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■ Ten years after the brutal end of the war >p14-15



European elections expose deepening political crisis - Workers need a party of their own >p2-3



What lies behind the US-China trade war?

>p8-9

Birmingham home carers' victory

STRIKERS PUSH BACK CUTS COUNCIL



photo Birmingham Socialist Party

Birmingham Socialist Party

Birmingham home care strikers are celebrating a hard-fought victory!

There is finally an end to the Birmingham home carers' 20-month long dispute, with over 80 strike days, against attacks to their working patterns and pay - and indeed the service itself - by Birmingham Labour Council.

This will be another blow to the Blairite council who recently lost to another group of workers - the Birmingham bin workers who won their fight against blacklisting in March this year.

The Birmingham home carers were defending their working hours as the council originally proposed a pattern of three split shifts. But as the dispute escalated the council changed this to cutting all contracted hours to part time - meaning some staff would lose up to £11,000 a year!

The council used every dirty trick to wear the workers down - isolating them in one-on-one meetings, pushing voluntary redundancy and other heavy-handed managerial tactics. The workers still stood strong with continued support for strike action which was led by public service union Unison. This was a battle of wills with the council wanting to save face and not lose to another set of its workers.

However, it was the workers who came out on top with the council withdrawing every proposal and the staff being able to keep their jobs under current hours and shifts.

While this is an amazing win for the workers and communities of Birmingham, there are no illusions that this story is completely over. The battle over hours may be behind them but the war over saving the service indefinitely is far from complete.

Only this year the council voted to scrap another 1,000 jobs - where these will come from is yet to be made public. Will this be the entire home care service? Will they attack the bin workers again?

Who knows - but one thing is clear, no worker is safe while the Labour council continues to carry out the Tories' dirty work. This Labour council is more afraid to stand up to weak and wobbly Theresa May than of their own workers going below the poverty breadline.

The best way for the home carers to ensure their jobs are safe in the long term is to link up their issues with all council workers facing similar attacks.

A citywide council strike would not only stop the Labour councillors in their tracks, but it would also show to the workers and people of Birmingham who really has the power in society.

It's the workers who keep everything going. It would firmly pose the question of the need for councillors who stand for the working class.

■ Continued on page 5

European elections expose deepening political crisis

WORKERS NEED A PARTY OF OUR OWN



What we think

The euro-elections were never meant to happen. The fact that they are even taking place is an utter humiliation for Theresa May and the Tories. They are bringing to the forefront again the historic crisis of British capitalism and the rage of masses of working class and young people.

In 2016, the Socialist Party campaigned for a socialist Brexit, understanding that the enormous working-class anger against austerity, the rich and the capitalist politicians could find an outlet in the EU referendum. We said that a Brexit vote could be a cry of rage, and could throw the Tories, the capitalist class and all its institutions into crisis.

It is expected that on Thursday there will be a total collapse of the Tories. A YouGov poll over the weekend put them in fifth place behind the Green Party, on just 8.3%.

Now Lord Heseltine, former deputy Prime Minister, has had the whip suspended for saying he would vote Lib Dem.

The Tories, the oldest and most successful party of capitalism on the planet, is in meltdown.



Many Labour voters were lost before the 2017 election because of Labour's previous betrayals. Over the course of Tony Blair's premiership, five million votes were lost. In 2017 Labour won the biggest increase since 1945, but it still left millions of working-class people looking for a voice

Theresa May had said she would stay as prime minister until the Brexit deal was passed, but in yet another defeat she has now told the Tory back-bench 1922 committee that she will stand down after she has put the withdrawal bill back to parliament in the first week of June. This would then mean a summer Tory leadership contest.

The challenge for her successor is well under way, with multiple contenders, including current front-runner Boris Johnson. Any hope that this will ease Tory troubles could be short-lived.

Their problem is that whoever would be the replacement could split the party. It is the hard-line Brexiters who have currently come out on top. They wanted an early contest to give them time to negotiate a different deal or allow a no-deal exit by the new Brexit date, 31 October. The Remainers wanted to keep May in until Brexit was "sorted". A leadership election could be the trigger for an actual split.

But despite this catastrophe for the Tory Party, in Thursday's election it is not the Labour Party that will be the gainer.

The same YouGov poll showed that three in five people



photo Paul Mattsson

in Britain say politics in Westminster and Brussels is broken. That is the view of 90% of those planning to vote for Nigel Farage's new Brexit Party.

The Brexit Party is on course to score twice as many votes as any other party - on 34%. At the weekend, the Lib Dems were on 17%, with just 16% for Labour and 9% for the Green Party.

The combined total votes for the Brexit Party and Ukip were predicted to be 36%, and the combined vote of pro-remain Lib Dems, Greens, Change UK, Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru was expected to be 37.5%.

Determined to do their best to undermine Corbyn, just days before the election the Blairites stepped up their attacks - probably disappointed that 'Change UK' (made up of right-wing Labour defectors and renegade Remain Tories) has so far flopped and not undermined Labour sufficiently. Former Blair minister Jane Kennedy, who resigned from the Labour Party, claimed Labour is "broken to the core", hijacked by "something really nasty and dark in the hard left". Margaret Hodge calls for a vote for a pro-EU party, not Labour.

Blairites - both MPs and commentators like Polly Toynbee - have of course continued to argue that the Labour Party should campaign for Remain. Pollster Peter Kellner argued the same case, on the basis that two thirds of Labour's 2017 voters are for Remain, and that a large part of Labour's vote is haemorrhaging to the Lib Dems.

This ignores the fact that many Labour voters were lost before the 2017 election because of Labour's previous betrayals. Over the course of Tony Blair's premiership, five million votes were lost. In 2017 Labour won the biggest increase since 1945, but it still left millions of working-class people looking for a voice.

Corbyn is right not to capitulate to the Remainers this time - as he did in the referendum in 2016. That was a serious mistake that left the leadership of millions of angry working-class people in the hands of right-wingers like Farage and Johnson.

But unfortunately, months upon months of concessions to the Blairites, including allowing Blairite Remainers like Keir Starmer take centre-stage on Brexit, has muted Corbyn's more radical voice and allowed confusion over Labour's Brexit position.

Brexit Party

In this euro-election campaign, thousands of people are attending Brexit Party rallies. Farage claims 100,000 have joined the party.

He is purposefully putting forward no policies other than a WTO (ie no-deal) Brexit. Of course, this is because his political views on privatisation, including of the NHS, austerity, as well as his racism, would alienate large numbers of people.

But Farage is tapping into a strong sense of betrayal. Saying that 'we need to get rid of the politicians' is a strong message.

"It has got nothing to do with Leave or Remain. It is social class. The elitists. The us and the them." These are the words of people attending a Brexit rally in Merthyr Tydfil, quoted in the Guardian.

"They always used to say Labour was for the working class," says another. "Now I seem to think that Labour is just getting into bed with the Conservatives, and they are the upper middle class. I honestly think Brexit is the new working-class party for poverty-stricken towns".

The capitalist press mock, and ask questions about Farage's donors. But it doesn't wash with many angry people. Some attending his rallies are reported as saying they don't like Farage, but for them that's not the point. They feel they are not being listened to. Wages are still below pre-crisis levels. In-work poverty is at a record high, and new figures show that in ten constituencies child poverty is now above 50%. Household debt is at a record high. The 'elites' lecturing and sneering didn't work in 2016 and doesn't appear to be working now.

Many of those Corbyn supporters who are now saying they could vote for 'Remain parties' are expressing, in a different way, a similar sentiment - anger and fear for the future, especially among young people. For them, the sudden rise of the Brexit Party is part of what they fear.

A new survey by Opinium shows that, since the EU referendum, there has been an increase in the number of Black and Asian people experiencing racism - up to seven in ten, from 58% in January 2016. The survey concludes that racists are becoming more confident - with the racist rhetoric from Ukip, the high profile of figures like Tommy Robinson, and the encouragement of fears about immigration by 'mainstream' politicians and the capitalist press.

We have witnessed the growth of right-wing populism and even the far right in some countries recently - most notably Trump in the US and Bolsonaro in Brazil. The Socialist Party warned of the possible rise of the right if the workers' movement didn't step up to the plate to fight the efforts of the rich and big business to force working-class people to pay for economic crisis through austerity.

But the sudden electoral rise of the Brexit Party is not necessarily long-term. In the 2017 general election, it was Jeremy Corbyn that thousands and thousands of people flocked to rallies to hear. In two weeks, thousands will march against Nigel Farage's friend Donald Trump when he visits Britain.

That the Brexit Party is currently being seen as a weapon against the austerity establishment, and the 2017 surge behind Corbyn's anti-austerity programme are ultimately both expressions of the need to build a mass independent political voice of the working class.

Therefore it would be a crude response to simply think that these Brexit Party rallies must be opposed by the 'anti-racists'. People are turning out to them because they feel betrayed and can see a way to beat the establishment politicians. It is vital that a pro-working class, socialist alternative is offered.

The collapse of the Tories could precipitate a general election. We call for Corbyn and the trade union leaders to mount a massive fight to boot them out. But even without that, in this volatile time, there is the potential for a Corbyn-led government coming to power possibly in the next months.



What is needed is not just ousting the Tories but to fight for a real working-class party. Such a party would mean not just passive voting and expressions of anger, but active participation of working-class people in building their own party. A party and mass movement that can implement socialist change is essential

The Brexit Party will be standing in a general election too, but when expected to put forward a wider programme, Farage's anti-working-class policies would be more exposed. The punishment being meted out to the main parties in these euro-elections wouldn't be repeated in the same way when the question of governmental power is posed.

But Corbyn must learn the lessons from recent weeks. A general election would be the chance to put a pro-working-class socialist stamp on events. Enough with the compromises and concessions to the pro-capitalist right in his own party, people like Margaret Hodge. The so-called 'liberal centre ground' - in other words, austerity capitalism - is not the winner in the euro-elections. This is a polarisation stemming from raw anger.

The general election, when it comes, needs to be a battle between the backward, right-wing ideas of the divided Tories and Farage, and a bold working class-based socialist movement around Corbyn.

That means the democratic steps the Socialist Party has argued for from day one of Corbyn's leadership victory - most urgently the opportunity for members to kick out the pro-capitalist Blairite MPs through an automatic reselection process - remain essential. The anger against the politicians is a warning to Corbyn. Kick out the pro-capitalist politicians in the Labour Party!

What is needed is not just ousting the Tories but to fight for a real working-class party. Such a party would mean not just passive voting and expressions of anger, but active participation of working class people in building their own party. As an illustration of what could be built, in the 1980s in Liverpool, when supporters of the Socialist Party's predecessor, Militant, led a socialist Labour council, thousands of people, including hundreds of trade union reps, participated in the District Labour Party meetings. A mass movement and a working-class party that can implement socialist policies are essential.

Have you got news for us? DEADLINE: Friday before publication date - urgent news: Monday

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REJECT ALABAMA ABORTION BAN

Heather Rawling
Socialist Party women's committee

Alabama legislators have passed a bill that makes it a felony for a doctor to perform or attempt to perform an abortion. They even denied an amendment allowing exemptions for cases of rape and incest.

The bill's sponsor Terri Collins - a Republican in the Alabama House of Representatives - admitted it was a direct attack on Roe v Wade. This was the 1973 landmark decision of the US Supreme Court supporting a woman's right to choose.

The legislators are counterposing the rights of the foetus versus the rights of the pregnant woman, which can have tragic results. For example in Ireland Savita Halappanavar died of a septic miscarriage in 2012.

Doctors there had refused to carry out an abortion following an incomplete miscarriage. An abortion, even in these circumstances, would have

been illegal at that time.

Accessing an abortion in some parts of the US has become increasingly difficult. Taking legally prescribed pills at ten weeks gestation can cost \$800.

Working-class women

Rich women can usually gain access to abortions through their connections and wealth. It is working-class women from all cultures that are forced into either more dangerous back-street abortions or to proceed with their pregnancies, despite difficult economic, social and personal circumstances.

Legal abortions across the US are under threat. The appointment of Judge Brett Kavanaugh to the US Supreme Court has given opponents of abortion rights a majority there.

Wooing the religious right, Donald Trump now states that he hates abortions, but would tolerate them in cases of incest, rape and danger to the woman's life. But women should have a genuine right to choose without limitations.

There will be resistance to any at-

tempts to limit the right to abortion. Protests have already taken place in Montgomery, Alabama.

It is necessary to take the campaign into the organisations of the working class, particularly the trade unions. There were massive demonstrations against Trump's racist travel ban, but it was the direct actions of workers at airports that forced an initial partial climbdown.

Capitalism has always attempted to control women's fertility according to its need. Women should have a genuine right to choose whether or not to proceed with a pregnancy.

This includes fighting for a fully free health service, an end to low pay and zero-hour contracts, free childcare and benefits that provide enough to live on.

The capitalist system won't give up these things without a fight.

Instead, we need a socialist society where the banks and big business are nationalised and the economy planned under the democratic control of the working class, so we can meet the needs of ordinary people.

British Steel threatened closure

The private steel producer could go under, threatening 5,000 jobs at its Scunthorpe and Teesside plants and a further 20,000 jobs in the supply chain.

British Steel received a £100 million government loan in April. Yet Greybull Capital - its profitable

private equity owner - is threatening to pull the plug and liquidate British Steel unless the government coughs up another £30 million.

Instead of subsidising big business, this important industry should be nationalised. In a

positive move the Labour Party has publicly endorsed this demand. The Unite union should immediately campaign among its members at the threatened plants to fight to bring British Steel into public ownership.

More in a future issue.



Labour's nationalisation plan

What policies are needed to avert climate catastrophe?

Michael Johnson
Leeds Socialist Party

Jeremy Corbyn has announced a 'Green Industrial Revolution.' The plans include nationalising the gas and electricity supply - taking the National Grid into public ownership.

Labour's 'Bringing Energy Home' also promised that in government they would fit nearly two million homes with solar panels, and give interest-free loans and grants to help a further 750,000 homes install solar panels.

Labour commits to generating at least 60% of the UK's electricity and heat from renewable and low-carbon sources by 2030 in response to the UN's 12-year deadline to avert a global climate catastrophe. While a positive step, there is still more Labour, and particularly Labour councils, could do to tackle climate change now.

Climate emergency

At present, Labour councils are, on the whole, at best, declaring 'climate emergencies' while taking few of the steps they could to make real change.

In some areas, Labour councils are carrying out plans that will lead to increased carbon-dioxide emissions - as is the case where I live in Leeds. Leeds Labour Council has declared a climate emergency, but is expanding

Leeds-Bradford Airport.

Instead, councils should invest in and develop public transport to make it cheaper and easier for working-class people to reduce car usage. This would require taking public transport out of the hands of the privatisers.

Homes

Councils should build new, green, carbon-neutral, council homes that can reduce energy consumption. Councils would have to resist rather than implement the cuts brought on by Tory austerity, and use their reserves and borrowing powers in the short term while they mobilise working-class support to win the money back.

The recent climate change movement has seen thousands take to the streets. This has certainly had an impact on Labour announcing these policies.

However, the key to building real action means mobilising the organised working class and campaigning for trade unions to take action.

They should organise around a socialist programme that fights for investment into safe forms of renewable energy, renationalisation of privatised utilities and public transport under democratic workers' control, step-up research on green energy, waste reduction and energy saving and a democratic socialist plan of production that puts people and the environment first.



photo Birmingham Socialist Party

BIRMINGHAM HOME CARE WORKERS' VICTORY - NOW COORDINATE ACTION TO FIGHT ALL CUTS!

■ Continued from front page

There is potential for Birmingham to act as a catalyst.

Trade unions, local communities and activists can build towards a wider campaign across other councils for coordinated strike action to end this weak, divided and hated Tory government and its austerity agenda and attacks on our services. In every council there is the potential for this.

Besides striking, the home carers also had to apply political pressure on the council. In 2018, Unison's regional leadership just followed the tactic of trying to appeal to councillors' emotions.

But Unison members became frustrated with the lack of development and the union was forced to take more decisive action against the councillors.

Finally, political pressure was built, exposing the hypocrisy of a Labour council, which is meant to be on the side of workers. Strikers targeted specific cabinet members

by door knocking and leafletting their wards, letting communities know exactly what these so-called representatives were doing to a public service.

Additionally - with the development of the bin workers going on strike at the end of 2018 - the workers, with the support of the Socialist Party, held a joint day of action.

Cracks began to show

From this pressure, cracks within the Labour council began to show. Not only did cabinet member Councillor Majid Mahmood step down from his position but there was an open letter signed by 23 councillors to Council Leader Ian Ward, voicing their anger at the handling of the disputes.

Furthermore, Jeremy Corbyn needs to come out publicly on the side of these workers. His complete absence during the home care and bin strikes did not go unnoticed by the strikers.

He needs to call on these councillors acting as the Tories' axemen

either to stop and work alongside the workers trying to defend these public services or step aside.

If he doesn't, he will jeopardise the massive support he was able to build on his anti-austerity manifesto during the 2017 general election.

The affiliated trade unions should refuse to pay any money to any councillor or MP who is continuing to cut public services and attack their members.

Instead they should put their own candidates forward who will stand on a no-cuts budget, refuse to carry out austerity and stand on a workers' wage so they continue to reflect ordinary people.

We need councillors who are prepared to fight and put forward socialist policies - such as building council homes, council services being brought back into public ownership and all cuts carried out in the city of Birmingham reversed.

■ See full version at socialistparty.org.uk



photo Christoph Derndorfer/CC

Day of action against cuts to special needs education

Mick Whale
Hull National Education Union

It is a measure of a society's progress as to how it treats its most vulnerable members. Applying that measure to special educational needs funding - we are heading back to the Stone Age.

It is a national scandal that just about every local authority in England faces a 'high-needs block' deficit but growing demand for specialist provision. High-needs block is the part of the local authority's education budget which funds special education.

In Hull, for example, the high-needs block is over £2 million in deficit. At the same time, the demand for specialist support has skyrocketed.

There were 100 applications for just 18 places at Northcott Special School in Hull.

The number of looked-after children has risen to more than 750. The number of children on the autistic spectrum has risen to more than 800.

Funding eroded

School funding is being eroded. Mainstream schools are at breaking point trying to support children who really need more specialist support.

Many schools have made valuable teaching assistants redundant and children's services have been slashed as a result of government cuts.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health have also faced cutbacks. This means that some of the services that could help schools in

supporting children with special needs have been removed.

The impact of austerity on family life and the emotional wellbeing of many young people is immense. 40% of Hull households bring home incomes below the official poverty line.

The Tories badge themselves as the party of the family. In reality, they have acted like a wrecking ball to family life, with many parents having to work two or three jobs to put food on the table.

Parents blamed

Often, this means that parents have to work in the evening, so some children don't get adult company after school. Yet, the Tories blame parents for poor pupil behaviour.

Parents of children with special educational needs have finally said "enough is enough". They are demonstrating in London, Leeds, Hull and other places for more funding.

It is a shame that the demonstrations are on a weekday, as many trade unionists who want to support this cause are in work. The trade unions, particularly those in education, must use their industrial strength to fight for full funding for all aspects of education - based on need not some fancy funding formula.

Labour councils should refuse to make these cuts. These demonstrations have to be the start of a campaign for a fully funded education system accessible for all children regardless of their ability or need.

■ Join the Hull protest - Thursday 30 May, 1pm, Queen Victoria Square

FANTASTIC RMT LONDON UNDERGROUND VICTORY

'Bill Johnson'
London Underground RMT member

The RMT transport union has scored a fantastic victory in the fight against cuts on London Underground. Members of the Fleet maintenance branch recorded a marvellous ballot result that easily met the new anti-union thresholds and announced strike action over three days from 17-19 May.

In the face of this determined response, London Underground management caved in and withdrew their proposals to slash the frequency of train inspections on the tube.

At present all trains on the tube are inspected every 24 hours. These checks include essential safety equipment including brakes and doors. To the disbelief of maintenance staff, train drivers and all tube workers, London Underground proposed extending the time between checks to up to 96 days!

The proposals are typical of London Underground management's approach to cost cutting. Accept whatever ridiculous budget cuts the mayor and government demand

and then make the rules up to fit the reduced budget. Safety and the efficiency of the tube service don't come in to it.

RMT's London Underground Fleet branch has shown how we can resist the cuts agenda with a fighting response. It is inevitable that management will return with proposals to cut maintenance and we must be ready to remobilise when they do.

In particular, members in the London Transport region will want general secretary Mick Cash to make good on his call for a political campaign to expose how a Labour mayor is enthusiastically implementing Tory cuts.

But the importance of this victory should not be understated. Having managed to impose cuts in some managerial and admin

functions where RMT is not the majority union, management thought they could attack a well organised, overwhelmingly RMT workforce.

Turns out they were wrong.



WOOLWICH FERRY WORKERS BEGIN TEN DAYS OF STRIKE ACTION

A Unite the Union member

Unite the Union members employed by Briggs Marine - which has the contract to run the Woolwich Ferry on behalf of Transport for London (TfL) - have begun ten days of strike action.

The action, in support of a pay and conditions claim, is also in protest at reduced staffing and serious safety concerns linked to non-functioning fire extinguishers.

The first day of action on 17 May was magnificently well supported - with only one very sad looking scab going into work. This individual must now know how pointless this was - one man cannot run a two boat ferry.

The action by the strikers means that no ferry runs on strike days. Briggs has stated that it will only negotiate if money is not part of the negotiations. It claims it has no money. But the reality is that the company run the service for a profit.

The answer is simple - TfL must take the service in-house. Workers are demanding that a layer of senior managers are dismissed and, instead, workers are given the chance to run an in-house service.

Workers also made clear on the picket line that they are prepared to escalate until a victory is won.



Woolwich ferry and London Underground worker (left) photos Daren Clarke/CC and Paul Mattsson

Building a fighting union at Unite young members' conference

'Jeremy Davidson'
Hull Socialist Party and Unite the Union member

On 18-19 May myself and 60 other delegates made the journey to Eastbourne, for the national young members conference of Unite the Union. This event shone a light on the attitude of many young workers towards capitalism and building fighting trade unions.

At the conference Unite's assistant general secretary, Steve Turner, opened a discussion on combatting the threat of the far-right. During the questions and contributions part of the discussion I put forward how a socialist case for Brexit would cut across the far-right and unite workers to fight austerity.

This speech was well received with praise and applause from young people there. To me this demonstrated a brilliant rejection of the capitalist, Remain narrative which the likes of Blairites in the Labour Party put forward.

The conference also voted on motions, with one, 'Fair Wages for Young Workers', calling for the exploitation of workers under 25 to

end, and supported Labour's recent announcement that the party's pledge for a £10 an hour minimum wage be extended to all workers.

Another motion on apprenticeship pay rightly condemned the scandalous, despicable wages of apprentices, some as low as £3.90 an hour!

It was demanded that all apprentices be paid at least the minimum wage and to fight the exploitation which bosses and corporations impose upon young apprentices. These passed with unanimous support.

Marketing?

To our surprise, this was followed by a presentation from a marketing company called King Campbell and Friends about how we can build the union for young people.

As the presentation progressed, it became clear that someone in the union had made a decision, without consulting us or our young members committee, to hire a private, capitalist agency, to design a campaign to attract young people to join our union.

Ludicrous ideas were proposed such as a 10% discount for Unite

members at online retailer ASOS or Pizza Express - two non-union friendly businesses!

With a quick Google search we found that the company's clientele included EasyProperty, a sister company of EasyJet, which our members had a dispute with last year! These shocking revelations combined with a complete lack of understanding of trade union work, made for a grim response to the presentation.

However, the presenter's idea of putting the "politics to the side" was the straw which broke the camel's back, and a barrage of flack and discontent from across the room followed.

Hand upon hand went flying up in the air, with young members making comments like: "Who thought this was a good idea?" and "We will not reach young people by offering them free pizza! We will reach them by offering them decent terms and conditions and good jobs to fight for!"

I found the conference to be an uplifting experience, with young workers rejecting capitalism and being prepared to fight and organise for a socialist society!

BEIS outsourced workers strike back!



ISS cleaners employed at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy in Whitehall, London are on strike. Together with their colleagues in catering (employed by Aramark), the PCS members are striking for four days calling for the London Living Wage and an end to exploitative outsourcing photo Socialist Party

Probation workers celebrate case management renationalisation

Chas Berry
Chair, Napo union Kent, Surrey and Sussex branch (personal capacity)

Probation workers are celebrating a famous victory with the announcement that all case management in England and Wales will be renationalised from spring 2021.

This puts into reverse the disastrous part-privatisation carried out by Chris Grayling in 2014, reunifying community based offender management as a publicly owned service accounting for around 80% of staff.

The move is a huge climbdown for the Tory government who had been in denial about the scale of the problems facing the service and were preparing to re-tender contracts to new private providers. Mounting evidence of operational inefficiencies and spiralling costs put paid to these plans, however, with the probation chief inspector describing the current working model as "irredeemably flawed".

In February this year, one company that ran three of the contracts went into administration leaving £1.2 million in debts to third sector providers.

The probation workers' union Napo has played a key role in securing the reversal through an effective campaign of political lobbying and use of the media. It maintained the confidence of members through a consistent call for 'reunification', seeing off the attempt to bankrupt it through removal of check-off and eventually bucking a trend that would have put many small unions

into terminal decline.

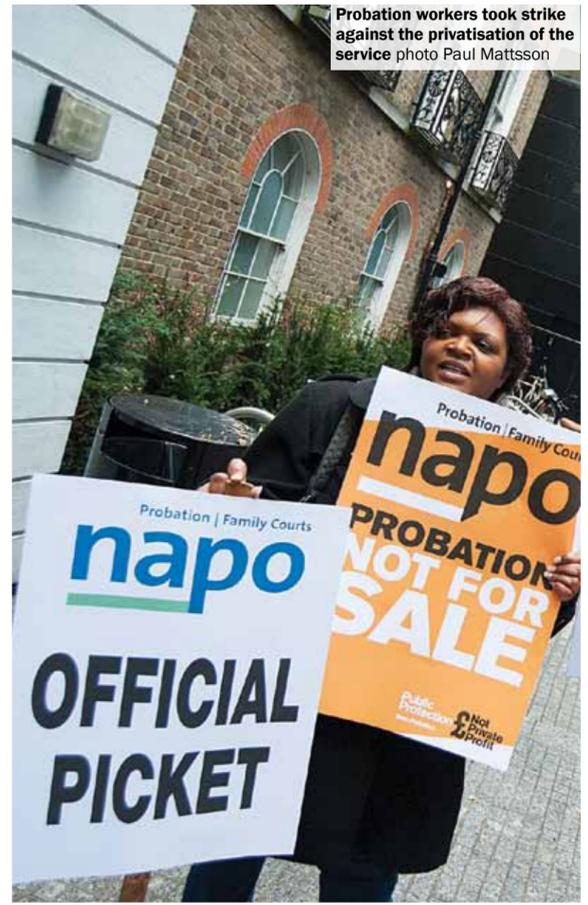
One major benefit will be the return to national collective bargaining for staff in the privately run 'Community Rehabilitation Companies' who have seen their pay and conditions decline in relative terms to their former colleagues in the state-run 'National Probation Service'. Our priority must be to end the disparity and the blatant unfairness of a two-tier workforce.

Celebrations have been muted by the fact that 'Community Payback' (unpaid work) and 'Offending Behaviour Programmes' will remain in the private sector and be re-tendered under new contracts. But as Napo general secretary Ian Lawrence said: "Napo will continue to campaign to ensure that all of these services and the members who provide them are eventually transferred back into the public sector".

While probation workers have almost universally welcomed the news, there is unease, not just about a further period of operational disruption while systems are stitched back together, but what a fully integrated publicly run probation service should look like.

Members don't want the current 'mixed model' replaced by just a bigger version of the centrally driven and bureaucratically run National Probation Service. We want local accountability and a say in how the service we provide is run.

The bankruptcy of the current system is an opportunity for trade unionists and socialists to raise the question of workers' control and the role of the community, including service users, in the provision and accountability of public services.



Probation workers took strike against the privatisation of the service photo Paul Mattsson

NSSN 2019 conference

Car workers in Swindon are reeling from the news that Honda bosses have confirmed the closure of the Wiltshire plant in 2021. Over 3,500 workers directly employed by the factory are facing redundancy. But the impressive demo of thousands at the end of March shows the potential to build the fightback. On that demo, Unite plant convenor Paddy Brennan, speaking alongside his shop stewards, said: "This is the fight of our lives." Paddy will be speaking at the NSSN conference on Saturday 6 July 11am-4.30pm at Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL. See shopstewards.net for more

[News in brief]

Universal Credit strike

Workers at the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) dealing with Universal Credit are striking on 28-29 May. Call handlers in Wolverhampton and Walsall will walk out in protest at workloads and staff shortages.

The PCS members also took action in March with the union estimating that at least 5,000 additional staff are needed to deal with the Universal Credit workload alone! Hand-in-hand with the issues facing Universal Credit workers are the appalling problems that claimants deal with. Thousands of DWP workers have to claim tax credits and could end up on Universal Credit themselves.

Universal Credit must be scrapped. Claimants and workers must unite in fighting against all forms of Tory austerity and attacks on the working class.

Blood courier stoppage

Couriers in the IWGB union who deliver blood to some of London's biggest hospitals planned strike action on 23-24 May in a dispute over pay and conditions.

About 100 cyclists, motorcyclists and van drivers who work for the 'Doctors Laboratory', a company that provides pathology services to the NHS are still fighting for the pay and workers' rights that they are entitled to after winning a legal battle to be recognised as workers by the company last year.



MORRISONS WORKERS REJECT PAY OFFER - NOW FOR ACTION TO FIGHT FOR MORE

'Jack Gallimore'
Morrisons worker and Usdaw Broad Left member

The 17 May could be an historic moment for Morrisons workers. It is now time for our union Usdaw, the shop workers' union, to dig deep and come out on top.

It's that classic line all reps in Morrisons have heard, from disgruntled members and opinionated non-members, the length and breadth of the UK, in nearly every pay brief for years: 'It will go through regardless'.

But that is changing, a staggering 18,792 votes to reject the latest Morrisons pay deal, in comparison to the 8,410 that voted in favour.

There can be no doubt the membership are disgruntled and have rallied together, but this is

ultimately down to the hard work of in-store reps. Usdaw didn't support the deal, but national reps didn't officially denounce the offer despite being very vocal on social media to vote No. While they clearly must have been under pressure, they missed a golden opportunity to lead the membership in Morrisons.

Yet despite all this the members are clearly angry enough to turn out and actively reject the offer. It's a clear second chance and an opportunity for the national negotiating team to fight back. There is clearly a need to reconvene with lay reps and call an emergency forum meeting, and listen to what elected representatives from each store want to see in the next set of talks, including discussing the possibility of balloting for industrial action.

Of course this shouldn't just rest

on the national reps. Branches have an opportunity to mandate the national reps and officers. They at least want to see stronger statements from Usdaw, whatever the outcome of the next stage of talks is.

A lobby of workers and activists should be organised at Morrisons head office in Bradford like the GMB union organised at Asda HQ recently (see 'Asda workers protest against attacks on paid breaks and bank holiday working' at socialistparty.org.uk).

Nearly a year into Usdaw's new leadership, there is a clear opportunity to stand up to Morrisons' arrogant bosses. The rejection of this pay deal is most importantly a second chance to get a better deal for the members, but also to show that Usdaw has sharp teeth when necessary.

WHAT LIES BEHIND THE US-CHINA TRADE WAR?

Robin Clapp
 Socialist Party national committee

The stakes have been raised in the increasingly ill-tempered and rapidly escalating trade war between the world's two most powerful economies. US President Donald Trump announced that, under the rarely invoked International Emergency Economic Powers Act, the Chinese telecoms giant Huawei and 70 of its affiliated companies are to be added to the 'Entity List'.

This effectively bans them from acquiring components and technology from American firms without obtaining prior government approval.

Blocking Huawei from purchasing semiconductors from US firms will have an immediate and damaging impact on its ability to develop important parts of its manufacturing process. Companies based in America that wish to continue trading with Huawei will henceforth have to apply to the Commerce Department for a licence to sell their technologies.

This dramatic move follows the Presidential announcement two weeks ago, that September's import tariffs of 10% on \$200 billion of Chinese goods sold in the US, could be raised to 25%. Among the commodities affected would be food ingredients, construction materials, bike parts and burglar alarms.

Trump insists that unless China reduces its level of exports to the US, a further 25% tariff may be affixed on basically every commodity arriving from Beijing.

Tariffs

There will be \$50 billion of US tariffs on specific Chinese technology goods covering aerospace, automobiles, communications technologies and robotics. Imposed in June 2018, they signalled the beginning of this more acute phase of protectionism, which is inextricably linked to a wider geo-political struggle between the rival super powers.

The clash between the US and China lays bare the different strategic objectives of these rival super powers. Threats and mutual distrust characterise the current relationship.

China has immediately responded to Trump's provocations by declaring new tariffs on \$60 billion worth of US imports beginning on 1 June. \$110 billion-worth of tariffs are due to commence at the end of this month.

There have been hints too from Beijing that if pushed into a corner, it could also respond by beginning



to sell some of its vast US Treasury Bond hoard. A potential meltdown in the US bond market is feared to be the second most likely trigger for the next crash.

According to Trump, the dispute is rooted in China's deeply unfair trading practice of seeing the US as an easy dumping ground for its commodities.

Fears of a deep downturn are growing. Trump is playing for very high stakes in his confrontation with China. Protectionism hurts both economies. A deep recession in China would have a huge impact on the US and the entire global economy.

An escalating trade war can quickly result in higher prices for US consumers. Eleven million US workers are in industries that produce goods which have been or will be targeted for reprisal by China. 59% of US manufacturers have seen rising production costs.

The 2020 Presidential election presents a challenge for Trump. China-bashing plays well with the Republican right. Many Democrats, seeking to shore up their electoral bases, have also demanded firm sanctions against Beijing. Big US firms that don't have substantial trade links in China have also supported a tough line against Beijing.

The wider narrative is that America feels threatened by the rise of the Chinese economy and its growing military strength.

Consumer and industrial activity in both the US and China slowed in April. Market analysts warn that a prolonged trade war is now the most likely trigger for an impending global recession.

With all the world's major economic blocs already performing sluggishly, it will be difficult for the US to maintain annual GDP growth above 2% through the rest of Trump's term of office.

Debt (sovereign, corporate and consumer) is an ever-present threat to the stability of the world economy. In the US alone, retail investors own \$2 trillion of corporate debt. The pool of more risky debt is now roughly equal to the sub-prime mortgage debt figure in 2007, the financial detonator for the crash which was to follow a year later.

China's economy

China's entire economy is worth \$14 trillion, making it the largest competitor to the US. It has grown at a 10% compound annual rate since 1980 when Deng Xiaoping opened the door to rural businesses (township and village enterprises) and foreign firms (mainly in the coastal zones, to begin with). It

is now the biggest manufacturing nation on the globe.

Clearly the transition from a fully nationalised, planned economy towards capitalism has gone a long way and can appear complete. But the rule of the Communist Party elite prevails, with substantial elements of state banks and industries remaining intact. Many of these strategically important state-owned enterprises, mostly in heavy manufacturing or energy production, have been kept alive since 2008 through heavy doses of central bank borrowing.

The state remains firmly in charge of economic management. The overall approach is top-down, authoritarian and target driven. The state's primary concern is to maintain the economic reins and not to unleash those economic liberalising forces that precipitated the collapse of the planned economy in the Soviet Union in 1991, leading to the restoration of capitalism there. No threats to social stability will be tolerated.

An unprecedented stimulus programme launched by Beijing both largely inoculated China from the worst effects of western contagion and also threw an economic lifeline to the rest of the world. Without that, the recession may have developed into a full-blown 1930s

style Depression.

Even without the dangers of a tariff war with the US, China is having to confront many economic challenges.

The most pressing is the slowdown in its growth rate. Stripped of the creative accounting that accompanies Chinese statistics for growth, it is believed the economy's underlining trend growth rate is now just around 3%. Lower year-on-year growth will follow until 2021, with the adverse impact felt both in the west and in developing economies.

Beijing has sought to reverse this dangerous trajectory in a number of ways. A new stimulus programme totalling \$477 billion of loans was hurriedly brought forward in January.

The Central Bank also cut the amount of cash that banks have to hold in reserves for the fifth time in a year, freeing up more liquidity. Borrowing rates for small businesses have been cut and in February interest rates were surreptitiously cut by the use of complex financial instruments.

A further economic package of stimulus measures aimed at the private sector to cushion the blow from American tariffs now seems likely, particularly in the light of April's retail sales figure, a 16-year low.

Political fears have become paramount. The overheating of the property market in 2018 created steep price rises in the big cities, prompting concern about social unrest. Measures were introduced to dampen the market and the overheating shadow banking system.

But now, with wages rising by only about 2% last year and sales of mobile phones static, the government is wrestling with and seeking to neutralise the rising political temperature, reflected in a growing number of bitter strikes, largely unreported but a source of great fear for the elite.

Export growth is crucial for China - trade with the US is running at around \$2 billion a day. The state has responded by tightening its grip. Government-owned firms' share of new bank loans has risen from 30% to 70%.

The private sector is being increasingly stifled. Its share of output has stagnated and rules have been enforced that insist companies must establish party cells which may then have a say over hiring, firing and key investment decisions.

The Chinese leadership is well aware that a slowing growth rate creates a perilous position for its rule. President Xi Jinping will seek to steer the economy away from its

dependency on investment and exports, but the dizzying growth rates over the last 40 years were initially based upon moving the population out of low-productivity jobs in agriculture into higher-productivity jobs in manufacturing. That has now happened in key areas of the country.

Despite spectacular infrastructural projects, cutting edge robotic and AI technologies, and massive advances in science and technique, the necessary transition to a consumer-led, service-driven economy is extremely difficult given the present geo-political situation.

The emergence of an America which sees China as an economic and military rival that has to be curbed compounds this.

On the international stage, Chinese influence and prestige has been massively bolstered through the multibillion-dollar 'Belt and Road' Initiative, a state-backed campaign that seeks to promote China's influence around the world, while benefiting its economy. Huge new infrastructural links between Asia, Europe and Africa have been undertaken.

In this sphere too the US is attempting to limit Chinese expansionism. It has warned the UK of serious security consequences if it allows Huawei to have a role in the

5G technology roll-out and sought restrictions on the EU's interactions with Chinese firms.

Post-2008 the world economy and inter-imperialist relations are hugely more complex. Imperialism cannot resolve its own contradictions. The period of super charged globalisation that developed after the collapse of the Soviet Union has been partially derailed by the 2007-2008 recession.

Where will this end?

It is not clear how far the present threats of full-blown trade war will go; whether Trump will fully deliver on his ultimatums and how China will respond, but rooted in this conflict is an ideological rivalry expressed through an economics, territorial spheres of influence and military/technical imperatives. George Bush's unipolar world has been replaced by instability and competing interests between the imperialist powers.

It is vital in China, the USA and everywhere else, the working-class struggle is stepped up to confront, expose and overthrow this capitalist system.

Rising numbers of strikes in the US, including among workers who voted for Trump, show the potential power of the organised working class, learning to rearm itself in this new era. Socialist ideas are eagerly taken up as young people search for alternatives to capitalism.

In China too, despite the totalitarian state seeking to imprison and eradicate all dissent, a rash of heroic industrial disputes, strikes and protests show that the struggle to change society can never disappear.

■ A fuller version of this article will appear on socialistworld.net

Socialism Today

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■ Socialist red lines needed for Brexit talks

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photo Mary Finch

WHAT'S ON

Here are some upcoming Socialist Party meetings and other events taking place around the country. For a full list of meetings and events see socialistparty.org.uk/whats-on.

Send details of your meetings, protests and other events to editors@socialistparty.org.uk

North London Socialist Party 'End Israeli state slaughter'
Thursday 23 May, 7.30pm, Oak and Pastor pub, 86 Junction Road, Archway, London N19 5QZ

Teesside Socialist Party 'Climate emergency; System change = Socialist change'
Tuesday 28 May, 7.30pm, The Library, Friends' Meeting House, Skinnergate, Darlington DL3 7NB
For more info, contact teessidesocialists@virginmedia.com

Hackney & Islington Socialist Party 'Spain today'
Wednesday 29 May, 7.30pm, Cafe Z-Bar, 58 Stoke Newington High Street, London N16 7PB

Wirral Socialist Party 'Brazil - Bolsanaro and the rise of the far right'
Thursday 30 May, 7.15pm, Stork pub, Price Street, Birkenhead, CH41 6JN

East London Socialist Party 'Socialist change to end climate change'
Thursday 30 May, 7.30pm, Sylvia's Corner, 97 Aldworth Road, Stratford E15 4DN

Waltham Forest Socialist Party 'Venezuela - how can socialism be achieved?'
Thursday 30 May, 7.30pm, William Morris Community Centre, Greenleaf Road, London E17 6QQ

National Shop Stewards Network conference
Saturday 6 July, 11am-4pm, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL

Socialism 2019
The annual weekend of discussion and debate hosted by the Socialist Party - Saturday 2 and Sunday 3 November 2019, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL



photo Elaine Brunskill

LIFTING THE MOOD

After a week of sunshine on Tyneside it was grizzly rain on Saturday 18 May. It was tempting to just call off our regular public sale of the Socialist and go for a coffee. Fortunately we didn't... and what a response we got!

For the Socialist Party, alongside all our other activities, paper sales are a way of gauging the public

mood and testing our ideas.

For a short while in Newcastle we've struggled against an 'anti-politics' mood as working-class anger has festered over the Brexit shenanigans in parliament.

But on Saturday we saw that mood beginning to break, and people are again starting to look for answers to

the problems they face.

Loads of people came to speak to us, agreeing with our campaign to scrap Universal Credit and to get rid of this rotten Tory government.

Many of those who came to our stall were themselves on benefits and had suffered sanctions and a feeling of hopelessness at living in

grinding poverty.

Our leaflets calling for the scrapping of Universal Credit were snatched up. We sold 17 papers and collected over £10 for the fighting fund and, most importantly, raised the prospect of a socialist alternative.

**Elaine Brunskill
Tyne and Wear Socialist Party**

Anger and frustration at the establishment

The mood on the streets was reflected on our Socialist Party 'Defend the National Health Service' stall in Newton Abbot, Devon, on 18 May. Anger was expressed not only at the privatisation and running down of the NHS but also at the way the country is being run or, more accurately, not run!

Those who signed our petition expressed anger and frustration at events, in a confused way, as the unravelling of the political parties continues.

But support for our socialist ideas and campaign was there. We sold 15 papers and £15 was also collected in Fighting Fund.

I was surprised to see that the only other political stall was a Brexit one - no Labour/Tories/Green stalls and more so, no Lib Dems, who have just ousted the Tories in the local council elections.

The Brexit stall was manned by ex-Ukippers handing out Farage leaflets. They made the mistake of trying to talk to us - a one-sided contest!

Sean Brogan, Torbay and South Devon Socialist Party



photo Sean Brogan

Socialist sales boost

Three members of Worcester Socialist Party branch took advantage of the article on our campaign to save a local library in the Socialist

(Issue 1040). We went door knocking in the local area with copies of the paper and our latest leaflet on the protest coming up as part of the campaign.

There was a bit of friendly

competition between us and we sold out of papers. This was following an earlier successful stall in the area.

One person also signed up to get involved and another one gave a

donation towards our campaign costs. And there is also a possibility that a local newsagent might take copies of the Socialist to sell.

**Ruthie McNally
Worcester Socialist Party**

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photo William Warby/CC

Pouring cold water on the Riverside estate

Barking Reach Residents Association was out conducting a survey of heating and hot water issues. As we walked into the pleasant grounds of Robert Lewis House on the Barking Riverside estate, east London, we met a young woman pushing a pram.

She told us that in the four years of living there, she has never had heating or hot water - the second person in this block of flats we've met who has suffered this.

She has mould on the walls, she tells us. The flats are run by London and Quadrant (L&Q) housing association.

Meanwhile, angry residents of Ernest Websdale House, whose landlords are Adriatic, were without hot water for two weeks. They had to pay to investigate and fix the issue, yet the landlord appeared to be responsible.

We've drawn up a 3,000 word protest. We demand compensation

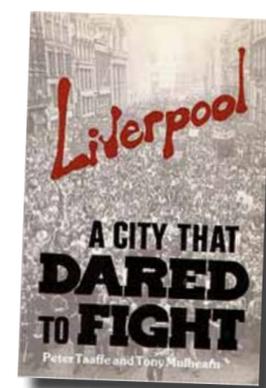
for their expenditure, and the cost of immersion heating for hot water. We demand that, at the landlord's cost, engineers should make appointments to visit each flat in this relatively new-built estate, and test and make good all flats for heating and hot water.

We call for L&Q to investigate the need for an extra boiler in Robert Lewis House because the flats are widely reported to be cold in winter.

And we ask: What assets does overall landlord Barking Riverside Limited have? The finished estate was planned to have a majority of elected residents on the company board running the estate, and we say they should be given access to this information now, so the assets can be used to solve this horrendous situation.

**Pete Mason
Barking Reach Residents Association**

WHAT WE SAW



Tony Mulhearn, Merseyside Socialist Party member and former president of the Liverpool District Labour Party and city councillor in the mid-1980s, was recently interviewed by the Liverpool Echo about the role of Militant (forerunner of the Socialist Party) in the struggle against the Tory Thatcher government.

■ 'Liverpool: a city that dared to fight' by Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn is available for £12 from leftbooks.co.uk



WORCESTER TORIES STONEWALL ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Over 100 climate change activists lobbied Worcestershire County Council on 16 May to demand emergency action to save the planet.

However, all this talk about an emergency was not going to deflect the council from dealing with important matters! It took an hour for them to elect a new chair and vice-chair with each being lauded for their previous sporting prowess and business acumen.

The companion of one councillor, I cannot remember which, was referred to as a "consort" for some obscure reason. Those of us waiting for the real business of climate change to be addressed looked at

each other in dismay.

At first it seemed the Tory councillors would not put the climate change issue further up the order paper, but with a bit of encouragement from the public they did so!

However, the call for action so that the council could become carbon neutral by 2030 was defeated, with the target being pushed back to 2050.

More voters now understand the scale of opposition they face from Tory councillors who are more concerned with their political aggrandisement than saving the planet.

**Pete McNally
Worcester Socialist Party**

Socialist Party building fund

The Socialist Party is currently under threat of eviction from our national headquarters.

We have had a presence in London since the early 1960s and have been at our current premises for over 17 years.

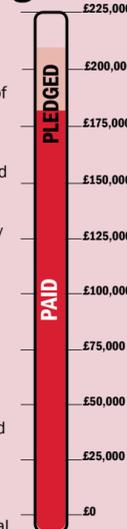
We believe that it is essential that our HQ remains based in the capital city, therefore we have launched a building appeal for a new premises.

We do not have any rich backers. Our branches are based in working class communities, among workers, students and young people who have been hammered by austerity, debt and low pay. But our members and supporters have been prepared to make a sacrifice to ensure that we have the funds we need.

We are looking for a building to buy or rent in London, where rents are high, and large enough properties to buy are over a million pounds.

Your donation, however big or small, will make a difference. Be part of something bigger - donate to the Socialist Party building fund and know that you're part of fighting for a better world.

You can make a donation at socialistparty.org.uk/donate and include 'building fund' in the comments.



Socialist Party Fighting Fund

	£ received	£ target	April to June 2019		Deadline: 2 July 2019
South West	4,103	1,800			76%
East Midlands	1,329	1,850		44%	
Wales	2,052	2,300		33%	
Southern	3,505	1,600		30%	
Northern	3,020	750		29%	
North West	2,292	2,100		26%	
Yorkshire	1,969	3,300		24%	
South East	2,850	750		23%	
West Midlands	6,513	2,600		21%	
London	3,255	6,100		12%	
Eastern	680	1,200		12%	
Other	1,248	5,650		23%	
TOTAL	7,929	30,000		26%	

Donate today!

If you agree with what you read in the Socialist, consider making a donation to the Socialist Party's fighting fund:
 ■ pay by card on 020 8988 8777 or socialistparty.org.uk/donate
 ■ cheques payable to 'Socialist Party', PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD



Opinion: socialists must link climate struggle to power of organised workers

Wayne Scott
Socialist Party Scotland

I attended a meeting organised by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). It was billed as a debate between them, Friends of the Earth and Extinction Rebellion (XR).

XR didn't turn up. The guy from Friends of the Earth gave few solutions beyond recycling and carbon taxes.

He was responded to by Amy Leather, a member of the SWP's central committee. She started off with a good introduction on the history of industrialisation in Britain, the development of plastic industries, and so on - all very interesting.

This, however, set the tone for the rest of her speech. The SWP limits itself to anti-capitalist argumentation, and Leather spoke repeatedly of "system change" to prevent climate change, without explaining that has to mean socialist change.

So she spoke of doing away with production methods that are environmentally harmful, ditching fossil fuels and so on. Not once, though, did she raise any demand anywhere close to public ownership of the big polluters.

The word socialism was given a mere passing reference, with no real explanation of what that means or how we achieve it. She said nothing about the potential role trade unions can play here.

I spoke from the floor for the Socialist Party, making some points around climate change being a class issue. I asked the Friends of the Earth guy how he expected me to consume less than I do when I'm on Universal Credit. These points were echoed by SWP members in the room who also rejected individual solutions.

I raised with Leather that I thought it was wrong to simply pose the question of shutting down the fossil fuel industries with no qualification, as this would cut us off from the workers in those industries and so damage working-class unity and power.

Instead we demand the nationalisation of the top companies and big polluters, without compensation to the bosses; a rapid transition away from fossil fuels towards renewables; a guarantee of a job for all in those industries with no loss of pay, retraining people when necessary; and a system of democratic workers' control and management based on a socialist, planned economy.

I also pointed to the potential role the trade unions can play here, saying that if the union leaders built towards coordinated strikes against austerity, it would attract the young people fighting climate change in their thousands.

I finished off by pointing to the role Socialist Party members in the National Education Union played in getting a motion passed defending students who walk out and supporting the establishment of school student unions.

Why give no concrete proposals for how to link the trade unions with the school students in her initial remarks? It's because, unlike the Socialist Party, the SWP doesn't put the working class central to achieving fundamental change.

Genuine Marxists take part vigorously in every social movement and campaign, but always try to link them to the huge economic power that organised workers have to shut down the economy and ultimately run society. That is what is needed to resolve the multiple crises facing society and achieve socialism. That is what the Socialist Party does.



photo Mary Finch



The Socialist Inbox

Do you have something to say?

Send your news, views and criticism in no more than 150 words to editors@socialistparty.org.uk - or if you're not online, Socialist Inbox, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD

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.

Farage EU elections

The Merseyside Pensioners Association views with grave concern the growing popularity of Nigel Farage's Brexit Party, which, according to polls, is polling 34% for the EU elections, with Labour next closest at 16%, and the Tories on a derisory 10%.

We believe this support for Farage reflects a disaffection with the two main parties, and has created a vacuum which Farage is filling with his 'anti-establishment' demagoguery which is the stock in trade of the populist right.

The question of austerity, equality and growing poverty, particularly among the working poor, is completely absent in these debates.

We are calling on Jeremy Corbyn and the trade union leaders to launch a mass campaign to expose the hypocrisy of Farage, 'Tommy Robinson' and their al-

lies, by highlighting the ongoing attacks on working people which continue to be the policy of this government, a policy to which Farage's Brexit Party offers no alternative, and clearly posing the socialist alternative to austerity.

Tony Mulhearn
Merseyside Pensioners Association

Saving app scam

On social media I'm getting constant adverts for apps that can "help me save" from the likes of "Plum." They analyse your transaction history and automatically take money out of your account and put it into savings.

Others round up when you pay for items, and put your change into savings. This alongside patronising tweets by banks about

cost-cutting measures show how removed those at the top are from the lives of working-class young people.

They take 1+1 and find it equals 3. I would like to see the Plum app try and "analyse" the bank account of a Deliveroo driver or someone on a zero-hour contract. I suspect it will make the app crash.

Helen Pattison
Ilford, east London

Pensioner benefit cuts

Lord True has recommended that pensioners' free bus travel, TV licences and winter fuel payments should be next in line for skinflint Tory cuts.

He has the audacity to scapegoat pensioners for the lack of affordable housing for young people.

As an unelected parasite, presumably he has forgotten that pensioners have votes.

Derek McMillan, Worthing



Domestic abuse accommodation

TORIES SHIFT - BUT SAFETY IS MORE THAN A BED

Amy Cousens
Women's Lives Matter

The government has announced new changes to place a legal duty on local authorities to deliver 'accommodation-based services' to victims of domestic violence.

The Women's Lives Matter campaign at its national meeting on 8 December 2018, made the legal responsibility to fund services one of its core demands. We welcome this legal protection but the fight must definitely go on to end cuts to the services women need to be safe.

Prior to this new law, part of the domestic violence bill consultation, councils had no statutory responsibility to fund services which meant that, in a climate of cuts, local councils were choosing to cut back or stop funding altogether anything which they are not legally obliged to fund.

Local authority spending on refuges has been cut from £31.2 million in 2010 to £23.9 million in 2017 despite no corresponding reductions in incidents of domestic violence.

However, as can be expected from a government that has proven it is not genuinely interested in supporting domestic violence victims, it is grossly below what is needed. We need an end to austerity and investment in council homes and all the public services required to give women routes out of abusive situations.

Instead the government boasts that it has already 'increased' refuge provision for domestic violence victims. Statistically, between 2010 and 2017 there has been a 10% increase in bed spaces for those fleeing domestic violence. However, provision has decreased in real terms. 20 refuges have been lost in that time.

There is a cost-cutting trend for local authorities to commission 'catch all' services which are larger, more generic and therefore cheaper. In reality, this means a decrease in services and more work and higher caseloads for the same number of staff.

More than a bed

Specialist domestic violence services are vital. But even worse, in some cases, women and children are being housed, unsafely, in generic homeless hostels.

Refuges need to be far more than beds. They provide specialist advice, support, advocacy and therapy including for children. Funding these specialist support services saves money in the long run. More importantly it saves lives.

What the Tories have also done, which they have made no promise to amend, is strip back community service provision, outreach support and therapy services. Supporting domestic violence victims and survivors takes much more than a bed.

The government has said it will accompany the law with funding, but that the exact levels will be determined by 'stakeholders'.

The local government secretary estimates around £90 million will



photo Yorkshire SP

be needed to make this enactable by local authorities. But it has only promised £22 million for domestic abuse projects in England. If Tory austerity has taught us anything, it's that any money put out by the Tories will be far less than what is needed.

We cannot trust the Tories with women's lives. Corbyn's Labour Party shouldn't be waiting for a general election to bring in measures to ensure women's lives are safe. Labour councils can and should

be funding domestic violence refuges and community services sustainably now. Women's lives are at risk now. Labour councils should be mobilising the labour movement and wider communities to fight for no-cuts budgets to secure all our public services.

John McDonnell needs to act now and use his power to mandate councils to use their reserves and borrowing powers to fund these vital services.

■ **Appeal to John McDonnell to help end the destruction of domestic violence services and refuges:** <https://www.change.org/p/john-mcdonnell-stop-the-cuts-to-domestic-violence-services-and-refuges>

■ **For a model trade union motion to build the campaign to defend refuges, please email** info@socialistparty.org.uk

Haringey: Socialists' stance fully vindicated

Nick Auvache, Karen Tate and David Kaplan

Barbara Blake was one of three right-wing Blairite Labour candidates to stand for the ward of Seven Sisters, Haringey, north London, during the 2018 council elections.

But having been elected as a councillor she has now been expelled from Labour due to her public support for Change UK - the small anti-Corbyn group of renegade Labour and Tory MPs.

Haringey Labour Party had moved to the left prior to the council elections, replacing Blairites with many left candidates opposing the Haringey Development Vehicle (HDV) and austerity cuts.

The HDV gentrification scheme would have 'socially cleansed' huge

swathes of the borough by pushing out working-class residents.

It would have been a tragedy if the anti-austerity fight associated with Jeremy Corbyn was not reflected by any of the candidates in that ward.

Therefore the Socialist Party decided it was essential to take part in that process and stand candidates that were opposed to all cuts.

TUSC challenge

As a result three candidates stood under the broad left Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) banner, against the remnants of the old-guard Claire Kober (the former council leader) regime which was associated with the HDV.

TUSC candidates warned voters that if they vote Labour in Seven Sisters ward they would effectively get a Tory.

However, many people in Haringey voted enthusiastically for Labour believing that it had changed to reflect the anti-austerity mood in Labour more broadly.

Much was made of Haringey becoming the first 'Corbynista' council.

Now the truth has been revealed and Barbara Blake's justified expulsion has confirmed what TUSC candidates said at the time. We were the real socialists not Barbara Blake and her crew.

Blake should now call a byelection and fight on her own programme of cuts and misery. If she did we are confident that she would be roundly defeated.

Anti-cuts Corbyn supporters should make sure that whoever replaces her is a real socialist committed to fighting the cuts.

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SOCIALISM
2019

Sri Lanka - Ten years after the brutal end of the war Mullivaikal - Remember the dead and fight for the living!



Tamil-speaking people occupying Parliament Square, London, in 2009 when the war in Sri Lanka was reaching its bloody conclusion

Socialism and the struggle for justice

TU Senan
Tamil Solidarity and Committee for a Workers' International

Thirty years of war in Sri Lanka came to a brutal end on 18 May 2009. In their final act of barbarity Sri Lankan government forces surrounded over 300,000 people fleeing the war, forced them into a tiny lagoon called Mullivaikal and bombarded them. Over 140,000 perished in a few days and tens of thousands are still 'missing'.

The scale of destruction and death has had a shocking impact among the approximately three million Tamils, the main minority population in the island nation.

All the key leaders of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) - a separatist organisation that waged an armed war against the Sri Lankan government for decades - were also killed in the last phase of the war.

While the armed clashes ceased, those conditions that gave rise to the war have not.

The government has shown no interest in satisfying basic demands such as adequate compensation for the victims; release of occupied land; finding information about the forcefully disappeared; the release of political prisoners, and so on. Bringing justice to the victims or taking action against the war criminals and those responsible for the killings remains a far cry.

While tens of thousands of Tamils across the world are mourning their dead, the Sri Lankan government celebrates it as a victory. In a statement released by the 2009 defence secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa on social media he said he had watched the end in Mullivaikal with a "sense of quiet joy" and bragged about "annihilating terrorism".

Today, war criminals are paraded as "war heroes" and many have been promoted. Even those named in United Nations (UN) reports as war criminals have been allocated to organise 'war hero days'.

The current president of Sri Lanka, Maithripala Sirisena, opened a new monument to mark the celebration of the "war heroes" on the remembrance day.

No capitalist solution

In the last ten years there has been major factional struggles and manoeuvring in the government - with hopes among the population that changes in the regime would bring justice.

But they have been dashed by experience. Now many Tamils cannot see a solution via any Sri Lankan government.

The hopes that the main Tamil parties, such as the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), would fight for their interests have also been crushed as they continue to collaborate with and protect the Sri Lankan government.

The TNA and the majority of the

self-proclaimed Tamil leaders continue this failed method with the promise of winning concessions.



Clearly, on a capitalist basis, the outstanding 'national question' in Sri Lanka cannot be resolved

But in the seven decades of Sri Lankan independence a pattern has emerged. Unstable capitalist governments have whipped up hatred against the Tamil minority in a bid to secure and consolidate their power. They base themselves on Sinhala Buddhist nationalism to woo support among the majority Sinhala population.

On the other side, in opposition to the Sinhala nationalist oppression, Tamils' demand for equal rights and better conditions have fed into the national aspirations of the Tamil masses.

The demand for separation remains strong. In fact the brutal war and the ongoing oppression has further increased the polarisation that exists among the Sinhala, Tamil, and Muslim populations.

Sinhala workers, youth, and poor

people have seen none of the 'peace dividend' promised them during the war.

Now, International Monetary Fund-led privatisation measures are threatening the free education and health services that have been the proud possession of the masses - won through intense class struggle in the past. The government whips up hatred against the minority to justify the ongoing attacks on living standards.

Clearly, on a capitalist basis, the outstanding 'national question' in Sri Lanka cannot be resolved. Only the development of mass struggle among the working class of all population groups against the capitalist system can offer a way forward.

Such struggles could facilitate the rapid building of a mass socialist party to break with capitalism and implement democratically agreed measures to achieve peace, increased living standards, redistribution of land, and self-determination.

In other words, a struggle modelled on the successful October 1917 revolution in Russia led by the Bolsheviks.

The Socialist Party's sister organisation in Sri Lanka - the United Socialist Party - fights for such a perspective.

The fragility of the peace was revealed in the latest terrorist bombing that took place on Easter Sunday. The government declared a state of emergency and introduced a number of repressive measures

against the Tamil-speaking Muslim population. Attacks by organised mobs on the Muslim population take place under the watchful eye of the armed authorities.

Out of desperation, there is a widespread hope that western governments and international institutions such as the UN will deliver justice. This is mainly due to the propaganda of the majority of Tamil leaders that the 'only credible path' to achieve justice is through a so-called independent international investigation.

However, the failures of western capitalist states and their institutions are very well recorded. In the name of maintaining 'neutrality' the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) packed up and abandoned people in the middle of the 2009 attack.

Western hypocrisy

It has also been revealed that the UN was in constant touch with the Sri Lankan government and knew about the atrocities being carried out. Soon after the war a resolution was passed in the UN Security Council congratulating the Sri Lankan government for ending the war.

Both the Indian government and western governments, including Britain, maintained arms sales to Sri Lanka throughout the war - and to this day.

This doesn't stop right-wing politicians in countries with significant Tamil populations, like



18 May 2019. Members of Tamil Solidarity in Parliament Square mark Mullivaikal

Canada and Britain, paying lip service to Tamil rights with the cynical aim of securing their votes.

The foreign policy of these governments has not changed in relation to the Sri Lankan government. Some noises are made in UN reports and meetings to calm Tamil activists, as well as attempting to shift the Sri Lankan government away from China's increasing influence.

This amounts to demanding the Sri Lankan government establishes some sort of "reconciliation mechanism", and is mainly to avoid any future opposition that may emerge among the Tamil population.

But while the oppression continues, these state forces will not be able to hold back the struggle from emerging again.

The success of a fightback, however, depends on what ideas it is organised around. A section of young people and students in Sri Lanka released a statement this year calling for Mullivaikal to be an "awakening day". This day should be a mass mobilisation day.

Public discussion on what perspective and strategy should be adopted is needed, starting with rejecting all capitalist governments and instead seeking allies among workers and revolutionary organisations to build a successful fightback.

Unfortunately, the current so-called Tamil 'leaders' are an obstacle to such an approach. In the diaspora, the majority of the leaders subscribe to right-wing ideas, including support for the Conservative Party in Britain.

They try to trick Tamil workers and youth, suffering and angry at Tory policies, into believing that "we're all conservative".

At this year's main remembrance event what was the leading diaspora organisation ten years ago could not

muster 200 supporters - compared to the thousands of previous years. Instead of an appeal to working-class people, they attempt to make shortcuts and appeal over workers' heads to the government and MPs (a long list of Tory, right-wing Blairite Labour, and Lib Dem MPs were invited), even playing the British national anthem!

Long-time supporter of the Tamil cause shadow chancellor John McDonnell only got to speak after several Tories who promised nothing.

In an interview given to Tamil Solidarity in the past John McDonnell stated that if Jeremy Corbyn come to power they will stop all military assistance to Sri Lanka. But this year even he stuck to the tune of "delivery of justice" via all groups coming together.

Political cynicism

The Labour, Conservative and all the other main parties were enthusiastic to speak this year mainly because they are in the middle of a European election campaign.

The majority of these MPs voted for cuts in services, for war in Iraq, for the bombing of Syria and many other brutal domestic and foreign policies. Their main aim is to fight for the 'Tamil vote' which they hope the 'leaders' can deliver en bloc.

Almost all of them carried the same message - that they are for "peace and justice" but with no explanation of what that means and how, ten years on, it can be achieved when so far their annual speeches have achieved precisely nothing for Tamils in Sri Lanka.

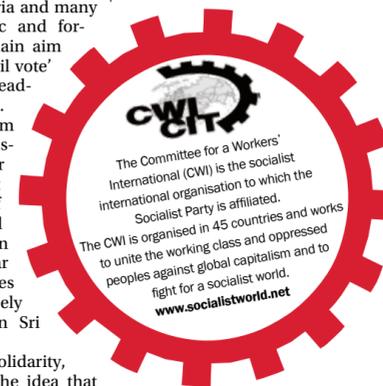
On 18 May Tamil Solidarity, founded in 2009 on the idea that

the struggle for Tamil rights must go on, offered an alternative. Words are not enough - we demand action. We should mobilise and build our strength by linking up with the working class in struggle.

The Tamil Solidarity campaign rejects all capitalist governments and all those who support any form of oppression. Tamil Solidarity instead calls for an alliance with trade unions, socialists and young people.

In the past years Tamil Solidarity has won the national affiliation of trade unions Unison, PCS, Nipsa and many union branches. Tamil Solidarity also joined forces with the fightbacks of workers and youth that have taken place in Britain.

It is through these actions that we aim to build the struggle of the Tamils. The Socialist Party has assisted the work of Tamil Solidarity from its founding meeting and maintains close collaboration on various struggles. Socialist Party members from various national backgrounds took part in the Mullivaikal remembrance day events.



What we stand for

The Socialist Party fights for socialism - a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also oppose every cut, fighting in our day-to-day campaigning for every possible improvement for working class people. The organised working class has the potential power to stop the cuts and transform society.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

Our demands include:

PUBLIC SERVICES

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, public services and benefits. Defend our pensions.
- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.

- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and 'free schools'!

- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs - free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!
- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

WORK AND INCOME

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £10 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards a real living wage. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings. Scrap zero-hour contracts.

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

- An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension.
- Scrap Universal Credit. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.

- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.
- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

ENVIRONMENT

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

RIGHTS

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

MASS WORKERS' PARTY

- For a mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
- Fight for Labour to be transformed into such a party: deselect the Blairites.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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



**Join the fightback!
Join the Socialists!**

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@socialist_party text 07761 818 206 /CWIsocialistParty

4 JUNE - WALK OUT AGAINST TRUMP!

CLIMATE CRIMINAL NOT WELCOME

Tom Baldwin
South West Socialist Party organiser

The latest in the series of global youth strikes for climate is on Friday, 24 May. These monthly actions have been hugely successful with tens of thousands of students walking out of British schools, colleges and universities to join protests, coordinated with events across the entire planet.

Young people have confounded negative stereotypes of being a self-obsessed generation with their willingness to come together and fight for their futures. These protests can be the impetus to build school student unions. These would help democratically organise the movement and protect those taking part from being victimised. Student unions would also be able to discuss a response to all the other issues facing young people in this age of austerity.

The climate strikes are not just an excuse to bunk-off. Protesters have been engaged politically and open to radical solutions to save the planet.

Socialist Party calls for 'socialist change not climate change' have been widely welcomed and have also provoked discussion and debate at the open mic street meetings.

Protesters' anger has largely been directed at the big businesses that have profited from destruction of the environment and the politicians that have allowed them to get away with it.

The most prominent of these, US president Donald Trump, will be coming to Britain for a state visit on 3-5 June. The built-up momentum of the youth climate strikes should be fed into the mass demonstrations that will greet him on 4 June. This climate criminal has pulled the US out of even the extremely limited Paris Agreement and showed his support for expanding fossil fuel industries.

Trump's climate change denial doesn't just come from scientific illiteracy. He represents the interests of those billionaires who want to profit at the expense of our planet.

The same interests lie behind his ratcheting up tensions on the world stage and his attempts to divide the working class with sexism and racism. We will be protesting not just against Trump himself but the capitalist system that he represents and raising the socialist alternative.

■ More on climate change - see page 12 & 4



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