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Public sector wages - Pay up!

Strike to smash the cap

Jane Nellist, National Union of Teachers national executive (personal capacity)

A stark new report by the government's own advisors on public sector pay has shown that there was [a 6% drop in average wages from 2005 to 2015](#).

That's reflected in a £3 an hour loss for teachers, £2 an hour for police officers and £8 an hour for doctors.

More experienced teachers have lost as much as £5,000 a year because of pay restraint, and that doesn't include the loss from increases in pension and National Insurance contributions.

There is a growing anger among public sector workers about low pay and funding cuts to the services they deliver. The Tories are wobbling on the public sector pay cap, with many cabinet members - fearing mass revolt - coming out for change.

But we cannot rely on their 'good nature'! They'll just cut somewhere else to pay for it. We must come out fighting.

[At the 1 July 'Not One Day More' demo](#) Mark Serwotka, leader of the PCS civil servants' union, absolutely nailed it when he posed the question: "Why don't we have a public sector pay strike to break the pay cap?"

As each day goes by, the Tories are getting weaker. Even though mathematically they have a small majority, propped up by the billion-pound bribe for votes from the DUP, they have no authority.

And it's not only pay they're showing weakness on, some have hinted at tuition fees being on the table too. As their poll ratings plummet, they are more divided. We need to push harder to put them out of their misery.

The recent demo was vibrant and young. Labour's manifesto started to lift aspirations on so many fronts. The mantra of austerity, 'we are all in it together,' is dead.

The mood is changing and there is a tangible feeling of victory in the air. That can become a reality, but only if the leadership of our trade unions starts to lead.

Now is the time to organise the millions of public sector workers in a serious coordinated campaign, including strike action, to win back dignity for public sector workers and the services we deliver.

Victory: protest is not a crime!

Jobstown is officially not guilty

Cillian Gillespie, Socialist Party (CWI in Ireland)

"The news has just come through from the Central Criminal Court and I am the first to report it to the house.

"Deputy Paul Murphy: not guilty. Councillor Michael Murphy: not guilty. Councillor Kieran Mahon: not guilty. Frank Donaghy: not guilty. Michael Banks: not guilty. And Scott Masterson: not guilty."

Mick Barry, Socialist Party member and Solidarity TD (MP), announced the verdict on the six Jobstown protest defendants on 29 June in the Dáil, the Irish parliament.

TDs from the parties of the capitalist establishment, most notably Tánaiste (deputy prime minister) Frances Fitzgerald and Labour leader Brendan Howlin, were visibly crestfallen.

It is a stunning blow to them, the gardaí (police), and the whole state machine. Loyalistically egged on by the capitalist media, they orchestrated trumped-up charges of ['false imprisonment' of then-Tánaiste Joan Burton and her assistant Karen O'Connell on 15 November 2014](#).

On this day, a peaceful protest took place in the deprived working class community of Jobstown, near Dublin, against the imposition of charges for water.

Burton, who backed the charges, was on a visit to the area. Protesters impeded the progress of her car over the course of two hours by sitting around it.

The protest was not an isolated one. The anti-water charges movement had exploded from below in the Autumn of 2014, reflecting the seething discontent against six years of austerity for working class people.

Added to this was disgust with Burton's Labour Party. Having shamelessly lied to win the trappings of power in February 2011, it was dutifully implementing cuts, austerity taxes and bank bailouts.

Mass non-payment succeeded only months ago in abolishing water charges for normal usage. Nowhere is this double blow more apparent than in Ireland's supposed paper of record, the Irish Times.

The day after the verdict its front page story [dealt with two tweets by Socialist Party member and Solidarity TD Paul Murphy towards the end of the trial](#), as opposed to the fact that Paul and five others were acquitted unanimously by a jury of their peers.

The Times argues that social media influences the outcome of a trial. They are ignoring how two and a half years of vicious lies and propaganda against the people of Jobstown helped shape bias against the protesters, particularly among sections of the middle class.

They would like us to forget about the real outrage of the Jobstown trial: a succession of gardaí lied in their statements, and under oath on the witness stand. Clearly there was an attempt by the state to pervert the course of justice.

We are [demanding a full independent inquiry to investigate how the Jobstown charges were brought about](#). All the charges against the remaining eleven Jobstown defendants must be dropped. The [earlier conviction of a 17-year-old protester in the Children's Court](#) should be overturned.

Working class people are supposed to passively accept austerity. The capitalist establishment wanted to use this trial to create a chill factor for anyone thinking of challenging the status quo.

Critically, they wanted to undermine the Socialist Party and Anti-Austerity Alliance who played a decisive role in building non-payment of the water charges - something Sinn Féin and many trade union leaders were not prepared to do.

The establishment is clearly worried about the growing influence of the socialist left.

There have been important strikes in the last year. The burgeoning movement demanding abortion rights held mass protests on International Women's Day. There is growing support for separating church and state.

It all shows a desire for meaningful, radical change on the part of workers, women, LGBT+ and young people. The crisis-ridden system we live under is incapable of meeting such aspirations.

This poses the necessity of building an anti-capitalist, socialist left that can challenge the undemocratic, corrupt and rotten capitalist system itself.

- Police lies, media smears, dawn raids - read the full article: ['Jobstown - a rotten stitch-up exposed', at socialistworld.net](#)

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Blairite EU rebellion: No to the bosses' Single Market

Kick out the saboteurs

Tom Baldwin, Socialist Party national committee

Jeremy Corbyn has had to [sack three members of his shadow cabinet](#). They were among 50 Labour rebels who voted to remain in [the European Single Market](#), against the party's instruction to abstain.

The pro-free market amendment was put forward by arch-Blairite MP Chuka Umunna.

Labour's right wing may have been temporarily silenced by Corbyn's successful election campaign. But this shows they have not gone away and are still organising to undermine his pro-worker leadership.

Corbyn was right to face down this rebellion. But he must now go further in both taking on the Blairites and developing an alternative, socialist Brexit plan.

The majority of working class and young people were rightly appalled by the anti-immigrant bile that came from the official Leave referendum campaigns. For this reason, some understandably support efforts to 'soften' Brexit.

However, the establishment's 'soft Brexit' has nothing to do with a principled defence of migrants.

Umunna himself [said in September last year: "If continuation of the free movement we have is the price... then clearly we couldn't remain in the Single Market."](#) More recently he's stated that immigration could still be attacked while remaining a member.

Many of the rebel MPs are supporters of 'Progress', the main Blairite organisation within Labour. They support the Single Market because it is a bosses' charter.

It is a free-trade area with rules meant to assist capitalists by - among other things - undermining workers' collective organisation, encouraging privatisation, and blocking nationalisation.

The Labour right is struggling to regroup. They see the EU as an issue on which they can make gains. They're even willing to work with sections of the Tory party to do so.

[The Telegraph has reported discussions between the two](#), and not for the first time. [The Mail on Sunday even quoted a source](#) who rightly said that Umunna "has got much more in common with open-minded Tory MPs than

he does with Corbyn."

Jeremy Corbyn seems to be moving back towards his historical pro-worker position of opposing the EU as a bosses' club that pushes austerity and privatisation.

A socialist, internationalist vision of Brexit would guarantee the rights of migrants. It would also stand up to the economic sabotage threatened by big businesses.

Warnings of job losses and falling tax revenues come from capitalists defending fat profits. Companies which threaten to pull investment should be taken into public ownership under democratic workers' control and management.

While the rebellion was a damp squib, it shows the Blairites cannot be trusted. They still want to oust Corbyn and end the left's challenge for control of Labour. To prevent this, Corbyn must lead a campaign to democratise the party.

Policies should be decided by members and affiliates at a democratic conference, with a collective voice for trade unions. All elected representatives should face mandatory reselection to make sure they represent the party and not their own interests.

Genuine socialists and socialist groups should not remain excluded from Labour while Blairites are allowed to stay and use their positions to undermine Corbyn's anti-austerity leadership.

Fight establishment's Grenfell insults: no to cover-up, safety for all!

Paul Kershaw, Socialist Party London and chair of Unite the Union housing workers' branch LE/1111

Every day seems to bring a new insult to the survivors of the Grenfell Tower fire.

They are still seeking assurances of local rehousing. [Their landlord has charged them rent for burnt-out homes in error.](#)

A local therapy group was [locked out of a community centre when locks were changed without notice.](#) And when the council's attempt to hold a meeting on Grenfell behind closed doors - excluding press and residents - was overturned by a court order, the meeting was halted.

There have now been some belated resignations - the leader and deputy leader of Kensington and Chelsea council. But London's Blairite mayor Sadiq Khan has called for the government to send in unelected commissioners to take over operations.

The Socialist Party disagrees with this call. Local residents and workers need councillors who fight for them. Councillors not willing to do so should stand aside for candidates who are. And top of the list of demands: use the borough's £300 million reserves!

In any case, responsibility goes higher up than just councillors - and we have seen no moves towards prosecutions.

The establishment is in full cover-up mode. The planned 'inquiry' looks designed to put a lid on the affair.

Not only does the judge appointed have a record of judgments in favour of social cleansing - his technical advisor, Sir Ken Knight, recommended against retrofitting sprinklers as "not considered practical or economically

viable." Will he be investigating if his own advice makes him in any way responsible?

Jeremy Corbyn was right to challenge Theresa May, calling alongside Grenfell campaigners for the inquiry's terms to be widened and survivors to have a central role.

A serious inquiry will need to look at reductions in regulation and the interlocking links between semi-public quangos and businesses that obscure accountability.

Sajid Javid, now overseeing the Grenfell response as the government's communities secretary, was in charge of getting rid of "red tape" to save £10 billion. The Homes and Communities Authority had its regulatory remit cut back.

Ex-property developer Anthony Preiskel was on the board of the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation which ran Grenfell Tower. He is also on the regulator's board.

The Fire Brigades Union and general union Unite have applied for core participant status which would help put a working class voice in the official inquiry. But the need for a truly independent inquiry is becoming increasingly clear.

Stop testing cladding and take it down - this is the message from David Orr, chief executive of the National Housing Federation, the umbrella body for housing associations.

"We are calling on government to halt the testing on cladding and shift its focus to making people safe... This process has powerfully demonstrated a systemic failure in construction, manufacturing and the way that regulation has been applied."

But the government is refusing to give assurances about funding.

Some will see Orr's statement as an attempt to shift responsibility away from landlords. But tenants and residents of tower blocks will agree that action cannot wait.

All council and social landlords must take down cladding and publish full safety reports, and the government must make private landlords do the same.

- For free organising resources including sign-up sheets, leaflets and window bills, go to socialistparty.org.uk/leaflet
- How working class communities can organise to fight for safety: read '[Justice for Grenfell and safety for all](#)' at socialistparty.org.uk

Hillsborough deaths: six charged due to determination of justice campaign

Dave Walsh, Liverpool Socialist Party

More than 28 years after 96 people were unlawfully killed in the Hillsborough stadium disaster, [charges are finally being brought against the policeman in charge on the day and five others](#).

In the aftermath of the tragedy, the British establishment deployed the obscene tactics of blaming the dead who had been trapped by unsafe stands and police inaction. They tried to discredit the fans with the most terrible lies, making them seem inhuman and unworthy of sympathy.

Disasters like Hillsborough happen because of the drive for profit and utter contempt for working class people from those in power. Attempts at cover-ups are an inevitable consequence when a super-rich elite controls the state, the legal system and the media.

We're already seeing the beginnings of a cover-up of the [Grenfell Tower fire](#). If we don't want to wait 28 years for the truth and for those responsible to be held to account, then we must fight for an independent workers' inquiry to take place now, led by trade unions and residents, which would look into everything that has happened and expose the crimes that have been committed in the interest of making cuts and protecting profits.

We also have to fight for the necessary resources to be made available to prevent future such disasters.

At the time of Hillsborough, I was a 22-year-old Liverpool season ticket holder. This qualified me for a ticket in the Leppings Lane pens where the crush occurred.

But the day before the match I got a ticket from a friend for the seats above. I sold the one for the pens to another Liverpool fan outside the stadium.

He thought I was a tout and was expecting to pay a big premium. I only charged him the price on the ticket and explained why it was going spare. He was so pleased he gave me a big hug.

When photographs of the victims were published weeks later, I scrutinised their faces to see if he was one of them. To this day I can't be sure.

Like many people in the city I felt a deep sense of grief. I know very well how much pain and outrage was caused by the lies told in the cover-up.

If it hadn't been for the utter determination over many years from the families and the justice campaign, then the truth would never have been told and nobody would have been held to account.

The victims of Grenfell must not be put through the same ordeal.

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Tories' tuition fees wobble: fight for free education!

The Tories [must "change hard" on their approach to university fees](#), according to First Secretary of State Damian Green.

The government's number two man called for a "national conversation" on tuition. The Tories have near-zero youth support.

Green still wants the working class to pay though. He says only taxing workers could cover the costs - and even so, free education would mean overcrowded classrooms.

But that's not true. Britain's billionaires and big businesses steal enough to fund high-quality, free education for all - and much more besides.

The very fact that Green is talking about tuition fees reflects the Tories' precarious position.

No minority government has ever lasted a full parliamentary term. Corbyn's anti-austerity manifesto enthused millions and pushed political conversation left.

This too is behind the hypocrisy of Tory ministers calling for an end to the public sector pay cap. Michael Gove, Jeremy Hunt and Justine Greening are responsible for attacks on the same workers they now pretend to back.

Of course, no capitalist politician wants to threaten profits with serious pro-working class reforms. But their fear is palpable.

Big demonstrations and coordinated strikes can bring them down. Students and workers: unite and fight!

James Ivens

Book review

200-year miscarriage of justice exposing ruling class

Jon Dale, Mansfield Socialist Party

Exactly 200 years ago a 17 year-old Nottinghamshire girl was murdered walking home to Papplewick village from nearby Mansfield. She had been looking for work. Three weeks later a former soldier was hanged for her murder.

Within two years a memorial stone was erected, inscribed: "To the memory of Elizabeth Sheppard of Papplewick who was murdered when passing this spot by Charles Rotherham July 7th 1817."

The Murder of Bessie Sheppard, by David Marshall, describes his 40-year investigation into this crime, completed in 2014. Why was Bessie killed - and why was the name of her killer commemorated alongside hers?

Marshall unearthed contemporary newspaper reports of the murder, trial and hanging. The more he researched, the stronger there seemed to have been a miscarriage of justice.

Today, Papplewick is a pretty village but when Bessie lived there with her mother and younger brother it was dominated by Robinson's cloth mills - which exploited child labour. Marshall comments: "Robinson was a very rich man. He was also, I concluded fairly quickly, a bastard."

New machinery threw hand-loom weavers into destitution, as well as soldiers returning from the Napoleonic wars who roamed the countryside.

Less than 24 hours after Bessie was brutally bludgeoned Charles Rotherham, a travelling scissor-grinder, was arrested on the outskirts of Loughborough, about 20 miles away.

As Marshall explains, police forces at this time were in their infancy, set up in response to growing civil unrest. How and why did the police make such a remarkably quick arrest?

Marshall shows contradictions in witness reports, throwing doubt on Rotherham's conviction, and questions why he apparently confessed to the crime immediately after arrest.

Marshall makes a good case for Rotherham's defence. But if it wasn't him, who else might have killed her?

Newspaper reports of the time say Bessie's mother thanked the "nobility and gentry of the town of Mansfield and its vicinity for the many favours and kind assistance she has received since the murder of her daughter."

He speculates that Bessie had been working as a prostitute to support her family and that Rotherham's rapid arrest, conviction and execution conveniently prevented further investigation of the 'nobility and gentry', who

raised the finance for the memorial stone and had Rotherham's name inscribed on it.

The local gentry might also have been keen to see a poor stranger found guilty of the crime as four weeks earlier, barely ten miles away, [200 to 300 armed workers marched from Pentrich towards Nottingham](#), thinking they were taking part in a national uprising against the government. The leaders were awaiting trial in Derby gaol, later to be hanged or transported to Australia.

Justice, far from being a traditional right enjoyed by all, served the rich and well-connected. Working class people have had to fight for justice - and continue to do so, [as the Hillsborough](#) and Orgreave campaigns show.

Transport strategy: London's mayor is no visionary

Andy Beadle, bus driver, Lewisham Socialist Party

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan recently released his ['Mayor's Transport Strategy'](#) for public consultation.

His foreword opens: "Transport is a cornerstone of my vision for a fairer, greener, healthier and more prosperous city." He wants "a city where transport is affordable, reliable and accessible for Londoners." But can we trust [billionaire-loving, Corbyn-undermining, Mayor Khan](#) to achieve this?

The strategy document is filled with pictures of people strolling and cycling down wide, well-kept leafy streets, with lots of sunshine.

There aren't many cars in most of the pictures, but 36% of trips in London are currently by car. By 2041 he wants this to be 20%. This is long-term vision. One aim is for 2050. In fact, step free access to all tube and rail stations isn't scheduled even by then!

Khan hopes to replace car journeys with bus, cycle and walking trips. This extra exercise, together with a cleaner environment and lower road speeds will improve everybody's health. The aim is to stop all road deaths and serious injuries by 2041.

Socialists are very much in favour of a vision for the future of the capital, including a clear transport strategy. But Khan's "vision" is not based in reality and has no prospect of becoming a practical plan.

Over the last decade British governments (including Gordon Brown's, when Khan was briefly transport minister), have imposed savage austerity cuts on our public services because they decided to bail out the failing banks and capitalist financial system. Even London is now being hit, with big cuts in government subsidies to public transport and transport price hikes.

Working people find it increasingly difficult to remain in London largely because of high house prices and rents.

[Jeremy Corbyn's manifesto](#) pledged to renationalise rail (as the franchises expire). Khan doesn't even have this limited plan.

Although a Labour mayor, Khan pledges to be "the most business-friendly" mayor yet and condemned tube workers' strike action against ticket office closures and cuts in station staff levels as "completely unnecessary".

It is impossible to balance the idea of long-term planning for the benefit of all with the narrow interests of big business, where decisions are made by companies to maximise private profit.

- Khan should refuse to carry out the Tories' cuts to public transport and campaign in support of union demands for massively increased public investment in transport infrastructure

- Take private profit out of public transport - bring the bus and train operating firms and tube network into a publicly owned, democratic, integrated transport plan
 - End May's austerity government
-

The socialist inbox

Do you have something to say?

Send your news, views and criticism in not more than 150 words to Socialist Postbox, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD, phone 020 8988 8771 or email editors@socialistparty.org.uk.

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

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

Justice for Grenfell - safety for all

Young Londoners with a life ahead of them - of study, work, love, ups and downs, trips to the coast and just sitting in parks with those they care about. All gone because the family home they lived in was refurbished on the cheap.

We now have to build a movement across the country to get sprinklers and alarms fitted in all the 4,000 tower blocks that do not have them. Build all the genuinely affordable homes needed to solve the housing crisis. Call for rent strikes where landlords cannot guarantee safety or provide the information to allow tower block-dwellers to sleep easy.

I have lived most of my life in tower blocks. They can be decent places to live, but now many are death traps. This must end. Now.

Steve Nally, Oval, south London

My grandfather was civil defence officer for Jarrow in World War Two. Jarrow was one of the first towns to be bombed.

No one had planned for survivors. Grandad was faced with people who were bombed out. They were homeless and they had lost everything.

Grandad sent someone on a bicycle to all the local estate agents with instructions to collect all the keys to vacant houses. He dished out the keys to homeless people.

Grandad ordered Woolworths to open on Sunday morning. All the bombed-out people could have anything they needed. Woolworths sent the bill to the council.

Grandad had all the people bombed out on Friday night rehoused and re-equipped by Sunday lunchtime.

People came from London the following week, saw what Grandad had done, and approved it. They made it standard practice.

Surprising really that in 2017 the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea cannot do as well as my grandad did in 1939. Of course, my grandad was a socialist.

Charles James, Portugal

The old saying 'a lie can travel halfway around the world before truth can get its boots on' is inadequate to describe the lies about the achievements of the Militant-led Liverpool council in the 1980s.

This is because the lies originated in the labour movement: Neil Kinnock's infamous speech at Labour Party conference in 1985.

I was a Constituency Labour Party delegate and vividly remember its reception. Immediate applause from those pre-warned. Disbelief and confusion from those not expecting treachery from the leader of the Labour Party.

In the 30 years since, that lie has completed many 'world tours' - but just occasionally truth catches up. In the Guardian on 15 June, a Simon Jenkins article about Grenfell Tower stated: "In the 1980s Liverpool's Militant movement asked Everton's inhabitants what should be done with their towers, the reply was pull them down and give us back the streets. It was done."

John Merrell, Leicester

Debate desirable

As a relatively new member of the Socialist Party, I was recently initiated to the order of branch meetings.

I was pleasantly surprised to find my fears unfounded. What I did find is how well the right to freedom of speech is exercised! Each and every participant is allowed - more so, encouraged - to speak up.

The platform welcomed all views. I found this apparent not only at branch meetings, also public meetings.

In my opinion, this is what sets the Socialist Party out against any other party: the right to freedom of speech and healthy debate.

Walter Allsop, Coventry

Magic money tree

During the election, the Tories kept on attacking Labour with the mantra that there is no "magic money tree." However, the DUP deal disproves this.

They got ten MPs elected, who the Tories have done a deal with to keep themselves in power by promising £1 billion of extra funding.

What I want to know is: where does this £1 billion come from suddenly if there is no magic money tree?

The Tories also went on about terrorism and Jeremy Corbyn. However they are quite content to be propped up by the DUP, which historically has links with Protestant paramilitary organisations.

The Tories have more faces than Big Ben.

Chris Fernandez, Derby

Qatar's crimes

An interesting piece of news is that during the British Airways cabin crew strike which began on 1 July, the airline has applied to lease in aircraft and crews for cover. What is particularly of note is that 20 of these aircraft are to come from state-owned Qatar Airways.

It is fitting that a state which is being openly criticised for apparent banking corruption and links to terrorist finance is helping a major British company try to break a strike.

Clearly, for the bosses, there are no morals when it comes to who they deal with for profit.

Mark Andrews, Birmingham

Corbyn confidence

The June election was a big victory for working class people over an establishment that doesn't get us.

It's not usually the brightest who enter mainstream politics, but more often the most self-confident, the most well-connected. These types don't represent most of us.

For many, Corbyn is the antidote to the big-headed Westminster sons and daughters of gentry who act and speak like 'experts' on everything, yet cannot see past their own fat ambition.

Times are a-changing. People were disconnected from something not worth being connected to before. But when a real positive ally gives alternatives, people are more than ready to step up with ideas, passion and drive.

This applies everywhere from student unions to trade unions and local Labour Party branches, wherever arrogant right-wing types shut out anyone who disagrees with them.

I can never remember a more exciting time for so many to start to thrive and help destroy a crumbling capitalist establishment, and fight for socialist change. For the many and not the few in action.

Nick Slater, Torquay

1 July demo: anger and enthusiasm shows potential mass movement

All who attended the Tories Out demonstration on 1st July will have been given a huge boost of confidence that the anger and determination exists to bring down the weak and wobbly Tory government. Many tens of thousands of workers and young people came to express their opposition to the Tories, the DUP and austerity.

The Socialist Party made a big impact on the protest. Our flags, gazebos, placards, leaflets and sellers of the Socialist couldn't be missed. Figures are still being collated but certainly Socialist Party members sold hundreds of copies of the *Socialist* and raised hundreds of pounds that will help to fund more anti-austerity and socialist material. Scores of people gave their details as interested in [joining the Socialist Party](#) and five joined on the day.

At various points of the day hundreds of young people joined the vibrant 'red bloc' organised by [Young Socialists - Generation Socialist](#). The open-mic stage which launched the bloc at the start of the demo had queues of people wanting to share why they had come along.

The now famous 'oh Jeremy Corbyn' chant echoed around the march throughout. But this was no blind hero-worship - people were serious about winning what Corbyn promised in his election manifesto. Socialist Party placards calling for people to 'organise, strike, resist for Corbyn's programme' flew out of our hands at tube stations and coach stops as people arrived. So too with our 'capitalism kills' placards with an evocative picture of the burnt-out [Grenfell Tower](#).

A speaking stage on the final stretch of the demo, organised by the National Shop Stewards Network, received a great response as crowds arrived. When Socialist Party member and Barts Health Trust Unite branch secretary [Len Hockey said "we're going on strike"](#), there was a roar of support from those passing.

While it was a welcome and lively demo, the turnout for it was only a fraction of what could have been achieved had the trade unions turned fully to the task of building for it and organising coaches. Instead there were reports of transport being called off even on the morning of the day itself.

It was even more impressive, therefore, that a large number of people made their own way on trains from around the country and in droves from across London. As discussed in the *Socialist's* editorial below, this must be just the beginning.

[Click here for more photos from the demo](#)

Editorial of the Socialist, issue 955

After the demonstration - what next?

"For years we have campaigned for the idea: another world is possible", said John McDonnell, Labour's shadow chancellor, at the 1 July People's Assembly (PA) demonstration closing rally in Parliament Square. "But now", he concluded to rapturous applause, "we can truly say another world is in sight".

A mood of celebration dominated the day and was reflected from the platform. Almost every speaker said, in different ways, that the Tories were 'weak and wobbly' and that there was a real prospect now of a Corbyn-led government.

Jeremy Corbyn himself told the rally that not only are "the Tories in retreat, austerity is in retreat, the economic arguments of austerity are in retreat."

Unfortunately, however, there was less clarity from the platform speakers on the next steps that are needed to actively work to bring down the government, or to [build the forces that will be needed to meet the inevitable opposition of the capitalist establishment](#) to a Corbyn government.

The PCS civil servants' union general secretary Mark Serwotka rightly argued for [coordinated public sector strike action to break the pay cap](#) but this concrete call was in sharp contrast to other speakers. Trade Union Congress (TUC) general secretary Frances O'Grady typically confined herself to vacuous slogans.

"Every worker needs a pay rise", she said - and who could disagree? But she then said absolutely nothing on what the TUC proposes to do, not even to use the new political situation for a mass unionisation drive.

That is not good enough. The TUC, the coordinating body for over six million workers, is a counter-power to the government. If it gave a lead, Theresa May would be gone in months. It was a political mistake by the PA organisers not to use the demonstration to make a firm call on the TUC to act.

The same was true with regard to Labour councils, also a potential counter-power to the government.

A Fair Funding for Schools campaigner spoke passionately about the present [£3 billion schools funding gap and teacher redundancies](#). But PA stalwart and National Union of Teachers executive committee member Alex Kenny offered no way forward in response. "We don't know when the next election is", he said, "but we do know there's a budget in November. So if you live in an area with Labour, Liberal Democrat or Green MPs or councillors, you must work with them to build the pressure on the Tories before then".

But why do councils, Labour ones especially, need 'permission' from the May government 'in November' to act on the schools funding crisis now? They have the power to step in and, using their borrowing powers and reserves, underwrite school budgets so that the sacking of teachers and support staff could be stopped immediately.

What could the government do? If it dared to take on councils protecting local public services it would only bring the next general election nearer and guarantee its final demise. Austerity must be resisted in action, not just in words.

One speaker, the Green Party London Assembly member Sian Berry, did point to the record of Labour councils on housing. Grenfell Tower was referred to by many as a symbol of Tory Britain but, as Sian Berry said, most Labour councillors are pursuing exactly the same policies of privatisation, deregulation and cost-cutting. Significantly, her criticisms were not received with any hostility by the crowd.

But even her points were only half made, not spelling out clearly the need to clear the Blairite councillors out of the Labour Party if it is to be transformed into a real anti-austerity movement, or offering support to Jeremy Corbyn in that task. And when Green councillors have been in positions of power, they too have not resisted the austerity agenda.

Overall, the demonstration confirmed the changed mood and raised expectations since Jeremy Corbyn's general election campaign. But it was a missed opportunity by the PA organisers not to map out a clear way forward, reflecting their political adaptation to the right-wing of the labour movement.

There were calls, rightly, for more demonstrations. Lindsey German, convenor of the Stop the War Coalition, said: "We can't wait for a general election. If this is the number of people we can get on the streets in just three weeks, imagine what we can get to demonstrate outside the Tory Party conference in October".

But on the vital task to [re-shape the labour movement for the battles ahead, to organise to defeat the Blairite remnants as well as the Tories](#), not a word was said to the assembled crowds.

Jeremy Corbyn concluded the rally by stating: "It's the ideals of social justice, of unity, of people coming together to oppose racism and all those that would divide us, that are the ones that are moving forward." Although, he did not explicitly say that it is only through socialist policies that those ideals can be realised - another frustration on a day when tens of thousands mobilised to seek an answer to the question: What next?

Consolidating the Corbyn revolution - Socialism Today

The July edition of *Socialism Today*, the Socialist Party's monthly magazine, includes a call for Jeremy Corbyn to go over the heads of the Blairites who still dominate the Labour Party apparatus and present his own proposals for a transformed Labour Party directly to members and trade union supporters.

Peter Taaffe, in an article headed '[Britain's earthquake election - consolidating the Corbyn revolution](#)', argues that "the civil war within Labour has not been settled by Jeremy Corbyn's success in the election campaign and subsequent events like the Grenfell Tower fire...

"The majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party is still steeped in the ideas of Blair, of Labour remaining within the framework of capitalism, and ultimately being prepared to bow to the pressures of the system...

"If Corbyn does not act, his triumph could dissipate over time... [He] should boldly act as he did with the general election manifesto. He appealed over the heads of the right and got support for his radical proposals. That confronted the right with a fait accompli!

"He should do the same by presenting his own democratic constitution to a referendum of all Labour Party members - full and associate - which would have at its heart mandatory reselection of MPs and the replacement of the bureaucratic machine, with power resting in the hands of the membership, particularly new members and the trade unions.

"It should also enshrine the principle of a federal arrangement which would lead to the re-admittance of all expelled socialists and organisations back into the Labour Party...

"Such an approach would shatter the plans of the right to pursue a rear-guard struggle to frustrate and delay the real involvement of workers and youth in a revived, socialist Labour Party."

The magazine also carries a major article on the lessons of the Syriza government in Greece, two years on from the July 2015 referendum which saw a massive victory for the anti-austerity struggle but which was then turned into a defeat.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 3 July 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

'Jubilant' hospital workers strike against poverty pay in east London

Socialist Party reporters

On 4-5 July domestics, porters and security staff at Barts Health Trust in east London, members of Unite the Union, began [a campaign of strike action to defend jobs and to break out of poverty pay](#). If not resolved satisfactorily then another 14 days of action are planned.

This strike is very important coming as it does, with the Tories on the rocks and under pressure over public sector pay. This strike could help to break the pay cap and give confidence to health workers everywhere to fight for better pay and to defend the service against cuts and privatisation.

Since December 2016 services such as catering, cleaning, security and portering have been run by [private contractor Serco](#).

The workers explain: "This is a deal that will cost taxpayers £600 million and lead to Serco making large profits from our hard work. Since Serco have taken over they have planned job cuts at Whipps Cross Hospital, attempted to abolish tea breaks for hard-pressed workers at the Royal London Hospital, increased the workload to

unsustainable levels and continued zero-hours contracts despite a commitment not to. Serco profits from our NHS. Their CEO alone earns almost £2 million a year. A cleaner would have to work for almost 100 years to receive this sum." The strikers are fighting for a 30p pay rise.

On the first day of the strike, at the Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel, already at 6am a crowd was gathering, women and men, mostly black and Asian workers, blowing horns and brimming with confidence. One striker said: "I only joined the union a month ago. This is a really big step for me. I've worked here 14 years and for the first time I don't feel like I'm in my place. I'm exhausted. The work has got so hard. When I get home I don't want to cook, I just want to put my head down. Now we have a union that will fight."

1,100 workers have joined Unite in the last few months as part of a hard-fought campaign to unionise and then fight for better pay and conditions. The record of the porters and domestics at Whipps Cross Hospital, explained in many meetings, has encouraged workers to see that a fighting trade union is possible.

Another striker who wants to remain anonymous says: "Serco is much worse than previous employer Carillion. Serco don't even supply cleaning materials and only two uniforms. They don't want to pay our pension either. Carillion was better but best of all it should be taken back in house."

Workers are saying pressure needs to be applied to the health trust and the question needs to be asked - 'are they saving money on this contract?'

After the picket lines strikers marched from Mile End and Barts hospitals to the Royal London for a jubilant rally. We marched, danced and chanted around the hospital and then a Unite organiser compered a brilliant rally. He started off saying "this is best picket line I've ever been on". In introducing Unite branch secretary and Socialist Party member Len Hockey, the compere said: "you've heard about BC and AD - well in Barts Trust, as far as Unite is concerned, there's BL and AL." [Before Len/After Len]

Len declared: "I am honoured to be a striking porter in this Unite branch. This union blew the whistle on exploitative conditions. We said it will end. We will organise.

Hundreds have joined, zero-hour contract workers finally have a voice. We want a famous victory for east London workers."

Royal London rep Melissa said: "Together we fight. For a pay rise. Against stressful workloads. Fighting together we will win. We are forced to do two to three jobs, which is not good for our health." Pete Cavanagh and Gail Cartmail, Unite regional secretary and national deputy general secretary both also spoke, as did Paul Kershaw, chair of Unite housing branch.

After the speeches we marched round to the Serco offices and danced in the street outside!

At the Whipps Cross Hospital rally at there has never been so much singing and dancing at a hospital either! Speakers included Linda Taaffe, secretary of Waltham Forest trades council, a nurse from the hospital, and Nancy Taaffe Socialist Party member.

And Len Hockey addressed the strikers here too: "We say to Serco what we think we're worth and we will fight for that". He reported solidarity messages from as far afield as Malaysia and Australia! To support the strikers contact len.hockey@unitetheunion.org

If there is no resolution, the strike will start again on Tuesday 11 July for seven days.

There will be a demonstration from the Royal London in Whitechapel to Barts on Saturday 15 July.

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Support the Merseyrail strikes against driver-only operation

Hugh Caffrey, North West Socialist Party regional secretary

The Labour-run 'Liverpool city region transport committee' which oversees the local Merseyrail train service still intends to take guards off the trains and [introduce 'driver-only operation'](#). This is putting the profits of the train operator ahead of the safety of the travelling public.

We support the guards' trade union, the RMT, taking 24-hour strike action against this on 8, 10 and 23 of July. [Huge support exists](#) for the guards' resistance to their removal, despite the intimidation and propaganda by the Merseyrail management and the Labour councillors involved.

We need a massive mobilisation to support the guards and demand that local Labour politicians drop their guard-cutting plans. We urge all readers on Merseyside to visit the picket lines to show your support, any time from 4am through the day, at Birkenhead Central, Liverpool Kirkdale depot, Liverpool Lime Street and Southport.

[Labour's general election manifesto](#) supported the renationalisation of the railways, albeit in a piecemeal manner. So why are Merseyside Labour councillors so determined to press ahead with driver-only operation, a policy based on privatisation and profiteering, not on public ownership?

The Socialist Party opposes all cutbacks and fragmentation of the rail network. We call for the renationalisation of the railways under the democratic control and management of rail-workers and the travelling public. A socialist transport policy is the only way to meet the needs of people and the environment, based on a massive and sustainable expansion of public transport.

An RMT member on Merseyrail told the Socialist: "This dispute has now been going on for five months. At the heart of the dispute is the fight to keep guards on all Merseyrail trains so passengers can feel safe in the knowledge that a highly trained, safety-critical person is aboard their train and he or she can take control of any eventuality which may occur during their journey.

"This dispute isn't about who opens or closes train doors, this dispute is about keeping a second safety-critical member of staff on every train from origin to destination and from start to end of service. In a recent survey 89% of Merseyrail passengers stated they want to keep guards on trains but unfortunately Merseyrail has chosen to ignore that fact and they've continued on their march towards driver-only operation."

A "force majeure" exists within Merseyrail's franchise agreement with Merseytravel which prevents Merseyrail from losing out financially through any type of industrial action it may face. With this "force majeure" in existence the hard-working taxpayers of Merseyside foot the bill for a company which makes an annual profit of £17million! The company therefore thinks it does not have to engage in any dialogue with the RMT. But this strike action will show workers won't accept this lying down.

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RMT conference opens debate on Labour and pledges to fight anti-union laws

Socialist Party AGM delegates

This year's RMT annual general meeting (AGM) took place in the wake of [Jeremy Corbyn's tremendous general election result](#). The elation of workers and trade unionists at the result was carried into the hall and reflected by delegates to the conference which ran from 25-29 June in Exeter.

There was a wide and varied range of resolutions debated and voted on including an important debate on the new anti-union laws which make it even more difficult for unions to take legal strike action. The increased ballot turnout requirement has already landed a blow against the union. London Underground members recently failed to achieve the required 50% turnout in their strike ballot in defence of unfairly sacked colleagues. It was agreed that the TUC has failed to lift a finger against the iniquitous new laws and the RMT would seek a united front with other militant unions against the employers and support each other materially if they came under attack.

Jeremy Corbyn addressed the AGM, followed by Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell at a pro-reaffiliation fringe meeting.

Labour

Following a closed session debate, a full discussion in branches and regions will now take place about what formal relationship the RMT will have with Labour.

This discussion will include the problems the union faces if we were to reaffiliate, including the outright opposition from significant sections of the membership in Scotland, following the disgusting spectacle of Labour campaigning alongside the Tories during the Scottish independence referendum.

The different positions that are likely to be debated were outlined in two fringe meetings at the AGM. At one fringe meeting, some speakers called for the RMT to affiliate as quickly as possible.

Supporters of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) also held a fringe meeting at which the arguments were put that we should seek assurances from Labour on key political and organisational questions before affiliating. Several delegates (who, along with RMT's president, are banned from Labour membership after standing against cuts with the TUSC) asked why they remain banned while the likes of warmonger Tony Blair, even after advocating a "strategic" Tory vote and Jess Phillips MP, who boasted that she would stab Corbyn "in the front", can be allowed membership.

The presence of the leader, deputy leader and chair of the RMT parliamentary group at the AGM suggests that RMT has significant influence even without a formal affiliation. RMT was the first to donate to Corbyn's leadership campaign and only Unite gave more.

In contrast, it was raised that at the present time Unite and Unison are giving millions of pounds to Labour while local Labour authorities are sacking their members as they cut jobs and services.

Around 30 delegates attended the TUSC fringe meeting and 22 copies of the Socialist paper were sold.

Birmingham bin workers' anger boils over into strike action

Ian Leech, Birmingham Central Socialist Party

At 10.45am on Friday 30 June bin workers in the union Unite across the city of Birmingham began leaving their vans and depots to begin the first in a series of strikes against their employer Birmingham City Council.

The dispute has been triggered by the Labour controlled authority's plan to introduce a package of measures designed to cut the bin service budget.

The package includes the termination of the contracts of, initially 122, now 113 full time staff employed at Grade 3 level and then to re-employ some at a lower Grade 2 through a competitive process.

In addition, there would be the reconfiguring of working days. Currently staff work four days of nine hours, with a 'rest day'. This will be altered to reduced hours on four days plus working until 10.30am on the previous 'rest day'. This will cut staff wages and eat into their designated rest day in what is a physically demanding job.

The trade unions are also demanding that Birmingham City Council ceases its longstanding use of agency staff and recruits to full time posts for the bin service.

The mood on the picket line at the Perry Barr depot was a mixture of anger, determination and frustration. The frustration comes as a result of the members having offered up suggestion after suggestion when asked by the employer on how best to improve the service, yet none of the proposals from staff have been recognised.

In addition, a large amount of money earmarked to improve the service in previous commitments had never materialised. This has brought an accusation from the local authority trade unions of "financial incompetence".

In discussion with pickets, many referred to learning the lessons of a previous dispute that took place in 2014, where, according to the Unite members, "we had them over a barrel only to let them off the hook and they reneged on the agreement reached. That won't be happening this time!"

Discussion and questions

On the picket line there was some intense discussion on the issue of "a Labour council continuing to make huge cuts when Labour could be in power in government within months" along with questioning of the failure of the GMB union to ballot its members despite it lodging a formal dispute with the employer.

This issue and its consequences for individual GMB members not wanting to cross picket lines had caused a complication and worry that could have been avoided. It had been reported that, as a result, GMB members had been leaving their union to join Unite.

In addition, there was questioning as to why Unite itself had only called out on strike the Grade 3s across the city despite balloting the Grade 2 and 4 members. Instead, Unite full time staff had only asked Grade 4s and 2s to support their colleagues if they felt inclined to!

In each refuse vehicle, Grade 4 staff drive and take charge of the vehicle in road traffic and parked, while Grade 3s oversee the bin operation at the rear of the vehicle. Grade 2s undertake the lifting and emptying of the bins. Clearly, without the Grade 3s in the operation, then not only will a gap appear in the pay structure, blocking Grade 2 'progression', but also, and crucially, Health and Safety will be compromised as the driver cannot take responsibility for all aspects of the job from inside the cab.

Unite members will continue the action with two-hour stoppages on designated days throughout July (3rd, 11th, 19th and 27th) and into August (4th) to force the employer to back down over the proposals. However, even at this stage it would provide a massive lift to the Unite members involved in the current action if GMB was to announce that it intends to ballot its members who are equally affected by these proposals.

Birmingham South East Socialist Party member Bob Severn reports from the Tyseley depot picket:

Solid strike action by Birmingham refuse workers against job cuts and bullying brought bin collections to a virtual halt on Friday 30 June. Many agency workers showed their solidarity by refusing to drive the bin lorries.

At the Tyseley depot, some agency workers walked off the job half an hour into the half-day strike, while others stayed on site but refused to go out in the wagons.

Pickets said the strike looked a lot stronger than previous disputes and there was no chance that uncollected bins would be 'sorted-out in 24 hours', as claimed by the council.

The council plans to sack 113 of the workers and hire lower-paid replacements - including from the agency workers. One worker said he was facing the sack after working there for 35 years.

The agency workers would be taken on at a wage 50p an hour less than the rate they currently get with the agency!

Many pickets commented on how little their experience and expertise on the jobs is valued by their bosses, and about the problems that using barely-trained agency workers can create - especially if there are no experienced bin workers with them.

- Dave Wright from Birmingham South East Socialist Party reports that at the Digbeth depot, the strike steward - who has worked on the bins for 33 years - said the council had closed the yard down for the rest of the day. Pickets there shared phone footage of the dispute from the Perry Barr depot.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 30 June 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Unison conference: Socialist Party argues for a socialist Brexit

Mia Hollsing, Unison conference delegate (personal capacity)

One of the important debates at the [2017 Unison conference](#) was about Brexit. One year on from the referendum, there were a number of motions and amendments about what form Brexit should take and what role the union should play.

The Unison leadership was forced to acknowledge that the Leave vote was not purely about immigration, but [in large part a vote against the establishment and austerity](#). Socialist Party members played an important role in this debate. There was also a debate about the single market, as the leadership backs continued membership.

I argued against this, explaining that [the single market is a neo-liberal free trade area based on the so-called 'four freedoms'](#) - freedom of movement of people, goods, services and capital.

Race to the bottom

I am an EU citizen and I respect the right of people to live and work where they choose, but I explained employers must not be allowed to use migrant labour as a way to drive down terms and conditions (as has happened under EU rules, and this would continue if we remain in the single market).

I also explained that freedom of movement of capital is what allows employers to move production abroad to increase their profits and that the rules around freedom of movement for goods and services forbid nationalisation of services.

I pointed out that Corbyn's programme for nationalisation of the railways, Royal Mail and energy companies would therefore be illegal under single market membership, and that we would also be unable to save the steel industry by nationalising plants such as Port Talbot in Wales.

What we need is not a 'soft' Brexit or a 'hard' Brexit, but a socialist Brexit and this means leaving the single market. These arguments were well received by conference, winning the debate. However, unhappy at the vote, the president took it another two times until they got vote they wanted.

- See ['Unison conference: confident delegates take control, give Corbyn 'rapturous' welcome' at socialistparty.org.uk](#) for more on Unison conference
-

Surrey FBU pass no confidence motion

Paul Couchman, Staines Socialist Party

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) in Surrey has passed a motion of no confidence in the local fire authority, [saying planned budget cuts will see firefighter numbers plummet](#).

Already in Surrey, since 2010, firefighter numbers have been reduced and the FBU says that a further £10 million of budget cuts is on the cards, which it claims would leave Surrey Fire and Rescue with just 117 full-time firefighters.

In 2010 the service had 378, meaning a potential reduction of more than two thirds in 12 years.

The union also references the recent Grenfell Tower tragedy in their motion.

Socialist Party members in Staines, through Save Our Services in Surrey, have worked closely with the FBU over the past few years - particularly in the fight to save Staines fire station from closure (where we have won a temporary reprieve).

Our petition is still open and can be signed online here: petitions.surreycc.gov.uk/SaveFireService/

In April, Surrey FBU voted to support local Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidate and Socialist Party member, Matt Clarke, in the May council elections. This was due to the solidarity shown by the Socialist Party to local firefighters in their defence of services.

The crisis in public services has reached an acute level when the workers in those services now have to declare a complete loss of confidence in the local authority.

Richard Jones, secretary of the FBU in the South East, told the Socialist: "These budget cuts are completely unacceptable and show, once again, how little regard the fire authority has for the safety of the public."

- The FBU motion can be read in full here: fbu.org.uk/publication/motion-no-confidence-surrey-county-council-s-fire-authority
-

BA cabin crew blacklisting strike starts

Mixed fleet cabin crew started a 16-day strike on 1 July. Up until the start of the latest strike, mixed fleet cabin crew had been [on strike for 26 days](#).

The strike is [over pay and the sanctioning of striking workers which as Unite say is tantamount to blacklisting](#). Sanctions have included cabin crew seeing bonus payments worth hundreds of pounds taken away and the removal of staff travel concessions.

It is clear just from the full car park at Bedfont Football club where the strikers meet that this strike is very well supported. There's a very determined mood with 30 more mixed fleet cabin crew joining Unite just today. If anything the protest lines around Heathrow are bigger than ever.

The strikers took their protest on the road too, with a protest at the Qatar airline headquarters in Earls Court, west London on 5 July. And on 8 July strikers will be going on the Pride march in central London and will also be attending the Durham Miners Gala.

Chris Newby

Leeds: Nurses' union RCN says 'scrap the cap'

"It's time for all of us to take a stand, if we don't we won't have an NHS left" said one nurse through the megaphone at the RCN nurses' union pay cap protest in Leeds on 30 June.

Around 30 nurses in the RCN, officials and supporters took part in the protest.

Nurses were angry about how the NHS is being run down, and despite the RCN never having gone on strike before, 78% of the 55,000 members in the NHS consulted with said they would be prepared to strike against the pay cap.

The rest of the NHS and public sector unions should be preparing campaigns to coordinate strike action with the RCN. Given the wobbles of Theresa May over whether the cap would continue, RCN members felt confident that they could win this demand.

The protest attracted a lot of media attention, but it was clear to all there that this was just the start of the campaign.

Iain Dalton, Leeds Socialist Party

Pride 2017: we need a fighting, socialist movement for LGBT+ rights

Michael Johnson, from the Socialist Party's LGBT group, highlights some of the issues being discussed in this year's Pride celebrations and examines the lessons of the Russian revolution for the struggle for LGBT+ rights today.

London Pride this year has been beset by controversy. [A number of posters it created were seen as advertising Pride as an event](#) for straight people, treating gay men as fashion accessories, and recycling common homophobic bullying by calling negative things "gay."

At the same time, London Pride organisers were courting notorious corporations such as Barclays Bank, Starbucks and Vodafone as sponsors - an issue that has increasingly caused controversy around the world.

There are serious questions about the discriminatory practices of these companies against LGBT+ people, as well as their role in wider politics. This has led to protests against their involvement, such as at Washington Pride in the US earlier this year.

There are now discussions among parts of the LGBT+ community about the role of Pride events going forward. Pride marches initially marked the anniversary of [the Stonewall Riots in 1969 in New York](#).

They quickly spread around the world as a day to display the strength and community of LGBT+ people and have played a major role in the ongoing struggle for LGBT+ rights since, such as during the Aids crisis and struggle for marriage equality.

Despite what some may argue, the struggle for LGBT+ rights is not over. Within the UK, [people in Northern Ireland are still fighting for marriage equality](#).

LGBT+ people still face harassment and violence, not just from strangers but in work and schools. We are more likely to experience mental health issues and a disproportionate number of LGBT+ young people are homeless.

Rather than try and entice corporations to sell things to take advantage of a mythical 'pink pound,' Pride events should be organised by the LGBT+ community.

Alongside celebrating the achievements made, they should provide a forum to develop campaigns on the issues that are affecting our community to ensure the fight for LGBT+ rights continues, rather than be swallowed by rainbow logos.

Lessons from the Russian revolution

The Russian Revolution is not typically held up as a significant event in the advancement of the struggle for LGBT+ rights. In fact, it's often seen as the opposite, given the terrible oppression that LGBT+ people faced under Stalinism.

The 1934 Stalinist slogan 'Destroy the homosexual - fascism will disappear' casts quite a shadow on LGBT+ rights in the USSR. But in this centenary year of the Russian revolution, it's important to look at the genuine and significant progress that was made in the early years after 1917.

Prior to the revolution, bans on homosexuality in Russia could be traced back to the 17th century and were particularly barbaric.

Gay men and women were put to death, women explicitly by burning. By the 18th century the government had banned gay men from the armed forces and in the 19th century sexual acts between men had been criminalised.

These laws were by no means unique to Russia. In the UK, male homosexuality was punishable by death by hanging until 1861 and remained criminalised until 1967.

Decriminalised

Only a handful of countries worldwide had decriminalised homosexuality prior to 1917, starting with France in 1791 in the wake of the French revolution (though it must be noted that in 1960 France introduced indecent exposure laws targeting homosexuality that remained for 20 years).

Even today, around 80 countries have laws explicitly against homosexuality or which are used to target LGBT+ people - a number of which include the death penalty. In 28 states in the US it is still legal to fire someone for their sexuality.

Immediately prior to the 1917 revolution, the law in Russia had been applied on a very selective basis, with friends of the imperial family benefiting from a selective tolerance.

But institutions like the Eastern Orthodox Church pushed the idea that homosexuality was a sign of corruption, decadence and immorality. While gay rights movements began to develop in other countries such as Germany, this propaganda meant very little was able to develop in Russia beyond fictional representations.

At around this time, under familial and societal pressure, Georgy Chicherin - a flamboyant and openly gay man, already a committed Marxist who used an inherited fortune to support the 1905 Russian revolution and anti-war campaigning - undertook gay 'conversion therapies'.

It's unclear which therapies he attempted - at the time they ranged from psycho-analysis, to hypnotherapy, to surgical procedures and castration. Unsurprisingly, this was unsuccessful and Chicherin later described himself as self-accepting of his homosexuality.

Chicherin was jailed in Britain for his anti-war activities but his release was secured by Trotsky after the 1917 revolution. He went on to work closely with both Trotsky and Lenin, eventually becoming the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs.

This appointment was in 1918 - it would have been unthinkable in any other country at that time, even where there were more active LGBT+ rights movements. It would take until the latter part of the 20th century for other countries to have out politicians in similar positions.

Given this background, it was enormously significant that when the Soviet Criminal Code was established in 1922, male homosexuality was not included as a criminal act (female homosexuality and 'crossdressing' had never been explicitly outlawed but were met with heavy repression). This was not, as some historians argue, an inadvertent omission or oversight.

The Soviet minister of health proudly spoke in Germany of the abolition of the Tsarist laws against homosexuality, stating: "No unhappy consequences of any kind whatsoever have resulted from the elimination of the offending [law], nor has the wish that the penalty in question be reintroduced been raised in any quarter."

Dr Grigorii Batkis, director of the Moscow Institute of Soviet Hygiene, echoed this, saying: "Soviet legislation bases itself on the following principle: it declares the absolute non-inference of the state and society into sexual matters, as long as nobody is injured, and no one's interests are encroached upon."

In 1926 it became legal to change your sex on passports and intersex and transgender people received access to medical care without state demonisation. The advances for women in the early days of the Bolshevik government secured lesbian and bisexual women with unprecedented freedoms.

100 years on and millions are marching in the wish that the US president could be close to being that progressive! These steps undoubtedly energised the fight for LGBT+ rights around the world at the same time as the revolution was breathing new life into the revolutionary struggle internationally.

Social attitudes

But the negative social attitudes fostered during the repressive Tsarist regime could not disappear overnight, especially within a geographical area as large as the Soviet Union.

This perhaps explains accounts such as the (only recorded) raid on a party of crossdressers and gay men gathered for a marriage ceremony. This was justified by a single Justice Commissariat lawyer, despite the decriminalisation, as he felt public displays of 'homosexual tastes' may endanger 'suggestible personalities'.

However, so far research has not shown any criminal charges due to crossdressing or public displays of homosexual affection during this early period.

Lesbian and bisexual women, who had received praise for their contributions to the soviet military and police during the civil war, are reported to have received admiration as "energetic" participants in the revolutionary landscape. 'Masculinised' women were seen as politically conscious and valued citizens in Russia while in other countries similar fashions were met with increasing scrutiny as a sign of 'female emancipation.'

There is also some evidence for the beginning of a change, albeit slow, in social attitudes, facilitated by the government. The novel 'Wings' by Mikhail Kuzmin about same-sex love was republished in 1923 by a publishing house owned by the Soviet government.

Especially within the medical community, there seemed to be a push away from the Tsarist regime's religious, moralistic view of homosexuality. Instead the understanding was that homosexuals had biological 'deformities' and, far from their sexual attraction being a conscious, sinful choice, it was instead something that could not be helped.

This was generally coupled to an attempt to find a 'cure' for these desires, but did lead some to conclude that homosexuality's 'inevitability' meant it might be a legitimate part of the 'human sexual spectrum.'

However, to a large extent, questions of sexuality were seen as issues that would resolve themselves once the economic and social foundations of the Soviet state had been laid.

There was no real official position of the Bolsheviks. Unfortunately this undoubtedly left the political and social progress LGBT+ people had made following the revolution at greater risk.

Homosexuality was re-criminalised by the Stalinist government in 1934. This was at a time when the regime was pushing the importance of the Soviet 'nuclear family'.

Male homosexuality in particular was focussed on as a symbol of 'bourgeois individualism,' based on the idea that revolutionaries should put aside their own desires for the sake of the continued revolution.

At the same time, the government banned abortion, calling for an increase in the birth rate. The Stalin government, reforming its links with the Orthodox Church, conflated homosexuality with rape and paedophilia.

[Georgy Chicherin](#), who had passed away following illness in 1930, became a victim of the Stalinist purges at this time. Most references to him were removed.

This was probably because of both his sexuality and his politics. Either way, the result is unfortunately of a leading Bolshevik and out and accepting gay man largely lost to history.

The increase of repression led to around 1,000 trials of gay men for sodomy every year under the Stalinist regime (with punishments of five years hard labour). The new laws seem to have been enforced beyond even the scale that they were under Tsarism.

The complicated record around LGBT+ rights following the Russian revolution is often treated as a simple one by capitalist historians: the revolution, in and of itself, led to repression for LGBT+ people.

Liberation

This view serves to diminish the real lessons we can learn. The decriminalisation of sodomy was an indisputable step forward, giving a glimpse of the possibility for all kinds of liberation in a socialist society.

The subsequent reversal of these advances and the repression under Stalin show the importance of fighting for more than reforms which can be rolled back at any time. Instead we must fight explicitly for all advances towards liberation, along with organising to change society fundamentally.

To truly end racism, sexism and the oppression of LGBT+ people, we must continue to fight for socialism.

Weakened Tories forced into Northern Ireland abortion u-turn

Sarah Sachs-Eldridge, Socialist Party national organier

Thursday 29 June 2017 saw a significant step forward for women in Northern Ireland (NI). [Funding to cover the financial costs for them to access abortions in England was pledged by the Tory minority government.](#)

The Tories' ['supply and confidence' deal with the ten DUP MPs](#) turned a spotlight on Northern Irish politics. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Abortion Act that introduced free, legal abortion for women in England, Wales and Scotland within certain limitations. It was understood by those who fought for this legislation that women should have the right to choose when and whether to have children and that the right to an abortion is a life or death issue. But no major party in NI supports extending it there.

Women in NI are denied access to abortions in almost all circumstances. When they come to England to access NHS services they are forced to pay for the service. Including travel, time off work, accommodation, etc, it can cost the two women who travel every week on average up to £2,000.

Anyone who performs an illegal abortion in NI could be jailed for life. Cases of rape, incest and fatal foetal abnormalities are not circumstances where abortions can be performed legally. Health workers face criminal charges if they do not report women who present with complications caused by an abortion. These conditions remain, so the fight for abortion rights in Northern Ireland is not over.

Yet nearly 80% of people in NI believe abortion should be legal when a woman has become pregnant as a result of rape or incest, [according to the 2016 Life and Times Survey](#). When the same survey asked if abortion should be a matter for medical regulation and not criminal law, over two-thirds of both Catholics and Protestants agreed or strongly agreed.

However, it was initially predicted that the [ten DUP MPs could influence the weak and wobbly Tories](#) towards cutting women's rights. This government is incredibly weak and that fragility is the key to understanding what happened - and to drawing lessons for the fight for women's rights. Theresa May won the vote on the Queen's Speech with a majority of just 14 votes.

When an amendment to the Speech calling on the government to fund NHS abortions for NI women from Labour backbencher Stella Creasy looked to be gaining support among some Tory MPs, there was enormous pressure to make a concession just to keep the show on the road.

Creasy withdrew the amendment when Tory Chancellor Philip Hammond announced that Justine Greening, the women and equalities minister, would write to MPs "explaining that she intends to intervene to fund abortions in England for women arriving here from NI". This is estimated to cost around £1 million.

While it was Creasy who moved the amendment it is the weakened state of the Tories that forced them to concede. That weakness was created by the surge behind Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity manifesto - which was absent from the material and campaigns of the anti-Corbyn wing of Labour to which Creasy subscribes.

Creasy has since been touring media studios. In less than five minutes on the BBC's Andrew Marr show she made eight references to MPs working together 'across the house'. This appears to be part of the moves towards a new alignment of the pro-capitalist wing of the Labour Party and the pro-EU Tories. But there is no future for women's rights in this. In fact [in 2008 an attempt to extend abortion law to NI](#) was scuppered by the then Blair government.

Undermining Corbyn is undermining the potential for an anti-austerity government that could start to transform the lives of women. Blairites like Umunna and Creasy have been part of the campaign to remove Jeremy Corbyn and keep Labour as a party that can be relied on to defend capitalist interests. That includes cuts and privatisations of public services that deny women access to health, childcare, housing, etc, and enormously undermine women's choice about when and whether to have children, and condemn women, children and men to poverty.

Across the world women's rights are threatened by unpopular or unstable regimes who use social issues to try to maintain power. However women are fighting back. Last October women in Poland won a crucial victory as proposed legislation to impose a near-total ban on already restricted access to abortion was overwhelmingly defeated by a women's strike.

In the Republic of Ireland the energetic and largely youthful campaign for the introduction of abortion rights is understood as a fight against establishment austerity politicians who still kowtow to a Catholic church that has lost its influence over the masses. Members of the Irish Socialist Party who are elected to the parliament and the Rosa campaign there are playing a leading role there.

In the US rights that have been won by previous generations and that were seen as secure are under threat in this era of capitalist crisis. This understanding, at different levels throughout the movements, contributes to the sense that the fight for women's rights is 'our task'.

A movement is rising. In January 2017, an estimated five million women, children and men participated in 673 Women's Marches around the world against Trump's inauguration, with an unprecedented 550 of them in the US.

The huge demo in London is a warning against any attempt to curtail women's rights. The latest social attitudes survey confirms that mood with a record 70% saying an abortion should be allowed if a woman decides on her own she does not want a child. Opposing the Creasy amendment could have provoked an enormous movement, which if it was properly built for and linked to the other struggles in society could bring the weak Tory government down.

Last week the BMA doctors' union, following the tremendous strike by junior doctors, voted by two-thirds for decriminalisation of abortion, in effect an extension of the 1967 Act. This points to how the trade unions can be central to a new mass movement that uses the collective strength of workers to fight for women's rights and against austerity.

Background

The Abortion Act 1967 established access to free safe legal abortions for people in England, Wales and Scotland. This Act was not extended to include Northern Ireland which is governed by laws dating back to 1861 which criminalise seeking or assisting in an abortion and outlines the penalty as 'to be kept in penal servitude for life'.

Although unlikely that someone would face the full penalty today, people, including health workers, are being convicted in the courts under this law. In April 2016, a woman in Belfast was given a suspended sentence of one year for taking an abortion pill at home. While, more recently a woman was prosecuted for obtaining abortion pills for her underage daughter after she was reported to the police by their family GP. On the 14th of June 2017, the Supreme Court ruled against the case of A and B who challenged the NHS in the courts to allow women from Northern Ireland to access free abortions in Britain on the NHS. This case was brought after a mother had to travel to Manchester with her underage daughter to avail of an abortion five years ago and could only do so with the support of an abortion charity. It is estimated that around 2,000 women a year from Northern Ireland are forced to travel to Britain to avail of abortion services.

Repeal the 8th Amendment

Abortion is against the law in the Republic of Ireland unless the pregnancy endangers the life of the woman. There is no exception in the case of fatal foetal abnormalities when the baby will not survive outside the womb.

Nevertheless, as we have seen in some cases women have been denied abortions even though there is a severe risk to their health. The death of Savita Halappanavar in November 2012 was a tragedy which provoked thousands onto the streets in sadness at her death and anger at the legislation.

Free, safe, legal abortion cannot be provided in the Republic of Ireland until the 8th Amendment to the constitution is repealed. The 8th Amendment equates the life of the foetus to that of the mother which causes a grey area for medical professionals when treating pregnant individuals. There are many examples of how this Amendment has caused undue stress for those affected.

Forcing people to travel to Britain to avail of abortion services causes undue stress and financial pressure. This means that individuals who are able to avail of an abortion usually can't afford to have it until later in term and are unlikely to seek post termination care due to the stigma and legal threat that is attached to using these services, thus putting lives and people's health at risk.

Mood to fight!

There is a major shift in public opinion towards repealing the 8th Amendment in the Republic of Ireland and for a change in legislation in Northern Ireland. However, the church and the political establishments maintain the status quo.

In the Republic of Ireland, Socialist Party members who are MPs in Solidarity (formerly called the Anti-Austerity Alliance) put forward a motion in the parliament to repeal the 8th Amendment to the Constitution in October 2016. However, the government brought in its own counter motion to block any discussion on this issue until at least 2018. The parliament approved the counter-motion by 96 votes to 47 which shows how out of touch the elected representatives are with public opinion. Their justification for this move was that they said they couldn't decide on this issue until after the Citizens' Assembly had concluded in April 2017 and their findings were reviewed by an Oireachtas committee starting in July 2017. The Citizens' Assembly was used as a delay tactic to ignore dealing with a debate on repealing the 8th Amendment and the government as well as the mainstream media anticipated the Assembly members to be more conservative in their recommendations. However, to their surprise the Assembly voted for a more liberal ruling on access to abortion services. Although the terms of the referendum are unclear at this stage the government has promised a referendum on this issue for 2018. The huge rallies for change to the abortion laws in the Republic of Ireland along with the reaction to the announcement that the Sisters of Charity would be running the new National Maternity Hospital in Dublin illustrate the mood amongst ordinary people who want change in how our health services are run and a clear separation of church and state in all aspects of Irish society.

Trump's threats to abortion rights in the US show that the rights won by previous generations are not safe. Under capitalism, no right that is won in struggle is permanent. We stand for a democratically run socialist society, planned to meet the social needs of all rather than the profits of a few.

Socialists fight for an end to women's oppression. We fight for universal access to free contraception, abortion and childcare services with access to adequate housing. The decision to have or not have a child should be up to the individual and not influenced by how much money they earn.

Stop demolition of homes and communities in Haringey

Nick Auvache

The fight to stop Haringey council's massive privatisation project which will raze whole areas of Tottenham and Wood Green in north London to the ground, leaving thousands homeless or displaced, will step up a gear on 3 July. On that day, local people will once again take to the streets in an attempt to put pressure on the council to abandon its plans to socially cleanse large areas of the borough.

The campaign enters a new phase given the changed political situation with a very weak Tory government facing a turbulent period ahead. The Tories may have won the election but no one doubts they are a government in crisis and [Jeremy Corbyn has emerged enormously strengthened](#).

The Grenfell tragedy has also increased the political polarisation, exposing years of neglect where the safety of homes inhabited by working class people was sacrificed at the altar of cut backs, neglect, privatisation and outsourcing.

This changed political atmosphere will give further impetus to the campaign to stop the HDV (Haringey Development Vehicle). So far, Haringey council, run by a rabid Blairite clique, has refused to listen to the campaign, it has refused to listen to local tenants and trade unions who have pleaded with the council to reverse its decision to bulldoze thousands of homes and sell off whole swathes of property in Haringey.

Opposition within Labour

It has even refused to listen to the two local constituency Labour Parties who have instructed their council to change course! This shows the strength of feeling against the council's plans as well as the potential for success but it also shows the determination of Blairite council leader Kober to push ahead regardless of the opposition.

Incredibly the company that the council has chosen to "redevelop" the area not only has a reputation for blacklisting trade unionists but now it has been exposed, not once but twice, for attempting to use flammable cladding similar to that used on the Grenfell flats!

It attempted this on projects in Conservative controlled Australia but regulations prevented it from going ahead. Yet it has found friends in Haringey Labour council! This shows that we can't trust the private sector if we want safe, good quality housing but it also shows that we can't trust Blairite Labour.

Some 'rebel' Labour councillors have already been disciplined for voting against the scheme earlier on in the year.

Corbyn's policies

After the election there was some speculation that the project would be shelved with the real prospect of a Corbyn-led Labour government coming to power soon. This has not materialised and shows that any attempt to stop the HDV must also go hand in hand with removing the Blairites and replacing them with councillors who are genuinely committed to the ideas that Corbyn has been associated with.

He has always spoken out against social cleansing, for protecting existing council housing and the importance of building much more council housing to solve the housing crisis. He has also spoken out against privatisation and outsourcing.

In the run-up to next years council elections it is vital that Labour candidates stand on a clear policy of "No to HDV, No to privatisation and outsourcing and No to cuts".

It is equally important that tenants' organisations, trade unions and community organisations flex their muscles in the meantime. They should ensure that Labour candidates make a pledge to support these aims and if they refuse to do so then they should convene a conference to build broad support for standing candidates themselves who genuinely represent Corbyn's anti-austerity, anti-privatisation ideas.

If the HDV project is defeated it will not only be a victory for working class people in Haringey but also a huge defeat for the Blairites and the capitalist system that they are so wedded to.

Demo against the demolition of our homes and communities

Haringey council is not listening: Make some noise about social cleansing

Monday 3rd July

- Assemble at Ducketts Common, N8
 - 5.30pm march from Turnpike Lane tube to Wood Green Civic Centre
 - 6pm at Wood Green tube, Wood Green High Road, London N22
 - Bring pots, pans & whistles
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This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 30 June 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

South London tower block residents plan safety campaign

Tower block residents from the Ashmole estate in south London joined Lambeth Socialist Party members to discuss building a safety campaign on 29 June.

One is an engineer who believes the tower's cladding testing results are likely to come back unsafe.

Local member Steve Nally has lived in the tower for three decades. He is demanding that experienced firefighters carry out safety checks. Private contractors cannot have the same practical experience, and are suspect due to profit motives.

Steve and other Socialist Party members had visited flats to collect signatures for a letter to the housing association and council. As a result, four other residents came to our public meeting, and a fifth turned up after work. One had lost family at Grenfell.

Some remembered Steve for his work coordinating the local and national campaign against Thatcher's hated poll tax. John Reid, a Socialist Party member and RMT union rep, remarked that early poll tax campaign meetings were about the same size. By the end of the campaign, 18 million refused to pay!

There was a real mood for action. Residents there discussed organising for fire safety - but also problems with security, maintenance, service charges and rents. An organised residents' union could address all this.

Property management has been taking down posters advertising the campaign and its demands. We plan to hold a meeting in the block's stairwell to discuss demands and next steps with more residents.

James Ivens, Lambeth Socialist Party

Newcastle tenants demand answers from Labour council

William Jarrett, Newcastle Socialist Party

On 27 June I attended a meeting organised by concerned tenants of Your Homes Newcastle (YHN), an arms-length management organisation (Almo) of Newcastle City Council, at Cruddas Park tower in the city's west end.

Tenants revealed a shocking array of safety violations catalogued throughout Newcastle's tower blocks in the fortnight since the Grenfell Tower disaster, explicitly referring to them as being potentially criminally negligent.

Included among them were failures to install smoke detectors, faulty windows, lack of fire extinguishers, and doors which sealed a tenant inside of their home during a fire alarm.

A member of Newcastle council Labour group, Dipu Ahad, questioned whether the meeting was organised by actual tenants. But a BBC Look North film crew present didn't question the meeting's authenticity, and were keen to interview residents.

Councillor Ahad said that if the campaign was going to be "hijacked"(!), then "we" - presumably Newcastle's Labour group - "can't help".

This drew the ire of Diane, a campaign organiser and YHN tenant. The possibility of rent strikes was also discussed.

The Socialist Party rejects all outsourcing of council housing, whether through Almos or private companies. Services must be returned in-house, and fully funded, for proper oversight and regulation.

I offered our solidarity and support to the campaign, and committed to undertake activity with them to hold YHN and Newcastle City Council to account to ensure safe housing for all.

East London community demands action after racist attacks

Moshin Ahmed, Tower Hamlets Socialist Party

Over 100 local residents, including 20 who couldn't get in, packed the Berner Community Centre in Tower Hamlets, east London, on 2 July, angry about [a number of recent attacks on local Muslim people](#).

Some of the attacks have been with acid, causing horrific burns. Others have targeted Muslim women by pulling off their veils.

The meeting was organised by residents from the Berner Estate, who invited the Labour mayor of Tower Hamlets, John Biggs, who replaced the previous mayor Luthfur Rahman, [undemocratically removed through the courts by the Tories](#).

The mood of the meeting was that the council hadn't done enough to protect the community from hate crimes. Muslim people always appear to be the target of these attacks. They wanted reassurances from the police and the council. But Biggs blamed the funding cuts from central government.

"Use the reserves"

Incredibly for a Blairite, he said: "We have to wait for a Corbyn government to scrap the cuts"!

But one of the independent councillors revealed that the council has millions in their reserves. Immediately, people were surprised and then demanded that the reserves be used to resource more police. But this demand was ignored by Biggs.

The Socialist Party would say, for example, why can the council not use its reserves to fund community wardens - as well as funding the much-needed services that have been savagely cut back?

The Socialist Party has been to the forefront in campaigning for the Labour council to refuse to implement any more Tory cuts.

It's vital that the labour and trade union movement plays a key role in uniting working class people to ensure that the racists can't sow division and isolate and threaten the Muslim community. In the aftermath of the London Bridge attack, the far-right racists of Britain First have been provocatively going to the nearby East London Mosque, although every time being chased away.

There is a growing feeling of local people to get organised to defend themselves because of a lack of confidence in the council. The council should be pressurised to act by a campaign. This can include lobbying the council to force them to use their reserves and stand with the community against the racists and the Tory cutters.

In the 1990s in Tower Hamlets, the BNP (British National Party), who won a council seat on the Isle of Dogs, [were defeated by the mass mobilisation of young people and trade unionists, including occupying the site of their 'paper sale' in Brick Lane.](#)

This mobilisation also called for 'jobs and homes not racism'. With the help of Youth Against Racism, supported by Militant (now the Socialist Party) local people organised a whistle alarm defence campaign.

We need to mobilise working class people in Tower Hamlets and throughout east London, where other attacks have happened, to defeat the racists, pressure the council to stop the cuts, and fight to defeat the Tory government.

- Tower Hamlets and East London Socialist Party meeting: Action needed against racist attacks - fight for services, jobs and homes. Thursday 6 July, 7.30pm, Oxford House in Bethnal Green, E2 6HG

Another record fighting fund quarter!

Ken Douglas, Socialist Party national treasurer

Socialist Party members raised an outstanding £35,264 in the April to June quarter of 2017. This broke the record for the second quarter, which itself had only been set in 2016 - £7,300 was paid in over the last ten days alone.

This money was raised in the course of campaigning for Jeremy Corbyn in the general election, from countless protests and demonstrations against Tory austerity and from the many fundraising efforts of the branches.

No rich backers

The Socialist Party has no rich backers, we rely on support from ordinary people - and they have responded to our programme for building opposition to the Tories and transforming the Labour Party.

Five branches raised over £1,000 with Liverpool topping the charts having raised £1,712 and Southampton hitting those heights for the first time, with a new fighting fund organiser.

There were very successful appeals at public meetings during the general election and after - £1,000 raised at PCS conference, £2,000 at Unison conference, £1,500 at the London book launch of From Militant to the Socialist Party, £400 in Leeds and £314 in Cardiff. Lancashire branch raised £109 with an appeal at their post-election public meeting, a real success for a small branch. Coventry East and West branches raised £620 at a joint public meeting.

Branches also found time among all the campaigning to ensure that they smashed their target. Including car boot sales, 'quiz and curry nights' and selling rock cakes, record collections and t-shirts.

Dave Gorton, to ensure that Chesterfield branch hit their target, donated an extra 79p - a small donation but he said: "Well I could spend it trying to get Liar Liar to number one as a gimmick or I could put it into the fighting fund to pay for a few leaflets that may make a real difference."

This underlines that the fighting fund enables us to produce the leaflets, pamphlets, placards and posters that raise the profile of the Socialist Party and the relevance of a socialist alternative.

At the same time, the sales of the Socialist have soared over the past few months, surpassing the record sales of 2016 and showing increasing interest in and support for socialist ideas.

From Militant to the Socialist Party - what you thought

Like many people who eagerly pre-ordered From Militant to the Socialist Party I have enjoyed reading its 600-odd pages.

The period covered by the book is really the period of my political awakening and for me, reading a Marxist analysis of the key events in this period really helped bring about a conscious understanding of things that I had maybe had a 'gut feeling' about or sometimes failed to see what the 'big deal' was about.

As the book concludes, it deals with the first campaign I got involved with against cuts in 2005-2006 to Huddersfield NHS services where we elected a Socialist Party member who led the campaign to the local council.

I think this just goes to show how an understanding of the past helps us understand and contribute to the struggles of today, just one more reason every serious campaigner should read this book.

Iain Dalton

- From Militant to the Socialist Party - £15, available from socialistbooks.co.uk

Pensioners oppose DUP deal

The Merseyside Pensioners Association (MPA) is affiliated to the National Pensioners Convention, a campaigning organisation for decent pensions and the rights of pensioners generally.

At its weekly meeting on 28 June, the MPA considered a resolution tabled by Socialist Party member Roger Bannister on the deal between the Tories and the Democratic Unionist Party to enable Theresa May's Tory government to cling on to power. The resolution opposed this deal.

<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/25791>