia too.

The wealth of America was produced by immigrant and slave labour. Immigrants and Mohawk Indians built the New York skyscrapers. When you look at the truly great civilisations of the past - modern America pales into total insignificance. Along with their president, whose just a dangerous ignoramus.

I'm confident that in the years to come, the American worker will rise up and usher in a democratic socialist society, a society in which future generations can enjoy life to the full.

BILL BUCHANAN
NOTTINGHAM



GAGESNIDMORE/CC

Non-fiction: This Land - the story of a movement

NICK CHAFFEY

SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

The 2017 general election surge for Corbyn's anti-austerity manifesto was a high point for many workers and youth desperate for an alternative to Tory cuts. The election of Johnson and the succession of Keir Starmer to the Labour leadership signalled the effective end of Corbynism within the Labour framework, with answers and ideas needed for a way forward.

So, in his new book 'This Land', Owen Jones, a prominent left commentator and activist, argues: "There is no future for any progressive project that does not face up and learn from its errors."

Corbyn's election as leader in 2015 had transformed the political situation, with the potential to reverse the Blairite pro-capitalist domination of the Labour Party.

His election created two parties in one. This was confirmed by arch-Blairite Peter Mandelson in an interview he gave to Jones after the 2019 election saying: "Corbyn had total power within the party" - although not, of course, over the Parliamentary Labour Party.

Jones lists the single issue campaigns that emerged in the 2000s as Blairism left people disenfranchised and leaderless, correctly pointing out: "These movements were diffuse without the ability to build a coherent alternative to the established order. While there had emerged a broad grassroots constituency thirsting for radical change, that constituency lacked both organised political representation and leadership."

Potential and reality

Jones goes on to show how that potential was never turned into reality, to re-establish Labour as a workers' party based on a clear anti-austerity manifesto, restoring the democratic structures of the party, with members making party policy via resolutions and the national conference, and with the central participation of the trade unions.

The Corbyn insurgency was enthusiastically welcomed by the Socialist Party, but we warned before he was elected that if he won: "He would face an open revolt from the pro-capitalist right that dominates the Parliamentary Labour Party, Labour council groups across the country, and the Labour Party machine, which would do everything to sabotage his leadership." (Socialism Today, issue 191 September 2015)

After graphically describing how Blairite MPs blocked and sought to undermine and remove Corbyn every step of the way, towards the end of the book Jones asks: "Why were these people ever in the Labour Party?" Clearly it's the reward pro-capitalist politicians got for the work they did blocking Corbyn and defending capitalism. Jones and the forces around Corbyn fatally failed to draw the necessary conclusion.

Corbyn's 2017 anti-austerity manifesto led to the largest increase in votes for any party since 1945. This was a confirmation of the potential for left-wing and socialist ideas to unite working-class communities

LOST FOR IDEAS AND WITHOUT A STRATEGY TO WIN



PHOTOS PAUL MATTHESSON



Brexit and antisemitism are the issues Jones focuses on, but he omits the role Blairite councillors played in carrying out Tory cuts

and draw behind sections of the middle classes.

But Jones sees the growth of Corbyn's vote as a victory for a savvy social media team rather than what could have been possible if, from 2015, Corbyn had built mass support for an anti-austerity programme.

Linked to an organised struggle via Labour's control of 120 local councils to stop cuts and build affordable council homes, as we consistently outlined in the Socialist, Corbyn could have demonstrated in practice what an incoming Labour government would mean for working-class people.

Restoring mandatory reselection of MPs and councillors and the role of the trade unions, Corbyn could have led the 2017 election campaign with massed ranks of candidates who backed him. This approach would have ensured victory over a weak and divided Tory government.

But rather than building on this success, and drawing conclusions from the 2016 coup attempt to remove Corbyn, and the evidence of electoral sabotage conducted by the Blairite party machine in 2017, they took the path of compromise. Adopting a false policy of unity with the pro-capitalist right opened the door

to a series of challenges that increasingly muffled and undermined Corbyn's 2017 manifesto.

Brexit and antisemitism are the issues Jones focuses on, but he omits the treacherous role Blairite councillors also played in carrying out vicious Tory cuts and further undermining working-class support for Corbyn. He pays attention to the storms at the top of the Corbyn machine, criticises Corbyn's personal failings and, reflecting his lack of confidence in Corbyn, which he acknowledges he had publicly questioned, suggests John McDonnell was a leader who could have won.

Jones argues that, "the fundamental pillar of any left-wing movement is class politics", but on these key issues Jones, Corbyn, and the left, retreated.

A class approach would have meant Corbyn leading the official leave campaign with a clear call to oppose the bosses' EU and for Europe-wide workers' solidarity against austerity.

Jones ends inevitably downbeat but not without hope: "As long as wealthy nations fail to provide security and comfort to their citizens, as long as millions are deprived of a more comfortable and fulfilling

existence, there will be a demand for unambiguously radical answers." He points to the Black Lives Matters protests and "extra-parliamentary struggles that are impossible to ignore."

Jones comforts himself with the legacy of "a new ecosystem of think-tanks, economists and intellectuals who are seriously engaged in debating what a new world would look like."

But without a clear socialist alternative, Jones ends where he began - lost for ideas and without a strategy to build 'organised political representation and leadership'. The Labour left and Jones fail to recognise the existential capitalist crisis and what was needed if a movement was to succeed.

Jones and Corbyn's compromise with Blairism to maintain unity in the Labour Party was because the alternative, a rupture, led to a path they had no confidence to march down.

If they had, they would have been rewarded with mass support from the working class and youth, drawing behind them the middle-class layers squeezed by austerity and driven, like the striking junior doctors, into methods of militant trade unionism.

Militant

This path was partly due to the class character of the Corbyn insurgency - a layer of the angry and alienated middle class hit by austerity, not the movement of the working class that drove the reformist programme of Tony Benn to the left and saw the growth of Militant (forerunner of the Socialist Party) in the 1980s.

These events are a closed book to Jones, rejected and omitted from his preamble that leaves out the victories of Militant-led Liverpool City Council from 1983-85 or the 18 million-strong anti-poll tax army that melted the Iron Lady Thatcher.

Jones acknowledges that Blair's support for the war in Iraq led many to the conclusion that Labour was not a vehicle for socialism, yet fails to mention the emergence of political forces to the left of Labour. The first was the RMT-backed European election platform 'No to EU, Yes to Democracy', supported by Benn, which developed into the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, standing over 100 candidates and becoming the sixth largest party in the 2015 general election.

Jones' faint hope that Starmer would stick to his word and support Corbyn's manifesto has been quickly burnt by the supine support for the Johnson approach for dealing with Covid.

It leaves a vacuum once more to the left, which it is an urgent task to fill. Jones is right to warn of the dangers of right-wing populism. It is vital that the lessons drawn from the Corbyn insurgency are the need to build a mass workers' party, with the organised trade unions at its heart, and a bold socialist programme that outlines the way forward to a real, lasting socialist solution to the capitalist crisis and the enormous damage that threatens for workers in the period ahead.

● *This Land: The story of a movement*, Owen Jones, £14.34, Allen Lane

Greek workers and socialists celebrate convictions of Golden Dawn fascists

CARAH DANIEL
MILITANT LEFT (CWI IRELAND)

On 7 October, after a trial lasting five-and-a-half years, the neo-Nazi organisation Golden Dawn was found guilty of being 'a criminal organisation'.

Outside the court in Athens, 15,000 anti-fascist protesters celebrated the news, displaying slogans such as "Pavlos lives, crush the Nazis" and singing the revolutionary song *Bella Ciao*. The police used water cannons and tear gas to disperse them.

Golden Dawn was tied to a number of attacks on migrants (in 2013, two Golden Dawn members killed Sahzat Lukman, a Pakistani migrant worker), left-wing trade unionists, and the fatal stabbing of anti-fascist rapper Pavlos Fyssas, also in 2013. Golden Dawn member Giorgos Roupakias was found guilty of the murder.

There were 68 defendants in the trial, including the entire leadership of the organisation and all of their former MPs.

However, the state prosecutor had been roundly criticised for earlier opposing the banning of Golden Dawn, arguing that the criminal acts committed should be 'crimes of individuals'.

While the Greek state authorities have been forced by popular mobilisation to prosecute Golden Dawn for some of its worst crimes, we cannot rely upon the capitalist state anywhere to face down fascism. What is required is for workers to organise in a united front involving socialist political groupings and trade unions to defeat fascism on the streets, in the

workplaces, and in the communities.

But fascism's permanent defeat will require the overthrow of capitalism and instituting a socialist economy and society, thereby eliminating the social basis of fascism.

Golden Dawn was the third largest party in the Greek parliament in 2012, but had lost all of its seats by the 2019 election. The organisation had consciously exploited the deep economic crisis faced by the country, the anger of the working class at austerity and the political establishment, in order to promote its far-right agenda.

Golden Dawn used the capitalist crisis to blame and attack migrants and the left, and to harvest the feelings of despair felt by sections of the working class and poor following the country's economic devastation.

Syriza sell-out

Many working-class people at that time turned to the left-wing political party Syriza, which rejected austerity and the threats of the 'Troika' (the European Commission, European Central Bank, and International Monetary Fund).

Syriza was elected into power to great enthusiasm in 2015. It brought forward a referendum to decide whether or not Greece should accept the bailout conditions proposed by the EU and the IMF, where the conditions were outright rejected by 61%, and a no vote coming out on top in every region of Greece.

Scandalously, Syriza ignored the results of the referendum and entered an agreement with even harsher austerity than had been previously discussed! This represented another betrayal of the working class, and



Golden Dawn fascists displaying swastika-like flags PHOTO DTROCKS

led to massive disillusionment that Golden Dawn were, in part, able to tap into.

Golden Dawn's support has dramatically decreased in recent years, and its appeal has been somewhat eclipsed since the election of the New Democracy right-wing government in 2019. But we cannot be complacent about the threat Golden Dawn and other fascist organisations around the world pose to the working class.

The far right aims to stoke divisions in working-class communities often by using fears over jobs and housing,

fears that are heightened during a recession, to draw lines through communities on grounds such as race, ethnicity, sexuality and gender.

The best way to ensure homes, jobs and services for everyone, is for the working class of all nationalities, ethnicities, sexualities and genders to unite and build a powerful movement for change. The trade union movement, that Golden Dawn and other fascist elements correctly view as a threat to them, has a key role to play in unifying the working class to fight for better lives and to reject fascism.

The rise of Golden Dawn in Greece and the rise of the far right in other countries clearly show the need for an organised fight back, including the use of self-defence stewards when necessary, by the trade union movement and the left.

The far right and fascists are organised, it is essential that we are too.

● This article has been updated
● See also 'World perspectives: Revolution and counter-revolution - Who stands to gain?' A statement by the International Secretariat of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI)

Nigeria: Mass protests force government to disband killer cop unit

The Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM - CWI in Nigeria) welcomes the news of the dissolution of the infamous and loathed Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) by the Inspector General of Police (IGP). This follows days of spontaneous protests by young people, nationwide.

The anti-poor and repressive Buhari capitalist government did not grant this concession easily. The protests, which the DSM was part of, were viciously repressed with at least one protester shot dead in Ogbomoso and several injured across the country, including journalists.

Therefore, the commendation for this concession goes to the young people who invested enormous energy, sacrifices, sweat and blood across the country for this to happen.

While welcoming the dissolution of SARS as a victory for the struggle, we must quickly add that it falls short of what is required to achieve the full aim of the #EndSARS movement



PHOTO DSM

- which is an end to police brutality and a just and equitable Nigeria, where citizens live and can carry out their daily legitimate activities without fear of harassment, illegal arrest and detention, extortion and extrajudicial killing by security operatives.

We disagree with the decision to redeploy operatives of SARS to "other Police Commands, Formations and

Units" without first and foremost investigating the unit to determine the role of each of the officers in the assault on people's democratic rights and severely punishing those found culpable.

We therefore call for an independent panel of public inquiry composed of elected representatives of youth, trade unions and

pro-masses organisations. Those found guilty should be severely punished. Without doing this, the Buhari government would be letting loose embittered and vengeful defunct SARS operatives on society.

Secondly, the pronouncement from the IGP did not address the question of the egregious attacks on the fundamental rights of peaceful protesters by the police.

The #EndSARS protests have proven the leadership of the Nigeria Labour Congress and the Trade Union Congress wrong that struggle does not pay. These organisations scandalously betrayed the 28 September general strike and won nothing in return. Instead, they gave a blank cheque to the federal government to continue to increase the price of fuel through their acceptance of deregulation.

More than ever before, we need a mass democratic and fighting labour movement with a militant and Marxist leadership.

● Read statement in full on socialistworld.net



STOP NHS MELTDOWN

● **For a 15% pay rise and mass recruitment programme**

● **For democratic planning, not privatised chaos**

The Tory government's failed response to the Covid-19 pandemic means that the NHS is facing a major capacity crisis - that's before the pressure of the 'winter flu season' kicks in.

Nearly three million people have missed cancer screenings since March, and four million people are waiting for elective surgery - a figure that NHS chiefs expect to grow to a record ten million by the end of the year.

Ending staff shortages is the key to keeping the NHS afloat. The government in its election manifesto pledged an increase of 50,000 nurses by 2024-25. But this would only match the current shortfall. In addition, there are another 60,000 vacancies in the NHS.

Rather than just applauding NHS workers or giving out a few medals, the government should be engaged in a massive recruitment drive, linked to increased pay rates to overcome a decade of austerity.

Instead, Johnson and Co simply bung billions of pounds in undisclosed contracts to private companies to deal with the pandemic.

As usual, the Tories are putting profit before people. But healthworkers are fighting back and are being supported in their public demonstrations by fellow trade unionists, community campaigners and Socialist Party members.



Holly Johnson, a nursing sister in Sheffield, explains why she and her fellow healthworkers are taking action over pay.

"Years of Tory austerity, pay cuts and freezes have meant, in real terms, a 20% pay cut for many NHS workers. We are devalued as a profession, with job roles and responsibilities expanding and working conditions worsening. This is not to mention a brutal first wave of the pandemic, and we're about to face another - tired, stressed, and many of us suffering with long-term health problems related to contracting Covid.

"A fair pay rise would directly affect patient safety, actively halt the outsourcing to staffing agencies, and help bring the NHS back into public ownership and protect it.

"NHS Workers Say NO!" is a grassroots-led movement, formed after we were overlooked in the public sector pay rises. It started as a Facebook group. We quickly organised action for our protests on 8 August, and have been building from there. There are over 84,000 members now and several local groups around the country.

"We are demanding a 15% pay rise for all NHS workers. I am the lead organiser for Sheffield and, with the help and support of Sheffield Save Our NHS and members of the Sheffield Socialist Party, there have been several actions. There is a national week of action from 12 to 16 October.

We will continue to build and organise in our workplaces and gain public support. We are not going away!"



PHOTO SALLY GRIFFITHS

A socialist programme for the NHS should include:

- An immediate 15% pay rise for all health and care staff, including those in privatised sectors. A minimum wage of £12 an hour
- - £15 in London. Scrap zero-hour contracts immediately
- A mass hiring programme. Bring all outsourced workers and

services in-house on a permanent contract

- Reverse all privatisations. Scrap the 'Private Finance Initiative' and cancel all PFI debts
- Nationalise the private healthcare sector, care homes,

the medical supply industry and the pharmaceutical companies - integrate them into the NHS

- Reinstating student bursaries and scrapping tuition fees in England
- A fully publicly funded NHS and care system, free at the point of

use. Scrap prescription charges in England, dental charges and all health charges

- A socialist NHS - democratically run by elected and accountable committees, including service workers and users