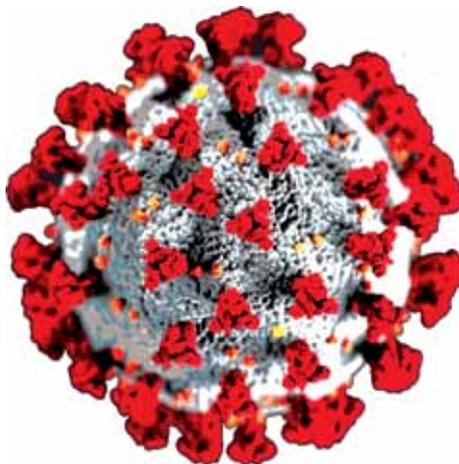


COVID CRISIS

“WE WON'T PAY THE PRICE”



ROB WILLIAMS
NATIONAL SHOP STEWARDS NETWORK, CHAIR

After giving Covid contracts worth billions to their cronies, the Tories announced yet another pay freeze for millions of public sector workers, and the scrapping of the planned increase in the minimum wage. These are just the opening salvos in the battle to make working-class people pay for the Covid crisis.

Workers have stood on the front line, put their lives at risk, and face sinking further into poverty - on top of a decade of Tory pay cuts when workers lost up to 14% of their income.

Chancellor Rishi Sunak cynically 'exempts' NHS workers from this pay cap. But they won't be fooled.

Any 'rise' for health workers will go nowhere near close to the 15% pay rise they protested for this summer. 15% would only close the gap on what they have lost in the last ten years.

This announcement takes place a decade after George Osborne's brutal austerity offensive. That cuts blizzard led to two million public sector workers striking together on 30 November 2011 to defend their pensions.

Workers need to fight together now to send the clearest message to the Tories and the employers. We won't pay the price, with our jobs and income, for your total mismanagement of the Covid pandemic and economic crisis, especially when the super-rich increase their wealth at our expense.

The National Shop Stewards Network of trade union activists calls on the Trades Union Congress and its unions to organise protests in towns and cities on Saturday 5 December. Start the mobilisation of workers that can lead to the coordinated strike action we need to defeat the Tories, and inflict on them yet another U-turn.

VICKY PERRIN
CALDERDALE UNISON LEAD SCHOOL STEWARD (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Tory-supporting businesses got PPE contracts worth millions. They have profited from the pandemic.

But us frontline key workers get told - after putting our health and safety on the line every day to provide essential public services through the pandemic - our pay will be frozen (cut).

There could be no greater slap in the face as we continue to staff schools and care homes. Covid is ripping through our workplaces at an ever-increasing rate.

The government's fake argument smokescreen will not pitch us against equally low-paid and essential shop and transport workers in the private sector. We will not race to the bottom alongside them.

ADAM HARMSWORTH
NAPO PROBATION UNION, NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

The massive national outpouring of applause for NHS workers was a sign of the absolute respect the public has towards the public sector. The money is there to give us decent pay, either in government coffers or in the hands of the rich.

The trade unions have expressed their anger in public statements, now they must take collective action. The unions have the power to properly challenge the renewed Tory attack on public sector workers.

The working class cannot, and will not, pay for the pandemic.

• Turn to pages 2-3 to hear teachers, civil servants, NHS workers and others explain how we can fight the pay freeze.

the Socialist

formerly **Militant**

Issue 1111

26 November - 3 December 2020

DO YOU HAVE NEWS FOR US?

The Socialist is written, read, sold and bought by ordinary workers, trade unionists, young people and Socialist Party members. 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.

CONTACT US

editors@socialistparty.org.uk
020 8988 8777 - ask for the editors

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

PUBLIC SECTOR PAY FREEZE - WORKERS SAY 'NO'!

Strike together to inflict another Tory U-turn



PAUL MATTSSON

● Probation worker: "Money grabbing, ungrateful, incompetent bastards"

HEATHER RAWLING

RESIDENTIAL WORKER IN PROBATION HOSTEL AND UNISON MEMBER (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

I'm struggling to find the words. 'Money grabbing, ungrateful, incompetent, bastards' springs to mind.

We had years of pay freeze during austerity, that contributed to paying for the banker's bailout. When is our bailout coming to pay our rents, our mortgages, etc?

At work, management put

posters up calling us 'heroes.' We all felt patronised. We wondered how the government might show their appreciation after all that clapping.

Well now we know the answer. They are not.

But the Tories show their appreciation to their own friends and family. This government awarded £17.3 billion of contracts to private companies.

£550,000 for a consulting deal with Public First, whose two directors just happened to previously work for

Cabinet Office head Michael Gove. £1 million with Faculty, whose shareholders until recently included Theodore Agnew, another Cabinet Office minister.

PestFix, a pest control supplies company, was added to the 'high priority lane' and awarded £350 million to supply PPE to the NHS. Clearly, we are not all in it together.

This government thinks a pay freeze will pay for their incompetence, and their donations to friends and family in big business.

With Keir Starmer leading the Labour Party, and Frances O'Grady, leader of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) - both pally with chancellor Rishi Sunak - the Tories calculate there won't be a fightback. But there will.

Workers are not just angry, they are getting desperate. If trade union leaders issued a call to action, we would respond.

But we need leaders that won't sell us out, like they did in the 2011 pension strike.

● Civil servant: Strike if we have to

Boris Johnson, and all the other Tory hypocrites, praise us on the one hand and impose a wage freeze with the other. How seamlessly they move from one to the other with barely a blink.

Members of civil service union PCS have fearlessly continued to

support the most vulnerable during this pandemic, despite personal risk to themselves. 100 PCS members at the government's Brexit department are balloting for strike action.

These outsourced workers provide cleaning, security, portage and postal services. But their private employer ISS is refusing to pare down the job, despite lots of staff working from home.

We've got benefits to the jobless,

furlough payments to those facing unemployment, helped the Vaccine Taskforce and Sage scientific advisors. None of this happens by magic.

Our members in every government department, public body and the private sector have worked tirelessly. They are rewarded with a pay freeze!

The trade union movement must now step up. We need more than words and petitions.

The leadership must mount a campaign of opposition to this attack and unite all public sector workers, and coordinate across the union movement for action, including strikes as necessary. I will be calling on PCS to lead the fight for pay justice for PCS members and all other public sector workers.

MARION LLOYD

CIVIL SERVICE UNION PCS, NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

● NHS worker: We want 15%

If the government's intent was to further antagonise and enrage public sector workers, then Rishi Sunak has succeeded.

NHS workers were already preparing to take on the Tories. They are now joined by council and civil service colleagues rightly asking: "What about us?"

Attempting to polarise public sector workers was a gross miscalculation. It may forge unity among all of us.

A collective response from unions - representing everyone from the probation service to librarians - must follow this derisory, insulting, broad daylight attempt to divide workers.

The price of a pandemic the Tories refused to adequately prepare for must not be put on us. We've borne

the brunt of Covid, losing thousands of colleagues to this monstrous virus.

The Tories are trying to 'level down' all workers. This is an opportunity for the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and all unions to demand a 15% pay rise for all workers.

NHS WORKER

Teacher: It's a slap in the face

This year, I've re-learned how to do my job twice - moving to teaching entirely online and trying to teach two years' worth of learning in one - with children off self-isolating.

I've increased my costs to provide my own computer and internet for hours a day to ensure I can do my job.

I've increased my stress levels. I have tried to reassure children that they will be safe in school, while reiterating that they are not allowed to see friends and family out of school.

I've shivered while teaching - opening windows to ensure classroom ventilation when the heating will not be turned up any further.

I've continued to work 70 hours a week. I want learning to retain

motivation and interest, and I try to progress children in line with government and Ofsted expectations.

My union has thanked me for keeping schools Covid-secure - the reason the National Education Union (NEU) gives for why there should be no fightback. I know there's nothing secure about it - just disinfectant and luck.

I've done all that because we're in a pandemic. Everyone has to do things differently.

But to be rewarded with a pay cut, it's a slap in the face. It's not a pay 'freeze', as the government likes to term it.

Supermarkets are announcing record profits and big business will try to recoup losses by increasing anything they can. My pay will mean less.

The media has used schools, teachers, and education staff, as a political football all year. Now I'm told that I'm worthless too.

I don't need to be told that I'm lucky, as a teacher, to have secure employment with an income that means that I can afford food and a home. That's not luck.

That's from workers fighting for decent pay and conditions. That's what everyone should have as a minimum.

Cutting public sector pay does nothing to help those on zero-hour contracts or who have lost their jobs. Everyone should be paid a wage that means they can afford to live and not just survive.

Workers across the private and public sectors need to push their unions to fight back. 15 U-turns already under their well-paid belts, there is no reason why we should let the Tories get away with this.

We need an immediate day of coordinated action to launch a campaign of strike action against this pay robbery.

A BRISTOL TEACHER



PAULA MITCHELL

Unison candidate Hugo Pierre: Unions must act now

At *Socialism 2020*, **Hugo Pierre**, a Socialist Party member standing to be general secretary of public sector union Unison, said:

The Tories plan to divide public sector workers from those in the private sector with a public sector pay freeze. We know in the trade unions that inaction only encourages further attacks.

That's why a socialist leader of Britain's largest trade union, Unison, would be calling for an emergency national executive council meeting

of the union - to draw up a plan of action to put to all the public sector trade unions to demand we won't pay for the Covid crisis.

Following years when our pay is over 20% lower in real terms than it was in 2009, we would make official the call of the National Shop Stewards Network for a day of action on 5 December.

A socialist leadership of the main trade unions would demand 100% pay for all furloughed workers and all asked to isolate. A socialist leadership of the health unions would be at the forefront of a claim for a 15% pay rise for all our NHS staff. They have put in more than 15% of additional unpaid time to save lives.

Hugo also calls for "an immediate

meeting of the leaderships of the public sector unions to plan a campaign of action, including coordinated strike action, to fight the pay cut proposals."

- Read Hugo's speech at Socialism 2020 on pages 4-5 or search 'Hugo Pierre 4 Unison General Secretary' on Facebook

- *Rules introduced by Unison to clamp down on democratic debate in the union mean that candidates for union elections cannot 'invite or accept' support 'in money or kind' from any entity which 'is not provided for in Unison rules.' These articles are produced without the authorisation of Hugo Pierre, in order to comply with these requirements.*

Socialist Party members in Unison are moving the following motion at the union's local government service group executive.

- We condemn the Tory government's announcement to introduce a public sector pay freeze/cap on 5.4 million workers
- The government position is a direct insult to the heroic work and service our members have continued to provide throughout the pandemic
- A pay freeze/cap will, in addition,

see a continued fall in the living standards of our members, who have suffered a decade and more of attacks on their pay

We agree to:

- Launch an immediate break the freeze/cap campaign
- Call on members to organise local protests that they locally decide on before the end of the year - in line with Covid regulations - highlighting the attack
- Begin a consultation with

members to seek to win support for a ballot for industrial action

- Approach other Unison service groups affected for a joint campaign
- Call on the general secretary to ask for an emergency meeting of the public services committee of the Trades Union Congress, with a view to organising a cross-union campaign to defeat the attack

Do you agree?
JOIN THE SOCIALISTS
socialistparty.org.uk/join



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) which organises across the world.

Our demands include...

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

WORK AND INCOME

- Trade union struggle for an immediate increase in the minimum wage to £12 an hour without exemptions as a step towards a real living wage of at least £15. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings. Scrap zero-hour contracts.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension.

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

RIGHTS

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

MASS WORKERS' PARTY

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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- Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join
- or call **020 8988 8777**
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SOCIALISM 2020: Growing search for ideas to change the world

Socialism 2020 broke previous records – on ticket sales, in the response to the finance appeal to fund the fight of socialism, in the number of workshops and in the participation in the discussion on ideas to change the world. Although the rallies and workshops addressing the unprecedented political, economic, environmental and health crises had to be online only, people left feeling like they had been in real discussions with real people about a real way forward.

Socialism 2020 brought together over 1,000 participants to take part in 38 zoom workshops over a period of four days, discussing themes of “After Corbyn”, “Smash Racism”, Trotskyism, Marxism, and more. This year’s record attendance, with around 200 people who were yet to join the Socialist Party buying tickets, is a reflection of the huge appetite for socialist ideas as the solution to capitalist crisis.

Here we print edited extracts from speeches at the main rally on Saturday 21 November which was live streamed on Facebook, YouTube and Instagram.



HANNAH SELL
GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY

The bosses have seen the Covid crisis as an opportunity to go on the offensive, to ‘fire and re-hire’ on worse terms and conditions. Twelve million adults are struggling to pay their bills, and unemployment is soaring. We are heading towards an 11% contraction in the economy in 2020, the greatest in 300 years. The government is already making it clear that it is the working class that will be expected to pay for the aftermath of this crisis, starting with a public sector pay freeze.

Worldwide we are already seeing a series of tremendous movements – in Hong Kong, Lebanon, Chile, Thailand, Belarus, Poland, Nigeria – gigantic protest movements have shaken society.

Of course, they all have different characteristics, but they also have features in common. In all of them young people have been to the fore, they have united different sections of the working class across ethnic and racial divisions, and they have shown enormous courage. And they have been fuelled by the economic impoverishment of the working class and young people.

An essential part of the role of our party, the Socialist Party, is not just to support movements, but to point towards how they can win.

We said from the start, that Corbyn becoming Labour leader did not make Labour a workers’ party. Rather it had created two parties in one. There was still a pro-capitalist,

privatising, warmongering party that dominated the Parliamentary Labour Party and the machine, and a potential anti-austerity party in formation around Corbyn.

We welcomed that potential party, and we campaigned at every stage for what was necessary to win the battle against the pro-capitalist right. We take no pleasure whatsoever in the fact that our warnings have been proved correct – that retreat and compromise don’t work; that the party right, and behind them the capitalist class, would only be satisfied with the annihilation of Corbynism, with driving it into the dirt.

A council of war

So there now has to be an urgent discussion on how we can fight to solve the crisis of working-class political representation. That’s why we’ve raised that the left union leaders should initiate a mass conference, a council of war, to bring together all of those who want to fight for a mass workers’ party.

It is vital that this not only includes those inside Labour, but also the left unaffiliated unions, the Socialist Party and other socialist organisations. It should be opened up to the many tens of thousands who are now flooding out of the Labour Party as individuals. And it is not just individuals. The Bakers’ union is now launching a consultation on whether or not it should continue to be affiliated.

There are those that say the best way forward is to stay and fight. In our view, if you are serious about that

fight, you want to bring the people who are outside into the fight as well.

Whether or not the workers’ movement does what is necessary, whether or not the left acts at this point, the current, not very stable, but seeming surface stability in politics, is going to shatter.

Tories in crisis

The Tories are in a serious crisis. Starmer is waiting in the wings burnishing his credentials, how he would be a more reliable representative of capitalist interests than Johnson. It is not impossible that the crisis at the top of the Tories could lead to Starmer being drawn into government one way or another, long before the next scheduled general election.

It is vital that industrial militancy also has a political arm, and this is the other side of the question of the need for a new mass workers’ party. One of the employers that have ‘fired and rehired’ is Tower Hamlets Labour council. The workers there are doing all they can to fight industrially, but they would also be strengthened by being able to stand candidates against their Labour council at the ballot box.

Similarly, if London Mayor Sadiq Khan continues on his current path of not standing up to the Tories, presiding over attacks on the pay, jobs and conditions of London’s transport workers, then an important aspect of the fightback by the RMT, Unite and other unions, could be standing against him at the ballot box.

Unite had already cut its affiliation fees before all this blew up as a means of trying to put pressure on Starmer. Some left affiliated unions are now threatening to withhold money from next May’s Labour local election campaigns.

We would say that’s positive, but why don’t you take one step further and allow your local branches to take the decision that they can stand candidates, if they want to, in local elections against Labour councils where they are implementing cuts? If Labour councils follow what the Tories want, they will be implementing cuts worse than anything we have ever seen, and a chance to combat them at the ballot box would be very effective.

That’s why we proposed to other participants in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), most importantly the RMT, the transport

workers’ union, that we restart electoral activity in next May’s local elections. So that even if the steps we want are not taken by other forces, TUSC can act as a banner for as many trade unionists, Black Lives Matter activists, community campaigners as possible. To come together and stand in defence of local services, jobs, pay and conditions (see also p9).

A Socialist programme

There are different forces involved in TUSC, it’s a coalition, we are united in an opposition to austerity and cuts. In the Socialist Party, we go further than that. It is our view, along with growing numbers of others, that capitalism itself means endless austerity, cuts and environmental degradation - it doesn’t work. That is why we put forward a socialist programme because it is the way forward for humanity.

That is why we call for the taking of the major corporations and banks out of private hands in order to harness all the science, technique, human ingenuity and talent that exist, to develop a socialist planned economy. That is the only way to prevent

environmental catastrophe, and to meet the needs humankind. It can’t just be done from the top by a government, it requires an active movement of the working class.

Even the capitalists themselves realise their system is in crisis, that it offers no future for the next generation. And that is why we are entering an era of mass revolt, of revolution, of enormous struggle. There will be opportunities in the era we are entering into, to build a mass force, capable of leading a movement that can bring an end to capitalism and begin to build a new socialist order.

If you agree, join us in that struggle.

Join the fightback

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

- Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join
- or call **020 8988 8777**
- or text your name and postcode to **07761 818 206**

to find out more today!

Your Feedback

“What a great weekend of discussion and debate, I attended five workshops and the Friday and Saturday night rallies. It was a shame we couldn’t all be there in person, but still an excellent atmosphere. I can’t wait for Socialism 2021.”
CALVIN FOWLER, WORCESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

“Thank you for an enjoyable rally, although I could sleep for a week now! I wish the party every success. The world needs the Socialist Party.”
GLORIA STEEMSONNE, DEVON SOCIALIST PARTY

“I was sceptical about four days of online meetings but I was completely wrong. 2020 has been tough for me personally but Socialism 2020 reaffirmed my commitment to the Socialist Party.”
SUSAN POWELL, GLOUCESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

“Wow what a fantastic event! Well done to all who worked so hard to make it such a success.”
JULIA LEONARD, HILLINGDON SOCIALIST PARTY

PETER TAAFFE
SOCIALIST PARTY POLITICAL SECRETARY

The future prospect for this system is that there is no light at the end of a very dark tunnel. This is the reflection of the stagnation, at best, of world capitalism, there are not real reserves on which it can call.

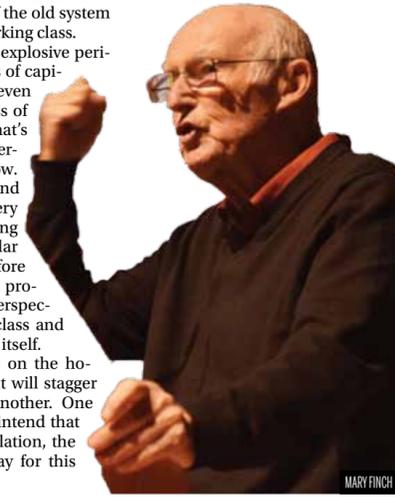
There is a colossal mountain of problems which could overwhelmingly engulf working people and society. Struggle and mass resistance, whether we demand it or not, is inevitable amongst working people. We have to resist, but we have to go further than that, we have to raise the necessity of an alternative economic and social system. Socialism, a planned economy, that could begin to solve the problems of working people.

All the elements are there to bring together the resources, of the workplace and also of the enormous ingenuity of the working class in Britain and worldwide. But only if we abolish

this dysfunctional system. You cannot proceed to progress on the basis of the perpetuation of the old system that has failed the working class.

We are entering an explosive period in which the faults of capitalism can be laid even more bare to the mass of the working class. That’s why there is an interest in this event now. We must go further and make an appeal to every worker, to every young person in particular with their lives before them. That we offer a programme, a policy, a perspective for the working class and the labour movement itself.

There is no lifeline on the horizon for capitalism, it will stagger from one crisis to another. One thing is certain, they intend that the mass of the population, the working class, will pay for this crisis.



MARY FINCH



Socialism appeal raises a record £50,145.80

This year the Socialist Party set a target to raise £25,000 during our annual Socialism financial appeal. Despite the fact that many workers face pay cuts on furlough and job losses, we achieved double that target! What an indication of the political confidence in socialist ideas.

Isai Priya, from the Socialist Party’s national committee, introduced the finance appeal: “We in the Socialist Party have unshakeable confidence in the working class and the party is, and will continue to be, built on the huge sacrifice of our

members both financially and with their time.”

The Socialism 2019 appeal raised a very impressive £43,000. That included a generous £12,000 donation. This year no one individual was able to give more than £2,000 – showing that we have raised more this year from many more people donating to fund the fight to change the world.

● Pledges can be redeemed by visiting socialistparty.org.uk/donates20



HUGO PIERRE
SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER AND UNISON NEC MEMBER (IN A PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Just imagine if the most powerful trade unions were led by socialists this year.

Would we have closed down for the first few months of the pandemic? Or would we have put together a trade union national action plan for production of PPE under democratic workers’ control, firstly renationalising companies like NHS Logistics to determine demand, regulate production and quality, and ensure distribution?

We would have not just posed this as a serious alternative, but would’ve organised trade union members in the NHS and those privatised companies, to demand emergency powers be used to bring this about.

A socialist leader of Unison, the largest trade union, would have demanded an end to the private care catastrophe, by calling for the provision and staffing of care homes to be brought into the public sector under democratic workers’ control of joint local authority and health boards.

A socialist leadership of the major trade unions would demand testing and tracing be put into the hands of



HOWARD BECKETT
UNITE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY AND LABOUR NEC MEMBER IN A PERSONAL CAPACITY

This week we have had an announcement that 5.5 million public sectors workers can expect a pay freeze. Again, workers told that they must pay for this crisis. And where is the voice of Labour? Where are our arguments that it is time to tackle the Tories and talk of nationalising those businesses?

We have a Labour leadership determined to trounce Corbynism. Determined to make a stamp that they are a new leadership and in doing so have created a civil war within the Labour Party that sees the attempt to exit Corbynism, and, in doing so, exit socialism itself from the Party.



HOWIE HAWKINS
GREEN PARTY CANDIDATE IN THE US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

The Democrats offered no real programme for working people. So the tasks for the Socialists and working class in this country are we need a mass party of the people, we need to go back to the grass roots.

● Message from the editors

The Socialist’s editors took part in this event as participants, speakers, chairs and technical assistants. Our thanks go to all those who made the event possible. Our involvement over the four days has meant that this week’s edition consists of 12 pages. We will be back to 16 pages next week. Some articles that aren’t included this week can be read at socialistparty.org.uk

local joint health and local authority boards, democratically accountable. That would recruit an army of workers trained in the best tracking techniques to reach 100% of those in contact with infected people.

A socialist leadership of the main trade unions would have demanded 100% pay for all furloughed workers and those asked to isolate. It would have demanded emergency funding for schools to deliver a mix of online and in-class education. It would have been at the forefront of a claim for a 15% pay rise for all NHS staff.



BEA GARDNER
SOCIALIST STUDENTS ACTIVIST

The representatives of capitalism want us to pay for the Covid crisis with our lives and livelihoods. They have shown that they cannot maintain their system, while at the same time providing us with the basic things we need including jobs, homes and education... We are part of the same struggle... Together we can stand as a mighty force able to win vital and necessary concessions for our class, but alongside this, in the course of our fightback, now more than ever we need to raise the banner of socialism.



FRIEDRICH ENGELS: A revolutionary who played a pivotal role in the development of socialism

LENNY SHAIL

SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

The 28 November 2020, marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of Friedrich Engels (1820-1895). Alongside his great friend, collaborator, and comrade, Karl Marx, Engels was one of the greatest thinkers of his time.

But he wasn't just a theoretician. He was a man of action, a class fighter who sought to place himself at the standpoint of the working class and its struggle for socialism. He rejected the privileges and comforts he could so easily have accepted for a life that he was born into.

An extremely humble man, who often downplayed his own historic contribution to 'scientific socialism', he commented: "What Marx accomplished I would not have achieved. Marx stood higher, saw farther, and took a broader and quicker view than all the rest of us. Marx was a genius; we others were at best men of talent. Without him the theory would be far from what it is today. It therefore rightly bears his name."



Marx and Engels developed their ideas from their central involvement in the many struggles of the day. They were socialists engaged in putting their ideas into practice, not academics

An equal

But Engels deserves to be placed alongside Marx as an equal. He not only sustained Marx by sacrificing his own energies to finance Marx's work, but also made groundbreaking contributions to their joint ideas on historical materialism, philosophy, economics and in many other fields, which laid the foundations for socialist change, both in their time and for the future.

Engels was born on 28 November 1820 in what is now Wuppertal, Germany. His family were wealthy, strict Christians and owned cotton-textile mills in Germany and Salford, near Manchester, in England.

However, even as a teenager Engels rejected the conservative life and religious conventions he was meant to follow. Sent to the German industrial cities of Elberfeld and Bremen to learn the family business, a teenage Engels was radicalised by the horrors experienced by working-class men and women in these early industrial centres.

In his letters from Elberfeld, he wrote: "Terrible poverty prevails among the lower classes, particularly the factory workers in Wuppertal; syphilis and lung diseases are so widespread as to be barely credible; in Elberfeld alone, out of 2,500 children of school age 1,200 are deprived of education and grow up in the factories - merely so that the manufacturer need not pay the adults, whose place they take, twice the wage he pays a child.

"But the wealthy manufacturers have a flexible conscience, and causing the death of one child more or one less does not doom a pietist's soul to hell, especially if he goes to church twice every Sunday."

While serving his military service in Berlin, Engels encountered and began to associate with the 'Young Hegelians', as did a young Karl Marx - although they wouldn't meet in person till 1842, and it wasn't until their second meeting in 1844 that they realised their analysis and conclusions of capitalism were the same.

But it was Engels' experiences and work in Manchester and Salford that placed him firmly at the standpoint and in the heart of the working class that was developing rapidly internationally.

Brought to Salford in 1842 to work as a clerk in his father's factory, Engels spent every second of his free time immersing himself in the lives, work, homes and bars, of the immensely poor and oppressed working class of the city.

"I wanted to see you in your own homes, to observe you in your everyday life, to chat with you on your condition and grievances, to witness your struggles against the social and political power of your oppressors. I have done so: I forsook the company and the dinner-parties, the port-wine and champagne of the middle-classes, and devoted my leisure-hours almost exclusively to the intercourse with plain workingmen" (nb. in the language of his day "workingmen" included working women).

He was helped into this world by a young Irish immigrant factory worker Mary Burns, who would become his partner both in life and in struggle. Engels rejected the norms and expectations of his class background to live with Mary.

Standpoint of workers

Still only 25 years old, Engels published his first book, 'The Condition of the Working Class in England', which collated in vivid detail every aspect of life in the squalid conditions for workers who he had quite literally lived and worked among.

But like Karl Marx, who he would meet for the second time in 1844 in Paris, Engels did not write or report for the sake of it or for journalistic praise.

His experiences in north-west England helped lay the basis for the cornerstone of Marx and Engels' work - that it was the working class that would be the key force in society, and that as it became a class for itself, could transform society along socialist lines - an idea that for its time was revolutionary in itself but was rooted in Marx and Engels' method of analysis.

Marx and Engels had, at almost the same time, evolved from acceptance of the 'idealist' philosophy of their great teacher Hegel to the ideas of 'dialectical materialism'. 'Dialectics' is the method of thought which seeks to understand the all-sided character, contradictions and interaction of events and processes. They "turned

Hegel upside down" and put him "from standing on his head firmly back on his feet," thereby rejecting Hegel's idealist standpoint.

Hegel's believed ideas and thoughts came from outside of the evolution of nature, humankind and social relations, and were quasi-religious. But Marx and Engels argued that ideas and people's consciousness are expressions of material forces shaping individuals and societies. That is, they are products of social struggles, events, developments in the economy, relations between social classes, etc. These are the driving impulse of history.

Agreement

The two young men never looked back after this second meeting. They became best friends and comrades for the rest of their lives.

Marx and Engels spent much of the 1840s in Paris, then Brussels, developing and honing their understanding of the world around them and its development from past societies.

The two never swayed politically, criticising the many idealist and utopian socialists of the time - such as Proudhon and Robert Owen - who thought appeals of 'kindness, reason and fraternity' could win people to a better world.

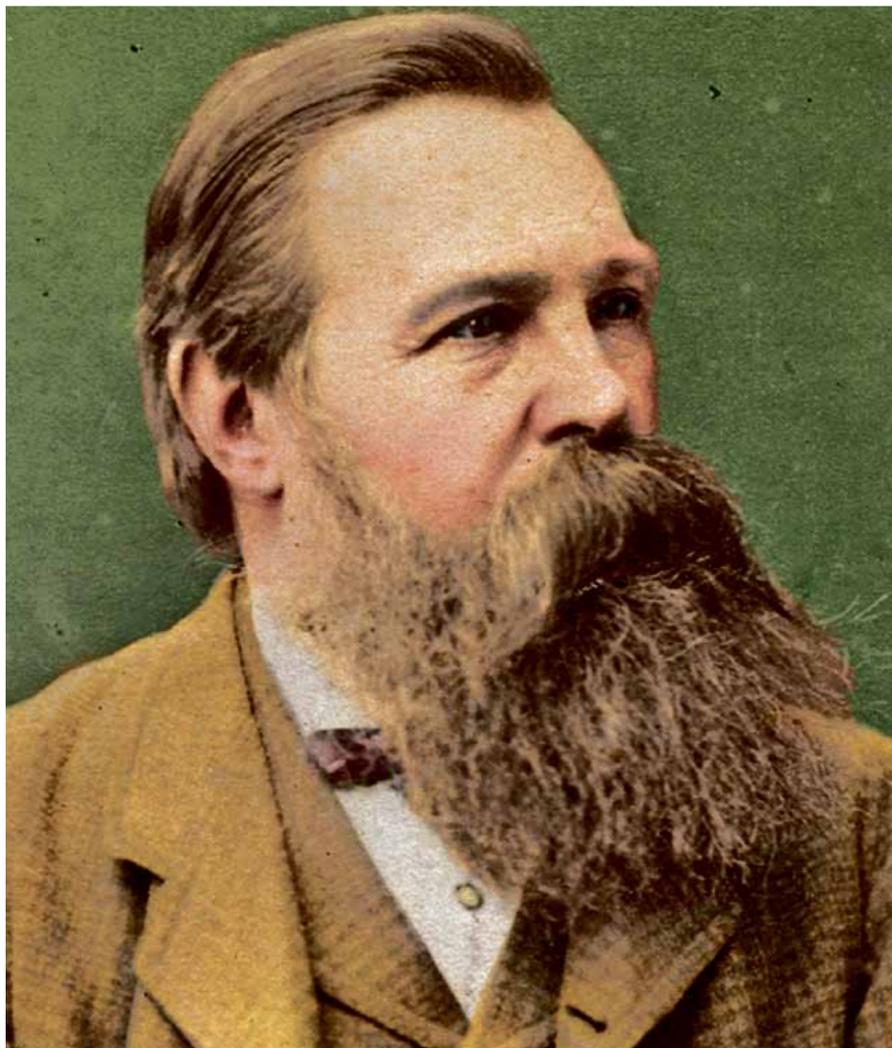
They fought to win people to the idea of 'class struggle', and that in capitalist society two key distinct classes existed - the bourgeoisie (ruling/capitalist class) and the proletariat (working class). And only the working class as an independent force, and through its economic, social and political struggles (because the bourgeoisie wouldn't give up their wealth voluntarily), was capable of taking society any further towards socialism.

Despite the image that most historians like to portray, Marx and Engels developed their ideas from their central involvement in the many struggles of the day. They were socialists engaged in putting their ideas into practice, not academics.

They helped to forge the Communist League in 1847, and at its second congress later that year they were asked to produce a manifesto and guide to communism that would become 'The Communist Manifesto'. This short masterpiece is now regarded as a classic, and for any socialist, it is still relevant today.

It was, however, a document for its time, a perspective on the rapidly changing world around them, a guide to action, and a programme for the toiling working classes of the world. Nonetheless, the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky, decades later, praised its 'astounding freshness': "Assuredly the young authors (Marx was 29, Engels 27) were able to look further into the future than anyone before them, and perhaps anyone since."

Its opening lines to the first chapter



Friedrich Engels IMAGE: ARISTOTELIS/CC

"Bourgeois and Proletarians" asserts: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles..."

"Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinct feature: it has simplified class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other - bourgeoisie and proletariat..."

The Manifesto ends with its oft-quoted rallying cry: "The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working Men of All Countries, Unite!"

backward, feudal-monarchist forces. Engels was once even arrested by the revolutionary forces because of his regular public disdaining of the 'petit bourgeois' leaders!

As the revolutionary wave was pushed back, Engels had to flee back to Britain in 1849 and returned to work at his family's factory in Salford, where he stayed until 1869. His income helped to fund his and Marx's revolutionary work. Indeed, with Engels' support Marx was able to work full-time in London.

Engels hated his time at the mill and the 'double life' it entailed. The day he was able to give it up and become a full-time revolutionary was the happiest of his life.

Marx and Engels would write daily to each other and continued to collaborate on the theoretical underpinning of socialism, but also to involve themselves in working-class struggle and the tasks of building a revolutionary party, both in Britain and internationally. This effort resulted in establishing the International Workingmen's Association which, historically, became known as the First International in 1864.

Central role of working class

In the International, Marx and Engels never held back from arguing that the working class is the main agent of socialist change. This tenet resulted in continual clashes inside the International with the anarchists, led by Mikhail Bakunin, that would eventually lead to its breakup in 1876, following the defeat of the revolutionary uprising of the Paris Commune in 1871.

Afterwards, Marx and Engels helped organise international support for the surviving Paris insurgents. Engels would also go on to play a role in the development of the Second International (founded in 1889) as well.

Marx and Engels fought for an independent party of the working class - in Britain and other countries in Europe, particularly helping to nurture the early development of the German Social-Democratic Party.

This is the same task which the Socialist Party, socialists, trade unionists and militant workers face today, and much of Engels' and Marx's writings are extremely relevant still today - for example, Engels' observations on the evolution of trade unions' national traits under capitalism.

"The unions are unexcelled. In them is developed the peculiar courage of the English [Engels means 'Britain']. It is said on the continent that the English, and especially the working-men, are cowardly, that they cannot carry out a revolution because, unlike the French, they do not riot at intervals, because they apparently accept the bourgeois regime so quietly. This is a complete mistake. The English working men are second to none in courage; they are quite as

restless as the French, but they fight differently."

In his later life, Engels was able to delve further into the processes and science behind Marxism and socialism and the development of society throughout history. Producing more masterpieces with 'Anti-Dühring' in 1878, 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific' in 1880 (which was a reworking of three chapters from 'Anti-Dühring' in a more accessible form), and 'The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State' in 1884, that gave a Marxist explanation of women's oppression under class society, and how to fight it.

In 1882, in the preface to the Russian edition of the Communist Manifesto, Engels ventured that the revolution in a peasant-dominated country like Russia at the time could be the spark for revolutions elsewhere. "If the Russian Revolution becomes the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West, so that both complement each other, the present Russian common ownership of land may serve as the starting point for a communist development." He thereby dismissed the false idea that Marx and Engels thought that a workers' revolution could or would develop only in an advanced capitalist economy.

Of course, although the revolution first broke out in semi-feudal Russia (capitalism's 'weakest link', as Lenin described the country), and after the October socialist revolution rapidly spread to other countries, the subsequent revolutions elsewhere failed, largely because of the inadequate and weak leadership of those revolutionary parties, and history took a different course.

Capital

With the assistance of Engels, Volume One of Karl Marx's 'Capital' (which laid bare the inner workings of capitalism) was published in 1867, with Engels commenting: "As long as capitalists and workers have existed in the world, no single book that could have had such importance for workers has appeared."

After Marx's death in 1883, Engels undertook the prodigious task of collating and deciphering Marx's unfinished notes into what were to become Volumes Two and Three.

Engels died in 1895. Like his best friend and comrade Karl Marx, his contribution to the struggles of the working class are as important and crucial today as when they lived.

Capitalism has taken society forward immensely. All around us we see the huge steps forward in technology, science and understanding. Yet, we live in a world in which living standards, life expectancy, health and the ability to enjoy life are being driven back. In many parts of the world the terrible living and working conditions which Engels witnessed in Manchester are not much different even today.

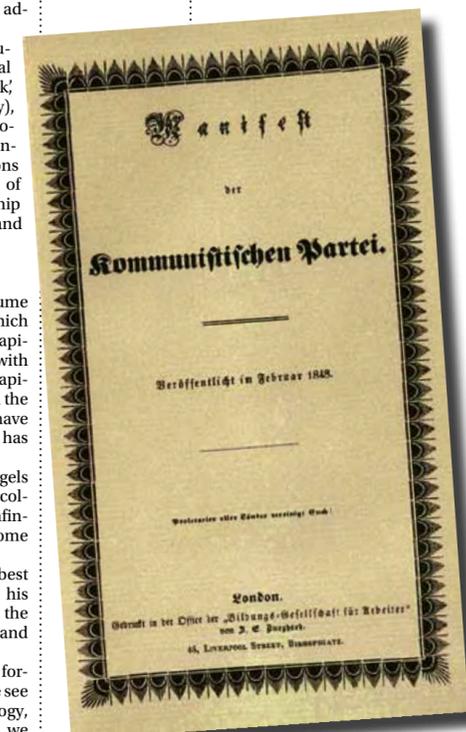


Marx and Engels fought for an independent party of the working class - in Britain and other countries in Europe

The tasks laid out by Marx and Engels over 170 years ago for socialists to build working-class parties across the world to fight to change society along socialist lines remain central and urgent to the Socialist Party and its co-thinkers in the Committee for a Workers' International today.

Only through a successful socialist revolution, which Engels and Marx fought for, can humanity begin to utilise and plan all the enormous science, technology and abundance of wealth that exists through the historical labour of workers in class society. Then, when 'workers of the world unite', it will be possible to create a harmonious world where the horrors of capitalism are firmly put into the dustbin of history.

- A full version of this appreciation of Engels is available now on 'Socialism the podcast' ('The revolutionary life of Friedrich Engels')
- A comprehensive review of the Communist Manifesto is on socialistparty.org.uk
- Go to leftbooks.co.uk for books by Marx and Engels



The cover of an early edition (in German, printed in London) of the 1848 Communist Manifesto, written by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

Little Ilford school strike stands firm - council must use reserves!

JAMES IVENS
EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

"I am the least rebellious person I know. I get to school at 6.30! But I have participated in this strike, and I will continue to participate in this strike... The kids will miss out on a whole lot more if we fall."

These words at the 19 November strike rally sum up the motivations of pickets at Little Ilford School in east London. Members of the National Education Union (NEU) had walked out on four days as the Socialist went to press, with another two planned.

The campaign against cramming even more students into this full-up comp has mobilised over 50 workers onto every picket line so far. Over a dozen have bought copies of the Socialist newspaper.

Another striker told the third-day rally: "I come from a working-class background. I wanted to give working-class people a chance. That's why I went into education. That's not what's happening with this expansion."

Even most of the school's senior management team is on strike against this disastrous plan. After more than four hours of negotiations, the education authority's response to the union's demand for 13 new jobs was... 2.2 jobs. Newham NEU rightly says the strike will go on till there's a real offer. The union has called further strike days for Wednesday 2 and Thursday 3 December.



PHOTO JAMES IVENS

Newham council has over £500 million in 'usable' reserves and well over £1 billion in total reserves. The Labour administration has had six years' warning of the need for more places. It should use its reserves and borrowing powers to create safe, manageable school places in the borough - under the democratic oversight of school unions, parents

● Birmingham NHS porters' strike

Birmingham Socialist Party members and trade unionists were out supporting Unison picket lines of NHS porters on strike at Heartlands Hospital at 7am on 23 November.

Porters are striking in opposition to enforced shift changes where trust bosses want 'flexible working' at the expense of workers' pay, health and work/life balance.

● Read more, search 'Birmingham NHS porters' 48-hour strike against shift changes' at socialistparty.org.uk



PHOTOS BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Heathrow workers to strike against 'fire and rehire' plans



PHOTO TONY HIGGETT/CC

Workers at Heathrow Airport are to take strike action for four days in December against the bosses' "fire and rehire" plans, cutting pay in the process.

The workers' union Unite says the action by frontline employees would effectively close London's main airport for periods in the run-up to Christmas.

4,000 staff have been told to sign new contracts, cutting pay for some by about 20% or up to £8,000. Unite says the airport has large cash reserves.

The strike action, by firefighters, engineers, operations, security and baggage staff, will take place on 1 December, when the new contracts take effect, and then on 14 December and 17 and 18 December.

Unite's regional coordinating officer Wayne King said: "The airport is using the Covid-19 pandemic as a smokescreen to permanently cut workers' pay."

"In the midst of a global pandemic, no key worker should be forced to take such deep pay cuts by an employer that claims to have billions in reserves."

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and students - and send the bill to Westminster.

Newham mayor Rokhsana Fiaz came to power promising she was different to the old Blairite regime of Sir Robin Wales. But what has really changed?

Neither the Tories, nor the Labour of Fiaz, Khan and Starmer, represents working-class people. Trade unionists like the Little Ilford strikers should consider their own electoral challenge to cuts politicians. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition exists to facilitate such stands. (See opposite)

Meanwhile, the local press has only given the council's side of things. Newham NEU has repeatedly contacted the Newham Recorder about the strike and the reasons for it. As yet, nothing. This must change.

The NEU's national leadership has declared the strike will go on till there is an acceptable alternative. This is an important signal to the council that it is facing firm opposition.

But Little Ilford workers might wonder why there was not the same firmness for national strikes against unsafe pandemic conditions, against crushing workload and low pay. NEU members are willing to fight. They need a national leadership to match.

● Send messages of solidarity to louise.cuffaro@neu.org.uk

SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

November issue includes...

- The future of Unite - the key issues at stake
- Police racism - a case study of racism
- Covid crisis boosts forces of revolt - and reaction

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TUSC sets out core policies for May 2021 local elections

As the Tories discuss their public spending cuts plans to make working-class people pay for the Covid crisis, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) national steering committee has set out the core policies TUSC candidates will be committed to fight for in next May's local council elections.

TUSC is an electoral coalition, offering the opportunity to trade unionists, community campaigners, socialists and others to stand candidates under a common anti-austerity banner, distinct from the mainstream, establishment politicians.

The core policies are the minimum basis on which someone can stand as a TUSC candidate rather than 'Independent' - the only legal alternative if you are not endorsed by a registered political party - which doesn't say whether a candidate supports austerity and cuts or not.

The individual candidates and different organisations appearing on the ballot paper under the TUSC name and logo will almost certainly campaign for and promote far more issues than those covered in the core policies, which their individual election material will explain.

But they will all fight to implement the core policies. Voters will know the minimum they can expect from any councillor elected under the TUSC banner.

Draft core policy platform for the May 2021 local elections

We need a working-class socialist voice in the council chambers to resist Covid austerity.

Tory governments have inflicted nearly eleven years of savage austerity, cuts and privatisation on working-class people. The results have been laid bare by the dire situation millions of us find ourselves in as the social, economic and health effects of the Covid-19 pandemic hit our workplaces, schools, services and communities.

Against this background, it is necessary to ensure that politicians, from whatever party, who try to pass the costs of Covid onto the working class, face the possibility of a challenge at the ballot box. And the council elections in May 2021 - taking place alongside elections for the Scottish and Welsh parliaments and the Greater London Authority - will be the first opportunity since the start of the Covid crisis to do so.

Covid has revealed both the drastic situation our local public services are in - with councils massively underfunded by central government - but also some of the many things local authorities have the power to do to improve our lives. In the first lockdown, for example, councils acted against homelessness in their local areas through the 'Everybody In' scheme. Many councils stepped in during the autumn half term to continue free school meals.

But they could go so much further. Councils could ensure not just a free school meals programme for current recipients for all future holidays, but organise access to decent quality food and meals for all children, the elderly and the vulnerable



PHOTO SENAN

in immediate need. They could use their powers to begin a mass home-building programme to tackle the housing crisis.

Most current councillors however - including unfortunately, the majority of Labour's 7,000 or so local representatives - would say they cannot use their legal authority to act without first getting funding from the government.

But that's the wrong way round. The Tories have made deep cuts to councils, but they still account for over one-fifth of all public spending, with responsibilities for adult social care, housing, education support, transport, recycling and rubbish collection, libraries and many other services. That's a powerful position from which to organise a fightback. Councils should first spend what's needed - and then demand the money back from the government.

The multiple U-turns made by Johnson and his chancellor, spending billions when the pressure is on them, show that if just a handful of councils used the powers they have

to refuse to implement any more cuts, and spend what is necessary instead, the Tories could be made to pay up.

TUSC has a policy platform for the local council elections (see below) which could make a difference. Even one councillor in a local authority taking a stand, if they used their position in the council chamber to appeal to those outside, could give confidence to local trade unionists and community campaigners to fight. A network of rebel councillors across the country could have an even bigger impact in fighting for what is needed to meet the Covid crisis.

They would link up with those taking action against climate change, the Black Lives Matter movement, and campaigns against attacks on women's rights and services. TUSC councillors would be at the heart of any struggle that is a step towards a society in which people can enjoy life to its fullest without the fear of unemployment, homelessness, poverty and discrimination.

Agreement with the platform

below is the minimum basis on which any prospective council candidate can stand under the TUSC name in the 2021 local council elections - but it is a minimum, not a limit to the issues candidates will raise.

Every trade unionist, anti-cuts campaigner, community activist, and all those who want to see an alternative to austerity politicians can become a TUSC candidate. But voters should know that any councillor elected under the TUSC banner will:

● Oppose all cuts and closures to council services, jobs, pay and conditions. We reject the claim that 'some cuts' are necessary to our services or that the Covid crisis is a reason for austerity

● Support all workers' struggles against government policies making ordinary people pay for the crisis

● Fight for united working-class struggle against racism and all forms of oppression

● Reject council tax, rent and service charge increases for working-class people to make up for cuts in central funding, support a redistributive revenue-raising system to finance local council services, and demand central government restores the cuts in funding it has imposed

● Use councils' powers to begin a mass building programme of eco-friendly affordable council homes to tackle the housing crisis

● Vote against the privatisation of council jobs and services, or the transfer of council services to 'social enterprises' or 'arms-length' management organisations, which are first steps to privatisation

● Use all the legal powers available to councils to oppose both the cuts and government policies which centrally impose the transfer of public services to private bodies. This includes using councils' powers to refer local NHS decisions, initiate referenda, and organise public commissions and consultations in campaigns to defend public services

● Vote for councils to refuse to implement austerity. We will support councils which, in the first instance, use their reserves and prudential borrowing powers to avoid making cuts. But we argue that the best way to mobilise the mass campaign that is necessary to defend and improve council services is to set a budget that meets the needs of the local community, and demand that government funding makes up the shortfall

The core policy platform above agreed by the TUSC steering committee at its November 2020 meeting is still a draft document, now out for discussion within the different component parts of TUSC before final adoption. In non-Covid times TUSC usually organised a conference in January or February, and the steering committee will meet in December to discuss what might be possible in the new year.

● Comments on the draft platform are also welcome from individuals and organisations not yet participating in TUSC, and can be sent to the National Election Agent, Clive Heemskerk, at cliveheemskerk@socialistparty.org.uk

TV: CripTales - The Real Deal

A painful reflection of a system that pits us against each other



REVIEWED BY LINDSEY MORGAN
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

To mark the 25th anniversary of the Disability Discrimination Act, the BBC has produced a series of short films called 'CripTales'. One of these is about a disabled person who suspects a neighbour of fraudulently claiming Personal Independence Payments (PIP). This has been hugely controversial, and the film is accused of reinforcing Daily Mail-type stereotypes about benefit cheats.

Through a 15-minute monologue Liz Carr's character Meg revels in spying on her neighbour, taking photos, and eventually reporting him to the Department for Work and Pensions. The film is incredibly uncomfortable and painful to watch, reflecting a system that pits all of us against each other to fight for the scraps from the masters' table.

While the aim of the film was to show the hypocrisy and the almost farcical performances disabled people feel forced into when undergoing assessments, it also ends up reinforcing the idea of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving poor'.

It uses anti-working-class language with the apparent benefit cheat referred to throughout as "white vest". She pulls a face of disgust when she recalls him looking at her wheelchair and saying, "had my eyes on one of these babies for a while." "White vest" is also depicted in a predatory and perverted way - sniffing the crotch of her underwear as she tells him about how she wet herself.

Despite this she strikes up a friendship with him and he gives her advice on how to "pass as disabled" for the PIP assessment. This doesn't stop her grassing though - even after he attends an assessment with her!

Her betrayal of her neighbour is symbolic of the wider divisions and cruelty that we have to struggle to end. Meg says of her first PIP assessment, which she failed: "I tried so hard to look capable, smart." We live in a system that conditions us to put a brave face on and be heroic.

On TV, disabled people are more often than not shown as almost angelic, awarded points by society for how well we can try, going above and beyond, striving. It's natural then that disabled people will often try to live up to these models of the perfect disabled person.

This conditioning works against us when we are then encouraged to perform the opposite to get the money we deserve. The film also deserves some credit for showing such an unlikeable individual as Meg and demonstrating moral ambiguity. While she does tell tales on her neighbour, she hypocritically plays up her own disabilities in a later assessment.

The film is darkly comic in a short part of the monologue, showing her dressed in dirty clothes and dribbling, and is meant to be pointing at the horrific cruelty of the system and the way it destroys self-esteem.

However, many disabled people watching the film are hurt by this joke because the system has robbed them of the ability to live a more

capable life and has driven some disabled people to suicide.

This cruelty is reflected in Meg's monologue too, especially when she talks of the assessment she failed, and says: "White Vest makes me feel like they did at the assessment centre, from the moment the X-ray eyed receptionist smiled at me, I knew I'd lost."

Her disgust at the neighbour is a reflection of the disgust and alienation she feels about herself. The system made her feel as though she didn't deserve it; even though she is visibly 'the real deal'. By using the same language used by the media to demonise disabled claimants, the film tries too hard, and it is easy to miss the points it is trying to make.

Instead of fighting each other, as happens in the film, we need to unite and fight for a fair benefits system which replaces assessments with medical evidence, and gives disabled people the resources they need.

Disabled people fighting each other works very well for capitalism, but it is the system itself which needs taking down and replacing with socialism.

The trade union movement, community organisations, unemployed workers and young people need to fight together to end the cruelty that kills us. As more people are made unwell due to poverty, further austerity, long-Covid, and the exhaustion of financial hardship, more people will be dragged into the fight for PIP. Let's fight for socialism too!

● *CripTales is available to view on BBC iPlayer for the next year*



THE SOCIALIST INBOX

● Mangrove lessons

I have just watched Steve McQueen's excellent film 'Mangrove' in the 'Small Axe' series of films about racism from the 1960s onwards (see review opposite). McQueen's characterisations were excellent. They brilliantly show the out-and-out racism of the police, and the differences of opinion in the West Indian community centring on having faith in the British legal system versus defending themselves.

The trial of the 'Mangrove Nine' for riot and affray, following an anti-racist demonstration, graphically illustrated the racism not just of the police but also the judge and prosecuting counsel. It showed that those who challenged the system rather than relying on lawyers made the correct decision.

While we should congratulate their unrelenting campaign against racism and racist police behaviour, it is outrageous that these events took place under a Labour government, proving once again Labour's failure to challenge the capitalist state and the racism, hatred and division that it relies on for its survival

CLIVE WALDER
BIRMINGHAM SOUTH WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

● Double standards

A tale of two disciplinaries. Jeremy Corbyn was found not guilty of breaching Labour Party rules but is being sanctioned anyway by his party leader. Priti Patel was found guilty of breaching rules but is not facing any sanction from her party leader. The difference is a stark lesson - only one of them represented a potential threat to the establishment.

SUZANNE MUNA
BRISTOL

● Omitting socialism

It seems that in the US elections even bourgeois democracy is too much for the far right grouped around Trump. They must yearn for a tin-pot dictatorship. But, of course, for capitalism, bourgeois democracy is cheaper.

We could be forgiven for not knowing that there was a third challenge in this election from Green socialist Howie Hawkins (see page 5) and Angela Walker, which the Independent Socialist Group (co-thinkers of the CWI in the USA) supported, including the call for a mass workers' party.

However, as is always the case with the capitalist media, they don't directly ban socialist ideas, they just ignore or distort them. As the wonderful investigative journalist John Pilger once remarked, "it's censorship by omission".

Both Biden and Trump were running scared of genuine socialist ideas. But once these ideas emerge and have the ear of the masses, it's goodbye capitalism and all of its vile representatives.

BILL BUCHANAN
NOTTINGHAM

● New Year's resolution

The newly unemployed need to be aware of their new (non) status as classed by capitalism.

Surplus labour means the employers can abuse them and the existing labour force by supply and demand. Workers and unemployed need to be reminded of this and that the unemployed are not the enemy of those in work, but victims of a system that reduces standards of living for all, when it can.

It is also dismal and daunting for the unemployed as there are currently 13 applicants for every job vacancy and the unemployed figures continue to rise.

As unemployment will soon reach four million, the working class needs to unite in a concerted effort to give the Tories a Christmas present and a 2021 they will not forget. Let's make 2021 'the year of the working people's fightback!'

ADRIAN P RIMMINGTON
CHESTERFIELD



REVIEWED BY BHARATHI SUBA
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

The inspirational film about Britain's most influential black power trial, 'Mangrove', was recently aired on the BBC. The film, directed by Steve McQueen, is about the fight-back put up by the black community against the local police's heavy handed raids on the Mangrove restaurant in Notting Hill, west London; a place the Windrush generation saw as their 'home from home'.

Mangrove was a space for the local community to eat, socialise and discuss politics, providing a meeting space for black activists including the British Black Panthers. As shown in the film, the Panthers composed of black and south Asian membership, were a growing movement, linking struggles of the BAME community with the wider working class, and working closely with the trade unions. Their programme for more jobs, decent housing and education, an end to police brutality and an end to capitalism, was gaining massive support in the US.

After 12 police raids, the community organised a demonstration against these attacks. At the protest, the Special Branch's 'black power desk' was mobilised. The heavy-handed policing prompted violence which was used to build a case against the demonstration's leaders. Later, Home Office documents revealed this was a deliberate strategy to decapitate the emerging black power movement.

The case was thrown out by the presiding magistrate, but the director of public prosecutions reinstated the charges with 'incitement to riot'. After 55 days of the trial at the Old Bailey, the Mangrove Nine walked free. They had forced the first judicial acknowledgment that there was "evidence of racial hatred" within the Metropolitan Police.

Police behaviour

The racist police behaviour towards the black community and their derogatory reference to black people, highlights the institutionalised racism within the Met, which breeds and enables racist police officers to get away with crimes with impunity.

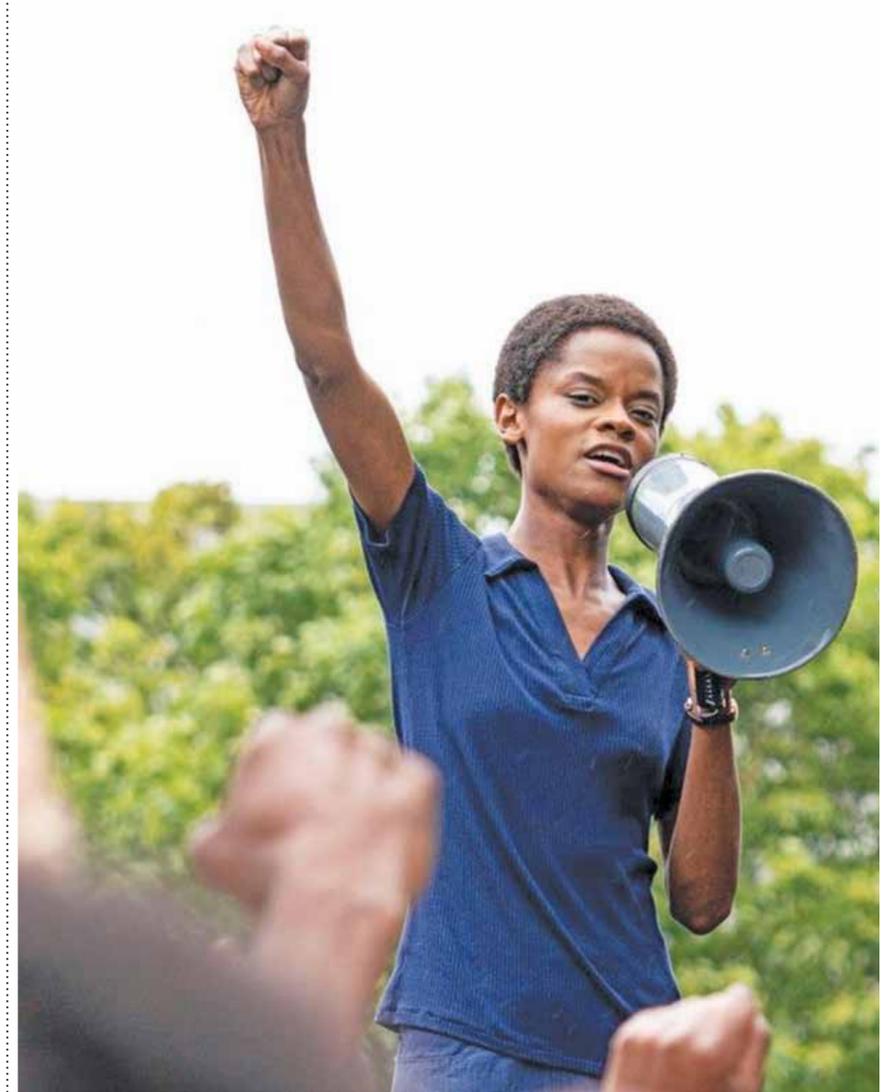
Despite a common belief that the police, courts and the justice system are there to protect us, the experience of the working class does not reflect this. Members of the BAME community, are more likely to be stopped and searched by police or even imprisoned.

During the Mangrove Nine trial, two of the protesters opted to defend themselves, a more effective method to speak of their experiences directly to the jury and to cross-examine the witnesses. Although the request for an all-black jury was rejected, the protesters stamped their authority on the trial by vetting potential jurors politically, resulting in two black jurors out of the 12.

Internationally, many tactics were borrowed from the 1970 Trinidad black power revolution and the 1968 Chicago trials in the US. The assassination of prominent US Black Panther Fred Hampton in 1969, identified by the FBI as a 'radical threat', and the false accusation trial and the public gagging of Bobby Seale by a racist judge, were all closely watched with anger. Only a few years earlier Malcolm X and Martin Luther King

TV Film: 'Mangrove'

When the black community made a stand against state racism



were assassinated for concluding the system needed changing.

The Mangrove trial was more than fighting against police racism, it set the precedent for future generations to defend their rights. But as one of the nine, Darcus Howe, is shown saying, 'complaining to police about police, complaining to magistrates about magistrates and complaining to judges about judges' is no use.

The BAME community, which is part of the working class, has to organise politically against the attacks on their rights. But London's Blairite Labour Mayor Sadiq Khan's call for 40% of new police recruits to be from a BAME background won't, in itself, solve the problem of institutionalised police racism. Police accountability requires democratic control by the local community and trade unions.

The police and the whole justice system are part of the state machine, to suppress the working class when it threatens the existing order of the capitalist system. The state is neither neutral nor independent. In order to safeguard and protect the interests of the ruling elite, democratic rights are never permanent or protected under this system.

Also, the ruling class uses racism, among other strategies, to keep workers divided. As Malcolm X explained, "you can't have capitalism without racism."

In order for permanent change and protection for communities, we need to build a mass movement to abolish capitalism and bring about socialism.

● *Mangrove is available on BBC iPlayer*

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Covid, vaccines and the NHS

STOP THE TORIES PUTTING PROFIT BEFORE HEALTH

Millions will be breathing a huge sigh of relief at the news of several Covid-19 vaccines successfully passing through their development stages. But the vaccines' efficacy, and any subsequent mass inoculation, still present enormous hurdles to overcome, especially if the distribution is dependent on a dysfunctional Johnson government and a hotchpotch of privately run supply chains.

Concerns over infrastructure and supply capacity are enormously magnified when inadequate health services in poorer countries are considered. But if supplies of the vaccine are equally distributed worldwide, then the pandemic could be brought under control.

With many thousands of health worker vacancies currently in the NHS, rolling out mass inoculation programmes, while maintaining a functioning health service, could prove to be a nightmare.

Belatedly, the government has launched an inadequate NHS recruitment drive for 'nursing and allied staff', and renewed its efforts to bring former health workers out of

retirement. However, staffing levels would be less of a problem if the government accepted health workers' demands for higher pay and better working conditions.

The NHS's fragility is due to this government's - and its Tory and Labour predecessors - chronic underfunding and fragmentation through privatisations.

Big pharma

So far, the main beneficiaries of these prototype vaccines are the giant pharmaceutical companies - 'big pharma' - which only took up the challenge of developing a safe and effective vaccine when governments around the world greased their palms with billions of dollars of public money.

In some instances, their entire development programme was publicly funded, but any profits will be privately owned. As we quoted from US campaign group Patients for Affordable Drugs, in last week's Socialist, "We're socialising all the risk and privatising all the profit."

Moreover, most of the stock valuations of big pharma have soared into the stratosphere, guaranteeing huge dividends for

large shareholders. Even AstraZeneca, whose share price initially dipped because it says it will sell its vaccine at cost, expects to reap longer-term profits.

But for health authorities to get on top of this pandemic requires more than an effective vaccine. We should not forget that the virus only became an epidemic in Britain because the Tory government had ignored any contingency planning, lacked adequate stocks of PPE and test-and-trace infrastructure, and had insufficient bed capacity and numbers of health workers within the NHS. Instead, it initially considered letting thousands of elderly people die as part of its reported Dominic Cummings-inspired 'herd immunity' strategy.

Lessons

When the political fall-out from this disaster - which has led to thousands of unnecessary deaths - dawned upon Johnson et al, the government hastily threw huge sums of public cash at greedy private companies with little or no experience in providing health services (see page 3). It ignored the collective experience and skills of NHS

workers and, instead, handed out top jobs to their chums to run "game changing", "world beating", privately operated test-and-trace systems, and to get adequate PPE supplies. Heaven help us with their vaccine roll-out!

The vast majority of the population has paid too high a price for Johnson's unmitigated public health failures. There has to be a public reckoning with this government over its mishandling of the pandemic. And the working class must also hold to account the weak, and until recently, largely uncritical Starmer-led 'Labour alternative.'

A mass Covid vaccine programme lasting into the future can only be sustained through a fully funded, publicly owned and democratically run health service. We need to step up the fight for such an NHS through the trade unions and in our communities. And, ultimately, we must link this provision to a workers' government that acts in our interests and not those of private profit.

• See 'Covid, vaccines, big pharma - and the need for socialism' - at socialistparty.org.uk