

# NHS PAY

# 3% IS NOT ENOUGH

- **Reject the Tory pay insult**

- **Organise to defend the NHS**



### NHS AUDIOLOGIST

**T**he Tories' 3% NHS pay offer is not enough. With job losses in other workplaces, many of my NHS colleagues have become the main household earner during the pandemic. My rent has gone up by £10 a month, bills, train fares and food have all increased too. Anything less than 15% is a pay cut in real terms.

NHS staff have worked bloody hard during the pandemic. We are skilled professionals and our wages should reflect this. When NHS salaries aren't enough, some staff go private - for a lower workload and more money - who can really blame them?

NHS waiting lists are expanding, and the NHS can't keep up 'in house' because of a lack of staff. Private companies like Nuffield or Specsavers extort billions to cover the backlog and make a hefty profit.

A 15% pay rise is an essential part of retaining the NHS workforce. It would also help to attract new workers. Healthcare students coming through university have paid over £30,000 to study, often being used to cover staff shortages in the process. Their student debt should be wiped, and future health workers paid to train.

Privatisation does not just affect workers, but patient care too. Healthcare providers, motivated by profit, already run huge parts of our health service. Money that could be used to fund NHS services is instead lining the pockets of the bosses and paying off a mountain of PFI debt. This is set to become more widespread if the Tories' health and care bill is passed in parliament.

Rather than giving more money to billionaire owners of private healthcare providers, pay us NHS workers 15%. If you are an NHS worker, vote to reject the Tories' 3% offer. If you support our cause, help to mobilise your trade union to join the fight for fair pay for all, and for a properly funded, publicly owned NHS!

# the Socialist

formerly **Militant**

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

# Afghanistan: The Taliban takeover - what are the lessons for the workers' movement internationally



Afghans in the city of Jalalabad (above) braved Taliban retribution by demonstrating on national independence day

**NIALL MULHOLLAND**  
COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL (CWI)

On Sunday 15 August, Taliban militiamen, packed onto their trademark pick-up trucks, drove unopposed into Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, ousting the US-backed government of Ashraf Ghani.

Thousands of fearful residents, many with bitter memories of the last Taliban regime, tried desperately to board planes to flee the headline Islamic force. Ghani had already flown the coop.

After decades of a western imperialist military occupation backing up puppet regimes in Afghanistan, Kabul fell without a battle. Such was the lack of support for the rotten Ghani regime among the population as a whole, and the deep unpopularity of western troops on the ground.

Clearly, there is no strong appetite for the return of the rule of the Taliban in Afghanistan by the majority of Afghans, expressed in recent anti-Taliban protests.

The Taliban draws support mainly from the Pashtuns, who make up 42% of the population, and have been very hostile to the Persian-speaking Tajiks, who make up 27%. However, the Taliban have exploited the demoralisation of much of the masses at their atrocious conditions - 54% of Afghans survive on just \$1.90 a day - as well as the huge anger at corruption.

The hardline Islamists promise to deliver the 'law and order' and 'security' which is yearned for by so many.

However, it remains to be seen what their version of 'peace' will be.

The fall of Kabul is a devastating blow for the US, and for all the powers grouped under Nato, which invaded Afghanistan in 2001. It is a humiliating debacle for western imperialism.

The television images from Kabul of desperate, tearful residents blows away the idea, carefully promoted by capitalist ideologues since the collapse of Stalinist regimes in the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe, that US military power was unstoppable and could impose a 'New World Order' everywhere.

The 'nation building' plan for Afghanistan lies in ruins, as the Taliban return to power just short of the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks on the US.

From Tony Blair to Boris Johnson, successive British governments played their bloody part in creating this catastrophe for the Afghan people. Colonel Christopher Kolenda, advisor to three generals who served in Afghanistan, says that regime corruption was rampant from the beginning of the puppet Karzai government in 2001, which was "self-organised into a kleptocracy."

According to local civil rights activists, 100,000 Afghans died during the 20-year occupation. Opium production increased hugely, and now accounts for 90% of the global heroin market. One-in-ten young Afghans are opium addicts. And life expectancy is eight years lower than the world average.

The western occupiers were under huge pressure to deliver on their promises to transform education, healthcare and women's rights. And while there were some improvements, they were "dogged by endemic corruption and insecurity" (Financial Times).

For weeks before Kabul fell, the Taliban captured swathes of Afghanistan, facing little resistance. The Afghan national army was not prepared to fight and die for the very unpopular and repressive Ghani regime.

Like all institutions under the US's puppet regimes, the Afghan army was riddled with graft, corruption, waste and mismanagement. In many cases, soldiers were semi-starved and poorly equipped. From an early stage in its creation, the Afghan army was infiltrated by Taliban supporters.

Provincial warlords made deals with the advancing Taliban and did not rally to the 'lost cause' of the beleaguered Ghani government, even in the traditionally anti-Taliban north of the country. Only one warlord, Ahmad Massoud, now holds out in the mountainous Panjshir area, linking up with the deposed vice-president. Whether they intend to rouse a serious military opposition or negotiate with the Taliban remains to be seen.

### Fear and terror

With the arrival of the Taliban in Kabul, fear and terror has gripped many residents. When the Taliban last ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, they imposed their strict interpretation of Islamic law, which

entailed banning women from being educated or working, stoning women accused of adultery, and public executions.

In the period running up to their victory, the Taliban have indicated they will 'moderate' their rule. Taliban leaders are in discussions with Karzai and other Afghan 'leaders' over the formation of an "open, inclusive Islamic government".

At a press conference, the Taliban promised "no retaliation" against opponents - despite carrying out door-to-door searches for former regime officials and those who worked with Nato forces.

The Taliban are anxious to avoid direct clashes with western imperialism as they consolidate their rule, emphasising that Afghanistan would not be used to launch terror attacks, even though some of the Taliban's component militias are closely associated with al-Qa'ida.

They claimed that women would have rights but ominously added this would be within their interpretation of Islamic law.

How much of this is window dressing by Taliban leaders remains to be seen. "At the start of this transition [to power], the veteran Independent correspondent Patrick Cockburn comments, "it may be in the interests of the Taliban to show a moderate face and not stir up opposition at home or abroad by public executions and beatings".

An additional factor is that according to the Economist, the Taliban, "lacking technocrats or managers", declared a general amnesty for all government officials. For the Islamic group "the priority is to keep the existing state going."

Yet even a supposedly 'moderate' Taliban regime, or one involving corrupt politicians like Karzai, will be deeply reactionary and oppressive towards women and others.

Their lightning victory does not mean the Taliban has deep roots and universal support throughout the country. Afghanistan is made up of various ethnic and tribal groups, including Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara peoples, and the Pashtun, from which the Taliban draws most support.

The Taliban will have to try to reach agreements with many of these groups if it is to stay in power. If they fail in this aim, the way could be open for renewed conflict and another round of bloody civil war, with the country possibly breaking up.

An upsurge of Islamic terror attacks arising from the Taliban's victory is plainly a pressing concern of

regional and western powers. But the Taliban may try to rein in or contain jihadist Islamic forces from using Afghanistan to plot attacks that could invite western military assaults.

Nevertheless, Western governments express concern about a new spike of domestic terror attacks, as the Taliban victory acts, at the very least, as a spur to various Islamic terror groups around the world, conveniently ignoring that the US and UK armed and assisted al-Qa'ida and other Islamic terror groups in Libya and Syria against the Gaddafi and Assad regimes.

### Western powers

The western powers are now desperately scrambling around in response to the Taliban's coming to power, trying to find if there is any modus operandi they can have with the new rulers in Kabul. After all, they count the repressive Saudi Arabian regime as an ally.

Since former US president Donald Trump made his 'deal' with the Taliban, and current president Joe Biden announced the full departure of all US forces by 11 September, the US had pushed for an agreement by Afghan parties, involving the Taliban, during failed talks in Doha.

Clearly, the western powers can live with reactionary, anti-women and anti-working class Islamic regimes, such as their close allies in the Gulf States, as long as they do not stand in the way of their vital interests regionally or globally.

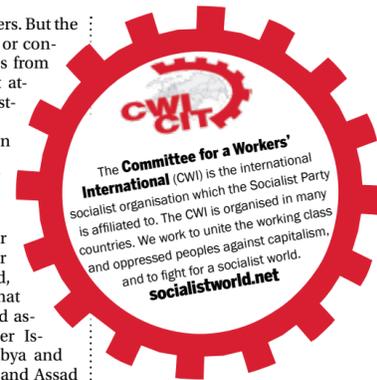
The 'war on terror' was merely the pretext for the imperialist invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. After all, the creation of al-Qa'ida arose from the US's backing of the Mujahedeen fighters against Soviet Union forces in Afghanistan during the 1980s. The occupation of Afghanistan by western forces in 2001 was a crucial part of the efforts by the US, and other coalition partners, like Britain, to enhance their influence and control of central Asia.

### Far-reaching repercussions

The Taliban's victory will have far-reaching repercussions. An immediate effect can be a new wave of refugees, destabilising the neighbouring countries and eventually affecting Europe, as well. Already the Greek and Turkish governments have moved to block their land borders to prevent a new



The Afghanistan Mujahedeen, from which the Taliban emerged, were armed and financed by the US during the Russian occupation of the country PHOTO ERWIN LUX/CC



The **Committee for a Workers' International** (CWI) is the international socialist organisation which the Socialist Party is affiliated to. The CWI is organised in many countries. We work to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against capitalism, and to fight for a socialist world.

[socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net)

wave of Afghan refugees.

The Taliban's assumption of power is a boon for neighbouring Pakistan's military and intelligence services, which have very close ties to the Taliban. For decades, Pakistan served as a base for Taliban leaders.

However, the Pakistan government will now be faced with a destabilising and unpredictable regime on its borders. And the outlawed Pakistan Taliban (TTP) will be emboldened in the "largest failed state in-waiting" that is also nuclear armed.

### China and Russia

China and Russia will be glad to see the back of western forces from Afghanistan and the chance to increase their influence in the region. China wants stability, which will enhance its 'new silk road' in central Asia, and an agreement with the new Kabul regime to rebuild Afghanistan's shattered infrastructure.

But both China and Russia will fear that a Taliban-run Afghanistan could act as an impulse to secessionist Islamic minorities in their countries and spur on domestic terror attacks by Islamic terror groups.

While the events in Kabul represent a serious blow to the prestige and influence of the US, Nato and western imperialism, the working class and poor of Afghanistan are left with the dire consequences of decades of occupation and now the return of the Taliban.

There is nothing remotely progressive about the Taliban or the warlords and tribal and ethnic leaders with whom the Taliban will try to find agreements in order to rule. And the Afghan people are not entirely rid of bloody western intervention; the US's new 'permanent special military unit', in Kuwait, staffed by 2,500 troops, can be used to launch air attacks in Afghanistan.

However, the Afghan masses will eventually have the last word on events. Already demonstrators in several Afghan cities have braved vicious repression in anti-Taliban street protests, including flag waving marches on Afghanistan's 'Independence Day' - 19 August.

The CWI has always argued that independent self-organisation and action of the working class is essential in Afghanistan.

This entails building mass organisations of the working class and poor, with a programme for fundamental socialist change, that struggles for power to end the nightmare of wars, invasions, poverty and oppression.

Such a road is clearly fraught with difficulties, but ultimately either the working class and its allies must prevail or it is a future of barbarism.

# Socialist Party

## 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, 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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# Afghanistan disaster - Unite to fight for funding for refugees and local communities



Many ordinary working-class people will be horrified by the tragic scenes of Afghans fleeing in desperation at Kabul airport. Most will be eager to help in any way they can. At the same time, many will also be concerned about the pressures on welfare provision, housing, NHS and other public services that continue to be cut, closed and privatised.

The Tory government has announced a pledge to take in just 5,000 refugees this year, with a maximum total of 20,000 staggered 'over the next few years'. In reality, the figure is tiny (see graph), especially given the role of British governments in the brutal 20-year war and occupation of Afghanistan. British governments have spent almost £40 billion on the occupation of Afghanistan and yet are prepared to do almost nothing to help Afghans facing persecution at the hands of the Taliban.

Only £5 million in funding will be available to local councils to receive and settle Afghan refugees. Many local and regional council leaders have come out volunteering their services



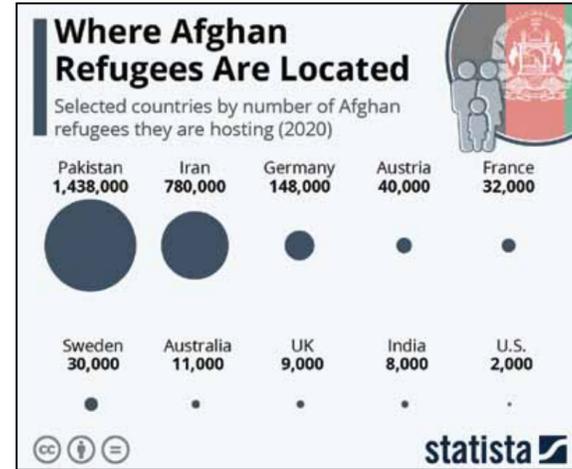
but others have attempted to whip up tensions against refugees, pointing to the lack of housing, jobs and services in their local areas while ignoring the fact that this is due to decades of austerity carried out by themselves!

### Cuts politicians

The same politicians, Tory and Labour, who have underfunded and decimated our local services, then dump and neglect the small minority of refugees they allow into the country in the poorest and most deprived areas without adequate resources.

We cannot trust those politicians to provide housing, services and welfare provision for local people or for refugees.

Trade unions and local communities should demand democratic oversight of the refugee resettlement process. This should be part of a campaign to fight for the funding and resources necessary for refugees to be adequately housed and have access to work on trade union rates of pay rather than be super-exploited or preyed on by criminals. But this cannot and should not be done at the



expense of resources for local people and communities.

During the Covid pandemic we have seen on many occasions that the Tories can be forced to make U-turns when they are placed under pressure. We need a united campaign which mobilises local communities for the funding that is desperately needed in every town, city and area of Britain to drastically improve the lives of all ordinary people.

Everyone should have access to a decent job, home and services rather

than the dogfight between communities that the capitalist class and their political representatives like to create and whip up. In fighting for the services we need, the basis can be laid for building a new party that unites together workers, young people, community campaigners and the oppressed; that fights for our interests, not those of the rich; for an end to the capitalist profit system that causes poverty, inequality, exploitation, wars and environmental destruction; and for socialism both here and internationally.

# Liverpool university strike saves jobs

TOMMY LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Liverpool University and Colleges Union (UCU) is in a long running dispute with Liverpool University over plans to slash 47 jobs in the health and life sciences department. Liverpool Socialist Party members attended the picket rally at University Square on 9 August in solidarity with the workers.

As a result of previous strike action and protests, negotiations between the union and management have successfully reduced the number of compulsory redundancies to two, proving that collective action can save jobs.

The latest ten days of strike action, which finished on 14 August, were to save the remaining two jobs - victims of the university's 'shake up'.

Management had initially hoped UCU members would suspend the strike. However, they misread the strength of the workers' solidarity, and their determination to fight for every job. At a special meeting, 97% of attendees voted to continue the strike.

Among the speakers in attendance at the rally, was former Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn who said: "In winning this campaign to defend



those jobs, you will stop a university going after the cleaners, the catering workers, the contractors and all the other workers in the university. You're showing solidarity with all of them. You will also be giving a message to the university and further education sector all across the country that where the Tory government comes after working-class jobs and

living standards with a new face of austerity, we're here, we're ready and we are fighting back."

The higher education sector has been destroyed by decades of marketisation and austerity which must be fought. By saving forty-five jobs so far, this UCU dispute in Liverpool has proven the power of the organised working class.

# University of Leeds students bribed to stay away while staff are under attack

JAY SLAYTON-JOSLIN LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

The University of Leeds recently announced that it would offer £10,000 and free accommodation to some potential students to persuade them to defer for a year. The deputy vice-chancellor stated that this was due to teacher-assessed grades making it harder to predict the number of successful applicants.

It is astonishing that these offers are being made to students, and at the same time the university is doing nothing to handle the other issues on campus.

After news of this broke, workers at the University of Leeds took to online forum Reddit to explain that they've been told there isn't enough money to extend their temporary contracts, and that their job security is gone. A masters student commented to me that they paid full price just to attend virtual lectures during Covid, with no hint of a refund.

Access to education is a right, and universities should never be run as

if they are businesses. We're always being told that there isn't enough money for pay rises, to fund mental health services and to reduce the rising costs for students to go to university.

### Redundancies

The University of Leeds' £10,000 offer shows that some universities can afford to pay up when they think it will make them more money in the long run. It comes at a time when dozens of universities are making redundancies, including in Sheffield's archaeology department and at the University of Liverpool (see left), both have seen workers' action to defend jobs. A combined struggle of students and staff is needed to win funding from government.

The money does exist to fund high-quality free education, a living wage and genuinely affordable housing - it's in the hands of the super-rich. Action and a socialist plan for the future are essential to harness these resources and provide education for all, with no one left behind.

# Care workers struggle for a pay rise and trade union recognition

Care and Support Workers Organised (CaSWO), a group that brings together workers in the care industry across different trade unions, is organising a series of protests on 4 September outside of the Department of Health and Social Care in London, Manchester, Newcastle and Preston. They are encouraging other care workers to join the campaign, and welcome support from the rest of the workers' movement.

Socialist Party member Nick Auvache spoke to Unite rep, and key organiser, **Billie Cooper** about the campaign.

### How did CaSWO come about and who is involved?

CaSWO started in response to the PPE crisis that emerged at the beginning of the pandemic and was initially called the Care Workers Coronavirus Action Group.

The failures of our social care system, however, predate coronavirus. While we were brought together by this issue, the scope of our meetings and ambitions quickly grew.

We are trade unionists and one of our demands is for trade union recognition for all care and support workers. A lot of us are very involved in union organising within our workplaces and active in our branches. However, we have also found it challenging at times to do the sort of organising we felt was needed within the structures of our individual unions.

### What support have you had from trade union leaders on the issues that you are fighting on?

While social care has been historically difficult to organise, we are increasingly part of the conversation. We are a workforce that is 1.5 million strong and growing, and there is



### CaSWO's main demands

- £15 an hour with holiday pay based on normal wages and pension parity with public sector workers
- Contracts of employment, including minimum hours, to be led by the needs of workers and those in receipt of care and support
- Occupational sick pay for all, including full pay protection for any absence arising from Covid-19
- Safe workplaces with genuine support for every aspect of workers' health and wellbeing

- Care and support workers should be entitled to benefits, including access to keyworker housing and eligibility for low-cost home ownership schemes
- Trade union recognition for all care and support workers
- Mandatory sectoral collective bargaining relevant to all governmental and devolved jurisdictions across the UK
- Social care to be brought into democratic public ownership, guided by co-production of workers, disabled people and those in receipt of support

an increased recognition that, while it is challenging, we are far from unorganisable!

Union membership in the sector remains low and there are sections of the workforce we are failing to reach, but we are optimistic that trade union leaders are prepared to engage with the challenge.

### What are the main issues facing care workers right now?

There are a lot of issues to tackle, but paying us more would be an excellent start! The average care worker receives £8.50 per hour. Last year, 73% of care workers received less than the Living Wage. In London, it was 90%. The Supreme Court's March 2021 ruling on sleep shifts also means that we are the only UK workers who are legally paid below the minimum wage while in the workplace.

Even those of us 'lucky' enough to

# UK hospitals in danger of collapse

## Fight for funding to keep us safe

MIKE CLEVERLEY WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

The NHS is crumbling from decades of underinvestment. Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Kings Lynn, Norfolk, has its ceilings propped up with almost 200 steel props. Hinchings-broke Hospital has set a weight limit for patients who can be treated in two of its operating theatres.

The West Suffolk hospital, in Bury St. Edmunds currently has 27 of these 'pit props' or 'acrows' supporting its ceilings. These hospitals, along with some schools and other public buildings, were built between 1960 and 1990 using reinforced concrete planks. It is these planks which are failing. The building method used was favoured by health trusts and local council-funded projects because it is quick and cheap. What was not broadcast at the time was that these concrete planks, and consequently the buildings, had a lifespan of just 30 years!

In 2020, hospital trusts participated in 'Exercise Hodges' that simulated a scenario where a hospital had to be evacuated due to concrete plank failure. The question was raised: "Would other hospitals have to be evacuated if one hospital suffered such a collapse?"

This is far from just a local problem. Hospitals in West Yorkshire, Surrey and Cheshire, as well as several

others, are known to be planning for similar events.

The cost of keeping the structure in West Suffolk safe is estimated to be around £70 million. The government says it has given £1,021 million to help hospitals address similar problems. All part of what it says is the 'generous funding' of the UK health care system.

Meanwhile, in my local area of east London, the Bart's Healthcare Trust proposes the demolition of a hospital built over 100 years ago and the building of a new hospital, using similar 'modern techniques', with 81 fewer beds for the post-pandemic era. This project is welcomed by the local Labour council and will be part-financed by the sale of most of the present site to property developers. Not to build council homes to house the 9,000 on the waiting list, but to build yet more flats that local people can't afford.

We need investment in our NHS infrastructure now - to make our hospitals safe, and to meet the growing needs of our local communities. Private companies looking to make a profit cannot be trusted to do this. We need to build a movement of NHS workers and patients, backed up by the wider trade union movement, to fight for an NHS pay rise and a fully public and democratically run NHS.



Hinchings-broke hospital has weight limits for patients ANDY PARRETT/CC

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socialist students

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# East Midlands rail strikes continue

CLARE WILKINS  
NOTTINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

RMT senior conductors and train managers took strike action again on Sunday 15 and 22 August on East Midlands Railways (EMR) and Intercity. The action was solid and well supported with picket lines at Nottingham, Derby and Kettering stations on 22 August.

Steve Hedley, RMT assistant general secretary, was at the picket line at Kettering on 15 August, where for the second week of the Intercity safety dispute a manager tried to intimidate relatively new RMT reps.

The dispute with EMR, over reduced pay and revised contracts for new starters and the associated safety concerns that flow from that, is in its fifteenth week. The re-ballot two weeks ago was overwhelmingly won. EMR management has refused to talk to the union, saying that it will enter talks if the strikes are called off. This weekend though, there are indications that some managers are keen to try to settle the disputes and to head off a brewing dispute with station staff. Unusually, managers have been instructed to give RMT reps all the time off they need to attend a series of workshops across sectors of the workforce to discuss the issues.

It is understood that at least some of the management want to settle the disputes before a substantial meeting with the Department for Transport (DfT) in October.

Once again, replacement buses

were operating instead of more than 50% of the trains, and managers were being called in to run others.

This was the third week of action in the Intercity safety dispute.

There have been questions about what the DfT is doing now that it supposedly controls the rail network again. Although a meeting of franchise companies indicates that they expect to maintain the running of services.

The Scotrail dispute continues and safety issues link all the disputes and concerns on other networks. There is talk that disputes could see the whole railway engulfed in strike action and that the DfT would be forced to intervene. There is also widespread recognition that the RMT is being taken on because it is strong and that this is as much an attack on the union as it is on the members.

There have been safety incidents on both train routes due to lack of route knowledge by managers acting as train managers and senior conductors. Train doors were open on the wrong side of the train at one station (Intercity) and all doors opened at a short platform station at another (EMR). RMT are compiling a dossier of incidents for the Rail Safety Regulator.

Nottingham Socialist Party joined the picket line at Nottingham, on both Sundays, and the pickets once again welcomed our support.

There is further strike action every Sunday until the end of September on EMR and ongoing on Intercity.



NICK AUVACHE  
UNITE HOUSING WORKERS BRANCH

Homelessness workers from different organisations across the sector have come together to set a joint pay claim and fight for better terms and conditions across all workplaces. By working together we can fight back against the race to bottom caused by competitive tendering of services for vulnerable people.

Over the last ten years, homelessness workers have seen a huge decline in their wages in real terms, as well as increasingly stressful working conditions. Those on the 'NJC' scale have lost a quarter of the value of their pay versus the cost of living. A number of organisations (Hestia, Lookahead, SHP etc) have broken away from the scale and pay significantly less. Many of these boast about paying the London Living Wage - a wage on which it is impossible to pay for childcare or buy a house, that leaves members trapped in insecure private rented accommodation. Despite being forced to work throughout the pandemic, often at risk to our health, this shows little sign of changing.

This sad state of affairs has been largely driven by homeless charities competitively tendering against each other in a toxic race to the bottom. In an effort to expand and win

more contracts, these organisations have transformed from small client-focused organisations into corporate behemoths focused mainly on growth in income. Ask any manager why our wages are so low or why our hostels are in a state of disrepair, and they will say that they have no choice - as if they spent more, they would be at risk of losing their contract to another organisation which is willing to undercut them.

We should always take these claims of low income with a pinch of salt. Lookahead is infamous for paying low wages - yet has £85 million in reserves, and last year had a surplus of almost £2 million. As homelessness workers we have had enough. Reps from Unite and Unison have begun to discuss setting a joint pay claim and sector standards document for 2022-23 (covering maternity, paternity and sickness pay, etc) If we can establish a joint pay scale and set of conditions across the homeless sector, our employers can no longer use competition as an excuse. We can start to turn the tide and force conditions up.

• Come to our public meeting on 16 September, 6-7pm via Zoom, to join the fightback and plan our campaign for decent pay and conditions across the sector

• 6pm September 16 - Meeting ID: 824 2655 4829, Passcode: 695162

## Homelessness workers fight for better pay and conditions across sector

### Woolwich ferry strikers - taking action necessary to win!

Unite the Union members working on the Woolwich Ferry have been taking discontinuous strike action since 14 May. The union has now issued notice for further strike action - which will consist of strikes every Monday, Wednesday and Friday throughout September.

This determined campaign is in response to the employer victimising union representatives, refusing to negotiate on pay, and cynically using agency staff to undermine terms and conditions. Transport for London (TfL) took the service in-house on 1 January, following a determined campaign from Unite demanding in-sourcing. Unfortunately, TfL used this as an opportunity to attack union organisation by disciplining Unite representatives.

It is to the immense credit of these workers that they have made the connection between attacks on the union and attacks on pay and conditions. Under huge pressure, TfL has been forced to negotiate, but unfortunately decided to engage in game playing, despite the union suspending the strike action for talks. But the tactics used by the strikers meant that management gained no advantage whatsoever - the action had only been suspended so the members were able to walk straight back out on strike the day after.

The action on the ferry is another example of workers no longer simply giving notice for one-day of strike action. Instead, action is increasingly for longer periods. This is an indication of how workers, including the Woolwich Ferry strikers, are prepared to take the action that is necessary to win.

UNITE UNION MEMBER

Join with workers, strikers, trade union leaders

# DISCUSSION! ACTION!

This is an open forum to have your say

## NSSN TUC Rally 2021

Sunday 12th September 12 noon

The 12th annual NSSN rally at the TUC!

### FIGHT TO SAVE OUR NHS! OPPOSE THE HEALTH AND CARE BILL BUILD FOR STRIKE ACTION ON PAY

Confirmed speakers so far:

SARAH WOOLLEY, BFAWU General Secretary  
JOE SIMPSON, POA Deputy General Secretary

Zoom details: Meeting ID: 861 1677 4093 Passcode: NSSN2021

nationalshop  
stewardsnetwork  
www.shopstewards.net

# NEU: Oppose the pay freeze with action not just words

MARTIN POWELL-DAVIES  
CANDIDATE FOR NEU DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY

After all that educators have done throughout the pandemic, the 'reward' that we have received from this government has been a pay freeze for teachers and a miserly 1.5% for support staff.

When inflation is heading towards 4%, these are real-terms pay cuts.

If we fail to respond to this insult with action, we will only be inviting more attacks - like a lengthening of the school day and yet further cuts being made to school and college funding.

Letters and petitions are not enough. We need to learn the lessons of how we forced a U-turn over Covid safety - by using the collective strength of the whole union acting together.

The government left it to the very end of last term to confirm that their 'thank you' for all of the exhausting work we carried out throughout the pandemic would be to impose a 0% pay freeze on teacher salaries. Support staff had already been offered just 1.5% and teachers in Wales 1.75%. Even NHS staff have only been awarded 3%.

With the Bank of England predicting inflation at 4% by the end of the year, these are all actually pay cuts.

But this pay injustice should come as no surprise. The pay freeze was first announced last November.

Ministers waited to see what response they would get from the National Education Union (NEU) and other unions. They obviously concluded that they could get away with it. We need to prove them wrong!

We are facing a callous, conniving government that, having looked after its friends during the pandemic, now wants school and college staff, and the communities we support, to foot the bill through cuts to our pay and conditions - and to the learning conditions for our students.



The government has 'rewarded' educators with a 0% pay freeze NUMBER 10/CC



**Unions must come together in a joint campaign to defend pay and public services**

If they succeed with imposing pay cuts, ministers will only gain in confidence to deal us another blow.

They are already threatening to extend the school day, worsening our contracts and workload yet further.

Letters and petitions alone will have no real effect. Instead, we need to learn the lessons from last January when, faced with NEU members invoking their Section 44 health and safety rights union-wide, Boris Johnson was forced into a U-turn over his unsafe school opening plans.

That's why I believe we now need to act with confidence and determination and prepare for national action.

The NEU rightly stresses the importance of building workplace strength. Important victories have been won by individual school and college groups taking strike action over the last year. But when we face a national attack, as we do over pay, then winning at a workplace level is not enough. We need to organise together nationally.

Of course, the government has deliberately put a significant hurdle in the way of unions by imposing a 50% postal ballot turnout threshold for industrial action to proceed. But, if the NEU is going to be able to defend educators and education, it has to overcome that barrier. The job of a union leadership is to work out a plan to make sure we can do so. I am standing as NEU deputy general secretary to provide such a lead.

Immediately, we need to make clear to both ministers and educators that we aren't accepting this attack lying down. Meetings and rallies need to be organised to explain and to convince NEU members of the need to act. They should be backed up with campaign materials for colleagues - and for parents and the public too.

Locally and nationally, we need to bring colleagues together from other unions, including in the NHS, to build a coordinated campaign of action, starting with setting a date for a national demo.

We need to organise meticulously at every level of the union to put in place the steps needed to ensure we are ready to proceed with a successful ballot, learning from NEU groups and other unions who have successfully met the thresholds.

If we are going to build for national action, we should also widen our demands beyond just the pay award.

We should submit a claim for a new national contract for all staff that includes binding pay scales on all employers and an end to performance pay. But our working conditions are just as important - perhaps more so for many staff given levels of workload. Our claim should also include a call for legal limits on both class sizes and on overall working hours.

Finally, for schools to be able to both pay us properly and employ sufficient staff to meet pupil needs, our action needs to be part of a campaign to reverse cuts and win the funding that our schools and colleges need.

## In October, vote for Martin as your NEU deputy general secretary

Martin has worked over decades to build a strong, campaigning union.

As Lewisham National Union of Teachers (NUT) secretary for over 20 years, he supported hundreds of colleagues and organised many successful campaigns, opposing cuts and academisation, defending

pay, jobs and workload, challenging racism and management bullying.

As a member of the NUT national executive from 2010-15, and then as London regional secretary from 2016-19, Martin showed he could provide national leadership too.

He is now a science teacher and local NEU officer in the North West.

Martin has been nominated to stand as DGS because he has the proven record, ideas, experience, and commitment to provide the leadership needed if we are to stand up to the attacks we face.

• Election is 4-29 October



Martin Powell-Davies  
PAUL MATTHEWS

# LESSONS FROM POPLAR 100 YEARS ON

## “It’s better to break the law than break the poor”



A mural in Poplar, now part of Tower Hamlets borough, commemorating the council's struggle. The right-wing Labour council today was among the first employers to use fire and rehire. CERIOWEN/CC

NICK CHAFFEY  
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

This year marks 100 years since the victory of Poplar council against austerity and unemployment, led by fighting Labour councillors who mobilised a mass movement of the working class. It was a victory for working-class struggle and independent working-class political representation. Unwilling to bend the knee and carry out cuts and attacks on the working class, 30 councillors went to jail. They stood behind the immortal slogan, ‘It’s better to break the law, than break the poor.’

At a time when the working class faces a new crisis; as Johnson and the Tories prepare to end furlough; with attacks on jobs, benefits and public services; with local councils in particular facing a gaping hole in their budgets, what are the lessons of this inspiring struggle for today?

Poplar Labour council was elected in 1919 to represent the borough dominated by the huge east London docks, and home to a predominantly working-class community. In 1918, in the aftermath of the First World War, a new Tory-Liberal coalition government had been elected.

But the sheen of victory was short lived. A new economic crisis unfolded leading to a period of mass working-class struggles. Against this background, Labour won control in Poplar, winning 39 of 42 seats and a majority on the Board of Guardians - the body that administered benefits to the unemployed.

The newly elected councillors faced a challenge: what could be done to fight in the interests of the workers that had elected them?

Poplar’s Labour councillors were not the career apparatchiks that most councillors are today, collecting their pay and shamefully carrying out Tory cuts. These were workers: dockers, labourers and rail workers. They were fighters schooled in trade union struggles, political debates conducted by socialist groups such as the Social Democratic Federation, and by the stormy international events of the First World War and the Russian Revolution.

### Workers’ councillors

The councillors were often attacked as Bolsheviks by the capitalist press. Councillor David Adams, secretary of the dockworkers’ union, organised to prevent munitions being loaded on the Jolly George and sent to British troops fighting with the White army against the newly created workers’ government in Russia.

For these councillors, led by George Lansbury, the election meant a responsibility to act. They set about implementing a significant programme, raising the minimum wage for council workers, and introducing equal pay for women. This meant a 20% pay rise for men and 70% for women. A new house building programme was started, free milk for children, libraries, public baths and parks were expanded. Imagine a Labour council acting so boldly today!

After the war ended in 1918, initially economic growth led to increased



The approach of Poplar Council was to maintain workers’ living standards by paying benefits equal to the level of wages

employment on the docks and associated industries. But this ended sharply with a deep economic crisis in 1920. Unemployment rose to 23%, with workers thrown into poverty and destitution. Dockers at that time were typically only hired for half a day’s work, and 50% were registered unemployed. This had devastating consequences in Poplar.

Unemployment benefits at the time were administered locally by elected representatives, Guardians. Poplar council raised money for these benefits through the collection of rates, a proportion of which went to the London County Council (LCC) and the police. Now these Guardians were Labour, what were they going to do?

As unemployment grew, Poplar was affected more than other wealthier areas. The financial burden of providing support fell disproportionately on the poorer boroughs, compared to more affluent areas where unemployment was lower and ratepayers wealthier.

The approach of Poplar Council was to maintain workers’ living standards by paying benefits equal to the level of wages. But to do so would require greater resources. The councillors refused to make the working class pay higher rates that they couldn’t afford. Instead, they demanded ‘the equalisation of the rates’ and for the government to make more affluent areas contribute.

Previous attempts had been made to shift the government’s position with deputations to ministers who ignored the demands. Now was the time to act. Anything else would mean increasing rates on those who couldn’t

afford to pay and cutting services. This has been the rotten road followed by right-wing Labour councils in the past ten years.

This road the Poplar councillors refused to take. Their policy was to organise a rate strike, to stop collecting rates for the London County Council and the police. They argued this would force the government to act knowing it would lead to an inevitable clash with the authorities.

### Mass support

To build support for the council’s approach, a local conference was called involving the trade unions and Labour Party members to debate the proposals. The conference gave unanimous support to the plan, and resolved to back the fight by all means in its power. With mass support, the full council meeting voted for its fighting policy in March. So began a drawn out confrontation with the London County Council, the Tory government and the courts.

The strategy of the councillors was to delay legal proceedings for as long as possible, to give time for workers to benefit from the rate relief. With the prospect of the campaign spreading to other boroughs, pressure would grow for the government to introduce a fairer system of rates.

As the weeks and months passed, the campaign grew in Poplar and beyond. Meanwhile, the government faced mass opposition in the form of strikes and protests from organised workers across the country.

Reports to the Cabinet were forced to admit that in Poplar the “mass is



The strategy of the councillors was to delay legal proceedings for as long as possible, to give time for workers to benefit from the rate relief

solid” Finally, London County Council decided to act by serving writs on the councillors demanding they pay the rates owed, or face jail.

The day of the court hearing, a five-mile march from the council to the court was joined by 2,000 workers and trade union banners. Pressure had already led to concessions from the government that would increase financial support to poorer boroughs, including Poplar. This helped to increase the determination of the councillors who continued with their strategy, passing a reduction on the rates.

### Defying the law

Facing jail, council leader George Lansbury, writing on the decision of the court, said: “Organised labour should understand that all the judges administer class-made laws, not to do justice but to preserve the present social order.”

Mass action had forced concessions from a determined government. This was much to the consternation of Poplar’s opponents in the Labour Party like Herbert Morrison, leader of neighbouring Hackney council. Following Poplar’s victory, other councils were encouraged to act too. Meanwhile, Morrison pleaded for a ‘constitutional’ approach ‘within the law’, echoing the right-wing Labour councillors of today who wave the white flag, swing their little axes and administer brutal cuts.

One Poplar councillor responded that when the unemployed are hungry, “they do not care much for constitutionalism.” Lansbury added, “All reforms came from those who are prepared to break bad laws.”

The night before councillors faced arrest and jail, 6,000 massed outside Poplar Town Hall. Councillor Rugless told the press: “All the prisons in the country will not alter our determination to win.”

The courageous stand of the jailed councillors, including five women, made the fight a national issue. 10,000 marched with the five women councillors to Holloway prison where Councillor Julia Scurr called

for a borough-wide rent strike to be prepared.

Elsewhere, Councillor Charlie Sumner was in Cardiff building support at the Trades Union Congress for the fight against unemployment, getting unanimous support for the Poplar stand. Broadening the fight against the opposition of Morrison and the right wing was not easy, but Bethnal Green and Stepney councils voted to join the battle, including taking up the demand for the release of the Poplar councillors.

Seeking a way out, the LCC and the government looked to engage the Labour Party in negotiations, but the jailed councillors rejected any talks while they remained in prison. Their slogan, backed up by growing support, was to demand “release first, negotiations afterwards.”

The firmness of their position left the government facing a bleak position and considering new laws to take over the collection of rates. But they had to take into account the mass opposition they would face in Poplar, where the councillors had issued a call to tenants to declare a rent strike if outside bodies attempted to collect the rates. Thousands had signed up, and committees were set up across the borough. Posters in windows throughout Poplar stated: “We support our borough councillors.”

After six weeks, under intense pressure, the authorities climbed down and released the councillors who were met with a ‘monster demonstration’ in Victoria Park.

### Concessions won

Under the direct action of the rate strike, the determined stand of the councillors, the mass support across Poplar and beyond with other councils joining the fight - concessions were won. There were significant increases in funding from the government to Poplar and other poor London boroughs.

Poplar laid down a marker. It inspired future council battles with central government, including the stand



The struggle of Liverpool council in the 1980s also took the approach ‘It’s better to break the law than to break the poor’ PHOTO: DAVE SINCLAIR



After six weeks, under intense pressure, the authorities climbed down and released the councillors



Militant led millions of workers in refusing to pay the Poll tax PHOTO: S GARDINER

of Clay Cross councillors in the 1970s who refused to raise Tory-imposed council rent increases.

The mass struggle of the socialist Liverpool council from 1983-87 also built on the traditions of the Poplar struggle. Led by Militant supporters, now the Socialist Party, Liverpool council went further. Once again mobilising a mass campaign of council workers, trade unions and wider national support, it set a needs budget and demanded the Tory government pay up. The Thatcher government was forced to retreat, returning over £60 million to fund the council’s programme.

Liverpool council put the ideas of socialism into action, building 5,000 council homes - freezing rents, raising council wages, creating jobs, apprenticeships, leisure centres and parks. A fighting socialist council gained mass support with record votes for Labour across the city.

Once again the famous Poplar slogan: ‘It’s better to break the law, than break the poor’, was to be raised across Liverpool, and again during the mass anti-poll tax movement, led by Militant and the All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation. Thatcher and the Tories introduced a new tax where millionaires and workers paid the same rate. The campaign mobilised at its height 18 million non-payers who defied the courts and prison to force its abolition and the resignation of Thatcher herself.

In the weeks ahead, Britain will enter a new era of struggle as the government plans to end furlough, with the possible loss of a million jobs. Families thrown into poverty by the Covid crisis - forced onto universal credit, left for five weeks without money - now face a £20 cut in payments.

Proposed attacks on pensions, cuts to public services and the public sector pay freeze, will be added to the economic instability of Brexit and the faltering of the post-lockdown economic bounce. Facing the impact of these cuts, local councils will once



The fight of Poplar will inspire a new generation of the possibility and necessity of mass struggle

again take the axe to jobs and services provoking renewed opposition from council unions and working-class communities unwilling to accept another round of austerity.

Labour under Starmer has shown its intent to act in the interests of capitalism, abandoning Corbyn’s manifesto for measures to protect the profits of big business. This means making the working class pay.

### Rebuilding fighting traditions

In the period ahead, new fighters will emerge and the question will be posed more sharply: how is it possible to end and reverse the cuts, and how can councils meet the needs of our impoverished communities?

The Socialist Party, as a leading component of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, calls for councils to fight like Poplar and Liverpool. To use their powers to set no-cuts budgets and build mass support for the restoration of government funding to local authorities.

We call for councils to implement rent controls and build affordable council housing. At the same time, we call on the trade unions to organise a conference of those inside and outside the Labour Party prepared to fight, to launch a new workers’ party with socialist policies that will offer an alternative to capitalist crisis.

The fight of Poplar will inspire a new generation of the possibility and necessity of mass struggle, to build on the traditions of Liverpool and the anti-poll tax army, and to create a new fighting tradition.

In the course of that struggle, capitalist crisis will drive many to draw the conclusion of the need for a new socialist society. Reforms won through struggle will be made permanent through the nationalisation of the banks and big business under working-class control and management. Society’s resources can then be used to develop a democratic plan of production to abolish poverty and insecurity forever.

# Why I rejoined the Socialist Party

## In Labour I was a fish out of water



Coventry Socialist Party campaigning against hospital parking charges ADAM HARMSWORTH

MARY MEDD  
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

I could very much identify with the article by Steve Merriman (see 'Labour v Socialist Party - my experience is seismic' at socialistparty.org.uk). I have been a supporter of the Socialist Party since the 1990s, and always voted for their candidates.

However, when Jeremy Corbyn became the Labour leader, I joined the Labour Party, believing it would at last be reflecting my socialist beliefs. I hoped to become an active member, but after attending only a couple of local meetings, I realised I was a fish out of water.

Throughout this period, my Socialist Party comrades remained in touch, and would regularly deliver the Socialist and chat, even during the pandemic.

I tried to see the best in Keir Starmer. But I knew I had to leave Labour, and be true to my beliefs.

I rejoined the Socialist Party, and regularly attend branch meetings, where a variety of issues are debated each week. Contributions are welcome from all, with suggestions for further debates.

Although I am now retired, and not physically involved with workplace issues, it is good to hear from young people active in the trade union movement, as I once was, fighting for workers' rights. I would recommend the Socialist Party to all those on the left who are seeking a political home.

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



# Councils declared climate emergency - now act like it!

MIA WROE  
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

With COP26 Glasgow looming ever closer, the spotlight is on the UK and whether its climate policies are fit to achieve 'net zero by 2050'. Approximately two in three councils in the UK have declared a climate emergency, with one in five councils having some version of a net zero pledge in place.

However, it is hard to have much faith in these pledges when those same councils support policies likely to increase carbon emissions; an expansion to Leeds-Bradford airport seems counterintuitive to Leeds Council's 'net zero by 2030' pledge, while the construction of the new

Silvertown tunnel in Tower Hamlets probably isn't conducive to 'net zero by 2025'.

### No plan

Councils lack accountability in actually upholding their promises. The lack of a framework to bring councils together and plan their climate policy, has resulted in already inadequate funding being fragmented. Councils competing against each other for grants to fund climate projects makes planning in the long term difficult. Projects typically end up expensive and ineffective.

However, there are numerous important ways in which councils could act: ensuring that their premises run on green energy and that pension

funds disinvest from fossil fuels; exercising their powers over buses and taxi licensing to reduce emissions; and creating safe cycle routes.

Councils could fund street-by-street insulation programmes and tram network development by exercising their borrowing powers, as well as investing in parks, nature reserves and local agriculture for the benefit of their own residents, as well as to meet their climate goals.

This would mean setting council budgets to meet the needs of people and the environment. It would mean mobilising popular support for the measures and demanding the necessary funds from the government. This is the approach needed to start to deal with the climate emergency.

# Wales: Gearing up for 9 October youth marches

EVAN VAUGHAN  
SWANSEA SOCIALIST PARTY

The Youth Fight for Jobs campaign has been relaunched, ready to fight the slew of job losses expected to come down the pipeline after the furlough scheme ends. This follows the ending of the eviction ban.

That has been replaced by longer eviction notices, a pathetic attempt to prevent the hardship coming to workers. With the support of unions, we can build a movement to prevent the onslaught.

Wales is already preparing for the 9 October. We have marches planned in both Swansea and Cardiff for that day. We are building support for the marches with the trades council,

allowing us to reach the broader labour movement.

To build for these marches, we have been handing out material on the street. We distributed leaflets and also did speeches at an all-Wales youth stall in Cardiff. We had a great response from the public. Many sympathised with the call for a £12 minimum wage and more council houses.

In particular, young workers, who have borne the brunt of the economic catastrophe while the Tories enriched themselves, resonated the most with our demands. We also have a competition to develop material to distribute once students are back on campus, showcasing the varied abilities of our newer members.

● youthfightforjobs.com

# Donate to stop Tories clawing back crumbs

The Covid crisis has laid bare the class character of society. It has made clear to many that it is the working class that keeps society running, not the CEOs of major corporations. The results of austerity have been graphically demonstrated as public services have strained to cope with the crisis.

The government ripped up its

'austerity' mantra and resorted to policies that not long ago were denounced as 'socialist'. But it is trying to claw back what has been given - by making the working class pay.

The Socialist Party's material is more vital than ever, so we can continue to report from workers who are fighting for better health and safety

measures, against layoffs, for adequate staffing levels, etc.

As the health crisis subsides, we must be ready for the stormy events ahead, and the need to arm the workers' movement with a socialist programme that puts the health and needs of humanity before the profits of a few.

## SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q3: JULY-SEPTEMBER 2020	DEADLINE: 30 SEPTEMBER 2021
Southern & SE	2,288	2,350		97%
Wales	1,983	2,300		86%
West Midlands	2,226	2,600		86%
South West	1,390	1,800		77%
London	3,149	4,600		68%
East Midlands	1,255	1,850		68%
Yorkshire	1,368	2,550		54%
North West	485	1,150		42%
Northern	260	750	35%	
Eastern	186	1,200	15%	
Other	1,243	3,850	32%	
TOTAL	15,831	25,000		63%

● Visit [socialistparty.org.uk/donate](https://socialistparty.org.uk/donate)  
● or call 020 8988 8777  
● or make cheques payable to Socialist Party, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT

# Biggest in-person socialist event this year!

## SOCIALISM 2021

Including  
**RALLY FOR SOCIALISM**  
Saturday 20 November 4-6pm  
People's Palace  
Queen Mary University of London,  
Mile End Rd, London E1 4NS

Hosted by  
**Socialist Party**  
[www.socialistparty.org.uk](https://www.socialistparty.org.uk)

**www.socialism2021.net**  
A weekend of socialist discussion and debate  
Friday 19-Sunday 21 November 2021

SARAH SACHS-ELDRIDGE  
SOCIALISM 2021 ORGANISER

This will be the biggest in-person socialist event this year. And we need it. We need the chance to get together and talk about the socialist alternative to this rotten system of capitalism.

Even surveys by the defenders of capitalism keep finding growing interest in a socialist alternative. A new Fox News poll in the US found 59% of Democrats had a positive view of socialism, up 19% from February 2020. No wonder.

As the horror of the Afghanistan disaster and the climate catastrophe compete to expose the failings of capitalist leaders, bigger numbers of people want an alternative.

The next month will bring the end of furlough and the so-called uplift in Universal Credit.

The last year has shown over and over again the preparedness to fight back. Thousands marched on Black Lives Matter and Kill the Bill protests, after the murder of Sarah Everard, and against Israeli state terror.

Workers have taken strike action against 'fire and re-hire', and other attacks on pay and conditions. Health workers are balloting on action against the Tories' pay insult.

But how can these movements win? What programme is needed? What are the lessons of past working class and youth struggles? What does Marxist theory have to offer for changing the world today? How does the fightback in the workplaces, campuses and communities connect to what happens in elections? What are the lessons from the Corbyn experience for building a working-class political voice? This will all be part of the discussion at Socialism 2021 - and more.

The Socialist Party has secured a venue in which hundreds can come together safely to discuss and debate in real life! There will be in-person workshops at Queen Mary

University on the Saturday and Sunday.

There will also be separate workshops on Zoom for those who can't travel, and to involve our sisters and brothers from the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), the world socialist organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated. The rally will also be livestreamed.

There will be a major socialist bookshop, stalls, a social to continue all the discussion informally, and places to stay over for those who wish. Those who day-trip to London for the rally and workshops on Saturday will get the chance to participate on Zoom on the Sunday.

Given the costs of venues today, ticket prices will rise slightly. But those who have already bought tickets won't be required to pay more unless they want to upgrade to the 'golden ticket' which includes a hostel bed. The new ticket prices and 'golden' option will be online from 1 September.

● **Come to Socialism 2021 - tickets and info at [socialism2021.net](https://socialism2021.net)**



# Ealing by-election: Labour council has not opposed Tory cuts

## Vote TUSC in Hobbayne on 16 September

TONY GILL  
TUSC CANDIDATE IN HOBBAVNE WARD

The three main establishment parties take ordinary people for a ride. We need a new mass party that will give the working class a genuine political voice.

In Hobbayne and the rest of Ealing, residents have suffered from the decimation of local services - the closure of day centres, libraries, local NHS provision, and increases in council tax. The council has cut 73% from youth services since 2010.

Ealing Labour council has passed on cuts from the Tory government, without fighting back. For every £1 Ealing received from central government in 2010, it now gets 36p - with no resistance from the Labour council.

This council will cut more, using the pandemic to justify further austerity. But why should working people continue to pay, while the rich have increased their wealth by a third during the pandemic.

Instead, the council should use its £67 million reserves, and borrowing powers, to set a no-cuts budget and fully fund our vital services. At the same time, it should launch a mass grassroots campaign to restore the money stolen by central government.

Ealing Council consults residents on what to cut. But, we say, let us tell the council what we need!

The pandemic has shown the money is there in a crisis. But there is still a crisis of public services.

the housing crisis, or help the 12,000 families on the council waiting list.

There are 650,000 empty homes, and Ealing has its fair share. We need council housing, which is eco-friendly and genuinely affordable to ordinary folk.

The council has allowed families to live in damp housing on the High Lane estate for far too long. It is a mistake that nearly 300 of the new homes on the estate will be at market rents - they should be council homes.

Some of these new developments in Ealing are being marketed to private investors abroad. The council is more interested in striking business deals with private developers.

In 2019, the current council leader, then cabinet member for planning and housing, attended a real estate conference in Cannes, on the French Riviera. His £3,000 entry, flight and hotel bill was paid for by housebuilding giant Berkeley Group.

We want to see less pollution, as well as safer and quieter streets. But undemocratic decisions closing roads, punitive measures against motorists - the council made £1.4 million in Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN) fines for the year 2020-21 - and Sadiq Khan's decision to get rid of the 150 bus route, will not tackle air pollution.

There should be genuine democratic control over local road closures and other changes, and a massive increase in government funding for public transport to make it greener, cheaper, more reliable and more frequent.

We need councillors who are going to stand up in the interests of people's needs.

# United action within and across unions will win on pay - reject the Ministry of Justice pay offer

DAVE BARTLETT

MOJ PCS GROUP EXECUTIVE MEMBER  
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has tabled a pay offer which trades conditions for pay. This is its second attempt after failed proposals three years ago were roundly and soundly rejected by members.

The so-called leaders in the PCS union are recommending acceptance of this deal. Why, when they were opposed to the previous deal? What has changed?

Earlier this year, the PCS's second largest membership group, the Revenue and Customs (HMRC), signed up to a three-year deal which exchanged conditions for pay.

Socialist Party members opposed this deal. We argued the Left Unity HMRC Group leadership should reject the deal and put its weight behind a national pay campaign, uniting all PCS members in a fight to defeat the government pay restrictions.

Instead, the Left Unity national and group leaders recommended the deal. It was accepted in a ballot which, as Socialist Party members pointed out, was held without the details and implications of the deal being made fully known.

This aside, there is little doubt that the HMRC members voted for the deal in large part because they were not given an alternative.

The group leadership was not prepared to fight for something better and there was no national pay campaign to talk of.

It is therefore of little surprise that we are now seeing a similar HMRC type pay deal being proposed elsewhere. This time in the MoJ.

The deal being proposed is 10.3% over three years linked to a number of changes (worsening) of conditions such as staff currently on 35 or 36 hours moving to a 37-hour week, removal of various location allowances, and so on.

With inflation currently at about 3%, and expected to continue at this level, 10.3% over three years is, in real terms, little better than a standing-still offer.

The proposed deal would still leave MoJ pay rates behind other government departments like HMRC.

As with most of these concession-bargaining pay deals, it's not immediately clear who will lose out and the extent of the loss.

But it is clear that this barely better-than-inflation pay deal is being financed in part by members losing current entitlements. It falls way short of the union's national 10% claim.

The deal was negotiated in total secrecy by the MoJ leadership (comprising PCS Democrats and Left Unity).

Details were only disclosed to the



PAUL MATTSSON

PCS executive during its July meeting, immediately before the deal was announced to members by the employer. It is being balloted on between 20 August and 9 September!

In their haste to bounce members into accepting the deal, some issues have been left to later reviews.

Even more worrying, and unfortunately in line with previous decisions that the union has made, the effects of the deal on members have not been thoroughly analysed, have not been assessed for equality implications, and there are still many questions unanswered, which means that it will be difficult for members to make an informed judgement.

As a group executive committee and Socialist Party member, I called for the ballot to be deferred so that members have all the facts they need, and are given time to debate them before they have to vote.

Several years back, MoJ members rejected similar management attempts to impose a deal of this sort. The threat of strike action forced management to scrap its plans.

Nothing has changed to justify the decision. Yet this time the national union and the group leaders are recommending the deal.

The MoJ deal comes nowhere near the national claim demand, and if members vote in line with the union's recommendation it will dilute that campaign even further.

We say reject the deal and force the leadership within the group and nationally to take seriously the union's national pay campaign for 10% without strings, and for the action needed to achieve this.

● See [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk) for the full article

## Exam results: grade gap widens

### ● Fund our schools

EVITA NAZARI

SIXTH FORM STUDENT, WEST LONDON  
SOCIALIST PARTY

After a tumultuous two years of studying during a pandemic, students across the country finally received their teacher-assessed results on 10 and 12 of August. Many experienced joy at their results, while others missed out on the top grades they needed. However, a clear pattern emerged: those rejoicing at grades were disproportionately from private schools.

61% of private school students received GCSE grades at 7, 8 and 9, which is in stark contrast to the 23% of students in comprehensive schools. This pattern is repeated in A level results as well: 70% of private school students acquired A or A\* grades, while only 39% of students at comprehensive schools received the top marks.

This year saw more students getting the top grades. But that didn't close the gap! Private schools experienced an increase of 14.6%, while for state schools it was around 7%.

The grade gap between private and state schools has increased further during the pandemic. The

introduction of teacher-assessed grades increases the opportunities for parents to pressure teachers. A study from the charity Sutton Trust found that in private schools, 23% of teachers experienced interference from parents, compared to just 11% in state schools.

Furthermore, the closure of schools to most students due to Covid-19, and commencement of online learning have highlighted that students from state schools are less likely to have access to, or have to share, technology. Lack of correct equipment at home has hindered, thousands of working-class students' from studying, and limited their potential to achieve the top grades.

A major problem fuelling grade inequality is that state schools are underfunded.

This year's results just prove that, under a Conservative government representing the super-rich, going to private school is more important than intellect when it comes to achieving great results.



Join the student fightback!

JOIN  
socialist  
students

- Visit [socialiststudents.org.uk/join](http://socialiststudents.org.uk/join)
- or call 020 8988 8761
- or text your name and school, college or uni to 07749 379 010

# Reflections on the Lebanese tragedy one year on

LANA MACIVER

It was the morning of 4 August, the first anniversary of the explosion in Beirut. My family and I were sitting round the breakfast table at my godmother's house, all of us reminiscing about where we were a year ago that day.

Videos remembering the event started circulating on social media, and every so often I would glance up at my sister, who was periodically in tears, staring down at her phone. She almost lost her life that day. Her PTSD is strong, and every time she heard a sudden noise or loud bang she would jump out of her skin.

Later that day we returned home. All of us crowded round the television watching the victim's families arriving at the port for the memorial service. People on the news were sharing their stories about how they lost their loved ones.



**I thought to myself, if all of us could unite like this, if the working class could come together every day, we could have a beautiful, thriving country**

The army dispersed around all of Beirut, roads being closed off to allow for the demonstration to begin. It was tense. My mother and sister were on edge, debating whether it would be safe to go down to the protests.

My mother argued that it was important we pay our respects at 6.07pm, the time the explosion set off that day. I suddenly felt a wave of sadness and determination. I too

agreed with her, and that afternoon we walked down from Ashrafieh to the port.

Along the way we met our cousins. They were waving the Lebanese flag proudly. Today was a day of unity and coming together to remember the horrible, tragic events. There was a sense of community from everyone marching down.

For the first time, no other political groups were the main source of attention, although ultra-right wing parties were around trying to instigate trouble.

There were some placards being held high with the slogan: "Everyone, means everyone". This was in relation to the government and how everyone in the government needed to step down. All the parties need to be dismantled for the country to start afresh, without the rule of the mafia-like government that has been in power since the 1970s and the civil war.

It was 6:07pm and a woman announced over a loud microphone in both Arabic and English that it was time for a moment of silence for the victims and their families. I looked across the highway which had been blocked off for the masses of people, the 300,000 people that had all gathered to mourn our Beirut, our Lebanon.

I looked up at an abandoned skyscraper that had no windows, the blast having taken them all and never being repaired. There was a massive red banner draping off the side with the words written in large letters: '4 Million Lebanese, Murdered. Injured. Afflicted. Stolen. Kidnapped.'

I thought to myself, if all of us could unite like this, if the working class could come together every day, we could have a beautiful, thriving country. Instead, what was waiting for us after the moment's silence had expired was cancerous teargas and rubber bullets. The aim was for us to meet at the port and then head down to parliament to demand answers,



Lana at the commemorative demonstration, with the massive red banners in the background

but the army was against us. It wasn't safe and most of the people went home.

There was, however, a moment of peace and serenity as they began to

read the names of the victims out loud, and the military planes flew across the sky in a flypast. I thought back to that moment a year ago, as the tears rolled down my face and I

remembered what it was like to wonder if my family was still alive.

● See also 'Beirut's devastating port explosion one year on', by Iain Dalton, on [socialistparty.org.uk](https://socialistparty.org.uk)

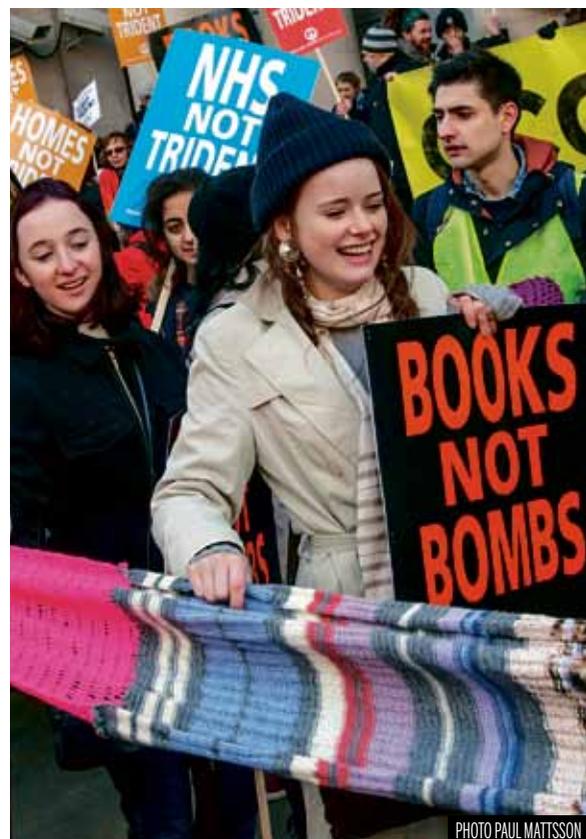


PHOTO PAUL MATTESSON

## Liverpool: Stop the arms fair!

ROGER BANNISTER  
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Disgracefully, Liverpool is set to host the AOC Europe 2021 arms fair in October, at the council owned Echo Arena. On display, and up for sale will be warplane components, components for missile systems, drones and other military hardware.

Representatives of governments from many countries, plus their top military brass, will rub shoulders with the merchants of death determined to make massive profits out of military conflict and human suffering.

Back in June this year, hundreds of protesters marched through Liverpool city centre against the arms fair. In 2019 an arms event at the Arena was cancelled by the council following a public backlash.

Despite promises of a fresh start for Labour in Liverpool, following the political demise of former Mayor Joe Anderson, the newly elected Mayor

Joanne Anderson (no relation), and the bulk of the right-wing Labour councillors, are refusing to take effective action to stop this event.

The Arena is council owned, run by an arms-length (no pun intended) company called ACC. But all the councillors have resigned from its Board of Directors, leaving it entirely in 'non-political' hands. This allows the councillors to pretend that they are powerless to act against the arms fair.

Faced with Labour's cowardice, it was left to the Green Party to move an amendment to ban the event. Only four Labour councillors defied the party whip to support this ban!

Cowardice in the council chamber is now being mixed with hypocrisy, as Labour councillors who voted for the arms fair are campaigning with a petition against it!

The Socialist Party rejects this nonsense from the Labour Party, and demands that the arms fair be cancelled immediately!

## Marching for Kashmir's liberation

CLIVE WALDER  
BIRMINGHAM SOUTH WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

500 Kashmiris, from all over the Midlands, protested in Birmingham on 15 August. They were calling for the removal of all Indian military forces from their land. It was the second anniversary of the removal of Kashmir's special status by Narendra Modi's reactionary Hindu chauvinist Indian government.

Despite being confronted with enormous military force, the Kashmiri people show no signs of accepting permanent annexation by India, and the discrimination that accompanies it.

It would be a grave mistake to rely on either the equally reactionary anti-worker government in Pakistan for national liberation, or the 'diplomacy' of the world's major imperialist powers. US President Joe Biden has delivered a very mild rebuke to the Indian government. Biden is more concerned with defending US geopolitical interests in the Indian sub-continent than the welfare of the Kashmiri masses.

Kashmiri workers and peasants can only rely on their own strength and organisations to achieve national liberation, and urgently need to form a party of workers, peasants and poor farmers, armed with a socialist programme, to take over the land and major industries in the region, so that Kashmir can be governed in the interests of the masses.

## STATEMENT FROM SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND

The ruling Scottish National Party (SNP) and Scottish Greens have agreed to form a de-facto coalition at Holyrood (the Scottish parliament).

For the first time since the parliament was established in 1999, the Greens will now be part of the ruling administration with two junior ministerial posts. It is also the first time the Greens have been part of a government in any of the four parliaments across the UK.

Currently one short of a majority, this deal will make it easier for the SNP to get their annual budgets passed with the support of the eight Green MSPs. It also ensures a majority government in favour of a second independence referendum.

While common ground has been found on most of the SNP's programme for government, in essence the Greens still have the right to oppose parts of government policy.

The programme that both parties have signed up to contains some positive proposals - on rent control and more power for tenants for example. However, the proposed rent controls would only be introduced at the end of 2025 - a very long time to wait for tenants paying shockingly high rents.

Among a layer of young people there will be illusions that this SNP-Green government will deliver progressive policies. However, close examination of the agreement and, more importantly, the record of the SNP and the Greens in power point to a government that will continue with pro-capitalist, anti-working class policies.

The claim that this new government will carry out the "economic transformation" of Scotland, while maintaining the profit-based system of capitalism, is hollow in the extreme.

## Oil

Rightly, Green MSPs have come out to criticise Nicola Sturgeon and her party for failing to oppose oil exploration off the coast of Shetland. However, the defence of North Sea oil companies has been part of the SNP's DNA since the days of the 'It's Scotland's Oil' campaign.

In addition, the SNP has just announced it plans to cut 300 train services from next year - 10% of the pre-Covid total. The Scottish government intends to take over the Scotrail franchise from next year, and this is a clear case of cutting now to make the new franchise more 'financially viable'.

It underlines how public ownership under the pro-capitalist SNP will still be run on business terms rather than socialist nationalisation under workers' control.

It also makes a nonsense of the SNP-Green governmental pledge that they will provide "a realistic and affordable alternative through investing in public transport and active travel".

Furthermore, the past cooperation between the Greens and the SNP since 2016 on passing cuts through Holyrood, and in councils like Glasgow, should shatter any illusions that this would be any kind of progressive, pro-working class government. Instead, it will be a continued coalition of cuts and attacks on the working class.

The Scottish Tories are opportunistically weighing in to criticise the

# SNP-Green deal will not deliver for workers and youth



LORNA CAMPBELL/CC

Green programme for its approach to North Sea oil jobs. But while the continued exploration for new fossil fuel deposits undoubtedly has to stop, the workers on the rigs and related industries must be assured they will not lose their jobs or one penny of their wages.

This can only be done through a socialist transition away from fossil fuels based on public ownership and workers' control of the energy sector including renewables. This is a policy the Scottish Greens oppose, putting their faith instead in a greenwashing of capitalism and appeals to world leaders at the forthcoming COP26 international climate summit in Glasgow to change tack.

The deal is also an attempt to shield the SNP and cut across the growing criticism from a large section of the Scottish independence movement.

Sturgeon is under real pressure for her snail-like pace and timid approach to fighting for a new referendum - 'indyref2'. Indeed, the SNP-Scottish Greens agreement pledges that a second referendum would be legislated for only within the next five years.

There is no commitment to build a mass working-class movement to take on Boris Johnson's continued refusal to grant a 'section 30 order' - which gives the Scottish parliament the power to call a referendum.

Both the SNP and Scottish Green

leaderships are mortally afraid of taking on and confronting the capitalist class over the right to self-determination. Moreover, both parties support an independent capitalist Scotland rejoining the bosses' European Union.

## New party

The SNP-Scottish Green coalition, in all but name, does not represent a step forward for workers and young people in Scotland. It will fail on rent control and housing, on the climate crisis, on cuts, on the NHS and on social care. Therefore, the need to build a new workers' party to fight austerity and for a socialist recovery for the working class, is paramount.

Scotland's trade unions should lead the fight for such a party. Socialist Party Scotland and the Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition will be helping to spearhead an anti-cuts electoral challenge to SNP, Labour and Green councillors at next year's council elections.

Scottish TUSC is organising a conference on Saturday 2 October to prepare for these elections.

• See full statement on [socialistpartyscotland.org.uk](http://socialistpartyscotland.org.uk)



Omomeewa

## Nigeria: Comrade Omomeewa, student leader and socialist campaigner, killed by armed assailants

Tragically, a leading member of the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM - CWI in Nigeria), Nurudeen Alowonle, aka Omomeewa, was murdered leaving Lagos State University (LASU) late in the evening on 18 August.

The DSM "commiserates with and sends condolences to his wife, his four-month-old baby and entire family, wishing them the fortitude to bear this very painful loss."

Comrade Majekodunmi - a member of the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities, and staff adviser of the Education Rights Campaign (ERC), who was accompanying Omomeewa, also sustained gunshot injuries and is currently hospitalised.

## Disciplinary

Comrade Omomeewa had been attending Lagos State University (LASU) Students Disciplinary Panel for the umpteenth time in a contrived case of racketeering, first brought in October 2019. This was in retribution for his role in students' struggles on the campus and particularly his

solidarity with the campus workers' unions.

It is not yet clear why Omomeewa was attacked. However, along with being a DSM member, he was a front-line student leader in LASU, a former presidential candidate in the Students Union elections, and coordinator of the ERC Lagos State Chapter. He therefore would have had political enemies.

Following the murder, DSM members organised a protest at the university. In a statement (see [socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net)) the DSM has demanded "the immediate arrest and prosecution of Omomeewa's killers. We also call for the setting up of a probe panel democratically constituted by elected representatives of the students union, staff unions, trade unions, socialists, and civil society organisations. This body should unravel the real motive behind the attack."

## Solidarity

In an act of solidarity, trade union members at the university have rallied to cover Omomeewa's funeral costs. Even the management-supporting Students Union has been prompted into calling a vigil for him.

A statement from the ERC said: "While mourning comrade Omomeewa, the ERC demands an end to the tyranny and victimisation of student and worker activists in tertiary institutions in Nigeria."

• Messages of solidarity can be sent via the DSM: [dsmcentre@yahoo.com](mailto:dsmcentre@yahoo.com)

• In South Africa, comrade Weizmann Hamilton of the Marxist Workers Party (CWI in South Africa) was badly injured and hospitalised by an armed intruder at his home. Fortunately, comrade Weizmann is now slowly recovering from his ordeal.



Martin Eden

Socialist author Jack London CBIGORNE/CC

## Film Review: Martin Eden

# Establishment can't ignore Jack London's socialism

CLARE WILKINS  
NOTTINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Martin Eden is an Italian film based on Jack London's 1909 novel. I highly recommend it. Jack London set his novel in the US, the film moves the story to Naples in the 1920s and 1930s.

Jack London was a writer and socialist, a member of the Socialist Labour Party, and then the Socialist Party of America. Born into a working-class family, he was homeless for a time, and a sailor, before he became a successful writer.

The academic establishment plays down or ignores Jack London's socialism, referring to him as 'America's Kipling', and the embodiment of the 'self-made man' and the 'American Dream'.

Martin Eden is held up as proof of the potency of the American Dream. Not what Jack London intended:

"One of my motifs, in this book, was an attack on individualism (in the person of the hero). I must have bungled it, for not a single reviewer has discovered it."

Moving the action to 1920s and 1930s Naples - with its political mix of socialists, anarchists and fascists - the film gives Martin Eden back the intention Jack London had in writing it. Martin Eden's journey to transcend his working-class roots for the love of an upper-middle-class woman, Elena, leaves him alienated from the working class, but not accepted by the woman he loves or her family.

An older writer introduces Martin to socialist meetings, he chooses not to get involved. The regret that permeates the rest of his life, and his dissatisfaction with material success, stems from this choice.

The politics in the film are not central, but it is an important thread. There are strike meetings, and fights

between socialists and anarchists afterwards.

The film is intercut with political newsreel from the time. It portrays the growing confidence of the fascists and the threat of war. In a restaurant, a fascist leader salutes Martin Eden, but says that in the coming war, writers will not be needed.

At dinner in a middle-class household, Martin Eden lambasts liberalism as opportunistic and supporting nationalisation and state intervention. At that point he is hostile to socialists.

At the beginning of the film, Martin says: "So the world is stronger than me. For so long as I do not get overwhelmed, I am also a force." His individualist approach is powerfully juxtaposed with the deathbed speech of his friend, Russ Brissenden: "Fight on. Socialism is the only thing that will save you from the disappointment that is approaching."



Revolutionary Love SAMHWA NETWORKS

## TV review: Revolutionary Love

# You can feel the mark of workers' struggle

PETE MASON  
EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Many protagonists depicted in Korean dramas are desperate to get a permanent job. Jun, however, chooses to fill her waking hours with part-time work. She doesn't want to show allegiance to the corporate system, which may have killed her father. Building work, chauffeur, hotels, she's done it all.

Hyuk is a workshy 'conglomerate heir' who spends as much in one night as Jun earns in a month. When Hyuk is beaten, stripped naked, and thrown out of the family house by his father, literally without a penny or a place to stay, fate entangles them.

Hyuk, entranced and educated by Jun, learns of the exploitation of workers, especially the contract cleaners at his father's firm. Hyuk becomes a faceless worker there, cleaning blocked toilets. Hyuk also learns from Jun the essential dignity of fighting back, as well as the darker secrets of his family's company.

Perhaps Netflix knows that I'll watch any K-drama that sends brutal chaebol bosses to jail, and there seem to be plenty of them - very satisfying. Many of these programmes, however, see family ownership continue through the much-wronged younger son, a few see ownership transferred to an upstanding board member.

None end up with workers' control. And all showcase a powerful Korean capitalism.

The mass South Korean democracy movement of June 1987 was led by a determined and courageous working class. It overthrew the military dictatorship, and has left an indelible mark on Korean society. This is often reflected in the K-dramas that Netflix serve up.

In the first half of the 1980s, more than 2,000 union leaders were imprisoned. In just six months after the June 1987 struggle, almost 1,500 unions were formed, and almost 8,000 in the two years after 1987. Most workplaces were affected by struggles for workers' rights.

In K-dramas, workers' and residents' workplace and street protests can be integral to the plot or a leading character - a point at which the brutality of the bosses and their hired thugs is exposed or defeated. The struggle feels real and effective in a way that is very rare on British TV.

In Revolutionary Love, the workers readily stand by each other, and organise a strike, with their iconic headbands and jackets covered with slogans. They risk their jobs to protest the unjust sacking of Jun. They say: 'If we don't defend you, we will be next.'

If you've not surfed the Korean wave, put on your wetsuit.

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# the Socialist

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formerly **Militant**

## Afghanistan in crisis:



Chaotic scenes outside Kabul airport as thousands of British and US citizens, along with many Afghans associated with Nato forces or the previous Ghani government, try to flee Taliban rule

- A colossal failure of western capitalism
- Fight for a socialist alternative

**A**fter two decades of military occupation and trillions of dollars spent by western governments, millions of Afghans are now back to where they were in 2001 - under the brutal rule of the Taliban.

Yet the capitalist politicians responsible for this tragic debacle - Messrs Tony Blair, George Bush, and others - continue to defend this colossal failure. And today's crop of establishment politicians, including Johnson and Starmer, also defend the western invasion and occupation of Afghanistan in 2001.

In contrast, a recent survey in Britain shows a majority of the public consider the invasion and occupation by Nato forces to have been a waste of many lives and much money.

Meanwhile, tens of thousands of Afghans who loyally served the US and British occupiers throng Kabul airport, desperate to flee the inevitable retribution from the Taliban. Several have already died in the crush or fallen to their death clinging to the undercarriage of aircraft taking off.

Home Secretary Priti Patel says she'll allow a few thousand to resettle in the UK, but over a five-year period. How can Afghans associated with British forces or the previous Ghani government remain hidden for five years!

And what was the Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab doing when the rotten Ghani government collapsed like a house of cards? Lounging in a luxury five-star resort! Not only couldn't he be bothered to call officials in

Kabul, he reportedly refused to get off his sun lounger and return immediately to London and deal with the evacuation crisis. Yet Downing Street says it has "full confidence" in Raab!

Typical Tories. They look after 'number one' and let everyone else sink into the quagmire of their failed capitalist policies.

As the Socialist warned before the 2001 US and British invasion of Afghanistan, it was to serve the western powers' geopolitical interests - not directly to liberate Afghans from the tyrannical rule of the Taliban.

Nato officials complain about reported human rights abuses under the new Taliban regime. But what do they say, and do, about the lack of human rights, the cruel punishments and public executions by the Saudi Arabian

regime? Nothing. In fact, western governments continue to arm this brutal regime simply because it is, broadly speaking, compliant with western capitalist interests in the region.

It's clear from the experience of working-class and poor people in Afghanistan, and indeed in many other countries, past and present, that capitalism cannot guarantee democratic rights or decent living standards. That requires ordinary working-class people uniting behind a socialist banner and fighting for fundamental change.

● See: 'The Taliban takeover - what are the lessons for the workers' movement internationally', p2-3

● Also: 'Unite to fight for funding for refugees and local communities', p4

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS ►► see column on p3

