

£1/£2 solidarity price

Issue 1051
1-14 August 2019



socialistparty.org.uk

the Socialist

Formerly **Militant**

"The longest, darkest days of my life"
FIGHTING UNIVERSAL CREDIT



> p8-9 photo Dan Moyle/CC

PUERTO RICO: mass protests topple governor



> p14 photo Old School WWC Fan/CC

NORTHERN IRELAND STRIKES

- Civil service pay struggle
- Save Harland and Wolff shipyard



> p6-7 photo Unite the Union Northern Ireland/CC

Build a working-class movement to

FORCE A GENERAL ELECTION



Lindsey Morgan
Leicester Socialist Party

With Boris Johnson 'elected' prime minister by just 92,153 Conservative Party members, he's keen to present himself as a representative of ordinary people.

But his policy announcements are anti-worker and pro-big business through and through.

Johnson's minority government is propped up by the tiny, right-wing DUP, and is careering towards the impending establishment crisis of a no-deal Brexit. His fear of working-class anger has led him to propose some measures supposed to dampen the inequality caused by the Tories' austerity project.

Meanwhile, in the finest traditions of the main party of British capitalism, he is steering through more tax cuts for big business and the rich as impoverishment grows among the many.

More than four million people in the UK are now trapped in "deep poverty," according to a report by the Social Metrics Commission. Their income is at least 50% below the official breadline, meaning an unjust weekly struggle to afford essentials that the bosses take for granted. Under the Tories, seven million people, including 2.3 million children, were at this level of poverty for at least two of the last three years.

The Social Metrics Commission is chaired by a Tory peer, and argues there is a "pressing need for a concerted approach to the problem." The Tories' view of the "problem" seems to be that the bosses aren't rich enough, and their "concerted approach" involves more tax cuts for them.

One of Johnson's proposals is

for 'free ports,' whereby areas of the UK such as Belfast and Teesside would have Singapore-style tax-free zones, allowing big business to cream off even bigger profits without paying in to public services.

Attacks on workers will continue with Boris Johnson, cheerleader for cruelty, as our prime minister. But as vile as he is, Johnson is only a symptom of the capitalist system controlled by the parasitic super-rich class. His job is to protect the profit system.

The Tories represent big business and have just 138,809 voting members. The trade unions have over six million workers as members and rising. Workers need a party of our own.

Jeremy Corbyn should use the huge enthusiasm which was created by his anti-austerity platform to start pushing the pro-capitalist Blairites out of Labour and throwing open the doors to workers and unions to control it instead.

The unions could mobilise the huge anger at inequality by building for a mass demonstration for a general election, and joint strikes as well if necessary.

A working-class movement like this could force a general election, get the Tories out, and push a Corbyn-led government towards socialist policies. Policies like taking the banks and big business out of the hands of the tax-cutting super-rich and putting them into public ownership under democratic workers' control and management. Fighting for socialism is the only answer to the capitalist system keeping so many of us destitute.

> **Boris and Brexit: editorial p3-4**



Historic conference refounds the Committee for a Workers' International

On Sunday 21 July over 200 delegates at a special conference of the Socialist Party in England and Wales voted overwhelmingly, 83.2% to 16.8% (173 - 35 with 0 abstentions), to sponsor an international conference to reconstitute the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI - the international organisation of which the Socialist Party is part).

The international conference which followed over the next four days was attended by delegates and visitors from England and Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, France, Austria, Finland, India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Chile, South Africa and the USA.

Unfortunately, comrades from South Africa and Nigeria who had planned to attend could not due to visa problems.

The international conference's decision to reconstitute the CWI followed an intense debate and political struggle in the CWI over the last seven months.

This political struggle has been fought between those represented at this meeting, who defend the Trotskyist method and programme the CWI was founded on in 1974, and an opposition moving away from this position.

Struggle in the unions

This opposition has taken a rightward opportunist turn, buckled to the pressures of identity politics, turned away from conducting a systematic and consistent struggle in the trade unions, and blunted the socialist programme that the CWI and its sections have fought to defend.

The international conference in London had lively discussions on the world situation and the tasks facing the working class and socialists, the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary upheavals taking place in the neocolonial world, and

also a balance sheet of the recent debate in the CWI and tasks for building the refounded CWI in the coming period.

The re-founded CWI was constituted on the basis of the political and organisational principles adopted by the first four congresses of the Third International, the founding documents of the Fourth International in 1938 and the congresses of the CWI.

Amazing collection

The determination and confidence of those present and represented at this conference was reflected in the collection which raised over £25,000.

The conference agreed that the International Secretariat will seek to convene a world congress in 2020 of CWI sections and groups that defend the programme of the CWI. The Congress will also invite revolutionary socialist organisations which are committed to building revolutionary socialist parties based on the working class and which are prepared to discuss and collaborate on an honest and principled basis.

Following the decision of the Socialist Party conference, a small number of our members have announced they have left our party. They have tried to disguise their decision by claiming they were expelled. This is not the case.

The resolution that was overwhelmingly passed by the Socialist Party conference called on all members, regardless of their position in the debate, "to continue to help build the Socialist Party as part of a healthy Trotskyist international organisation in order to prepare for the mighty class battles ahead."

The resolution agreed was "confident that the overwhelming majority of Socialist Party members will wish to participate in this historic



photo Tessa Warrington

task." However, it went on to explain that, "if a small minority decides instead to build an alternative organisation" based on opportunist policies, they "will have to do so outside of the Socialist Party where they will have the opportunity to test their ideas against the reality of the class struggle."

Even before the Socialist Party conference had taken any decision, a small number of members had clearly made plans to launch a new,

rightward-moving organisation, the launch rally of which was held an hour after our conference had finished.

The vast majority of members, however, have come out of the recent debate with a renewed confidence in our party.

We defend the programme and approach of the Socialist Party, which historically, in an era of heightened working-class struggle, enabled us to lead the struggles of Liverpool City Council and the battle against the Poll Tax, the latter

bringing down Maggie Thatcher.

We were also central to numerous struggles against racism and the far right.

At the present time our methods have allowed us to orientate effectively to those mobilised in support of Jeremy Corbyn, campaigning for the removal of the Blairites and the transformation of Labour into a workers' party with a socialist programme.

Fight against cuts

We are pioneers of the fight against council cuts. We play a vital role in the trade union movement, including our members playing a leading role in the rank-and-file National Shop Stewards Network.

At the same time, we have built a significant base on the university campuses. Most importantly, we are building a party based on a clear socialist programme, currently over 2,000 members strong, which will be able to play a vital role in the mighty struggles of the working class which are ahead.

We will publish further material on the issues in the debate, and the key documents from it, on our websites in the coming weeks.



What we think



photo Chatham House/CC

Boris Johnson's victory in this summer's Tory party leadership election will probably turn out to be the most predictable political event of 2019.

Having successfully manoeuvred during the MPs' part of the contest to ensure that his opponent would be a Remain supporter from the 2016 EU referendum, rather than another Vote Leave campaigner, the Tory ranks were always going to go for Johnson.

And so 92,153 people - less than one-fifth of one per cent (0.2%) of the 45.7 million UK electorate - selected the next prime minister.

But Johnson's victory resolves nothing, for the fate of the Tory party or for Brexit. How future events develop will be anything but predictable.

Johnson has pledged that Britain will leave the EU by 31 October 'with or without a deal, do or die'.

Equally likely however, if not more so, is a continued fragmentation of the Tories and a renewed parliamentary paralysis when MPs reassemble from the summer break in early September.

A general election in the autumn is now firmly on the agenda, against the backdrop of global and domestic turbulence - and the possibility, then, of a Corbyn-led government.

If there is not a withdrawal treaty agreed by 31 October the default position is that the treaty obligations between Britain and the remaining EU27 countries will no longer apply at that point, a 'no-deal' Brexit.

To obtain a further extension the UK government needs to request one, and an EU summit agree to it and its terms unanimously.

The EU27 countries have, so far, maintained a unified position that the current 'Brexit-in-name-only' 585-page legal withdrawal treaty agreed with Theresa May last November is not up for renegotiation.

Socialism Today

The Socialist Party's magazine

July-August issue includes...

- What lies behind the huge land grab?
- Brexit: Capitalism's dilemma, three years on



£3 including postage: Socialism Today, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD
- subscribe for £25 a year at socialismtoday.org

BORIS, BREXIT AND BRITISH CAPITALISM UNPREDICTABLE, VOLATILE AND UNSTABLE



The task is to meet the unfolding events with a clear socialist programme, which must include an internationalist opposition to the EU bosses' club



The slow-motion implosion of the Tory party culminating in Boris Johnson's unstable tenure in No.10 creates new opportunities for the workers' movement



photo Paul Mattsson

But the more ambiguous, non-binding political declaration could be recast, they say. The EU27 leaders do not wish for a disorderly Brexit or for 'Brussels' to be blamed if the whole process collapses.

A significant number of Tory remainder MPs have threatened to support a parliamentary no-confidence vote against a Johnson premiership if it is clear by September that a no-deal Brexit is being actively pursued.

On the other hand, changes of little substance are unlikely to satisfy the hard Brexiteer European Research Group (ERG) of Tory MPs. Conscious that a majority even of Johnson's new cabinet backed remain in 2016, the ERG deputy chairman Steve Baker refused a ministerial job offer on the grounds it would render him 'powerless'.

All of this points to Johnson going for an early snap election to try for a 'personal mandate' to pre-empt the inevitable collapse of his government.

Speaking at her farewell drinks gathering of Tory MPs Theresa May stressed that their priority should be "stopping Jeremy Corbyn entering Downing Street". The prospect of a Corbyn-led government is almost the only glue

holding the Tories together.

The ruling class as a whole, too, looks on a Corbyn-led government with trepidation. Under Tony Blair their attitude was different. With Labour's transmutation into the completely capitalist New Labour in the 1990s, the capitalists were confident that their interests would be served.

But even though Jeremy Corbyn has failed to decisively overturn the ideological and organisational legacy of Blairism and transform Labour into a mass socialist workers' party, for the ruling class he is still not to be trusted.

This is not only in a general sense: because a Corbyn victory would give enormous confidence to the working class, whetting its appetite for a broader struggle including an openness to clearer socialist ideas. It is also specifically: because he is not a reliable defender of capitalist interests on the EU and Brexit.

Continued on next page

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

020 8988 8777 editors@socialistparty.org.uk @socialistpaper

Editor: Christine Thomas
Sales: Chris Newby

News: Ian Pattison
International/campaigns: Dave Carr

Workplace: Scott Jones
Opinion: James Ivens

Photographer: Paul Mattsson
Website: Judy Beishon

Boris, Brexit and British capitalism



Socialist Party members protest against Johnson photo Sascha Stanic

>continued from page 3

Corbyn campaigned in the 1975 referendum against the European Economic Community, before it was renamed the EU.

As a backbench MP he consistently voted against all the neoliberal EU treaties. These are the rules and directives which give the bosses' club its character as 'Thatcherism on a continental scale'.

It is true that Corbyn made a significant retreat from this position upon his election as leader in September 2015. In a first and damaging concession to the Blairites he committed to support a Remain vote in the then forthcoming EU referendum in all circumstances.

This mistake continues to contribute to a perception amongst many Leave-supporting workers that Corbyn opposes Brexit. But despite the pressure since the

referendum from the Blairites he has not capitulated so far to their demand to overturn the 2016 result.

Even when he has spoken of the possibility of a second referendum he has ruled out a repeat of that vote.

So, in his first major broadcast interview after Johnson's victory, on Sky News, he supported a referendum against a no-deal Brexit if that is what is proposed.

But he also said that if Labour won an election he would "reopen talks with the EU" about reaching a Brexit deal. This leaves it open that he would campaign in favour of Brexit in any second referendum rather than for the option of remaining in the EU.

It is to avert this possibility that the campaign is being stepped up by the Blairites and the establishment media against Corbyn's leadership. Deputy leader Tom Watson is openly mobilising his base ready to move when the

time is right.

Whether the Blairites and their capitalist backers mount a direct leadership challenge to Corbyn like they did in 2016, or form a new party, is another unpredictable factor in the equation.

Splitting to form a new party more substantial than the hapless Change UK is a card that can only be played once. The calculation may be that staying to sabotage a Corbyn-led government would be a more valuable service to the ruling class.

What is clear though is that combating these agents of capitalism within the workers' movement is the duty of every socialist.

These are volatile times. The European elections were followed by the Peterborough by-election in which Labour held off Nigel Farage's Brexit Party.

This was in a Leave-voting city that, significantly, had seen average pay shrink by 13% in real terms since the 2007-08 financial crash. Class issues cannot be so easily buried.

The slow-motion implosion of the Tory party culminating in Boris Johnson's unstable tenure in Number 10 creates new opportunities for the workers' movement.

The task is to meet the unfolding events with a clear socialist programme, which must include an internationalist opposition to the EU bosses' club.



Boris Johnson photo Foreign and Commonwealth Office/CC

Hottest day ever TORIES LOOKING IN WRONG PLACE FOR CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

Bea Gardner
 Southampton Socialist Party

Thursday 26 July was officially the hottest day on record. Temperatures reached a sweltering 38.7°C in Cambridge.

The extreme heat caused misery for those stuck in blisteringly hot workplaces as well as thousands of stranded passengers, as our poorly funded infrastructure ground to a halt.

All Greater Anglia trains between Cambridge and London were cancelled. There was overcrowding at St Pancras, Euston and Waterloo stations.

Disgracefully, homeless people struggled to access drinking water, a consequence both of capitalist austerity and gentrification.

While a single weather event cannot be directly linked to global



The heat caused trains to break down and led to widespread cancellations photo Tom Anderson/CC

warming, the trends of weather over time clearly point to a changing climate.

20 of the warmest ever years recorded have been since 1997. The Met Office found that the UK is 30 times more likely to experience heatwaves compared to the year 1750, due to increased greenhouse gasses.

But despite knowing that 71% of all greenhouse gasses are from just 100 companies, the Tory government continues to put the blame on working-class people. As we enter the school holidays, the Environmental Audit Committee is launching an inquiry into tourism and its contribution to climate change.

But workers wanting to enjoy a holiday with their families are not to blame. Rather, multibillion-dollar companies, which continue to put profit ahead of the needs of the planet and workers, are.

For example, Carnival operates cruise ships out of Southampton and made \$3 billion in profit last year. They have repeatedly refused to take measures to clean up their practices, despite receiving hefty fines.

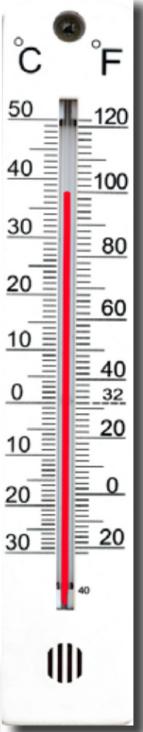
Their ships emit ten times more sulphur than all of Europe's 260 million cars. They are unwilling to dip into their profits to convert their cruise ships to mains electricity, and so leave their dirty fuel-guzzling engines on 24 hours a day while in port, contributing to the air pollution crisis in Southampton.

At a protest outside Carnival HQ on 27 July, one protester pointed out the hypocrisy that "outside schools we see signs telling us to turn our car engines off to protect our kids' lungs, but massive polluters like Carnival can leave theirs on all day?"

Unless steps are taken to drastically reduce global emissions and halt global warming, extreme weather events like July's heatwave will become more frequent. The answer to the problems of extreme weather, and the rising emissions causing it, is socialist change.

If the transport industry was under workers' control, the profits currently being hoarded away by bosses could be directed towards investing in a greener and more resilient transport network.

In the meantime, it is essential for workers, residents and environment campaigners to join together to fight corporate giants like Carnival whose drive for profit at any cost is destroying workers lives and our planet.



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

socialistparty.org.uk/join 020 8988 8777

@socialist_party text 07761 818 206 /CWSocialistParty

LABOUR PROMISES TO END COUNCIL PRIVATISATION

Sally Griffiths
 Salford Socialist Party

Councils must do that now

The Labour Party says it will cease the never-ending drip-feed of public money to private sector leeches, with its policy announcement that a future Labour government would push councils to bring services back in-house.

While this is very welcome, Labour needs to send a clear message to the working class, because that is not what we see in our workplaces and communities.

After years of selling services to private companies, cutting jobs, moving workers to the private sector on worse conditions, and fighting against trade union recognition tooth and nail, it is hard to imagine most of the current Labour councillors implementing this policy.

While we have seen colleagues lose their jobs, councillors have ignored public protests about outrageous cuts to services - some have bleated about "difficult decisions" and "tough choices".

Councillors must pledge to implement these anti-privatisation policies now. There can be no wriggling out of promises the week after councillors are elected.

Labour seeks to calm the squeals from big business, by saying it will



Barnet council workers strike against privatisation in 2015 photo Socialist Party

wait until "contracts are up" or lawfully terminated. Instead, they have to be bold, and bring back services immediately. While workers wait for private contracts to expire, their pay is cut and their terms and conditions are removed.

Corporate parasites will challenge legalities. They will take any steps to keep their nose in the public sector money trough. A determined movement of workers can stop them.

The Thatcher-initiated continued sell-off of public services has provided fat cats with decades of profits. We would demand compensation to be paid only in the case of proven need, not to the fat cats.

Bringing public services back in-house is only the start. We should not forget what has been stolen from us since the capitalists forced the poor to pay for their crisis.

It is vital that we demand restoration of services that have been cut. For example in Salford, restoring disabled children's transport and ensuring council-run nurseries - two campaigns the Socialist Party has helped support.

For too long Labour councils have administrated savage Tory cuts, but councillors have a choice. Labour's latest policy makes that choice all the easier and more achievable, even under a Tory government.

Councils could use their reserves and borrowing powers to fund no-cuts, needs-based budgets now. This would make Labour's 'for the many, not the few' believable to workers and more than just a soundbite.

Lib Dems: Little bosses' party elects eagerly pro-austerity leader

James Ivens
 East London Socialist Party

The Liberal Democrats, Britain's most shopworn and undeservingly smug little bosses' party, have elected a new leader. Jo Swinson is a management graduate, sworn enemy of Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity promise, and former minister in Tory David Cameron's coalition government.

As an MP, Swinson has eagerly put her hand up for austerity across the public sector. This includes benefit cuts, the pay cap, council cuts, the bedroom tax, raising VAT, hiking train fares, cutting corporate tax, protecting bankers' bonuses, tripling tuition fees, and abolishing Education Maintenance Allowance.

She has also supported privatisation of Royal Mail, NHS services, schools and forests, and backed fracking and overseas military interventions. As an employment minister, she supported zero-hour contracts and cautioned against meaningful increases to the minimum wage.

At times in the past, the Lib Dems feinted to the left on some issues. They hoped to capture the votes of young people and workers disenchanted with Blairite Labour's pro-capitalist politics.

Today, the Liberals pin their electoral hopes singly on defending their beloved, neoliberal European Union. They hope that understandable public anxieties about the chaos of the Tories' exit 'plans' will be enough to make up for the vicious anti-worker politics they share with the bosses' EU.

What it all shows is that Tories, Liberals and the EU are just three cheeks of the same rear end: politics for the super-rich, not the working class. The answer to Swinson, Johnson and the rest is to create a mass party for workers. Booting the Blairites out of Labour and fighting for it to adopt socialist policies would be a great start.

What do you think? Tell us!
 editors@socialistparty.org.uk



Jo Swinson photo David Spender/CC

POSTIES DELIVER DEFIANT MESSAGE TO BULLYING BOSSES

Ryan Aldred
Plymouth Socialist Party

Postal workers at the West Park delivery office in Plymouth took unofficial strike action from 24-26 July after Royal Mail's refusal to deal with bullying and harassment.

A manager who had already been removed from one office and had had ten complaints and more than 50 grievances raised against him was still working alongside those who had made complaints, prompting the walkout.

Clearly going against their own policies and procedures Royal Mail refused to suspend the manager pending investigation. As one striker put it "this is clearly a test of the union's strength. Three members of staff have gone sick with stress in the last couple of weeks and some have

been reduced to tears.

"If there is a problem the company need to investigate it. Some were nervous about going out unofficially but they've [management] lost the art of negotiation. They were chucking our personal belongings out of the gate when we walked out. Saying 'we'll leave you out on the streets!' We've had 100% solidarity with the whole office coming out in support of the strike.

"Senior managers are on £70,000 a year and they're now trying to do our work so hopefully now they'll know what it's like. It's funny, the moment there's a strike on all of a sudden they've got nothing to do so managers get shipped in from all over Devon to try and undermine the strike."

By Friday, gate meetings had been organised at all four depots in Plymouth. The strength of feeling

was such that the other three depots had agreed to walk out on 27 July if the manager wasn't removed. This would have meant that the only thing being delivered across Plymouth would have been a defiant message to the bosses!

As soon as word had gotten around that the strike was in danger of spreading, Royal Mail management suddenly rediscovered the art of negotiation and Communication Workers Union reps were called in to negotiate a deal to end the strike.

Privatisation

When asked about how much things have changed since privatisation Jason responded "It's no longer about the service it's about the shareholders. They go on about customer service but they don't care that mail isn't going out, they would rather close ranks around the managers."

Postal workers were grateful for the support given by the Socialist Party during the strike. While this issue has now been resolved, it is clear that it is only a matter of time before what has become a systemic problem of bullying and harassment resurfaces.

The Socialist Party calls for the renationalisation of Royal Mail and an end to the culture of bullying that has emerged under private ownership. Service, not the shareholders' profits needs to be the bottom line.

Plymouth Royal Mail workers walk out against bullying management photo Ryan Aldred



Nottingham Deliveroo riders strike

On 12 July, Nottingham Deliveroo riders stood together to shut down the Deliveroo Editions kitchen. The strikers were supported by the Nottingham and Mansfield Trade Union Council, the Socialist Party and others.

Orders had been backing up because riders were not going to the kitchen. A great cheer went up when it was announced.

One rider, Greg said: "The algorithm is pushing out cyclists and favouring motors - pushing us to the back of the queue and damaging the environment."

Another striker said: "Last week I was down to just one hour and nothing this week. If it wasn't for tax credits I'd be fucked... I've got a family to feed." The partner of a picket told us: "I don't know what

our family would do if I didn't have a full-time job."

One issue discussed was how city centre deliveries are more suitable to cyclists because of traffic and parking. It was also raised by one rider that after cyclists, they would go for the scooters.

Gary Freeman
Nottingham
Socialist Party

"BEIS: stop plSSing about and give outsourcing the boot!"



BEIS strikers 29 July photo Paula Mitchell

Paula Mitchell
London Socialist Party

Catering workers and cleaners, members of civil service union PCS, walked out on indefinite strike action on 15 July at the government's business department, BEIS. This bold action follows 14 previous days of strike action, fighting for the London living wage and decent terms and conditions.

For a week they were also joined by porters and security staff. The private companies who employ these workers, ISS and Aramark, are getting away with paying poverty wages, and the business department is happy to let it happen. Ironically, it is the job of BEIS to ensure employment standards in business!

Essential services

While striking for the London living wage, the workers all recognise that this strike is part of a fight to bring these essential services back in-house. The strikers want to keep the pressure up on their new boss Andrea Leadsom and on Boris Johnson, who has bravely declared he supports the London living wage - so pay up!

On 18 July the BEIS strikers were joined for a demo by PCS members on strike at HMRC in Liverpool.

PCS members at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have also been on strike for the same demand from their private

employer Interserve.

In fact, a wave of strike action recently in London has also seen Bromley library workers on indefinite strike (see below), special transport workers striking in Hackney, RMT members striking against driver-only operation, and school strikes against cuts and academies at John Roan school in Greenwich and Ilford County high school.

Now the independent union United Voices is preparing low-paid cleaners for a summer of strike action at several prestigious employers, including the Royal Parks.

Bromley libraries strike

The long-running strike at Bromley libraries has not lost its enthusiasm. Once again there was a large picket outside the main library.

These have been interspersed with protests outside other Greenwich Leisure Limited-run facilities such as libraries, sports centre and swimming pools.

The company is running down the service to increase profits, refusing to replace staff and increasing workloads without increased pay. But staff are angry and united against any more attacks and ready to defend the service they provide and their jobs, terms and conditions.

"ENOUGH IS ENOUGH": 20,000 NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL SERVANTS STRIKE AGAINST PAY RESTRAINT

Carmel Gates
Nipsa deputy general secretary
(personal capacity)

Up to 20,000 civil servants across Northern Ireland took strike action on 26 July.

Northern Ireland's civil servants union Nipsa achieved a magnificent 68.5% Yes vote in favour of strike action. It was particularly significant because we were forced to ballot within a three-week window before the summer leave season.

The strike has been provoked by the imposition of another below-inflation pay award for 2018-19.

This will be the largest industrial action in Northern Ireland since

March 2015, when the entire public sector was shut down in a strike against the austerity measures implemented by the Tories and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

A pay increase was due to civil servants from 1 August 2018. The measly 1.5% imposed will be in pay packets in July. Nipsa's claim was for 7% on pay and allowances and for scale shortening.

The treasury guidance that limits pay awards to civil servants in England and Wales also applies to Northern Ireland. We have suffered years of pay restraint with the majority of civil servants earning below the Northern Ireland average wage. Just as in Britain, many public servants now rely on second jobs and tax credits to make ends meet.



photo Carmel Gates

HACKNEY TRANSPORT STRIKE - BLOCKADE FOILS EMPLOYERS

Socialist Party reporters

Unite the Union members employed as drivers and passenger assistants by Hackney council have been taking action, including striking, in support of a campaign to compensate workers who undertake split shifts.

The actions on strike days have gradually escalated so that there were demonstrations every day by supporters of the strike which blocked buses being driven by the small number of strike breakers.

On the last day of the current round of strikes, the employers thought that they would be clever - the buses were taken out of the depot the previous evening and parked in a private car park, which they believed was out of sight, apart from the top deck of a double decker bus, which is indeed how this cunning plan was rumbled.

On the morning, campaigners parked cars across the entrance to the car park while the strikers occupied the pavement - meaning that in fact no buses could move.

The action was extremely effective - leading to the director of education visiting and attempting to coordinate the very unsuccessful attempt to break the strike.

This is a solid campaign - with new members joining the union. Agency staff have joined the strike too.

While individual Labour Party members and the constituency Labour Party have shown tremendous support, the response from councillors in a majority-Labour council has been appalling.

Unite the Union members employed as drivers and passenger assistants by Hackney council have been taking action photo Socialist Party



One councillor who visited the depot - not to stand on the picket line but to assist with the strike-breaking exercise - said that the strikers should be happy with their wages (some take home less than £800 a month) but also that there was no 'magic money tree' - wonder where he got that quote from?

This strike shows once again how important it is for Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell to give clear direction to Labour councillors: no more austerity, implement fair pay for public service workers - but also, crucially, that those councillors not prepared to fight austerity should be deselected.

Strikers have made it clear that unless the dispute is resolved, there will be more escalated strike action and

campaigning following the school holidays.

Urgent appeal for strike funds

The employers have made deductions from pay for the strikers without any warning. While union members are getting national strike pay, most are part time and as a result, their pay packet has been hit.

Please send financial donations and messages of support:

- Cheques can be made payable to "Hackney Unite" and sent to Onay Kasab at Unite, 33-37 Moreland Street, London EC1V 8BB
- Bank transfers can be made to: Hackney Unite, Sort Code 60-83-01, Acc number 20027115
- Messages of support via: onay.kasab@uniteunion.org

Sainsbury's distribution workers' second 24- hour strike against cuts to sick pay

Scott Jones
Chair, Usdaw East London C026
branch (personal capacity)

Workers at Sainsbury's Waltham Point distribution centre in Essex took a second 24-hour strike against cuts to sick pay on 25 July. The members of shop workers' union Usdaw also walked out on 27 June after Sainsbury's announced plans to reduce sickness pay from 26 weeks to only two weeks.

The company has refused to budge since the first strike and if it doesn't following the latest action Usdaw is considering escalating the dispute in August.

Dozens of workers again picketed the warehouse, supported again by

This strike isn't just about pay. To add insult to injury, changes to personnel procedures mean that line managers will be forced to take on more responsibilities in relation to sick absence management, grievance and discipline.

The action began with a full day strike on 26 July and will be followed by further action in the following months.

They tell us there is no money but they spent £210 million a few years ago to lay off 3,500 civil servants and now they are recruiting more staff. We have been left with no option but to fight. Enough is enough.

Nipsa members have made it clear that they are up for strong action and are determined to do what needs to be done.

Get the latest union news...
...with the National Shop Stewards Network bulletin. Available every week at shopstewards.net and by email subscription



Socialist Party members including Amy Murphy fourth from left at the Usdaw Waltham Point picket line 25 July photo Sarah Sachs-Eldridge

Erin Smithers
Single mum and
Universal Credit claimant

I have always been in receipt of some sort of benefit since the age of 16 when I gave birth to my first son. Although a life reliant on income support and tax credits was not in any sense easy, nothing has hit me as hard, financially and emotionally, as Universal Credit.

My tax credits were stopped in January 2019 when my marriage broke down. Like everyone else, I had the nerve-wracking five-week wait to find out what my new entitlement would be under Universal Credit.

I knew of the horrors of Universal Credit already. I had been trying to keep tabs on it as best as possible. But like all issues that predominantly affect the working class, the reality of it was heavily underreported.

When I finally received my amount, I found it was £180 a month. I also get a maintenance loan as I am studying at university, but this does not cover the living costs of one adult and two children. I couldn't believe it.

The five weeks without income had a domino effect on all my bills, and this was not going to cover any of it. I contested the amount. It couldn't be right. Once rent and essential bills were paid I was left with £12 a week.

When the Department for Work and Pensions 'work coaches' responded to my pleas on my 'online journal', they told me this was right, and offered budgeting advice.

I tried to explain that there is no way £12 a week would cover food shopping, travel and childcare fees, and that being told to learn about budgeting was offensive and patronising. I didn't get any response.

During the time when I was desperately trying to have the figure looked at again, we lost our home. I found myself on the street with a two and a six-year-old. My whole world was crashing down around me.

I couldn't afford my travel into my placement (I'm a student nurse). I was using whatever resources were on the ward to eat as I couldn't afford to feed all three of us.

Luckily, I have a wonderful friend

in Leeds who was able to put us all up. But the crap surrounding us was taking a huge toll on my mental health, and that of my six-year-old too.

He wanted his own bed, he wanted his own toys, he wanted to feel safe and secure. His whole life had been turned upside down and I was completely powerless.

We made an alarming discovery at Leeds City Housing. I had been awarded 'band A' priority for housing, but because my income was so low they didn't think housing officers would accept my application - because I couldn't pay rent.

A comment was made that I would be better off leaving university for the time being so I could claim the housing element of Universal Credit. I knew poor people were getting knocked down repeatedly, but leaving education too - maybe ensuring I could never move myself out of this bracket - was something I had never imagined.

“ ”

I tried to explain that there is no way £12 a week would cover food shopping, travel and childcare fees

After many online journal entries and lots of back and forth to various people on the phone, it was finally decided that there had been a mistake and I was only receiving two-thirds of what I should have been. Still barely liveable, but an improvement nonetheless.

I did receive an apology on behalf of the work coach who had been managing my case. But the damage was irreversible. We were still homeless, and due to not having a fixed address or tenancy agreement in my name I could not prove my change of circumstance. My loan was then withheld from me.

These were the longest, darkest days of my life. For someone who always had the security blanket of her children, this was slipping too. I couldn't provide for them and was completely financially reliant on the handouts of others.

With the help of a charity worker and the finance team at university, student finance after six traumatic weeks finally released my payment. I now had enough money to find somewhere to live.

I was incredibly lucky to find a housing association property quickly and moved in immediately. I was provided white goods a couple of weeks later which meant we could finally call somewhere home.

I'm not sure what the future will bring for us. My anxieties around money have become obsessive. I check and recheck everything.

The amount we are living on isn't acceptable. My children deserve to have the same quality of life as others. I'm not asking for Ibizan holidays, but after-school clubs and new socks shouldn't be things they have to go without. I still haven't shifted the feeling of being useless.

Universal Credit is so dangerous. It preys on those least likely to have a voice, society's most oppressed and vulnerable.

“THE LONGEST, DARKEST DAYS OF MY LIFE”

FIGHTING UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Councils can fight back!

- Set up and sufficiently fund council hardship grants, open to all on Universal Credit
- Ensure no tenants on Universal Credit in rent arrears are evicted from council properties or properties managed by council-commissioned services
- Fund and manage childcare services for residents and workers
- Take a fighting stance on austerity, reject Tory central government austerity budgets, and use reserves and borrowing powers to set budgets based on what people need
- Build a mass campaign involving council workers, trade unions and residents to fight to win the needed funds from central government
- As part of this, campaign nationally with other councils for a 'stop and scrap' approach to Universal Credit

Corbyn can lead the way!

- Instruct Labour councils to implement the above demands
- Call in the trade union leaders to set a date for a mass mobilisation demanding a general election, building towards coordinated strike action if necessary
- Stop and scrap Universal Credit - for a fully funded and staffed welfare system based on a reasonable standard of living for all
- Full funding for advice bureaux, law centres and legal aid
- A real living wage of at least £10 an hour for all now
- Mass building of council homes, and democratic rent controls in the private sector
- Free education, childcare and elderly care
- Nationalise the banks and big business, under democratic workers' control and management, to pay for it

photo Aaron Escobar/CC

How councils can stop Universal Credit

Amy Cousens
Leeds Socialist Party

The Socialist Party has long been trying to bust the myth that Labour councils cannot act against central government cuts. For a decade, working-class people have had to suffer their effects. Universal Credit marked a new depth of viciousness for austerity.

The Tories sold Universal Credit as a public money-saving scheme, combining several disparate benefits into a single payment. In reality, the 'savings' were to come from reducing payouts.

According to the government's own statistics, on average people are hundreds or thousands worse off when they transfer to Universal Credit - across every category of the 'legacy' benefits the system replaces. And benefits before Universal Credit are not enough to live off as it is. This is not to mention the Universal Credit-related suicides exposed frequently in the press.

It is a system designed intentionally to catch people out. For example, those who need to pay for childcare in order to work can supposedly get 85% of these costs refunded. However, the claimant must pay for the childcare upfront first.

The claimant then has to provide proof of purchase to the Department for Work and Pensions. Even then, the DWP warns claimants they may not get the money refunded. Many people cannot pay these childcare costs upfront and so therefore cannot work.

Sound like an impossible cycle? What if a parent were then to work overtime shifts so they could afford to pay the childcare costs upfront? If they earn 'enough' money that month, the DWP cancels their Universal Credit claim, and they will therefore not be entitled to any refund!

There is no doubt among workers in the sector - both Universal Credit staff organised by the PCS union, and workers who support claimants - that for the vast majority of those who need benefits, it is a system where they cannot win.

Figures in the Labour Party have sometimes put forward a slogan of "stop and scrap" but also a slogan of "pause and fix" Universal Credit. Claimants and benefits workers are left unclear what Labour's position is.

Jeremy Corbyn has been outspoken against austerity, but unfortunately has not used his platform to organise concrete action to stop Universal Credit at national or local level. In fact, the mandatory roll-out of the system has gone ahead this July, and there seems to be radio silence from the Labour councils where it is scheduled to happen, despite the havoc this will wreak on their residents and workers.

Some argue there is no point placing demands on your local authority because Universal Credit is a national policy run by a national body. But local councils do have the power to act.

In Leeds, the Women's Lives Matter campaign, with Socialist Party members playing a leading role, has helped to launch such a campaign. A large public meeting agreed unanimously to put pressure on the council to act on Universal Credit, with the following demands:

- Set up and sufficiently fund a hardship grant, open to all on Universal Credit
- That this system be managed by a specific support and advocacy service for Universal Credit
- Ensure no tenants on Universal Credit in rent arrears are evicted from council properties or properties managed by council-commissioned services
- Fund and manage childcare services for Leeds residents
- Take a fighting stance on austerity, reject Tory central government austerity budgets, and use reserves and borrowing powers to set budgets based on what people need
- As part of this, campaign nationally with other councils for a 'stop and scrap' approach to Universal Credit

These demands are what is immediately needed to protect people from plummeting living conditions and outright poverty. The Socialist Party says they must be the start of a mass campaign involving council workers, trade unions and residents to fight to win the needed funds from central government.

Our campaign has a meeting scheduled with the tenants' association in Little London, an area of Leeds whose residents are most likely to be in receipt of some benefits. They are also victims of council 'private finance initiative' schemes which increased rent, gentrifying the area. We intend to take the campaign across Leeds, linking with trade unions locally and nationally to put the council under pressure.

A post-Universal Credit welfare system must be based on a reasonable standard of living for all. It must also have sufficient administrative resources - strikes against excessive workload by Universal Credit workers in the Midlands underline the desperate situation faced by staff and claimants alike.

Full funding to advice bureaux, law centres and legal aid must also be restored, so claimants can get help to receive their full entitlement. And a real living wage of at least £10 an hour for all, alongside council homes, rent controls, and free education, childcare and elderly care, would eliminate much of the need for in-work benefits.

Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell should declare their support for these demands, including no-cuts council budgets, and instruct Labour councils to carry them out. This would stymie new prime minister Boris Johnson, already presiding over a hopelessly divided minority party, and could force the general election needed to get the Tories out and an anti-austerity government in.

Subscribe to the Socialist
New e-sub only £2.50!



Get socialist, anti-cuts news, reports and analysis delivered to your door every week. Subscribe by direct debit and choose from a range of free books!

- socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe
- or call 020 8988 8777
- E-sub £2.50 a month, paper sub £4.50, or £6.50 including Socialism Today
- or make cheques payable to Socialist Publications, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD
- 3 months £20, 6 for £35, 12 for £60



socialism2019.net

A WEEKEND OF
DISCUSSION &
DEBATE ON
SOCIALIST IDEAS
TO CHANGE THE
WORLD

2&3 NOVEMBER 2019
CENTRAL LONDON

SOCIALISM
2019

Hosted by the



socialistparty.org.uk

20% discount until 31 August



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

■ Victimised TUSC agent writes

Last August I was hit with a legal aid bill of £8,847.07 because I lost my case (see "Outrageous sentence for TUSC agent in 'misleading electors' court case" at socialistparty.org.uk).

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) organised a national appeal through the Socialist newspaper to help me. In July 2019 I made my last monthly payment to the collection agency of £737.26.

TUSC raised £4,623 of that. On behalf of myself and my wife Magdalena I thank all TUSC supporters, Socialist Party members and readers of your newspaper who donated to the appeal.

In addition to the appeal I received individual donations sent to me totalling £620. One donation was sent from an old friend who lives abroad, who was so outraged at the outcome of my trial that he and his mother sent a first donation of £500!

It has been a struggle at times making the monthly payments, but the monthly donations from TUSC took part of the pressure off us, and we are very grateful.

At last it is nearly over. My travel ban ends on 27 September. I will then be able to visit my relatives abroad.

I thank your readers for the letters that not only I received but also that Magdalena received, which lifted both of us.

My health has been affected, but I always look forward to receiving your paper and your journal, Socialism Today. Please keep up the good work that your party is doing in the trade unions.

Chris Fernandez
Derby

■ Profit, trains and climate change

On one of the hottest days on record, with the temperature around 38C, we attempted to make a three-hour train journey from London to Newcastle. However, like thousands of other travellers, we were met by chaotic scenes at the railway station.

Searing heat had frazzled lines

across the rail network. Trains from Kings Cross to towns and cities across the country were being cancelled.

At one stage there was almost a stampede as a departure to Newcastle was announced. Then we were told the information was wrong and asked to return to the main concourse.

The rail staff were fantastic, but there wasn't enough of them. In the torturous heat there were announcements reminding people to drink plenty of fluids, but no drinking water was provided.

The conditions in the station felt akin to an under-developed country. There was no extra help for disabled people or families with young children. People were worried about where they would stay if they couldn't get home.

Elsewhere in London I heard of buses overheating and near-suffocating conditions on the tube.

This crisis was a culmination of the reality of climate change, alongside decades of under-investment as privateers raked in obscene profits from our transport networks.

If this heatwave, or the next one, goes on for any length of time, workers are going to have to demand safe working conditions through trade union struggle. We need to fight for a socialist green alternative, which would include all public transport being nationalised under democratic workers' control.

I eventually arrived home in Newcastle over 20 hours late. Today I'm shattered, but tomorrow will again join the struggle for the socialist transformation of society!

Elaine Brunskill
Newcastle

■ Education workers' pensions attacked

The government has issued a consultation document on proposed changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). Most have little impact on workers.

But one proposal is to remove the current legal obligation to offer new non-teaching staff access to the LGPS from "post-1992 universities" (former polytechnics), sixth-form colleges, and further education colleges.

This move would introduce a two-tier workforce on this important condition

of service - and presuming that a pension which is cheaper for the employers would be on offer, would add to the growing problem of pensioner poverty.

The proposals only apply to institutions in England, thereby creating disparities between England and Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Public service union Unison opposes these measures, and is urging branches to lobby employers to reject the proposed changes.

But if the government presses ahead with these plans, Unison should organise industrial action, in conjunction with fellow unions Unite and GMB, not just of college members, but across local government. The unions should point out that this move would significantly reduce income flow into the pension fund, threatening its viability for all members, in or out of education.

Roger Bannister
Liverpool

■ Water waste of money

It is a sure sign of the growing popularity of water renationalisation, and steps in that direction in the Labour Party's 2017 manifesto, that the regulatory bodies have realised their life of indolence is under threat.

So they must be seen to be 'doing something' about an industry privatised 30 years ago that "has been criticised for increasing charges while distributing billions of pounds to shareholders" (Times, 10 July).

Thatcherism is inextricably linked to de-nationalisation, but equally infamous was privatising regulation. The Environment Agency was set up by the Tories in 1996, while New Labour, not to be outdone, set up Ofwat in 2006. These governments effectively absolved themselves of any democratic accountability.

The Environment Agency, faced with year-on-year increases in 'serious incidents' that damage the environment, threaten wildlife or put the public at risk - 52 in 2017 and 56 last year - reported "we are not seeing dramatic improvements. As a result we will toughen our regulatory approach" (Times, 10 July).

Ofwat is also adopting a 'get tough' approach which from next April "will force through cuts in customer bills across the sector." As the Times further notes, Ofwat "has received as much criticism for failing to properly regulate... as the companies have had for loading up their businesses with debt to enable dividend payments."

Renationalisation of the water industry will be welcomed by "the many, not the few." But our bitter experience of privatised regulation - and, previously, bureaucratic state regulation - necessitates public ownership to be under democratic working-class control and management.

John Merrell
Leicester

■ Labour peers hypocrisy

"Labour peer" is a contradiction in terms. They are the polar opposite of the working class. And some of them hate Labour more than the Tories!

Derek McMillan
Worthing

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.

HUGE WORKLOAD, LOW PAY AND UNPAID HOURS - A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A TEACHING ASSISTANT

A teaching assistant in Wales

Teaching assistants (TAs) play such an important role in school life.

Our wages do not reflect the invaluable role we play in the education and welfare of all students. Unlike teachers, TAs are not paid during school holidays. Wages are paid pro rata with money kept back each month so there is some left during the holiday times.

We are regularly expected to deliver lessons to whole classes and then mark the books. This is a significant saving on paying for a supply teacher.

Extra hours, but no pay

The TA, however, receives no remuneration for the extra hours worked or the extra responsibility involved.

TAs are responsible for the running of interventions ensuring all students are supported to reach the required levels of literacy and numeracy. Welsh schools inspectorate Estyn closely scrutinises the running of these interventions during its visits.

To successfully run the interventions a lot of preparation, resources and planning of lessons is required. Much of this is done outside of paid

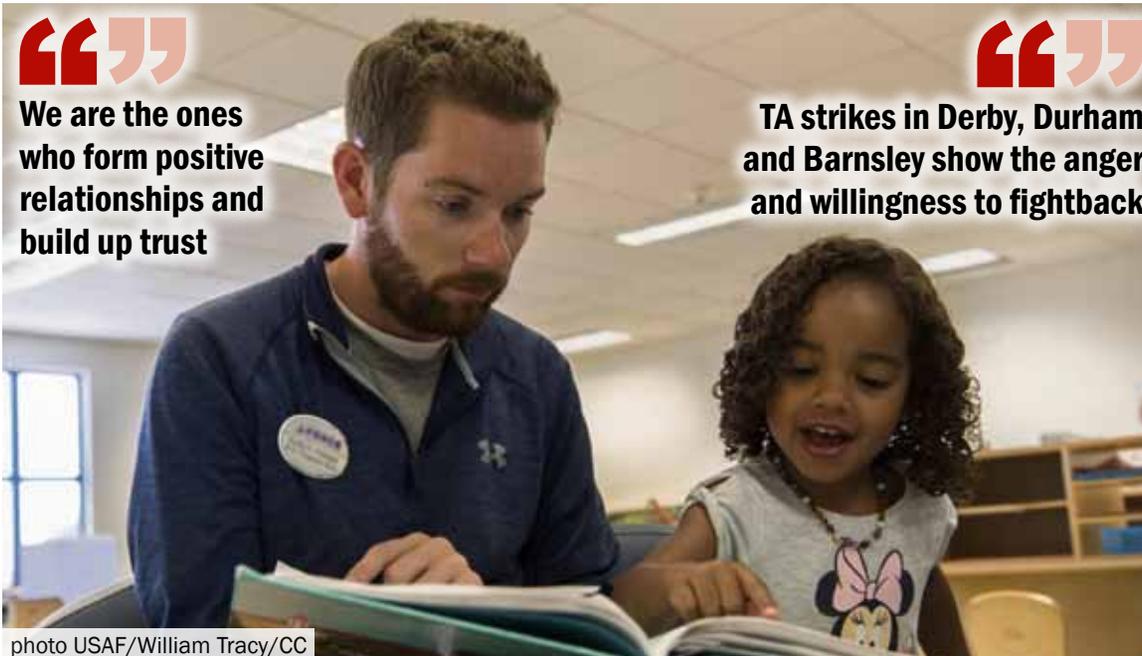


photo USAF/William Tracy/CC

“
We are the ones who form positive relationships and build up trust

“
TA strikes in Derby, Durham and Barnsley show the anger and willingness to fightback

hours and often at home as no time is allowed in a timetabled day.

As TAs often live locally we are an invaluable connection between local communities and their schools.

The role of the TA is an increasingly diverse one. We support children with emotional and behavioural difficulties and are often the ones who form positive relationships and

build up trust.

TAs prepare resources, work on displays around the school, deliver interventions, cover classes, fundraise, provide first aid as well as supporting all school staff, and often doing work to help the office clerk too. The majority are also dinner ladies to support their income.

We are expected to support many

extra-curricular activities. These include concerts, plays, discos, school fetes, and trips as well as residential trips.

These can add hours to the working day but are all unpaid. We often feel pressure to attend, sometimes causing difficulties with our own family arrangements.

Dedicated TAs can work as many

unpaid hours as those that are paid each month, making actual wages well below legal levels.

School budgets being tight (and due to be cut further) means many schools purchase the resources that are needed themselves. It's usual to buy our own files, glue sticks, staple guns and so on.

The TAs are the first to step in and make sure that a child on a trip is not left out when in the gift shop or at the ice-cream stall. We often bring in a PE kit or a warm coat from our own homes if a child is in need.

Unrecognisable

Many TAs ourselves are parents and came into the role to support our families. The role has changed unrecognisably in the last few years, but the wages do not reflect the level of commitment and professionalism the position now demands or the extra pressures it brings.

Low paid and overworked, it is easy for TAs to feel undervalued by teachers, head teachers and the governing body. It is no wonder many leave stressed and disillusioned.

TAs have taken strike action in recent years in Derby, Durham and Barnsley showing the anger and willingness that exists to fight back.

ARISTOCRATS ARE RICH AFTER ALL And getting richer

Nancy Taafe

Waltham Forest Socialist Party

A few years ago, there was a raft of TV programmes showing aristocratic owners of stately homes who had fallen on hard times, and were in danger of losing these precious national treasures forever.

We watched these bumbling modern-day aristocrats retreat to one room, boiling water on a single ring to make tea among the fraying carpets and dusty curtains, accompanied by the sound of rainwater dropping into steel buckets to catch it from the hole in the roof.

Well hold those violins!!!

Matthew Bond and Julien Morton from London South Bank University have just published research into the health of the modern-day aristocracy. The research looked at 2,000 current title holders, such as dukes, marquesses, earls, viscounts and barons.

It looked at more than a million wills passed down from generation to generation, some going right back to 1858. The research paints a totally different picture of the modern aristocracy to the one portrayed by these television programmes.

It paints a picture of hermetically sealed-in wealth within families that has become bigger and more concentrated over the years.

Dukes and barons

Some of the biggest inheritances of the last decade are 6th Duke of Westminster, Gerald Grosvenor, worth £659 million. 11th Baron Barnard, Harry John Neville Vane, £94 million. 11th Duke of Grafton, Hugh Dennis Charles Fitzroy, £71 million, and the list goes on.

Between 1978 and 1987 these wills and aristocratic inheritances were worth £4.2 million each, adjusting for inflation.

The report suggests that econom-

ic 'liberalisation' and deregulation of the City, ushered in by Margaret Thatcher, turbo-charged aristocrats' wealth. They took advantage of low interest rates and bought stocks and shares.

The values of the same inheritances have now increased fourfold to £16.1 million each.

The report cites the aftermath of World War Two as a phase of more progressive taxation and the expansion of the welfare state - Labour government reforms during a period of economic boom - which resulted in a 'pause' in their parasitical accumulation.

Rather than tea and sympathy, this report will have you looking for your pitchfork, particularly when you think that the phrase 'child summer hunger' is becoming normalised. Many kids who experience this suffering will accompany their working parents to foodbanks.

The theft of land and assets by aristocrats hundreds of years ago allows them to survive and thrive still. The first English revolution obviously didn't complete the job, another one is needed.

We've moved! But keep the donations coming in

The Socialist Party has now moved into our new national headquarters in north London. We would like to thank all of our members and readers for the excellent donations to our building fund which have enabled us to make this important move.

But we still have many additional costs related to moving and fitting out the new offices. Can you help us?

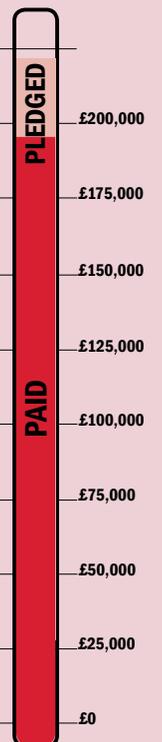
Perhaps you could buy a brick for £20, or maybe you are able to make a bigger donation. There are also still over £25,000 in outstanding pledges, so if you haven't redeemed yours yet please can you do so as soon as possible.

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

The Socialist's publication schedule

The Socialist newspaper is still in its fortnightly summer schedule. This issue of the Socialist will run from Thursday 1 August to Wednesday 14 August. Our normal weekly schedule will resume on Thursday 29 August.

The editors



Walthamstow shopping centre fire People's plan - not disaster capitalism



Billowing smoke from the Mall fire can be seen from the nearby railway station photo Ian Pattison

Nancy Taaffe
Chair of Save Our Square E17

On 22 July smoke billowed across the Walthamstow skyline as news spread on local social media that the shopping mall - the Mall - in our town centre, was on fire.

Save our Square, which is the four-year-old community campaign against massive overdevelopment plans by the council in that area, and is led by Socialist Party members, immediately put a statement up on our Facebook page about the fire, along with an advert for an emergency public meeting the following Thursday.

We expressed our concern that the authorities could use the fire for

a sort of 'disaster capitalism' - where phenomena like floods or fire are the excuse to rush through plans to privatise land, buildings and space. We were determined not to let this happen to the Mall after the fire. Within three days, over 9,000 people had read the post and our campaign was announced on LBC radio as well as on London BBC breakfast news.

At our public meeting we agreed to continue to campaign for our alternative 'people's plan' which we had compiled a month before this fire, as part of our regular campaign. Our plan is proposing good jobs, council homes and public services that are accessible to all in the square and Mall area.

We have produced a survey and

we are planning to run our own consultation throughout the summer and early autumn, with the aim of seriously approaching the authorities in early 2020.

Scott Jones, the east London retail branch chair of the shop workers' union Usdaw, spoke (in a personal capacity) about the immediate demands of shop workers in the light of the fire. He called for no loss of pay and for travel expenses to be paid for all those transferred to other stores. He also called for shop union members to be involved in any inquiry into the fire.

■ **Save Our Square has agreed to meet in the square at 12 noon on Saturday 10 August to continue the campaign**

Campaigning over housing safety

Socialist Party reporters

Following a shocking, preventable fire on its housing estate a few weeks ago, Barking Reach Residents' Association met to discuss the next steps of its campaign.

The association has already secured important concessions and tenants and leaseholders plan to fight on.

They had been campaigning against poor management and for access to fire safety risk assessments before the recent fire.

A recent lively meeting heard Paul Kershaw from the Unite housing workers' union branch and Shac (Social Housing Action Campaign) describe how residents are facing

similar problems around the country and are beginning to organise.

Residents have achieved gains where they have actively campaigned. Paul outlined the need for campaigns to link together to force the hand of a weak government, builders and landlords.

The question of withholding money for rent or service charges until assurances are received - 'no safety, no rent' - was also raised.

Ten years after the Lakanal tower block fire in south London resulted in recommendations that sprinklers should be installed, 95% of tower blocks lack sprinklers.

There is still confusion over what regulations allow, leaving loopholes. And some leaseholders get huge bills to pay to correct unsafe features. It is

so bad that the insurers who cover the private companies who do building control work - signing off buildings as compliant with regulations - are panicking and refusing to back the inspectors, driving at least one, and perhaps many more, to the point of liquidation. This could have serious consequences for housebuilding in the UK.

Boris Johnson has continued to champion deregulation, one of the key factors leading to the fire safety scandal.

The main housing expertise of the new minister, Robert Jenrick, seems to be in owning luxury homes himself - at the last count two London homes worth over £2 million each and a £1 million country pile.



100% council homes at Meridian Water!

photo Paul Mattsson

Enfield Socialist Party members

A big meeting of local residents and trade unionists in Edmonton, North London, agreed to set up a new housing campaign to fight for 100% council homes at Meridian Water, the biggest redevelopment project in London.

The meeting was called by Enfield's fighting, no-cuts councillor, Tolga Amaras - recently suspended by the Labour Party for refusing to vote for cuts - along with other anti-austerity Corbyn-supporting Labour Party members who have organised as Enfield Labour Socialists.

Socialist Party members enthusiastically took part and will be helping to build a campaign to force this right-wing Labour council to change course.

The development is Labour's chance to end the housing crisis in Enfield instead of handing publicly owned brownfield (ex-industrial) land to private property developers and guaranteeing only 75 council homes in the first phase - and none at all in the second phase!

The initial plans for Meridian Water are to build 10,000 homes, but even if only 5,000 get built because of protections on the land, it would still be enough to solve Enfield's housing crisis.

There are over 3,400 households in Enfield in temporary accommodation, the second highest in the whole country, costing the council £8 million a year. 4,500 are on the council waiting list.

In Enfield, over £150 million is paid in housing benefit to subsidise private landlords. As Tolga said, "socialism is cheaper!"

The meeting gave a little glimpse of what could be achieved if, instead of bowing down before the Tories, Labour councillors made a stand.

One rebel councillor and some Labour members who genuinely want the party to act as the champion of working-class people, have galvanised a great start to what could be a major campaign. Imagine the impact if Jeremy Corbyn was calling on Labour councils across the country to do the same.

A general election is looming and there could be a Jeremy Corbyn-led

Tolpuddle festival: Socialist policies to end Tory rule and austerity

Jane Ward
Southampton Socialist Party

Thousands of activists and trade unionists attended the Tolpuddle festival over the weekend of 20-21 July. The festival is held to celebrate the memory of the Tolpuddle Martyrs - agricultural workers who were arrested and transported to Australia in 1834 for forming a trade union.

Socialist Party members who attended called for an immediate general election to oust Boris Johnson and the Tory government, which was met with complete agreement by the large majority of people who stopped to talk to us.

They saw the urgent need to stop Boris in his tracks and for a Labour government with socialist policies. However, there was an undercurrent of worry that the massive onslaught from the pro-capitalist media and from the Blairite wing of his own party might mean that Corbyn may not win the election.

For the second successive year the crowds were slightly down in

number as the initial euphoria over Jeremy Corbyn as Labour's leader has declined. Even so, members from Southern and South West regions of the Socialist Party managed to sell 111 papers and raise £185 for the fighting fund.

Jeremy Corbyn gave the final speech at Tolpuddle. He said that he wanted the next Labour government's legacy to be as great as the one in 1945. He stated that he intended to found a national education service where education "from the cradle to the grave" is a right, not a commodity.

He made many pledges for socialist policies to end austerity, poverty and combat climate change. He promised that a Labour government would repeal the Trade Union Act.

Concluding, Corbyn gave a rallying call for the labour movement to be united on its policies because he believed a united movement can defeat the Tories and win an election. However, that requires that he takes on the Blairite saboteurs and democratises the Labour Party.

Climate strikes: Link up with the workers' movement

Lily Douglas
Waltham Forest Socialist Party

On 19 July, members of the Socialist Party and Socialist Students braved the rain outside parliament to support school students striking against destructive climate change.

It was the latest in a series of brilliant student strikes, which over the months have shown how determined young people are to fight the Tory government's failure to tackle climate change, and for their futures.

Perhaps because of the horrible weather and being the last day at school - the best day at school! - the

protest was smaller than the previous ones. However, the smaller turnout is also a warning that the movement needs to develop and build its links with the workers and trade unions, with clear demands of what students are fighting for.

Building up to the 'Earth Strike' on 20 September we are doing what we can to make it a success by putting demands to the trade unions and linking up with the young people and students.

While it was not a huge turnout on the 19th, we did manage to engage with some students who are interested in finding out more about Socialist Students and how we can fight for socialist change.

Ilford: Parents and teachers unite against cuts

Parents at Ilford County High School gathered outside the school gates on 22 July. National Education Union (NEU) members at the school have already taken three days of strike action against cuts and workload.

The parents wanted to sit down and meet with the headteacher, but she refused. The parents are furious that cuts have taken place and that they were denied a meeting with the head.

Next, parents will take their protest to the director of education, back to school management, to the local councillors, and to Redbridge's Labour 'cuts' council.

The school, which has a deficit, should force the council to allow a

moratorium on repayments.

Southampton council agreed to extend the budget of a local primary school, Valentine, when the head refused to pass on cuts - backed 100% by the Socialist Party.

If the cuts don't stop, the teachers could be striking again when term restarts in September.

The NEU and parents can also take inspiration from nearby Newham. In 2018, strikes stopped Avenue primary and other schools becoming privatised academies.

They were led by Avenue teacher Louise Cuffaro, Socialist Party member and NEU branch secretary. **Ian Pattison**

East London Socialist Party



Over 80 copies of the Socialist were sold photo Ian Pattison

Boris Johnson 'coronation' - boot him out!

In the aftermath of Boris Johnson's 'election' there were two lively and angry protests in central London. Neither was huge and each attracted people of varying political persuasions, but nonetheless opposed to the right-wing policies of Boris and the Tories.

Labour left Owen Jones spoke at one and Jeremy Corbyn at the other. It's clear that it will be a battle to force the Tories out of power - a fight that won't be won if Corbyn

capitulates to the Blairite right wing in the Labour Party on a workers' Brexit and ending austerity.

The Socialist Party attended both demos, selling over 80 copies of the Socialist to people who wanted to discuss more about how we fight for a general election and the need for an incoming Corbyn-led government to adopt thoroughgoing socialist policies.

Helen Pattison
East London Socialist Party

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



UNDERCOVER POLICING & TRADE UNIONS the Political and the Personal

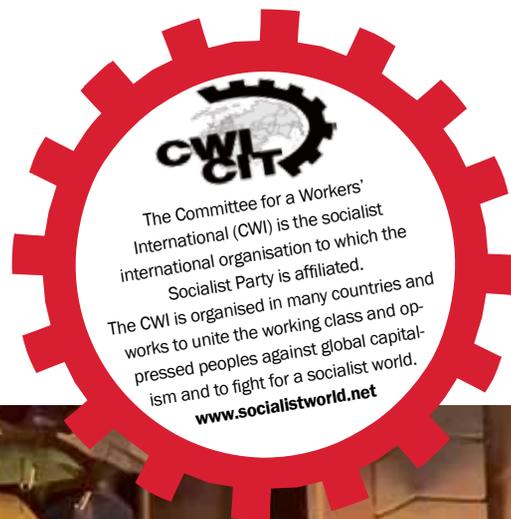
TRADE UNION CONFERENCE
Including sessions on:

Impact of undercover policing on the trade union movement
Women against the State
Privacy & Surveillance in the Workplace
Truth and Fiction: Representations of Spycops on Screen
Undercover policing - inquiry or cover up?

Saturday November 16th 10:30-17:30

University of Greenwich
Stephen Lawrence Building
Old Naval College, 30 Park Row
London, SE10 9LS

MASS MOVEMENT TOPPLES GOVERNOR OF PUERTO RICO



Christine Thomas

Two weeks of almost continuous mass protests have forced the resignation of the governor of Puerto Rico, Ricardo Rosselló. Monday 22 July culminated in a general strike and the largest protests in the history of this US territory, 500,000 people on the streets out of a population of 3.2 million.

The trigger for this popular explosion was the leak of nearly 900 pages of homophobic, sexist and insulting text messages between the governor and eleven members of his immediate clique. But these messages acted as a lightning rod for years of rising anger at corruption, austerity and economic crisis.

Before the Centre for Investigative Journalism revealed the texts, six top officials had been arrested for looting \$15.5 million of federal funds allocated as relief for the devastating destruction wreaked by Hurricane Maria in 2017. Harvard University estimates that up to 5,000 lost their lives in the disaster (Rosselló originally claimed that less than 100 were killed, and Trump 16!).

'Perpetual purgatory'

The New York Times described life for Puerto Ricans as a "perpetual state of purgatory". After 12 years of continuous recession, with Hurricane Maria reducing economic output by 6% in 2018, almost half the population live in poverty, twice the national average. Between 2016 and 2018 200,000 people left the territory, most searching for jobs on the US mainland.

When the territory went bankrupt in 2016 (having already looted the pension funds of workers) an unelected Financial Oversight and Management Board, commonly referred to as 'la Junta', was appointed by the federal government.



Puerto Ricans take to the streets to oust governor Ricardo Rosselló photo Old School WWC Fan-CC

As part of a debt restructuring plan, the board imposed brutal austerity measures, resulting in mass job losses for government workers, school closures and privatisation, and the selling off of telecoms and energy to the private sector.

One of the most frequent chants on the protests was "Ricky resign and take the Junta with you".

Rosselló is due to be replaced by Justice secretary, Wanda Vázquez, but as one protester said, "it's like taking out a cockroach and replacing it with another". Fresh protests have broken out demanding her resignation too.

Although debt repayments have been suspended during the restructuring process this is only a temporary measure and vulture bondholders will be demanding their money back once again.

The Financial Times now expects a "more bondholder friendly" debt restructuring, ie more money for the rich at the expense of current and future pensioners and the working class and poor in general.

Socialists support the right of Puerto Ricans to decide the future of their own territory and its relationship with the USA. On the basis of capitalism, however, that can only mean a future of endless



One protester said, "it's like taking out a cockroach and replacing it with another"

misery and desperation for the mass of the population.

Puerto Ricans have dramatically shown that mass action can get

results. Now it is necessary for independent organisations of the workers and poor to be built and strengthened around a programme which fights for an end to austerity, abolition of the Junta, non-payment of the debt, and public control of the banking and finance sector and major industries, democratically controlled and managed by the working class.

If the hell on earth of the Puerto Rican masses is to be finally ended, these demands must be accompanied by an appeal for solidarity from workers and youth in the US, and the struggle for a socialist Puerto Rico and a socialist USA.

Hong Kong: the struggle for democratic rights escalates

The struggle for democratic rights in Hong Kong is intensifying and widening far beyond the original campaign to scrap the authority's reactionary extradition bill. Demonstrators are protesting daily, despite being repeatedly attacked by heavily armed police.

Beijing has issued an ominous warning that protesters risked "serious damage to the rule of law" and that Hong Kong's undemocratic regime's "top priority" is to "restore social order".

Recently, suspected Triad criminal gang members brutally

attacked demonstrators at a metro station who were returning from a protest. Police were absent during the attack, prompting accusations of collusion by Hong Kong's puppet regime.

More protests are planned in the coming weeks. Significantly, these will include a transit workers strike and a city-wide strike.

■ How the movement can develop and with what programme of demands is analysed in Clare Doyle's CWI article, which can be read on socialistworld.net



Mass protest in Hong Kong for democratic rights photo VOA/CC

Harland and Wolff shipyard occupation

Workers demand government renationalise to save jobs and skills



photo CWI

CWI reporter Northern Ireland

Harland and Wolff shipyard is the sole remaining shipbuilding business in Belfast. The shipbuilding industry in the city has a 400-year history and was most famously associated with the construction of the ill-fated Titanic.

At its height, 35,000 workers were employed at Harland and Wolff, but like the rest of the UK shipbuilding industry, that number has dwindled to 130 employed at the site today.

The company was nationalised by the UK government in 1975 but was then sold to the Norwegian shipping magnate Fred Olsen in 1989. A scaled-back Harland and Wolff was transferred to his energy wing, Fred Olsen Energy.

In recent years the workforce has largely been employed in the assembly and finishing of huge metallic sheaves which support renewable energy sea-turbines, but the recent contracts for this work came to an end as Fred Olsen Energy went into bankruptcy.

Attempts to find a buyer for Harland and Wolff ran into difficulties in recent weeks, leaving the workers facing an increasingly uncertain future. Unite the Union has revealed that the company was unable to pay the workforce wages for more than the next week.

In the face of this threat a campaign was launched by Unite and GMB, who jointly represent the workforce, to demand immediate action from the UK government.

The unions raised the need for renationalisation as the only way to safeguard jobs and skills.

The workers were quick to highlight the words of incoming Tory prime minister Boris Johnson. In his speech delivered on the steps of 10 Downing Street he lauded the importance of the UK's "productive power". The workforce demanded he act to safeguard their "productive power" by renationalising the shipyard.

On 29 July workers locked the gates to the factory in protest. In a move reminiscent of the Visteon factory occupation in the city a decade ago, the workers have now said that they will stay until the UK government acts.

Strength

The strength of this action has forced local politicians, including the Democratic Unionist Party which represents East Belfast where the shipyard and most of its workers live, to line up behind them.

Already Boris Johnson has confirmed that the first point of call in his planned visit to Northern Ireland will be the shipyard.

A key demand raised by the workers and their unions will be for the new government to commit itself to guaranteeing that current Royal Navy contracts - worth multi-billions each - go to UK shipyards.

The previous Tory government was determined that contracts to supply both Type 31e frigates and support ships were deemed non-military expenditure, allowing the

Ministry of Defence to go to global competitive tender in order to minimise costs.

Should Johnson intervene to reclassify them as military expenditure, the government would be able to give these contracts to a bidding consortia of UK shipyards, including Belfast. Workers also continue to demand the government intervene directly and renationalise the business.

By initiating their occupation, the workers of Harland and Wolff have demonstrated what can be achieved by workers when they get organised and fight back.

Capitalism is clearly failing the workers in the Belfast shipyard. It has failed others which recently closed such as Appledore in Devon.

The skills of the workforce in Belfast are suited to the construction of structures for both wind and tidal energy. Belfast port is a natural deep-water port and centrally located for the development of this sector off the coast of both Ireland and Britain. A socialist economy would invest in these workers and the future skills base.

The power of the workers' occupation at Harland and Wolff and the immediate response of the UK ruling party demonstrate the power of the unionised industrial working class.

Members of civil servants' union Nipsa, currently on strike, have shown solidarity with the shipyard workers. The Irish Trade Union Congress needs to mobilise support and unite all the disputes.



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 many countries around the world.

Our demands include:

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

WORK AND INCOME

- Trade union struggle 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!

socialistparty.org.uk/join 020 8988 8777

@socialist_party text 07761 818 206 /CWSocialistParty

LOBBY THE TUC

FOR WORKERS' ACTION

TO DEFEAT JOHNSON

Rob Williams

Chair,
National Shop Stewards Network

It's finally happened. Boris Johnson is in Downing Street. His wing of the Tory party hopes that his maverick roller-coaster can power through to a snap general election win.

He's already shown that he can utter crude bigotry from one corner of his mouth while promising vague spending commitments from the other.

All designed to paint a picture of a 'plain-speaking man of the people'. But like Donald Trump, the only people he ultimately represents are the big business elite.

Despite the bravado of the right-wing press, the capitalist establishment is taking a leap into the dark with Johnson, in order to try and find a way out of the Brexit logjam. Particularly as they and the Tory party are split over the way forward.

But a Boris Brexit, like a Cameron Remain, would be in the interests of big business.

The only thing that unites them all is their determination to avoid a Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour government. Even in her farewell speech, Theresa May called on Corbyn to follow her off the political scene. In this, they are all joined by their Blairite agents in the Labour Party.

The Tories remember the last time they went for a snap general election. In 2017, the opinion polls

predicted a Theresa May landslide but Corbyn's manifesto of renationalisation, a £10-an-hour minimum wage and abolishing tuition fees, totally transformed the election, denying the Tories a majority and deepening their crisis.

That electoral turnaround was based on the economic and social crisis facing ordinary people. Corbyn's best bet to defeat a populist such as Johnson, who is dishonestly targeting working-class people, is to fight on a programme of socialist policies.

The capitalist establishment worries that a Corbyn government could raise the sights of workers, who could push him further to the left. They would expect it to intervene if their jobs were threatened

and could be prepared to take action if necessary. Just in the last few months, we've seen closures and mass redundancies announced or threatened across industry. Shipyard workers in Harland and Wolff in Belfast closed the gates on 29 July to demand assurances over their futures, calling for the shipyard to be nationalised (see page 15).

The anger that exists must be mobilised by the unions to fight for a general election to get rid of Johnson and all the Tories. The National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) is again holding a rally at the congress of the trade union federation TUC in Brighton to build such a campaign of action.

The TUC should be a council of war to bring together all the increas-

ing number of disputes with other channels of discontent, such as the climate strike on 20 September. Come to the NSSN rally and build the campaign for a general election.

2019 NSSN TUC lobby

Sunday 8 September 1pm
at Holiday Inn, Kings Road,
Brighton BN1 2JF

■ See shopstewards.net for more

ISSN 1366-9621



9 771366 962103