

**£1/£2** solidarity price

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# the Socialist

Formerly **Militant**

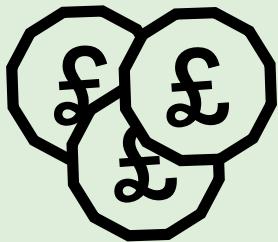
## WHERE'S OUR PPE?



## WHERE'S OUR TESTING?



## WHERE'S OUR MONEY?



### SAFETY

- PPE for all frontline workers
- Mass testing for all
- Workers' control of workplace safety

### INCOME

- 100% wages and increased benefits
- 10% pay rises for all NHS and frontline workers + hazard pay
- Minimum wage of £12 an hour

### ACTION

- Step up workplace organisation - build fighting trade unions
- Fight for an independent political voice for working-class people

### SOCIALISM

- Make the rich pay for the crisis, not workers
- End the profit system
- Socialist planning, not capitalist chaos

Hospital have the virus, according to an A&E consultant there.

Nurses and doctors have been hooked up to ventilators in the unit I work in. Some are among the 100 health workers to have died as a result of the disease. We need an urgent trade union-led investigation of the health worker deaths in the UK to see what PPE they were wearing, whether they were trained properly in its use, and what the conditions were like on their wards. Because fatigue really can kill in this situation.

There has been no serious effort to guarantee the supply of the PPE we need by the UK government or the devolved governments. There shouldn't be a debate in the press at all about whether there's enough PPE or not: politicians are lying when they say there's enough to go around. It's not the fault of nurses. They are having to ransack hardware stores, and appeal on social media for supplies.

Health workers have had a decade of real-terms pay cuts, leaving many of us with pay worth 20% less than it was in 2010. That meant thousands of nurses and other health professionals left the NHS, leaving us too short-staffed to run the NHS properly, even before the coronavirus crisis hit.

Many of my colleagues are saying that they will play their part while the emergency lasts, but that they're leaving afterwards. That would be a catastrophe for everyone who relies on the service. It must be made clear that the sacrifice of these workers is valued. There should be an immediate 10% pay rise, plus hazard pay, and an agreement to quickly recover all pay lost since 2010.

The last straw for many has been the callous way that politicians have treated our safety. Initially, we were told not to wear any personal protective equipment (PPE). After health worker fatalities and rising anger, the guidelines were changed. But they're still driven by supply failings, not safety, and in most areas the PPE is inadequate.

This, together with the pitifully small number of people who have been tested in the UK, means many health workers have nothing between them and the developing pandemic. It feels like we're being sent over the top without any ammo.

Despite what Welsh first minister Mark Drakeford says, PPE failures were a key factor in why there are so many infections around Newport. 50% of accident and emergency workers in the Royal Gwent

Health unions should take control of determining what health workers need to work safely. They should take over the supply and distribution of PPE too. We need a new army of union reps to come forward to coordinate that, and make sure we're kept as safe as possible.

The government should immediately take over companies capable of producing PPE and re-purpose production to produce the equipment we need.

Workers who know the job need to run things directly too. So that there are no more mistakes - like the ventilators that

have been manufactured and are useless because patients can't be weaned off their support - and so that all the shortages can be identified.

It's not just ventilators we need. Dialysis machines, supportive pillows for prone patients, and liquid nutrition, for example, are all in short supply too. The industries should be run under democratic workers' control, with health workers on the boards involved in designing the kit, and ensuring it is correctly distributed.

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

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

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020 8988 8777 - ask for the editors

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Friday before publication, or Monday morning for urgent news, unless otherwise agreed with the editors.

The Socialist goes to press on a Tuesday night. We publish online on Wednesday and in print on Thursday.

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

**Karl Marx**

# London bus drivers' action over safety stops front door boarding

## ■ Fight for further health and safety measures continues

**26 transport workers have died from Covid-19 in London, the majority of them bus drivers. Now London bus drivers have forced Transport for London (TfL) and bus companies to implement safety measures to protect them at work. Bus driver and Socialist Party member Moe spoke to the Socialist about what has been won and what needs to happen next.**

**What has been done?**

We have won an important safety measure, forcing bus companies and TfL to close the front doors of every bus and implement free travel, meaning passengers are kept at a safe distance from drivers. This is a victory and now other drivers outside of London are demanding the same.

**How did you achieve this victory and why is it so important?**

At first TfL resisted because it didn't want to lose revenue. But we got our argument across and forced TfL and management to concede. As we have done every step of the way. When lockdown was first enforced drivers started sealing doors, sealing holes in cab doors and stopping passengers sitting directly behind drivers. TfL and managers then endorsed these measures.

But it should not have taken so

photo Martin49/CC



# Excellent support for Socialist Party special finance appeal

**Chris Newby**  
The Socialist sales organiser

We have had a fantastic response to our special appeal to help finance the publication of the Socialist and promote the ideas of the Socialist Party in this corona crisis.

Three weeks into the current fighting fund campaign and we have raised a tremendous £14,393 - 58% of the target. Over £12,400 of this is for the special appeal.

Donations small and large have been flooding into our offices. Ranging from the £2 from new member Jonas Dos Santos Junior in South East London who writes, "Thanks for allowing me to be part of the Socialist Party", the £5 donated by new member and college student Sofia Pantisjoha in Waltham Forest, to the £500 from Heather Rawling in Leicester.

No matter the size of the donation, these are all crucial to making sure we can continue to get our socialist message out to as many people as possible.



## Socialist Party Fighting Fund

	£ received	£ target	April - June 2020	Deadline 30 June
South West	1,503	1,800		84%
West Midlands	2,102	2,600		81%
Yorkshire	1,633	2,550		64%
Wales	1,472	2,300		64%
East Midlands	1,148	1,850		62%
London	2,594	4,600		56%
Eastern	674	1,200		56%
Northern	350	750		47%
Southern	732	2,350	31%	
North West	235	1,150	20%	
Other	1,801	3,850	47%	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14,243</b>	<b>25,000</b>	<b>57%</b>	

Help fund the fightback

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cheques payable to Socialist Party, PO  
Box 24697, London E11 1YD  
Please indicate your donation is for  
the 'coronavirus appeal'



Dave and Judy Griffiths from Coventry both donated £50. £100 was also donated by the Coventry Communication Workers Union youth committee.

The following quote from Becky Shah in Liverpool, a new Socialist

Party member, shows the level of sacrifice that our members and supporters are prepared to make. Donating £10 Becky says:

"Sorry it's such a small amount. Wish it was more. Am on a limited income, survive on benefits."

long for them to listen to us. 26 people have died, and this could have been avoided. And drivers should not pay the price for the lost revenue further down the line.

**What else needs to be done?**

What we have achieved is not enough. There are 2,000 London buses that only have one door - the front - and we say these routes should be suspended unless two-door buses can replace them. The other concern we have is that more people are now boarding buses because they are free.

Combined with construction sites reopening after Easter, this means there is concern over passenger numbers. We are happy to transport key construction workers, but non-essential construction sites should be shut down with no loss of pay to protect those workers and lower bus passenger numbers.

Another measure that TfL have brought in is special electronic air filters on buses that are used on hospital routes. But they have been fitted on only 100 buses, while there are 9,000 in London in total! They should be fitted on every bus, and permanently, as they help reduce air pollution.

We are also still calling for more PPE, especially for drivers who have to travel as passengers on buses to get to work or change buses. And we also want lower working hours with no loss of pay. Drivers are mostly working long shifts, 10-12 hours, meaning they are more likely to be exposed to the virus and are fatigued - an issue we were campaigning on before the crisis.

Drivers are still scared to death during their shifts so we will keep fighting.

Here are some other quotes from members and supporters who have donated to this appeal:

"Keep up the good work guys. We need a voice to question decisions that are being made," Mr J G Jones Port Talbot donated £20

Miss S K Sethi donating £3: "Long live the NHS!"

Tony Pill Lancashire donating £10: "Wish it could be more."

It is clear that our online meetings are also having a good effect in helping to raise money for the appeal. M Oldziejewska from Chingford who donated £10 writes: "Thank you for organising a brilliant meeting tonight!"

Another supporter donated £30 after attending our meeting in North London.

While the vast majority of the fighting fund has come in from donations to our special appeal, our members are also looking at every opportunity to help raise fighting fund.

Alex Brown in Sheffield raised £30.06 selling t-shirts. Leeds members raised £190 selling badges, and in London our members raised £90 from an online bric-a-brac sale.

This is a fantastic start, but it's vital that we all continue our efforts to smash through the fighting fund target. Make sure you get in your donation and ask people that you know to donate.

# PPE shortages: “I feel so bloody angry”

The guidelines we follow on use of PPE have changed dramatically during this pandemic. At first we were told we must wear full PPE for every patient suspected of having Covid 19. Since then the guidelines have changed repeatedly. Clearly, this has not been because they are ‘listening to the science’. It is being driven by budgets and the lack of stock.

When the Tories realised how many people would be hospitalised the ‘science’ changed. So it’s now OK to wear flimsy aprons when treating patients with the most infectious viruses we have ever experienced!

We have pulled out everything we have to get through the weekend.

Used gowns and the higher quality masks have been saved from intensive care. This is unprecedented, and risks staff becoming contaminated. And we are still unsure how to decontaminate them. Even the hazmat suits have come out of storage, as any coverall is better than none.

Local people don’t just bring chocolate and hand cream. They make us visors, hats and masks. But the news that the gowns are not coming after all is devastating. It’s not safe for us or our patients, and clinicians are making some very tough decisions on treatment.

The lack of gowns at Southampton has become critical. It means

I can’t relieve staff attending long theatre cases because they need full PPE, and there’s not enough for more than one radiographer. So one of my colleagues worked right through, without food or water, only getting out at nearly 8pm. Also, intensive care had to borrow our only specialist mask because they had run out.

I just feel so bloody angry that my colleagues are being thrown under the bus!

Many of us will never get over the cruelty of this disease, and the cruelty of a system that puts getting business up and running ahead of saving lives.

**An NHS health professional**

# National plan for testing needed

Testing everybody in a northern Italian village of 3,000 people saw those with Covid-19 fall 90% within ten days. People testing positive, with or without symptoms, were isolated so they didn’t infect others. This shows why testing is vital.

The Tory government’s failure to test at the scale needed causes many severe illnesses and deaths.

Health and care workers urgently need weekly testing. Those with mild symptoms, but without Covid, could work. Covid carriers without symptoms isolate, protecting patients and colleagues.

When China’s first cases were identified in late December, pandemic contingency plans here should have been opened. They should have rolled into action after Britain’s first case was confirmed in late January.

On 19 April, the number of tests performed was still only 5,522 per million people (compared to Germany’s

20,786). South Korea has over 600 mobile test centres. The UK has 22, meaning two hour drives for many.

Health secretary Matt Hancock wrings his hands and says: “We have the best scientific labs in the world but we did not have the scale. My German counterpart for instance could call upon 100 testing labs ready and waiting when the crisis struck.”

Not until the end of March did the government announce it would recruit laboratories from universities, research institutes and private companies. Why not early February?

The Institute of Biomedical Science, representing 17,000 NHS laboratory workers, says the problem is not insufficient labs but swabs, plastic tubes and chemicals. There is a global shortage. The government’s early complacency left them at the back of the queue.

Years of austerity cuts mean NHS labs rely on a few non-domestic suppliers, such as giant corporation Roche. ‘Efficient’ in normal times, but these are not normal times! Most universities can make the chemicals required.

Julian Peto, a respected epidemiologist, estimates there are enough machines in the UK for ten million daily tests - everybody weekly - obtaining supplies directly from manufacturers rather than clinical test companies.

A national plan is needed, drawn up by NHS, university, biotechnology and other workers through their trade unions, to mobilise all the resources needed for a huge increase in testing. Test, isolate and contact trace to exit lockdown until vaccines are widely available!

**Jon Dale  
Secretary Unite union  
Nottinghamshire NHS branch  
(personal capacity)**

# Capitalist press attacks Tory incompetence

“Pandemic planning became a casualty of the austerity years.”

“We missed the boat on testing and PPE... We just watched. A pandemic was always at the top of our national risk register - always - but when it came we just watched. We could have been Germany but instead we were doomed by our incompetence, our hubris and our austerity.”

These quotes come from the horse’s mouth: scientists, academics, doctors, emergency planners, public officials and politicians have all attacked the Tories’ handling of the coronavirus crisis.

A 5,000-word article in the Sunday Times (ST) revealed how the Tories surrendered society’s safety to the interests of big business - through austerity and privatisation. These are, ultimately, a wealth transfusion mechanism - sucking from workers’ pay, public services, health and safety, etc, and swelling the bank accounts of big business.

The ST article reveals Boris Johnson’s absence from five Cobra meetings and a general lack of urgency towards the cri-

sis. A Financial Times editorial also excoriated the PM for his failure to act more effectively over ventilator production.

A 3 February speech confirms Johnson’s conscious general approach of doing nothing ‘herd immunity’: “We are starting to hear some bizarre autarkic rhetoric, when barriers are going up, and when there is a risk that new diseases such as coronavirus will trigger a panic and a desire for market segregation.” He went on: “Humanity needs some government somewhere that is willing at least to make the case powerfully for freedom of exchange.” In other words, a plan to take advantage of the world crisis situation in the interest of the British capitalist class - come what may for the working class.

The ST article was a major news talking point over the weekend, with speculation it reflected a growing lack of confidence in Johnson by sections of the capitalist class, at least by Rupert Murdoch, owner of the Sunday Times. The ‘all in it together’ line of the government was always a lie - with working-class people on the frontline, denied access to testing

and PPE, and bearing all the effects of austerity on our living standards. They have been eroded just as the stocks of PPE and pandemic planning were.

The Tories, who came into this crisis already divided, are fracturing over how to deal with it. Ultimately, they are there to act in the interests of the capitalist class, but their system is in crisis, and they are incapable of agreeing on the best way to do so. Hence the debate over an exit strategy from the lockdown.

Whatever their differences over a path forward, they all agree on the need to attack working-class living standards in order to benefit the capitalist class. As the Socialist Party’s workers’ charter says, trade unions and workplace committees should play a central role in deciding when and how a return to work takes place.

But where is the Labour Party, the official opposition, in all of this? The need to fight for a workers’ party that is independent of any big business interests is becoming clearer than ever in this crisis.

**Sarah Sachs-Eldridge  
Socialist Party national organiser**



## WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

### ENVIRONMENT



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

### RIGHTS

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

### MASS WORKERS’ PARTY

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

### SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

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**More dispatches from the front: 'There are so many more patients dying'**

**Week four and still no testing for ICU staff**

The main concern with staff at the moment is it's week four in Covid ICU and no sign of anyone being tested yet. We're OK for PPE at this particular trust, but you've seen the news about the shortage elsewhere. We're getting concerned about the number of frontline staff losing their lives.

**An NHS intensive care technician**

**PPE: we won't be divided along occupational lines**

Conditions are deteriorating as shortages of promised PPE serially fail to materialise. While morale remains high, there is now an almost complete lack of trust in central government.

The race for supplies also results in inconsistent application of guidance. Some clinicians ask that porters not use gloves or masks despite the serious concerns about transporting patients who are suspected or confirmed sufferers of Covid-19.

While ancillary staff understand that supplies are dwindling, it's no less unacceptable that government continues to view us as cannon fodder. We won't be divided along occupational lines.

**An NHS porter**

**Staff are struggling to cope with the number of deaths**

Almost every ward is a Covid ward. Some staff are struggling to cope emotionally with the number of deaths. There are so many more patients dying than usual.

People were very angry with the health secretary's boast that there is excess capacity in intensive care. Maybe there is in some hospitals, especially in areas where they haven't been hit so hard by the coronavirus.

But here, intensive care is totally full. It has been extended into two other areas. As soon as the workmen have finished altering the new wards, patients are being wheeled in.

**An NHS catering worker**

**Excuses, excuses from outsourcing management**

Domestics and other outsourced staff feel taken for granted. Before coronavirus hit, the trust was refusing to start discussions on bringing them back in-house.

Now they are saying they can't discuss it because they are too busy dealing with the crisis. What do they think cleaners and porters are busy doing?

They are cleaning Covid wards to prevent transmission; transporting dead bodies. They are keeping the hospital running. A domestic said, "we should have gone on strike now, when they need us the most."

**An NHS admin worker**

# Covid-19 patient speaks out: fantastic support from under-resourced health workers

**Steve Nally, a support worker in the housing sector, was among the first Covid-19 patients at St Thomas' Hospital in south London. Steve spoke to the Socialist about the problems in provision - clear even before approaching the peak.**

**How did you start to develop symptoms?**

I was in self-isolation from 17 March because I have asthma. Before that, I had been following all the government guidelines in terms of keeping myself safe at work, but I still had to go on a busy tube every day.

So despite all of that I started to become very unwell on 23 March. I must have picked up the virus in my block, or prior to self-isolation in my travels around London.

I was in a lot of pain for two weeks, then I became short of breath. By 3 April I was struggling. I rang 111. A health professional called me back later and immediately called an ambulance.

I can't explain the shock of an ambulance arriving and paramedics at your front door. You suddenly realise: this is serious. They took me to St Thomas' - they were two young Australians, working as paramedics here. I went straight into A&E.

**What was it like in the hospital?**

After testing I was transferred down to a Covid ward. I was their first patient. The lead nurse said they'd literally been training for the best part of two weeks for the wave to come in, and they didn't know how it was going to affect them, but they were as ready as they could be.

I got very, very ill. In my bay, I saw people being taken down to intensive care and I didn't see them coming up again. Young men with young families having to go down to ICU, you could see the fear in their faces. There's images I'm trying to blot out.

That must be difficult - when you're having to reassure someone, and also be quite honest with them. They're multitasking beyond belief. There's images I'm trying to blot out.

**And Boris Johnson was in the same hospital as you?**

The difference between me and Boris Johnson, who was in at the same time, was that he was in the luxury private rooms at the top. He was transferred down to the basement (so he lost his view!) in case he became very ill, because it takes a few minutes to get you from the top to ICU.

And that's it. You get a bag of medication and a discharge letter, and you realise after a day or two that there's no follow-up. Who's going to chase me up to see that I'm getting on OK?

Once you're past 'peak Covid', they need the beds, so off you go.

The only people left on the ward are the elderly and those with disabilities who need a care package.

The only follow-up I received was when I rang my GP surgery. They were very good, but I had to do that myself, which I think is a big failing.

If we had the number of hospital beds we had 30 years ago, people could be gently eased home. But I don't blame the staff, I blame Tory and Labour cuts over the past decades. And no follow-up afterwards - again, it's lack of resources, it's cuts.

But some felt uncomfortable. Feeling like he's said all these things about us, we've had our pay suppressed, our jobs cut, and now he wants our services. Now when he needs us, he's full of praise for us. The hypocrisy.

**What would you demand for the workers and patients?**

World-class PPE is a must - and lots



photo Mohsen Atayi/CC

# Care homes coronavirus scandal: blood on their hands

**Dave Gorton  
Chesterfield Socialist Party**

There is growing anger at the government's handling of the coronavirus crisis. 400,000 people living in care homes have been abandoned - surrendered to the virus. Most of the elderly and frail who contract Covid-19 will not be hospitalised, but left to die without adequate medical attention.

Only 217 coronavirus-related care home deaths were officially recorded in England and Wales up to 3 April. But the National Care Forum, a collection of not-for-profit organisations, estimates the figure is now over 4,000.

The government disingenuously says this discrepancy is to do with the timing of data collection, but the truth is that the fatality figures released are only those who die in hospital. As most are privately run, there is no official data about how many people actually live in care homes, never mind die of coronavirus there!

It is a huge industry, mostly run for profit, not for compassionate reasons. The lack of PPE provision for workers in private care homes



can be pinpointed directly to maintaining profits.

In England alone, there are 18,500 care providers, and 17,000 mostly 'standalone' residential and nursing homes. This is not a care system planned to care for those in need. It is profit-driven, and this crisis is demonstrating the anarchy of the free market in all its brutality.

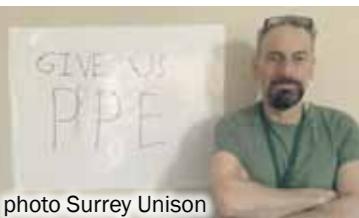
The majority in care are in residential establishments. They don't need nursing; they're in care because of dementia or other needs which can't be provided in the community. What they rely on is close attention which can't be provided without hands-on support. Social distancing is impossible in care homes.

What is possible is full PPE for the staff, testing for everyone, and proper live-in facilities for staff to prevent them bringing in, or taking out, the virus. Possible - but they eat into profits, so the bosses won't hand them over easily. The trade unions must lead a fight for them.

Those whose families suffer, those who work in the sector, and millions more, will demand change in the near future. This must include bringing social care into the public sector, in a fully funded and integrated care and health system, under the democratic control of staff and service users.

Covid-19 finally breached the care home my elderly parents are in last week. I'd obviously prefer it if my part of that struggle wasn't based on tragedy. But whatever happens, I'll still be fighting for an end to this capitalist system which has blood on its hands once again.

# Management tells carers PPE would 'worry' residents



My sister works as a carer in a local privately run care home. She has been worried sick over the policies for coronavirus not being implemented there.

Not until 16 March were they given the OK to wear full PPE, even though it was in the care home prior to that. They were told by the managers that they were following government guidelines set out by the care minister, Helen Whately, and that wearing PPE would worry the residents and should only happen if a resident had confirmed Covid-19.

She, like many who work in care, is not in a union. They feel powerless as they do not want to stop working because they are short of staff and want to look after the residents. Yet at the same time, they fear they could potentially kill a resident if they bring the virus in with them, and without PPE could spread it in the home.

**Brother of a care worker**

# Councils must demand control of supplies and reversal of austerity

**Hugo Pierre  
Unison union  
national executive committee member (personal capacity)**

Despite their claims of "partnership" between central and local government, it's clear the Tories have not involved councils in their Covid-19 planning at all.

Building of more hospitals and more beds. Mass stockpiling of all the things we need as this unfolds over the next 12 to 18 months.

All the staff, whoever works in the hospital, should have a serious pay increase.

There's people who were supporting me who were paying their way through a nursing degree. That should be scrapped for all students, but as a starter all health workers should have fees scrapped and reimbursed immediately. There's no other sector of workers who have to put their lives on the line and pay for the OK?

Once you're past 'peak Covid', they need the beds, so off you go. The only people left on the ward are the elderly and those with disabilities who need a care package.

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when I rang my GP surgery. They were very good, but I had to do that myself, which I think is a big failing.

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**Insufficient PPE, nightmares with Universal Credit, sick and knackered workers: read the full interview at socialistparty.org.uk**

they've been 'allowed' to spend this year on social care.

The privatisation and fracturing of social care over years has now led to a crisis of coordination in the care sector. There are 400,000 people in care homes, and over 500,000 cared for in their own homes. A letter to the government's Department of Health and Social Care by council directors of adult social care complained that distribution of PPE was "paltry" and in many areas "shambolic."

Many councils now face accelerated financial ruin, with some fearing they will have to issue 'Section 114' bankruptcy notices. These restrict spending to 'essential' items until the council can cut back expenditure even more.

Most started the year with major budget cuts on the agenda already, following 40% reductions to central funding over the last decade that councils had failed to oppose. For example, Camden Council was preparing to make £40 million more cuts to services.

The Tory-led Local Government Association, representing all councils, says local authorities face a cash shortage of at least £1 billion. That's on top of the £1.6 billion extra

place in social care has been amplified by Covid-19. There are over 120,000 vacancies in the care sector. New reports show many carers aren't even paid the national minimum wage! Then there is the scandal that overnight payments have, so far, been blocked by the courts. Labour councils must start fighting to take social care into democratic control and back into public ownership. They must demand the full funding to deliver a truly caring service with proper rates of pay for critical staff - not the Tories' only solution, a badge!

Labour councils still have billions in reserves that they can draw on, and more available through borrowing powers, to set up emergency funds to provide "whatever it takes" for struggling communities. The bill should then be sent to the government. The Tories have shown the money is there. They can be forced to pay up in this crisis. Councils should therefore be demanding more: that the government comes up with the funds to fully reverse the decade of austerity and its terrible consequences.

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# Trade union activists from across the south of England discuss the battle for safety on the frontline



**Paul Couchman**  
Surrey County Unison branch secretary (personal capacity)

Trade union activists from across the south of England came together for a Socialist Party meeting on Zoom on 18 April.

Members of the Fire Brigades Union, RMT transport union, PCS civil servants' union, public sector union Unison and general union Unite were among the reps attending, from the health service, social care, and from the private, public and independent sectors. All speakers spoke in a personal capacity.

Hugo Pierre, Unison national executive committee, and Jared Wood, RMT national executive committee, opened the meeting and spoke about the battle on the frontline of public services for appropriate PPE, immediate testing and full pay for workers.

## Response

The lack of an effective response from government, and the shortage of equipment and PPE, was linked directly to the years of austerity, cuts and privatisation carried out by successive governments.

Fragmentation and privatisation of health and social care services has made a difficult situation a thousand times worse - in terms of funding, distribution of equipment and so on.

Both speakers stressed the importance of the trade unions remaining

independent during the crisis, defending members, and organising around health and safety, and issues such as pay, terms and conditions.

Jared explained that many good trade unionists, even some left wingers, had been carried along by the 'we're all in this together' mood and were expressing the need to work with employers and the government in the national interest.

Unfortunately, as both speakers explained, the Tories' 'national interest' is protecting the economy and business rather than the workers and those who use services.

## Chilling examples

Both Hugo and Jared gave chilling examples of workers in their trade unions being told to work in unacceptable and unsafe conditions - without PPE, without social distancing - and outlined some of the great examples of where workers had made a stand, such as the postal workers and library workers who walked out over health and safety, Covid-19-related issues.

Joy and Callum from Hampshire County Unison talked about the situation within social care, and the need for a viable socialist alternative to the blind market strategy of capitalism.

Everyone who spoke made it clear that we need to hold our union leaders to account. Many expressed the need to link practical solutions to real-life problems with the need for socialist solutions. We are not all in this together - frontline workers are holding the line without the money, resources and safety measures they need. At some point these workers are going to say no, and our unions must be there to support them and lead them.

Agnieszka, also a Unison health rep, told of her personal fight with the virus, and how lack of PPE probably led to her contracting Covid-19.

# Bromley Libraries announce 'restructure' in the middle of pandemic!

Bromley Library workers are facing a restructure, including moving to new work locations, in the middle of this health emergency.

Their union Unite says the restructure has nothing to do with the health emergency - instead it's about the employer, Greenwich Leisure Limited, opportunistically using the health emergency to exert control in the workplace.

This follows the company's defeat at the hands of workers, and their union following indefinite strike action. The settlement included new posts, no compulsory redundancies, and backdated pay awards for those who had been underpaid. But the company is now trying to implement a 'reorganisation'.

Unite regional officer Onay Kasab says: "Our members working in Bromley Libraries have been told by this callous employer they face a restructure, a reorganisation. Bringing uncertainty and stress on top of what our members are having to cope with day in, day out. The restructure is completely and utterly unnecessary. We send a very loud and clear message to Greenwich Leisure Limited. Back off! There is no need for your restructure! The priority is people's safety!"

**Do you agree?**  
**JOIN THE SOCIALISTS**  
[socialistparty.org.uk/join](http://socialistparty.org.uk/join)

# RMT transport union: Lift the suspension of Steve Hedley

**The following statement of Red Lines - the bulletin of Socialist Party members in the RMT transport union - calls for the lifting of the union executive's suspension of Assistant General Secretary (AGS), Steve Hedley.**

"Following comments he made on Facebook, AGS Steve Hedley has been suspended from his duties by the RMT's National Executive Committee.

Socialist Party members in our union understand Steve's hatred of Tory austerity, and the misery it has caused for millions of working-class people. The current pandemic is tragically showing the effects of Tory policies.

Declan, a bus driver in the RMT, explained how he and his fellow union members had had to fight every step of the way for appropriate safety measures to be taken on the buses, including the supply of PPE. He also spoke of the dozens of transport workers who have died already from Covid-19.

Joy and Callum from Hampshire County Unison talked about the situation within social care, and the need for a viable socialist alternative to the blind market strategy of capitalism.

The meeting was sombre and included a number of workers giving their own testimonies as to what it has been like working during the coronavirus pandemic. Steve, Unison health service group rep, talked of the fight for PPE in his hospital and the fight for a fair pay award for health staff.

Agnieszka, also a Unison health rep, told of her personal fight with the virus, and how lack of PPE probably led to her contracting Covid-19.

## Support the working-class press in 2020 MAY DAY GREETINGS IN THE SOCIALIST

- Calling all trade union branches and committees, community campaigns and student groups!
- Show solidarity and fund the socialist press with a 2020 greeting
- Prices start at £30 for a small box - minimum price negotiable
- £55 for our most popular size, 1/16 of a page
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- £300 for 1/2, £500 for a page
- [socialistparty.org.uk/mayday](http://socialistparty.org.uk/mayday)

# No 'back to school' until outbreak is under control and trade union agreed safety arrangements

**Martin Powell-Davies**  
National Education Union member

Tory splits over a coronavirus 'exit strategy' are being played out over the question of when to fully reopen schools. For now, the more far-sighted representatives of capitalism have managed to resist calls for a reckless early return - but the internal battle is ongoing.

Of course, with growing pressures on their incomes and well-being, a full return to school would lift some of the burden on working-class families. But most understand that the pressure to open schools isn't driven by concerns about welfare or education. The most rapacious Tories just want childcare in place so that big business can reap their profits again, never mind the risks to their workforce.

## Hardship

In fact, most schools haven't completely closed. Smaller numbers of children from key-worker families, and others facing hardship, have been offered ongoing lessons. But take-up has so far been generally less than expected. Parents understand the health risks better than those planning an early return.

Opening schools now would be a major risk to public health. Yes, few children would show symp-

toms, but they would be spreading the virus far and wide - on the bus home, back to their parents and grandparents. The poorest families, those with the worst overcrowding at home, would be most at risk.

World Health Organization advice is clear that no 'exit' should take place until Covid-19 transmission is under control. Britain isn't even yet at the 'peak' of the outbreak, let alone getting cases and death rates down to a controlled number.

## 'Exit strategy'

Even when existing cases are brought under control, any new clusters would then need to be rapidly identified and isolated through testing and tracing of contacts of those carrying Covid-19. In other words, any genuine 'exit strategy' depends on the government correcting its failure to deliver on mass testing first.

Even when they've managed that, a return will not be straightforward. Secure social distancing simply isn't possible in a school environment. Many adults can't manage it consistently in a supermarket, let alone children in a classroom!

Before any school reopens there needs to be prior trade union agreement over working arrangements, including PPE needs, cleaning provision and testing of suspected cases. If staff feel unsafe after reopening, unions must back mem-

bers leaving their workplace if risks aren't addressed.

Finally, when schools do go safely back, there must be a return to a better education system than before. Let's scrap education inspectors Ofsted and Estyn and league tables for good, teach a broader curriculum, and get rid of the privatised agencies that have been ripping off supply staff.

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# DWP: Action on workers' safety, and protection of pay and conditions needed

**Katrine Williams**  
Vice-president PCS DWP group (personal capacity)

More than two million people have claimed benefits in the last four weeks. Failed Tory austerity is impacting health care workers having insufficient PPE and testing. It is also affecting the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) with its lack of IT for staff to work safely from home, and staff to process claims.

Given the enormity of the DWP tasks, you would think the PCS civil servants' union DWP group leadership would want everyone to maximise the PCS response to the crisis. Yet we have only had one group executive committee meeting since the crisis began, and demands only appeared six minutes before the meeting.

Broads Left Network (BLN) supporters had already submitted a motion, which the group leadership bureaucratically ruled out of order to avoid discussion.

BLN supporters continued to argue for improved demands. We urgently need 20,000 additional permanent staff to support the public by properly processing and paying new claims, and the reversal of plans to close offices. As well as the following protocol:

- Bring outsourced workers back in-house and produce union material to recruit these workers
- It is vital PCS supports branches working to protect members' safety, and ensure that capacity of buildings is not exceeded when social distancing is properly implemented. Consultation with management at local level and national level, as necessary, should resolve most issues.
- But there could still be instances where members' safety must be collectively fought for. All measures that members take to protect their safety should be supported by the union.
- Trade unionists have a responsibility to demand better government support so that no workers furloughed or laid off during the crisis should lose their overall pay.
- Also a substantial rise in benefits linked to a rise in the national minimum wage to £12 an hour, £15 in London. And an immediate 10% pay rise for all public sector workers.
- See [pcsln.wordpress.com](http://pcsln.wordpress.com)

# JD Sports: Shut up shop and give us full pay!

## JD Sports worker

JD Sports workers have been organising to demand the company close its warehouse, and pay all shop-floor and warehouse workers full pay for the duration of this crisis.

A 2019 report suggested that JD's CEO 'earned' a £6 million bonus (over 2 years) on top of his handsome £2.5m basic salary - a salary 146 times that of the shop floor workers.

At the beginning of 2020, a report in the Financial Times reported that JD was set to make over £425 million - a new record for the company. The final figure was due to be announced on 15 April.

Of course, they are correct. It would be incredibly inappropriate to announce over £425 million profits just two weeks after going cap-in-hand to the treasury, begging them to take on 80% of workers' poverty pay packets. Especially since a recent news article featured a company spokesperson boasting of the "more than adequate" cash reserves they have to survive the crisis.

Our message to JD is clear: close your warehouse and guarantee us all full pay for the duration of this crisis.

# WORLD ECONOMIC CRISIS: A MARXIST APPROACH TO THE CORONAVIRUS CRUNCH

In the following interview, **Judy Beishon** of the Socialist Party executive committee explains how the coronavirus pandemic is impacting on the capitalist global economy, the ruling classes' response, and the prospects for working-class struggle in a post-pandemic world. (The original interview can be heard on the Socialism podcast of 10 April 2020.)

**The coronavirus pandemic is a massive health crisis with widespread consequences - including a great economic impact. How badly could the economy be affected?**

The speed of decline of economic activity is unprecedented and is hitting every country - mostly at the same time.

The economic consequences are particularly serious because world growth was slowing before the coronavirus outbreak, and it was clear that a recession was on its way.

The chief economist of the International Monetary Fund has recognised that the present plummeting of economies is deeper than the 2008-09 recession - so the worst since the 1930s. Very large falls in output and growth took place last month, and again this month, with great uncertainty over the picture after that.

Whole sectors of industry and services have been strongly hit, and some temporarily devastated, like the airline industry. One commentator described it as whole swathes of the economy being "in cardiac arrest".

Along with that, there's a crash in oil prices, and stock markets are highly volatile - they suffered dramatic falls and then made a partial recovery - and there has been turmoil in the credit markets.

So it's a very rapid and synchronised plunge into recession, at a time when strong economies are needed to be able to put resources into defeating Covid-19.

**It's the working class and poorest who will suffer most from this economic crisis?**

Yes, they have the least means to get by during this onslaught on livelihoods. Globally, tens of millions of people are being forced out of work. Many of the lay-offs will be temporary - during the lockdowns - but it's already clear that many businesses are going bust or will downsize.

In the US, 21.8 million people signed up for unemployment benefit in the past four weeks, pushing unemployment to around 20%.

In Britain, new claims for Universal Credit are up to 1.2 million. It's been estimated that a fifth of small companies could close permanently.

Not everyone is in a category being helped by the government's assistance schemes for furloughed workers and the self-employed; and there are unacceptable time delays in accessing the help - likewise with Universal Credit. So people are going without essentials or face the nightmare of destitution for a period.

Only a small minority of struggling small businesses have received the bank loans on offer - which they might not be able to repay.

Overall, many people are suffering big drops in income, with all the consequences that can mean for mortgages, rents and other living costs.

People in the poorest countries of the world face even more severe effects on their livelihoods and health. Tragically, the virus spreading everywhere within a rotten capitalist system, means there's little help on offer by one country to another.

**In the 2007-08 crisis there were articles even in the capitalist media saying 'Marx was right'. How relevant are Karl Marx's writings to this crisis today?**

Marx's writings are an indispensable guide, because he worked out and explained the underlying workings and processes of the system; and also the contradictions, which are many.

For instance, big capital becomes concentrated into fewer and fewer companies and hands, which tends to undermine competition - a driver of innovation. Or we could point to the contradiction between developing the productive forces globally and the fact that capitalism is based on nation states. Or that workers as a whole are unable to buy back the goods they produce through the share of surplus value they are given in wages.

The capitalist classes of the world preside over a crisis of low productive investment and productivity, showing they're no longer able to carry out their original historic mission of developing the productive forces.

The chronic rotteness has led to short-term profit-seeking by the ruling class, who have no long-term confidence in their own system.

Instead of investment to advance society, the 'captains of industry' have turned in a major way to short-term greed and particularly in the decades since the post-war economic boom ended, have gorged themselves to an unprecedented degree with obscene pay levels, bonuses, and share dividends.

Meanwhile, they have reduced the share of total wealth produced that goes to their workforces, by grinding workers' conditions and well-being.

expansionary phases, and they can benefit from wages being forced down through the competition for jobs. But then lower wages give them less incentive to invest in machinery and new technology... And the cycles and contradictions go on.

Marx and Engels explained that capitalism can't avoid its inherent contradictions, so its debacles are repeated, even though the triggers, effects, etc, are new.

But of course, there's also the class conflict, by far the most serious contradiction for the capitalist system, because it will lead to its removal. Capitalism can keep going through all the other contradictions and the cycles they cause - booms and slumps - but not when its 'gravedigger', as Marx and Engels called the working class, moves to remove it.

Only a small minority of struggling small businesses have received the bank loans on offer - which they might not be able to repay.

While Marxism provides a crucial understanding of the workings of the system (or rather non-workings!), Marx's writings aren't a blueprint for the detail of events as they unfold. Rather, they're method of analysis that needs to be continually applied anew to events and perspectives. At the same time, it's remarkable how much written by Marx and Engels in the 19th century is apt today.

**So this downturn is only the latest one in a long-term picture of crises for the system?**

Yes, we recognise, as did Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, the 'progressive' role once played by capitalism in developing the productive forces (industry, science, technique, etc) - to a level that creates the prerequisite for socialism. But overall there's been nothing progressive about the system for a long time.

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further into the ground. Part of that has been the moving of production, call centres, etc, to lower-wage countries, and exploiting immigrant workers domestically.

Also, new technology in many sectors is not used to improve the living standards or lives of workers, but to reduce the overall amount paid to them through cutting jobs, hours or pay, and to place them under greater surveillance.

The corporate bosses have also resorted to private equity takeovers, often to asset strip the companies being swallowed up. And financial 'engineering' has included companies buying their own shares on a vast scale, which has become a major tool for boosting the stock holdings of company executives and shareholder dividends.

Another feature is the staggering amount of speculation engaged in by the finance institutions - gambling unimaginable sums on the currency markets, stocks, and elsewhere. The short-selling of shares is one means of this, being stepped up now due to the volatile stock markets (short-sellers borrow shares in order to sell them and then buy them back when they've fallen in price).

It can contribute to bringing down companies, as it did in the collapse of the multinational Carillion, which employed tens of thousands of workers worldwide.

**And the main faultlines that led to the crisis in 2007-08 are still present today?**

Yes, capitalist economists keep saying that the banks are better capitalised now, but most of the factors that led to the 2007-08 crisis remained after it. Stock values raced beyond the level of real company growth, trillions of pounds more.

Bonds have been overvalued too. Debt levels are unprecedented - company borrowing is more than double its level before the 2007-08 crisis and there's an increase in 'low quality' debt within that.

Capital still flows around the world in a destabilising fashion; current account imbalances between countries are as enormous as ever; financial speculation continues to be dangerous; and so on.

**Do the ruling classes have more friction with each other than before the last crisis?**

Tensions between them have increased because economic growth has been so generally weak, so competition for markets

has increased. Even before Trump became US president, trade protectionism was increasing and impacting adversely on trade levels.

Tensions have increased both between the main blocs of countries and within those blocs.

This is part of a trend of 'deglobalisation' which is apparent in a number of respects; but that's not to say that the world's capitalist economies aren't very interdependent, in financial and currency relations, and production supply networks.

**A major aspect of the present situation is the vast sums of money being injected into economies.**

To weather the crisis of 12 years ago, there were vast injections of money - over \$10 trillion in Quantitative Easing alone (QE - asset purchases using digitally created money), along with very low interest rates.

Those measures guarded against 1930s-level mass bankruptcies and served to temporarily mask the major weaknesses in the fundamental health of capitalism globally.

China's massive stimulus after that crisis was a lifeline for the whole world. But despite those interventions, growth during the last decade has been weak, and so many of the stimulus measures have remained in place in some form or other.

The coronavirus crisis hit just when the major economies were trying to more vigorously reverse those programmes. Instead, even bigger interventions are now being made - public money is being ploughed into economies to an unprecedented degree in a desperate attempt to try to ward off a spiral into depression.

In the US, a massive \$2 trillion is being injected, with the US Federal Reserve (central bank) pledging an unlimited supply of money to the US economy through bond buying.

In the UK, the government, through the Bank of England, is injecting a £350 billion package, along with a reduction in interest rates to the lowest level (0.1%) in the bank's 326-year history.

These - and similar measures across the developed economies - are raising mountainous debt levels even higher, storing up yet more imbalances and instability.

**Then the question will be: who will pay for the debt - which class in society?**

That's one of the fundamental questions that workers' struggles will be linked to when the coronavirus and economic crises eventually



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Frontline workers have been left without adequate protection  
photo shopblocks/CC

### Lack of demand? We want a test!

When I heard Matt Hancock say there hadn't been enough testing over the Easter weekend because of lack of demand, I nearly fell off my chair.

My partner and I became ill with coronavirus symptoms in early March. But whereas I recovered after eight days, my partner didn't.

After three weeks he got significantly worse and was diagnosed with pneumonia and a blood clot on his lung. Now, after five weeks, he's being treated for another additional lung infection.

It seems endless. It's exhausting and worrying for all of us.

The GP, NHS 111 and the doctors and nurses we've seen in five trips to the hospital all agree we both had Covid. Over the Easter weekend a junior doctor came close to sending him to the Covid ward and intubating him, but thankfully that was avoided.

He's been tested and tested for all sorts, and rightly so. But at no point has he been tested for coronavirus!

On Good Friday the doctor specifically said: "You've got coronavirus. But we're not testing you". So we don't occur in any of the statistics, but we do count as lack of demand!

**Angry Anonymous**

### Saved by millions not millionaires

I'm so bloody angry. So the Tories have flattened the curve - i.e. fewer people died today and yesterday.

There was I thinking it was the amazing effort of our doctors, nurses, cleaners, porters, radiographers and all front-line workers, who have worked tirelessly to care for and keep alive thousands of

very sick people.

But no, a bunch of multi-billionaires with their second homes and their privileges have achieved this, despite us 'wasting' PPE and not following proper infection control procedures - that we follow every bloody day of our working lives.

**Maggie Fricker**  
NHS worker

### Another unnecessary death from sick capitalism

Another Covid-19 horror story showing the utter sickness of British capitalism and unregulated, non-unionised slave labour.

A migrant Indian Uber driver in London caught Covid-19. Because he was scared of being evicted, and there are no rights working for the 'scab app', he starved alone in his room for weeks. This meant his body couldn't fight the virus when he eventually went to hospital.

One of a number of Uber drivers who has died of the virus. Uber have provided no safety for drivers, who are using their own improvised plastic sheeting to shield themselves and passengers.

**Matt Dobson**  
Glasgow

### Deplorable PPE response

The lack of PPE is akin to sending soldiers to war armed with cap guns! It must be filling all NHS workers with dread.

This thoroughly rotten Tory government has spent weeks lying through their teeth that there is plenty of equipment, then attempting to shift the blame onto nurses saying they are overusing

PPE.

The response of Unison, the trade union representing hundreds of thousands of health workers, is deplorable - in effect it's up to the individual to decide if they're going into a safe environment. Labour's woeful response - now is not the time for tough questions!

**Elaine Brunsell**  
Gateshead

### Where have the Tories been?

Recently, Conservative MP for Carlisle, John Stevenson, praised NHS staff in a full-page statement in the News and Star.

But he voted in Parliament against paying nurses the wages they deserve. He ignored a Carlisle Socialist Party petition, signed by 2,350 local people, demanding adequate resources for the NHS.

The Socialist Party, with trade unions and other parties, helped organise large demonstrations in Carlisle to defend the NHS. Where was he then?

We stood with the junior doctors, who were forced to take strike action for reasonable wages and conditions, but Stevenson and his party opposed and denied them.

**Brent Kennedy**  
Carlisle

### Water privatisation

Privatised US water companies can shut your water off if you can't pay your bills. In the richest country on the world, 15 million had their water shut off in 2016, before the crisis. Black women with children are the most vulnerable.

Most people who have their water cut off go to work, and can use toilets and

# Going viral

## Socialist comments and letters on the corona crisis

The Covid-19 pandemic is a world social crisis which touches every aspect of life. The iniquities and failings of the capitalist system are being exposed, and workers and communities are organising in response.

Send us your comments, reports, anecdotes and thoughts, in not more than 200 words (we reserve the right to shorten letters), to [editors@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:editors@socialistparty.org.uk).

wash basins at work and out in society. So prior to the shutdown, this abomination was hidden. Now with people stuck at home, it has become a real problem.

One Detroit woman had eleven people in her house; she was looking after her grandchildren. Now human waste is being dumped in household bins.

Socialism is so needed in the US. Water should never be privatised and should be available to everyone for free.

**Nancy Taaffe**  
Waltham Forest, London

### Tory NHS boost

Just read the Tories are going to invest millions of pounds in the NHS. They have employed three 99-year-old men to do laps of their garden.

**Martin Reynolds**  
Waltham Forest, London

### Maternity cuts

There needs to be some investigation into maternity care at this time. There are horror stories about women being sent home, being made to wait in pain. Now a pregnant woman has died.

A lot of specialist maternity units have been cut. Is this now translating into lack of care? The answer seems obvious, but who's asking the questions in the press?

**Amy Cousins**  
Bradford

### Keir Starmer: Big business politician

Pressure is being applied to reopen the schools, so that private companies can start making profits again.

Never Forget. Never Forgive.

**Paul Spooner**  
Hull

a dispute over payments for working difficult seams escalated and 1,040 miners went on strike.

The authorities struck back. Three union officials were jailed.

The miners were given the option of paying a hefty fine or going to prison. Almost to a man they refused to pay.

What to do? There was no jail space for a thousand men.

Even with heavily censored media, the story got out and other

miners discussed striking in sympathy. On 28 January a settlement was reached, charges were dropped and the union officials freed.

The lesson is clear. Even if the leaderships of the trade unions and the Labour Party declare peace in the 'national interest', the class struggle carries on at workplace level.

**Geoff Jones**  
Swansea

produced a student charter for the coronavirus - a three part socialist programme on student housing, health and safety on campus, and free education.

The charter is an indispensable tool for any student wanting to get involved in the fight for a safe and decent future for students and young people.

Get in touch if you'd like to attend a local online Socialist Students meeting in your area and how

you can get involved with Socialist Students.

That's why Socialist Students has

members of the University and College Union (UCU), has written to the government asking for a bailout. In return, it has committed to carry through further cuts on campus.

Students, forced to return home because of the crisis, are battling against greedy landlords refusing to release students from their contacts early.

The university bosses association, UUK, responsible for attacking the pay and conditions of striking

students, has

produced a student charter for the

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and decent future for students and

young people.

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# International Workers' Memorial Day - 28 April

## THE HISTORY OF STRUGGLE TO MAKE THE WORKPLACE SAFE

**Bill Mullins**  
South East London Socialist Party

**E**very year more people are killed at work than in wars. Every year these workers are commemorated on 28 April, International Workers' Memorial Day.

The coronavirus crisis has created a heightened awareness, like never before, for millions of workers of the importance of staying safe and healthy at work.

The scandal of this crisis has been revealed time and time again by the criminal indifference shown by the employers to the safety of their workers in the place of work.

Everybody is now aware that the lack of personal protective equipment (PPE), has directly led to the deaths of frontline workers in the health service and social care, and on public transport, such as bus drivers and tube workers.

Those workers who might have come into contact with the people they serve - such as their patients, residents and customers who could be suffering from the disease - are themselves now contracting it, and in some cases dying as a result.

Tory health secretary Matt Hancock blundered into another calamity when he blurted out the accusation that it is the fault of the health workers for wasting PPE.

It is business as usual for the bosses who seek every time to blame the workers for any health and safety problems in the workplace.

### Passport Office workers

The latest example is in the Passport Office, where the employer has demanded that workers come into work despite the ongoing threat of catching the virus.

The Home Office told workers: "We cannot hide away from it forever" (See 'Passport workers forced back to offices as Home Office shirks its duty of care' at socialistparty.org.uk)

Where does this cold cruelty come from? Is it a new phenomenon or is it intrinsic to the motives of the capitalist system, a system based on profit, as much today as it was in the past?

The history of working-class struggle is littered with examples of the attempts by organised workers to make their place of work safe and secure. From their point of view, they are forced to enter them fundamentally to earn a living.

But from the bosses' point of view, however, the role of the worker, once inside the workplace, is, as Marx expresses it, to put their labour power at the disposal of the employer.

Nothing, from the point of view of the capitalist owners, must get in the way of their ability to exploit the labour power which they have purchased to maximise their profits.



Every year more people are killed at work than in wars - a staggering two million workers photo Paul Mattsson

The exploiters want to eliminate obstacles to their ability to get that return. That not only means attempts to drive down wages, therefore keeping more of the value of the workers' labour, but also removing any 'unnecessary' expense in the physical environment of the workplace, or anything that slows down the work processes.

**The historical struggle to ensure that the workplace is a safe environment is in general hidden from the history books**

This is especially true of things that obstruct that process such as decent sanitary conditions, extra guards on machines that stop workers injuring themselves, and so on.

The history of working-class struggle shows that these issues are just as important for workers and their trade unions as the wages that the workers get for their labour, and sometimes more important.

The response of the employers has always been, with very few exceptions, to look with disdain on any attempt by workers to increase health and safety at work.

In his book 'Austerity Britain 1945-51', David Kynaston gives an

example of this when the scandal of the widespread use of asbestos was being revealed for the first time to the wider public. Even though, as he says, the bosses had known about it for at least 30 years before that.

"Asbestosis, lung cancer, mesothelioma - all were caused by the insidious dust, which (as victims from Clydeside shipyards and building sites would recall) came 'down like snow' on them, whether in the form of dust, asbestos cuttings or dried-out 'monkey dung' as asbestos paste was called."

One of the leading producers of asbestos was Turner and Newall of Rochdale: "An appalling tale of management indifference to the dangers to which its workforce was exposed, allied to an almost systematic policy of trying to wriggle out of financial liability to the families of those who had died as a direct result of those dangers."

The historical struggle to ensure that the workplace is a safe environment is in general hidden from the history books. But the parliamentary reaction to this struggle is often recorded in a series of 'Factory Acts'.

The first Factory Act was in 1802, and it was in relation to the appalling loss of life and stunted growth of the thousands of children in the textile mills. The children were often rounded up from the orphanages to be used as forced labour.

The process of spinning required a closed hot environment to protect against the snapping of the threads on the machines. This meant that typhus, smallpox and other diseases

were prevalent.

The Act was called the 'Apprentices Act for their health and morals', and called for "proper ventilation and cleanliness as well as regular religious service". Other Acts followed throughout the 19th century.

### Class struggle

Yet as historian EP Thompson pointed out in his book 'The Making of the English Working Class' in the history of working-class movements between 1780 and 1832, strikes and struggles demonstrated that legislation did not come about because of the "enlightenment of the rulers", but despite these very same rulers.

The bosses, through gritted teeth, were forced to make these concessions from above to stop revolution from below.

The same century was littered with examples of often bloody struggle that led to death, imprisonment and continual efforts by the working masses to improve their lot.

Today, in this unprecedented coronavirus crisis, a new generation of workers' leaders is springing up. The issue of health and safety in the workplace is not something that only a few are interested in, it is now the concern of many thousands and tens of thousands who are demanding not to go back to work unless it's safe to. We demand the right to full protection from the effects of this crisis now and in the future.

■ See the Socialist Party's Workers' Charter for our full programme on how to protect workers during the pandemic

Get all the latest union news...

**nationalshop  
stewardsnetwork**

with the  
NSSN bulletin:  
[shopstewards.net](http://shopstewards.net)

Workers fighting for safety during Covid-19  
public meeting via Zoom - Sunday 26 April, 3-5pm

The NSSN is hosting a public Zoom meeting to share experiences of how workers are fighting for PPE in the NHS and care system, posties are walking out to make Royal Mail management adhere to agreed safety practices, and how London bus drivers have sealed the front doors in response to the tragic deaths of their workmates. Zoom details - Meeting ID: 834 6072 7169 Password: 50884

The NSSN and other workers' organisations are building for what is becoming a global day of protest and action on International Workers Memorial Day, on Tuesday 28 April. Never have the words 'Remember the dead, fight for the living' been so important.



Like in the UK, the coronavirus pandemic in the USA has resulted in the postponement or cancellation of non-urgent surgery in hospitals. But because the US healthcare system is run on a for-profit basis, these cancellations have resulted in a sharp drop in hospitals' income and hence profits.

As a result, in the middle of a pandemic, thousands of healthworkers have been laid-off, furloughed or suffered a reduction in hours.

According to the Washington Post: "Remaining front-line workers face longer hours, and some have seen their pay cut and benefits reduced."

And despite a \$100 billion federal government bailout, it's estimated that 25% of US hospitals could go out of business over the next few months, significantly reducing available beds and staff and thereby putting a huge strain on remaining hospitals to treat Covid-19 patients.

Those hospitals most at risk are typically ones that treat low-income or uninsured patients.

In addition, there is also a crisis in primary care provision with 60,000 doctors' surgeries set to close or significantly scale back by June. This will result in 800,000 workers filing for unemployment benefit, being furloughed or having their hours reduced.

That figure amounts to a staggering 43% of the 1.9 million employed by family doctors.

Back in 2018, Donald Trump attacked advocates of publicly funded universal health care in the US by tweeting that the UK's NHS is "going broke and not working".

This disingenuous statement was made after a huge public protest in London - which the Socialist Party helped organise - against Tory government underfunding and privatisation of the NHS.

## SHOCKING INCREASE IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE KILLINGS

Domestic abuse killings have more than doubled during the coronavirus lockdown, according to Counting Dead Women (CDW), the organisation that monitors the killing of women by men. It identified 16 killings from 23 March to 12 April. In 'normal' times, over a similar period, there would be an average of five deaths - still an horrific figure.

Unfortunately, the CDW figure corresponds with the huge increase in calls to domestic abuse and online services since the lockdown began.

The founder of CDW said: "I don't believe coronavirus creates violent men. What we're seeing is a window into the levels of abuse that women live with all the time.

Coronavirus may exacerbate triggers, though I might prefer to call them excuses. Lockdown may restrict some women's access to support or escape and it may even curtail measures some men take to keep their violence under control".

The government's response has been pitiful, coming on top of years

of underfunding for refuges (see 'Tory money a drop in the ocean' at socialistparty.org.uk).

We have to fight for full funding for helplines, refuges and other safe emergency accommodation for victims of abuse during this crisis (see p16). But we also have to fight all cuts, and for the resources necessary for long-term financing of the services so desperately needed (see Unite the union opposes all cuts to domestic violence services at socialistparty.org.uk).

■ Sign and share the Women's Lives Matter petition at change.org/Covid-19-DomesticViolenceCrisis



### Nottingham DV meeting

14 people, including four non-members, came to our meeting via Zoom on 20 April. The meeting was entitled 'Domestic violence in the lockdown - the impact of the pandemic and Tory hypocrisy'.

We had a serious discussion on do-

mestic violence, its origins in class society, the effects of cuts, precarious work, low pay and austerity on services, and the increased pressures for sufferers from the lockdown.

We also discussed the demands of the Women's Lives Matter petition.

**Clare Wilkins**  
Nottingham Socialist Party

### What we heard

I just popped into Sainsbury's. At the self-checkouts there was a copper chatting to a Sainsbury's worker. He asked the copper if they were busy. She replied "mainly with domestic violence, calls have gone through the roof." Grim

**Scott Jones**

## Committee for a Workers' International

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI - the socialist international organisation the Socialist Party is part of) is posting regular updates from our sections around the world. These articles analyse the failings of capitalism, exposed by the coronavirus pandemic; report on working-class struggles to secure safe working conditions, health coverage and food security; and how CWI sections are advancing socialist programmes to deal with this immediate crisis and a post-coronavirus world.

See socialistworld.net

## Tory think tank proposes attack on pensions

**Roger Bannister**  
Liverpool Socialist Party

It was inevitable that the Tory government would try to offload the costs of dealing with the coronavirus crisis from their rich backers and onto the backs of working people.

Now, a report by the Tory-backed Social Market Foundation (SMF), has recommended that the first attack should be on the country's pensioners, by abolishing the 'triple lock' mechanism for increasing the state pension, and replacing it with a 'double lock'.

The triple lock has been in existence since 2011, and provides that the state pension should rise by the greatest of price inflation, average earnings or 2.5% each year.

At the time of its introduction, it was seen as a mechanism to gradually raise the value of the state pension, but it has long been an aim of the Tories to get rid of it. However,

whenever they have proposed it, public protest has forced them to back off. The proposed double lock would remove the 2.5% element from the mechanism.

The state pension is not high - currently set at £175.20 a week for people reaching pension age on or after 6 April 2016, and only £134.25 a week for everybody else, (currently the majority of pensioners).

Of the 36 countries that are members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the UK has the lowest pension as calculated proportionately against what they call the working wage for each country.

Following the attacks on final salary pension schemes, encouraged by the Tories, in the private sector, it is clear that Britain is now sitting on a time-bomb of pensioner poverty.

Growing numbers of workers are retiring with inadequate pensions, leaving them struggling to make ends meet.

The SMF proposal should therefore be rejected. The National Pensioners Convention, the main organisation representing pensioners in Britain, has long campaigned to retain the triple lock.

Now, the trade union leaders need to speak out against this proposal and prepare their members to take action should the Tories press ahead with this it.

The Labour Party has previously guaranteed to maintain pensions up to 2025, but that ignores the need to significantly increase the state pension.

Keir Starmer's newly appointed Shadow Secretary for Work and Pensions, Johnathan Reynolds, has blandly stated that the UK needs "serious long-term thinking" about pensions, which could mean anything!

Labour has to be clear about whether it supports pensioners, or simply sees them, like the Tories, as a potential area of cost cutting.

## Coronavirus news in brief

### Trump weaponises pandemic...

As the number of unemployed workers applying for benefits rises to 22 million due to the coronavirus crisis, reactionary US president Donald Trump is determined to end the country's health lockdown measures, which he sees as undermining his chances of a second term in office.

But having failed to overrule state governors and lift the lockdown, Trump resorted to mobilising his alt-right supporters to pressure Democrat governors in Michigan, Minnesota, and Virginia.

Motley crews of gun-toting, confederate flag-waving far-right activists congregated in a number of cities following Trump's tweets to "liberate" these states.

Incendiary tweets are Trump's forte. In 2017, after white supremacists terrorised the city of Charlottesville - one of whom murdered an anti-fascist protester - the bigoted president described these thugs as "very fine people".

### ...as does Bolsonaro

Not to be outdone by Trump's cavalier measures, far-right Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro - who described the deadly coronavirus as "just a little flu" - sacked his health minister who had repeatedly contradicted the president by insisting the country's health lockdown remains in place.

Instead, Bolsonaro held a rally of his supporters in Brasilia on 19 April, ignoring social distancing, to attack lockdown measures. Ironically, his far-right fans called for a return to Brazil's military dictatorship (1964-1985) when the country endured two decades of lockdown.

Brazil has more coronavirus infections than any other country in Latin America.

### Amazon workers walk out

On 17 April, 1,200 Amazon workers at the Torrazza plant in Piemonte in the north of Italy walked out over safety: "Because our health comes before everything". Four workers had tested positive for Covid-19 but bosses refused to give information about which department they were in or what shift they were working on. Masks had only arrived at the factory one week previously, and there was only one a day for each worker over an eight-hour shift. Workers said the pace of work had not lessened and social distancing and other safety measures were not being implemented.

Meanwhile, Amazon boss Jeff Bezos, the world's richest person who has funded anti-socialist campaigns, has seen his enormous wealth soar to stratospheric heights during the pandemic. With a surge in online orders from customers in lockdown, Bezos's net worth has grown \$24 billion to a staggering \$143.1 billion.

## 150th anniversary of Lenin's birth

# A REVOLUTIONARY LIFE - AND THE RELEVANCE OF LENIN'S IDEAS TO TODAY'S WORKING-CLASS STRUGGLES

**Nick Chaffey**  
Socialist Party national committee

In January 1917 the world was in flames amid the barbarism of the first capitalist world war. Yet within months, the Russian revolutionary socialist Vladimir Lenin was the elected head of the first democratic workers' government in history.

Today, as the coronavirus pandemic sweeps the globe, with its many deaths and a looming depression in the world economy, the capitalists speak in fear of the coming 'pitchforks' - the multi-millioned global working class seeking an end to the crisis by struggling to change the profit system.

For those looking for ideas and a way forward, the revolutionary life of Lenin, born 150 years ago, is rich with inspiring lessons for socialist struggle today.

### First workers' state

The victory of the working class and poor peasants in the 1917 October Revolution, with the Bolshevik Party led by Lenin and Leon Trotsky, remains the greatest event in human history. It liberated millions from the reactionary, feudal yoke of Tsarist Russia, and brought an end to the slaughter of 3.6 million Russians, out of a total of 20 million dead in World War One.

It was the first workers' government. And in its first years the most democratic form of government in history, formed by the soviets or workers' councils.

The soviets were based on the election of workers' delegates from the factories to local and regional councils, and to an all-Russian council. Delegates were subject to recall and only paid the average wage of the workers they represented. Its executive powers oversaw the abolition of capitalism and the first steps towards the development of a socialist planned economy.

As Lenin foresaw, it was the opening chapter of world revolution that swept across Europe and the world in the following months and years.

Lenin died in 1924, aged just 53, but by that time the new revolutionary Communist International, formed in 1919, was to have the support of millions of workers across all continents.

The October victory was based on Lenin's two key foundations: confidence in the working class as the decisive force to overthrow capitalism, and the need to form mass revolutionary parties, rooted in the working class, with a clear programme to achieve workers' power.

### Scientific socialism

Victory was not an accident nor was it inevitable. Lenin was politically developed by the conditions that surrounded him - a reactionary feudal Tsarist dictatorship and an emerging working class, forged in the rapid development of industry in Russia at the turn of the 20th century.

Lenin's historic leading role included forming the first all-Russian workers' party, the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP), through the strikes and workers' struggles of that period.

Lenin's ideas were firmly based on Marxist ideas, the ideas of scientific socialism. His writings explained the class nature of capitalist society from the point of view of the working class; producing workers' newspapers to report on the living struggle of the working class, and also providing a clear programme for workers to fight for the socialist transformation of society; and building a party based on these ideas.

While these ideas ultimately triumphed in October 1917, during the period from 1903 to 1917 Lenin and his co-thinkers were in constant debate over how the revolution would unfold, and which forces would lead the overthrow of Tsarism.

Would it be the liberal capitalists, placing themselves at the head of the workers' struggles, in alliance with the poor peasants; limiting the revolution to carrying through the 'bourgeois-democratic' tasks ie ending feudalism, an elected na-

tional parliament, land reform, etc? Or, would the workers push aside the capitalist class and lead the peasants in a revolutionary government that would begin the socialist transformation of society?

Lenin, in the numerous debates during the pre-revolution period, attempted to navigate a narrow path between the opportunists, who looked for an easier route to reforming capitalism, and ultra-lefts who turned their back on the patient tasks to win the masses, such as standing socialist candidates in the limited electoral bodies, Dumas, that Tsarism was to concede in the course of the struggle.

The battle for clear ideas led to splits and mergers in the workers' movement. The break between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in the RSDLP occurred first in outline in 1903, then became formalised in 1912. This split between the 'hard' and 'soft' party members was the result of the differences that emerged in the heat of struggle and revolution - first in the 1905 revolution (the 'dress rehearsal' for 1917 as Lenin described it), and again through the two revolutions of 1917.

While Lenin and the Bolsheviks set a clear course towards the working class, the Mensheviks were to take a reformist road, seeking support from the weak, liberal, capitalist elite.

### Party organisation

From the outset, Lenin understood that correct ideas were not enough. Enormous determination, courage and sacrifices were necessary.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks faced a brutal, repressive Tsarist state machine that persecuted the workers' movement, and those seeking to establish independent political organisations.

Enormous sacrifices were made by hundreds of party workers, its 'cadre', in establishing the network of links between the embryonic groups and party cells, the circulation of papers, and the vital collection of funds. Lenin fought for a professional, combative party rooted in the working class.



Lenin (centre) in discussion with Trotsky (left) and Kamenev

**Lenin fought for a professional, combative party rooted in the working class**

The party 'cadre', a French word for frame, was the structure around which the party would grow: a party not only built through struggle, but out of intense democratic debate and discussion, through which decisions could be reached in party congresses, and then collective action agreed upon.

These methods of 'democratic centralism' were the key to building a strong force that would not weaken nor compromise under the pressure of revolutionary events that were to follow.

The infant RSDLP organisation was quickly tested by the revolution of 1905. The deep-rooted anger of the workers rose in a mass demonstration of over 400,000 in

Tsarist Russia's capital St Petersburg. This was suppressed brutally by the Tsar, on Bloody Sunday, 22 January.

Protesting at the slave conditions in the factories of long hours and poverty wages, workers demanded an eight-hour day, trade union rights, democratic elections to a constituent assembly, and an end to the economic crisis brought about by the war with Japan.

Thousands of demonstrators were killed and injured. This opened up a revolutionary crisis in society that put to the test all political ideas and methods, and confirmed, in general, the correctness of Lenin's ideas and strategy.

Despite this, the events of 1905 had demonstrated in a few short months how a small party was able to become a mass force, through its party cadre, to draw in the most combative leaders from the working class and organise them into a cohesive political movement that would be decisive in the revolution of 1917.

The huge sweep of the revolution saw a spontaneous strike movement develop that led to a general strike in St Petersburg by November.

This tested revolutionaries with an opportunity of how to find the road to the masses and win their

support. Lenin had to press his small forces to turn out and open the door of the party to the working class, especially young workers.

The Bolsheviks, with small resources, saw their newspaper, Vpered (Forward), rise to a circulation of 50,000 by December 1905. Other revolutionaries came to the fore in this period, notably Leon Trotsky, whose newspaper was to reach a circulation of 500,000. With Trotsky elected as president of the powerful St Petersburg Soviet, Lenin commented: 'Trotsky has earned it by his brilliant and unflagging work.'

The working class, despite being a small minority of the population, came together as the only cohesive class in society, capable of uniting those opposed to the autocracy, and able to mobilise behind it the radicalised middle classes and the mass of the poor peasants.

Everything that Lenin had prepared, the programme, the party apparatus and its paper, now proved to be decisive in assembling the forces and leadership that offered the working class and poor peasants a route to victory.

Still, the door to revolution was obstructed by brutal repression. Here the great strength of Lenin and the Bolshevik Party became clear. Steeled in struggle, their militant leaders in the factories and soldiers'

garrisons played a decisive part in mobilising mass support to the side of the revolution. A majority in the factories, workers' districts, and army and naval garrisons were won to the side of the revolution, reflected in their overwhelming majorities in soviets across Russia.

Following the mass strikes and demonstrations of February 1917, the overthrow of the Tsarist monarchy, and the establishment of a provisional government headed by the capitalists, Lenin recognised that the only basis for ending the crisis of war, the starvation of the masses, and the resolution of the land question for the mass of toiling peasants, was to establish a workers' government.

This had to be based on the soviets - workers', peasants' and soldiers' councils thrown up by a renewed revolutionary wave engulfing the whole of society. A soviet government would begin the socialist tasks of transforming society.

Lenin recognised that without this victory the revolution in Russia would be smashed under the iron heel of Tsarist counterrevolution, assisted by the capitalists who feared the revolutionary working class more than Tsarism.

### "Absolute distrust"

Others in the leadership of the Bolshevik Party inside Russia, notably Stalin and Kamenev, mistakenly backed the soviets' conditional support for the new provisional government headed by Kerensky (as did the Mensheviks). From his exile in Switzerland a furious Lenin demanded of the Bolsheviks: 'Our tactics: absolute distrust, no support for the new government, suspect Kerensky above all, arming of the proletariat the only guarantee...'

Lenin, returning from exile in April, stood in a minority within the Bolshevik Party, but went to the ranks of the party, to the worker Bolsheviks, and won them to his position, with his short ten-point programme, The April Theses.

Lenin's goal was clear and explicit: 'No support for the provisional government, for a republic of soviet workers, labourers' and peasants' deputies, nationalisation of all lands, land to be disposed of to the peasants, nationalise the banks, bring social production and distribution of products at once under the control of the soviets, for a new international.'

This programme, and his organised forces in the Bolshevik Party, were the decisive, 'subjective factor' in ensuring victory to the revolutionary power of the workers. Lenin drew others towards him, all those genuine revolutionaries seeking a route to workers' power.

The clarifying of ideas, of a clear programme in the white heat of revolutionary events, brought Trotsky, with his supporters organised in the Mezhraiontsy, together with Lenin in the same party. They were agreed on the central role of the working class and the socialist tasks of the revolution.

But despite the heroic efforts of the working class, and the courageous struggle of the Bolsheviks to point the way forward in their programme, by December

basis for the development of the world revolution under more favourable circumstances.

Since then, there have been the

revolutionary events of Spain in the 1930s; France 1936; the global revolutionary wave that followed the end of the second world war; the colonial revolution; and the 1959 Cuban revolution; France 1968; Chile 1973; Portugal 1974. More recently we've seen the Arab Spring of 2011, along with the significant intense working-class struggles of 2019 in France, Chile, Ecuador, India, and the Middle East.

All of these movements, which unlike 1917 did not succeed in establishing genuine socialism, highlight the importance of Lenin's ideas: the power of the working class, its leading role in the struggle for socialism, and the need for a mass party rooted in the working class and based on Marxist ideas.

### Leninism today

In the current coronavirus pandemic, the capitalist system is again failing to deliver healthcare and decent living standards for the mass of the population. It shows, once again, the obstacle capitalism is to the development of society, and reiterates the need for socialism.

But we stand on the shoulders of

Lenin and the Bolshevik Party. We have a huge advantage in drawing on the lessons of the past in preparing for the huge battles to come. The Socialist Party has important roots in the working class and the trade unions, past victories, and international links to co-thinkers across the world.

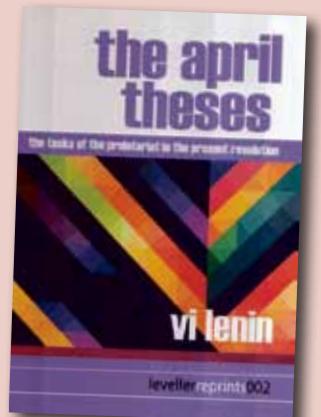
We're confident that the radicalised working class and youth of the world will seek a way forward, and look for ideas and organisation to solve their problems.

These are the ripening conditions

through which Marxist ideas and organisation will flourish in completing the urgent task of creating a socialist world that Lenin dedicated his life to achieve.



## Further reading from Left Books



- **The April Theses** - VI Lenin, £2
- **State and Revolution** - VI Lenin, £7.99
- **'Left Wing' Communism, an infantile disorder** - VI Lenin, £6.99
- **History of the Russian Revolution** - Leon Trotsky, £28
- **Lenin and the Revolutionary Party** - Paul Le Blanc, £17.99
- **From Lenin to Stalin** - Victor Serge, £15
- **Lessons of October** - Leon Trotsky (new introduction by the Socialist Party) £5
- Cheques payable to Left Books.
- Card payments - 020 8988 8789
- Left Books, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT

# CORONAVIRUS A WORKERS' CHARTER



## Income, jobs and workplace safety

- Full pay for all workers. Workers, especially those on low pay, can't afford to lose 20% of their income. Any worker who has to self-isolate or cannot go to work should receive full pay from day one and not be forced to take annual leave. Pay should be paid directly to the worker not via the employer
- Increase benefits to the level of the national minimum wage. No delay in the payment of benefits
- Increase the minimum wage immediately to at least £12 an hour, £15 in London
- Workers asked to work from home must be supplied with adequate equipment, and performance monitoring should be scrapped
- Workers who follow health advice to be absent from work to avoid potential spread should be excluded from any attendance-management procedures
- Trade unions to establish an all-union health and safety committee in every workplace to agree joint actions required to guarantee safety
- No return to work unless adequate safety measures are agreed with trade unions and the workforce
- Open the books of any company threatening redundancies or closure to the inspection by the workforce and trade unions
- To defend workers' jobs and incomes, industries should be nationalised under democratic workers' control and management with compensation only on the basis of proven need

## NHS and social care

- Emergency increase in funding for the NHS and for social care
- Adequate personal protection for all frontline workers
- NHS to take over all private healthcare facilities and staff

■ PPE for all NHS and frontline staff ■ Tests and full pay for all ■ Take over private health and other necessary facilities and industries. Not a penny to the profiteers ■ Socialist planning not capitalist chaos

This charter is for discussion and debate in workplaces and communities so that we can organise to defend our health, safety and rights during the crisis.  
Get in touch if you would like to join a Socialist Party online meeting.

Government should take over other industries and convert production where necessary, under the democratic control of workers in those industries and in the wider workforce, to guarantee the supply of PPE, medical equipment and testing. Not a penny to the profiteers

- Emergency training of NHS staff to deal with the coronavirus crisis
- Immediate 10% wage rise for all NHS staff and social care workers
- Resources to be mobilised from government and big-business sources so that free, accessible testing with rapid results is available for all frontline staff, workers interacting with the public, patients transferred into social care and anyone with flu or cold-like symptoms. Requisition all private testing and analysis facilities. Massively increase the number of contact tracers
- Reverse privatisation in the NHS, remove the privateers and cancel all the billions of pounds in annual PFI payments. End profit in social care and bring it into the public sector under democratic working-class oversight
- Nationalise the big pharmaceutical companies to guarantee research, production and supply of medicines, vaccines and treatments
- Suspend fees for overseas NHS

patients - treat all patients for free without the need to register to control the spread. Scrap prescription charges

## Public services and housing

- Emergency funding to take on more workers in essential services. Resources to protect workers, patients, and service users
- Councils to coordinate local distribution of food, medicines and other supplies to the needy and vulnerable with the democratic oversight of trade union and community organisations. Scrap existing cuts budgets. Demand that the government nationally finance all additional spending necessary to deal with the coronavirus crisis, as well as releasing the resources to reverse a decade of austerity
- 24-hour, adequately staffed, local authority helplines for vulnerable and elderly people forced to self-isolate
- Workload demands must be reduced and time made available to prioritise protecting the health, safety and welfare of staff and service users
- Quality childcare for vulnerable families and children of essential workers, under the democratic control of education and care

workers, with adequate protection for all. No delay in food vouchers for children normally in receipt of free school meals. Vouchers must reflect the real costs of providing a nutritious daily meal

- Nobody should lose their home because of coronavirus. Mortgage, rent and council tax payments should be waived for the duration of the crisis and arrears written off. Democratically controlled local authority hardship funds for landlords in genuine need
- Councils to use their powers to take over empty homes to house the homeless, those in inadequate housing and those fleeing domestic violence. Hotels to be used to provide emergency accommodation
- Funding for 24 hour helplines and increased spending on refuges and safe emergency accommodation for victims of domestic violence
- No action to be taken for non-payment of utilities. Free broadband for all

## Trade union and workers' action

- For the Trade Union Congress and the unions, the biggest voluntary national organisation with over six million members across the

country, to prepare to lead national coordinated strike action to protect people should necessary health and safety measures not be taken

- Democratic trade union oversight over any government or private sector emergency measures taken to contain the virus
- No erosion of workers' right to organise, including the democratic functioning of trade unions and parties
- No profiteering. Prices to be controlled by democratically elected committees of workers and consumers
- No trust in the Tories and other pro-capitalist politicians who are responsible for the crisis in the NHS and other public services to deal with the coronavirus crisis. For a mass workers' party, drawing together workers, young people, socialists and activists from workplaces and community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting political alternative to the pro-big business parties
- The resources are there to deal with the crisis. Introduce an immediate 50% levy on the hoarded £750 billion lying idle in the bank accounts of big business
- The capitalist market system that prioritises profit and is based on competition cannot keep society safe. We need a democratic socialist plan of production and distribution to meet the needs of the majority in society. Take into public ownership the banks, financial institutions and the top 150 companies that dominate the British economy and run them under the democratic control and management of working-class people so that we can make the decisions about what is needed. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- For international socialist cooperation