

# SOCIALIST★APPEAL

## CAPITALISM IS CHAOS FOR PLANNING NOT PROFIT!



# SOCIALIST★APPEAL

## WHO ARE WE? and WHAT ARE WE FIGHTING FOR?

**Socialist Appeal seeks to organise the most class-conscious workers and youth around a Marxist programme to change society.**

**We have no truck with the Tories or their hangers on, whose worship of the market has brought the country to its knees. They are the enemies of the working class.**

**We have no trust also in the Starmer leadership of the Labour Party, whose actions are destroying the party.**

**The bosses and their craven political representatives have shown that they will always prioritise profits over lives.**

**We demand socialist measures to protect workers, and put health before wealth.**

- For a fully publicly-owned and free health service, under workers' control and management. Reverse all privatisation and outsourcing. All private health and care services must be nationalised without compensation, and integrated into the NHS.
- Nationalise the pharmaceutical companies – without compensation – in order to ensure that vaccines are produced rapidly and made freely available to all worldwide.
- Reverse the austerity inflicted upon public services. Launch a fully-funded training programme for doctors, nurses, paramedics, medical staff, and carers, with decent pay and hours, to increase staffing levels across the board. New hospitals must be urgently built.
- Workplace safety should be in the hands of workers' committees and the trade unions. Proper health and safety measures must be implemented, with adequate PPE provided for all workers. The costs for this must be paid by the bosses.
- For safe work or full pay on a living wage. Any future restrictions must be accompanied by measures to provide for workers affected by closures. This means 100% wage support for those furloughed, as well

as full sick pay to those required to isolate.

- To fight job cuts and the threat of mass unemployment, work should be shared out without any loss of pay, in order to lower the hours of the working week.
- Fight for the real emancipation of women. Remove all barriers to women working: provide free nurseries, after-school childcare, and care for the elderly. End all forms of discrimination; equal pay for work of equal value.
- Scrap tuition fees and rents, and replace these with free education and full maintenance grants for all. Put staff in control in schools and universities.
- Ban evictions and cancel housing debts. Give local authorities the power to cap rents at affordable levels. And bring empty properties and the assets of the big landlords and management companies under public control.
- Many small businesses are faced with bankruptcy, with banks resisting any extensions of credit. Many are squeezed not only by the banks, but by the big monopolies. By nationalising the banks we can supply these small businesses with the lifeline of guaranteed low-interest credit.
- The financial resources required to fight the crisis must not come from increased taxes or more austerity, but through the nationalisation of the banks and finance houses. Rather than a 'wealth tax', we call for the expropriation of the monopolies.
- Instead of building up the national debt through government borrowing, the money needed should be obtained entirely from expropriating the accumulated profits of big business.
- If the bosses say they can't afford to pay for workers' wages, we say: open up the books! Let the working class and the labour movement see the accounts! If firms plead bankruptcy, they should not be bailed out, but nationalised under workers' control.

■ No to austerity! The working class must not pay for this crisis!

■ For a mass campaign to bring down this criminal Tory government and do away with this rotten system.

**It is clear that the market has failed and capitalism is in a deep crisis. The anarchy of capitalism prevents the planning of society's resources, in Britain and internationally.**

■ We therefore stand for the nationalisation of the 100 biggest monopolies, banks, and insurance companies – under workers' control and management – without compensation. They have stolen enough from us already. On this basis, the economy can be democratically planned in the interests of the majority, and not for the super profits of a few billionaires.

■ A Socialist Federation of Britain should be linked to a Socialist United States of Europe and a World Socialist Federation, in order to plan resources internationally for the benefit of all. This would put an end to the barbarism of capitalism and allow humanity to begin solving the urgent issues of climate change, disease, and poverty that face society and our planet.

**There is, however, a crisis of leadership in the labour movement. Those who have attempted to patch-up capitalism have been found wanting. It is therefore time to energetically build the forces of Marxism, which alone offer a real way out of this crisis.**

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# WAYNE COUZENS, SEXISM, AND THE STATE

## MORE POLICE ON THE STREETS WON'T PROTECT US

**Sarah Vedrovitch**

For many women, recent news has laid bare our worst fears. It has been uncovered that Wayne Couzens spent months planning the violent rape and murder of Sarah Everard – or, more precisely, any woman on the streets of Clapham that night.

Couzens has admitted that he used COVID protocols learnt in police training to carry out his attack. Those who saw the abduction thought they were seeing a legitimate arrest and walked on. Of course, we now know what happened subsequently: the vile and degrading killing of a young woman.

### Rotten to the core

This information has, once again, raised concerns about the role of the police.

Couzens was an acting police officer. And for all the posturing of the Metropolitan Police, it was not hard to see this coming. He was nicknamed 'the rapist' by his colleagues, and had three previous accusations of indecent exposure against him – two of which were made only a month before Sarah Everard's murder.

Tory policing minister Kit Malthouse stated that "there is a job to be done to rebuild trust by the police". But upon what basis can this trust be rebuilt?

From the disgusting scandal of Spy Cops having relationships with female

activists; to the hundreds of sexual abuse claims made against police officers in recent years; to the statistic that at least 15 serving or former police officers have killed women in the UK since 2009: there is no reason why women should have any trust in the police.

Even the vigil in memory of Sarah Everard resulted in young women being violently pinned to the ground by police officers.

Wayne Couzens' name and face may be the one splashed over frontpages in the press, but recent revelations have made it clear that this is not simply a case of a single bad apple. Rather, the whole institution of the police is rotten to the core.

### Institutional sexism

Highlighting this fact is the recent testimony of Sue Fish, a female police officer, who has revealed some of the deplorable attitudes and actions of her colleagues regarding sexual assault.

In her mid-20s, *the Times* reported, Fish was left in the car by a commanding officer while he went to have sex with a woman he had come across whilst on duty. Of course, the power imbalance of an on-duty cop and a vulnerable woman does not leave much romance in this situation.

According to Fish, "sex on duty was seen as a perk of the job" – a claim that is given much credence by the sordid case of Mark Kennedy.

Kennedy, a police officer put in charge of infiltrating a political group, has recently been in court regarding a relationship he had with a woman under false pretences.

The judge in the trial has admitted that senior officers were aware of this relationship and turned a blind eye.

This – alongside many other similar examples and instances, including the fact that Couzens was not suspended from the force despite the allegations against him – points to an endemic problem of sexism and misogyny within the police.

### Fundamental flaw

Home secretary Priti Patel has come out saying that she is heartened to see a 'monster' taken off the streets, now that Couzens has been sentenced to life in prison.

The problem, however, is not of one monster who slipped through the cracks, but a fundamental flaw that runs deep throughout the police force.

Even Lord Paddick, Liberal Democrat peer and ex-deputy assistant commissioner in the Met Police, says that there is 'widespread sexism' amongst the police.

Every woman who has tried to tell the police about their sexual abuse, only to be met with condescension, victim

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blaming, and a wholesale lack of support would likely agree with this statement.

### Creatures of capitalism

In any case, responsibility for the existence of such ‘monsters’ – within the police and wider society – lies with the ruling class, who create the breeding ground in which such creatures are able to grow and thrive.

Police officers are deliberately fed a diet of regressive and reactionary politics by the ruling class and their media mouth-pieces, in order to maintain them as loyal defenders of the capitalist status quo. As part of this, they are pumped up with self-importance; given a sense of impunity; and encouraged to feel that they are above the law.

We must remember that Priti Patel, in the wake of the brutal suppression of peaceful attendees of Sarah Everard’s vigil, tried to hand more power to the police.

How many ‘monsters’, in other words, have been created by this Tory government, which has given police officers the green light when it comes to repression and violence?

**Ultimately, the police are not here to protect us, but to protect the property, profits, and power of the capitalist class; that is, to defend the capitalist system - a system that relies upon sexism, racism, oppression, and violence to divide and exploit the working class.**

### Starmer’s ‘solution’

‘Sir’ Keir Starmer, who has constantly pandered to the ruling class and the right-wing press with his ‘tough’ stance towards crime and his rhetoric about ‘law and order’, has also said nothing of any use on this issue.

In his speech at the party’s recent annual conference, for example, to address concerns about safety, Starmer promised that Labour would put more police on the street. That’s right – to stop the police murdering women, Starmer suggests *increasing police numbers*. There is a very clear hole in this logic.

Many other establishment politicians – and the police themselves – have said that women should call the police to avoid being killed by the police.

Similarly, Scotland Yard officials have suggested that women should wave down a bus in this situation. And the police have issued guidance that if you are unsure about an arrest, you should ask to speak to an operator on the radio.

Given the absolute incompetence of senior officers in dealing with previous problems, why should women feel safe talking to another police officer? When the police are showing themselves to be the problem, how does speaking to another officer provide any assurance that you are safe?

### No safety under capitalism

Liberal commentators are now calling for yet another inquiry into the police; for a so-called “Stephen Lawrence moment” to “restore faith in the police”.

Others are demanding the resignation of Met chief Cressida Dick. (Although notably not Priti Patel or Keir Starmer, who – along with the rest of the establishment – have closed ranks to defend the police and its top representatives.)

But despite drawing conclusions of ‘institutional racism’, the Macpherson report about police failings surrounding the murder of Stephen Lawrence did nothing to eradicate structural racism within the police. Indeed, racist policing practices have actually become more prevalent in the decades since.

Similarly, replacing Dick with another face at the top of the Met will do nothing to bring about real change. Nor will hiring more female police officers – as suggested by notorious sexist Boris Johnson – help to eliminate the deep-rooted culture of sexism and misogyny within the force.

Couzens is not an isolated monster, but a terrifying example of a threat that exists through the police and the entire apparatus of the capitalist state.

Ultimately, the police are not here to protect us, but to protect the property, profits, and power of the capitalist class; that is, to defend the capitalist system – a system that relies upon sexism, racism, oppression, and violence to divide and exploit the working class.

The institution of the police cannot be reformed or rehabilitated. More officers on the streets is no solution. We cannot be kept safe by the very people whose role it is to repress and attack us.

We need to abolish this entire rotten system. Only by overthrowing capitalism and transforming society along socialist lines can we genuinely make our communities safe, and truly liberate women from the scourge of violence, sexism, and oppression. ■





# THE KILLING OF SABINA NESSA

## NO SAFETY UNDER CAPITALISM

### Greenwich Marxists

On Friday 24 September, hundreds of people from Kidbrooke and surrounding areas in south east London joined a vigil at Pegler Square to pay their respects to Sabina Nessa, another victim of the epidemic of violence against women, who was recently murdered in a nearby park whilst walking to meet her friend.

The vigil's organisers included local community groups and the *Reclaim These Streets* campaign.

So massive was the outpouring of support at the demonstration, that the small loudspeakers could barely be heard by much of the crowd, who filled the square and spilled out onto the streets.

The mood was sombre, with Sabina's sister giving an emotional speech.

But a glimmer of defiance and hope also punctuated the candle-lit vigil. One speaker received loud applause when reminding the crowd that 'there's no liberation without solidarity'. And another asked 'Do we want change?' and 'Are we prepared to make change?', receiving bold replies of 'Yes!' from the whole crowd.

### Tory hypocrisy

The hypocritical, sexist ruling class have shed crocodile tears in response to Nessa's murder.

Boris Johnson's official Twitter account, for example, posted a picture of a candle on the doorstep of Number 10.

But this is an insulting, empty gesture from the Prime Minister, who presides over a government that has cut vital services – including domestic shelters – that are a lifeline for women.

### Social sickness

Other commentators have contributed by highlighting the 'rules' and 'advice' that women should follow to keep themselves safe at night: wearing bright colours; walking on well-lit streets, and so on.

Meanwhile, images of clenched fists with keys between the fingers – a popular self-defence method circulated by young women – have become iconic, particularly on social media.

Much of this reflects the deep despair felt amongst young women, as



exemplified by the many placards at the vigil asking 'when will we be safe?'.

But this also contains a dangerous message: that women are personally responsible for their own safety; for a disease that infects the whole of society.

We must remember that Sarah Everard did everything 'right', but was still murdered – by a police officer; by the very system we are told protects us.

And let us also not forget Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman – two sisters whose 'safety in numbers' did not save them either.

Under capitalism women will never be safe.

### Crisis and oppression

Sabina's tragic death is sadly only a tiny ripple amidst the tsunami of violence that women all across the world face every day under capitalism.

It is no coincidence that this scourge of violence against women has escalated in recent years – particularly since the 2008 economic crash; and, more recently, since the start of the pandemic.

Working-class women have been forced to bear the brunt of unemployment and austerity, with worse to come as furlough ends and cuts to welfare bite. Female workers in essential jobs have been hit the hardest, fighting on the frontline of the coronavirus crisis.

And faced with financial insecurity, lockdowns have trapped increasing numbers of women in abusive relationships, or burdened them with extra caring responsibilities.

### Violent system

The Tories and the police show no genuine interest in tackling this problem. In fact, when they are not busy directly attacking women and the vital services they rely on, these boys in blue are working together to prop up the capitalist system – a system that breeds violence, sexism, and oppression.

The fact is that the representatives of capitalism have no solution to this status quo of injustice and inequality. Their passivity is not simply due to a lack of concern or morality, however, but is a reflection of the bankruptcy of the system they defend.

Capitalism in crisis can't afford the reforms and measures needed to keep women safe.

In fact, it is responsible for slashing away all the gains that women have struggled for over the decades.

As long as capitalism stumbles on, it is women, the working class, and the oppressed who will continue to bear the brunt of this crisis. That is why we must fight to overthrow the whole rotten system. ■

# LABOUR SHORTAGE LUNACY

## ANOTHER SYMPTOM OF CAPITALISM'S CHAOS

**Dylan Cope**

**L**abour shortages are an increasing problem across the world and across a range of industries. These are simply one expression of the acute crisis of capitalism today.

As if there weren't enough problems facing the capitalist class already, they are now having to grapple with the growing problem of labour shortages – seemingly too many job vacancies, but too few workers to fill them.

Indeed, in some industries these shortages are proving to be almost crippling, and are a key contributing factor to the problem of collapsing supply chains.

The capitalists lay the blame for this on the devastating impact of the pandemic. This dislocated the entire world economy, which has still not recovered, and which may never return to 'normal'.

But the real blame lies with the capitalist system itself – a crisis-ridden, anarchic system, which is incapable of providing for society's needs.

### Drivers and haulage

In recent months, this problem has been most sharply felt in Britain, where a shortage of HGV drivers has spiralled out of control. There is now a shortage of more than 100,000 drivers in the UK, out of a pre-pandemic total of about 600,000 drivers.

In part, this was compounded by the issue of Brexit. Of this 600,000, tens of thousands were drivers from the EU. With new restrictions on freedom of movement following Brexit, the ease of living, working, and travelling between mainland Europe and Britain has

become increasingly complicated. This has cut across the steady supply of EU migrants that many British businesses relied upon.

This existing driver shortage has also been exacerbated by a huge backlog in HGV driver tests, since 28,000 tests were cancelled over the course of the pandemic. It takes almost a year to qualify as an HGV driver, so this backlog won't be cleared any time soon.

But one of the most fatal causes is simply the devastation of the haulage sector over many years.

Conditions and pay have been ground down, with long hours, no bathroom breaks, and poor treatment at depots becoming the norm.

These poor conditions have long hampered recruitment, resulting in an aging workforce, with over half of drivers being over 45-years-old.

It was only recently – after months of begging from the Road Haulage Association, logistics companies, and supermarket chains – that the Tory government finally relented and issued 5,000 short-term visas. But these are only valid until February.

This is like a sticking plaster on a gaping wound. In fact, for the time being, the government has had to resort to bringing in the army to drive petrol lorries, following severe shortages.

This recent fuel crisis saw mile-long queues, with caravans of cars following tankers around in a desperate search for petrol.

### Food and meat

These labour shortages are not unique to haulage – although this sector epitomises the problems facing many businesses.

A lack of workers is also affecting the food industry. Farmers cannot find workers to pick vegetables, which are rotting in the fields. There is also an estimated surplus of 100,000 pigs, due to a huge shortage in skilled butchers at abattoirs, with many animals being prematurely slaughtered as a result.

Even white-collar professions have not gone untouched, with shortages at top accountancy, law, and consulting firms. And given the high demand for all types of workers, there is now a shortage of job recruiters too!

### International problem

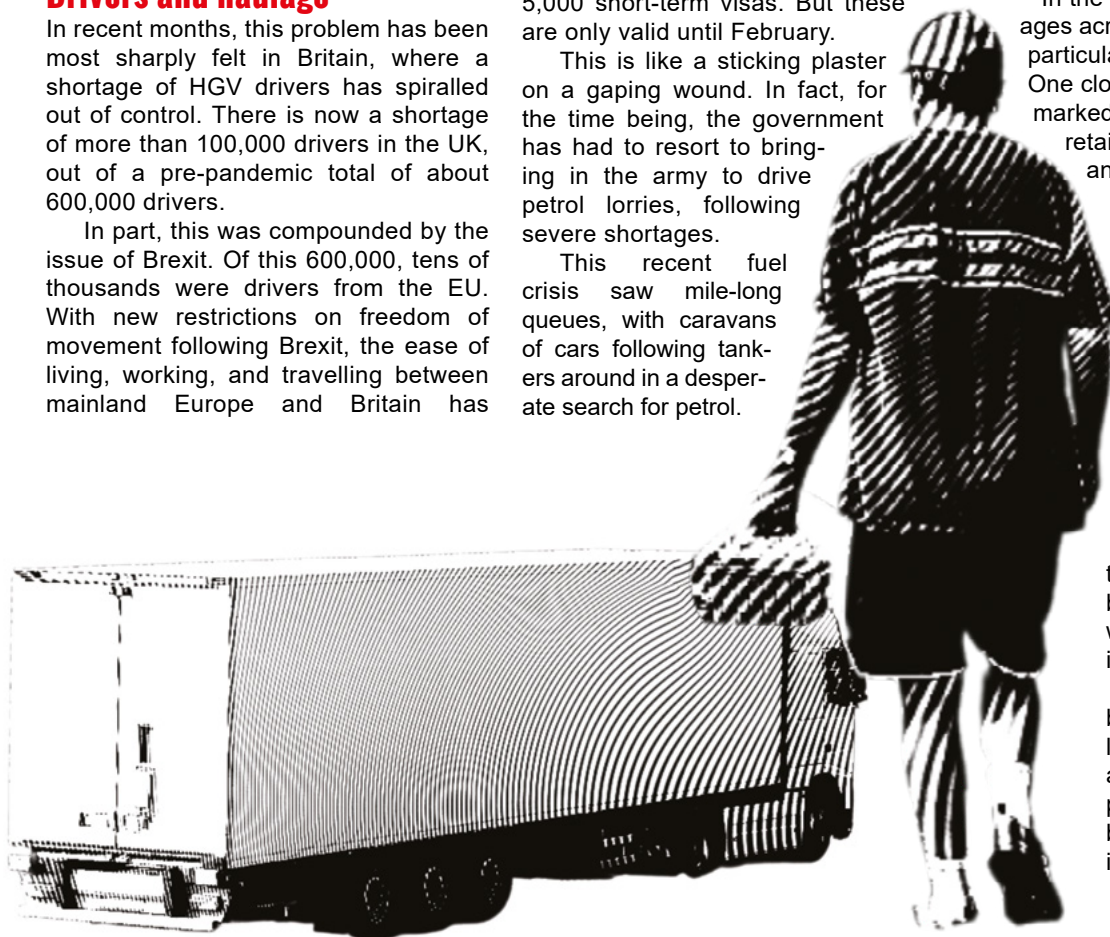
But this problem of severe labour shortages is not just affecting Britain. It is a global trend, which is beginning to hit one country after another. Clearly, therefore, other factors must be at play other than Brexit.

In the United States, there are shortages across a wide range of industries, particularly in manufacturing and retail. One clothing company owner even remarked: "In more than 30 years in the retail business I have never seen anything like this before."

In Canada, consulting firm Deloitte estimates that over 30% of businesses face labour shortages. These are especially high in the manufacturing and construction sectors. And a report by the EU has identified shortages of workers in construction, engineering, software development, and healthcare.

Even the lucrative Australian mining industry has been hit by shortages of skilled workers, as have other sectors in the country.

Elsewhere, 62% of Czech businesses have reported a long-term lack of workers for advertised jobs. And Singapore has been particularly hit by labour shortages, especially in the restaurant sector.



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## Hollow words

One country after another faces these shortages of workers. Yet the capitalists and their media are generally trying to paint this as a series of isolated problems – one affecting particular industries in particular countries.

But this is clearly a general, global trend, and increasingly cannot be ignored as such.

As per usual, however, big business politicians are sidestepping the problem.

In a blustering speech at the recent Conservative Party conference, for example, Boris Johnson called on business to overcome the problem simply through increasing wages:

“That’s the direction in which the country is going now,” the UK Prime Minister asserted, “towards a high-wage, high-skilled, high-productivity and, yes, thereby a low-tax economy.”

Similarly, when pressed on the question of labour shortages, President Joe Biden’s response was “pay them [workers] more”.

These are hollow calls. It is precisely the capitalist system that both men defend that is ultimately the root cause of this issue.

## Capitalist crisis

This is not to deny that there are factors that exacerbate this problem, such as Brexit or the pandemic. But these act more like catalysts for the underlying problem: the long-term decline and decay of capitalism.

For decades, the capitalists have refused to actually invest in industry and infrastructure, or education and training; or to pay higher wages to attract new workers into vital industries. Instead, they have attacked wages and conditions, in order to boost their profits in the short term.

In many sectors, the bosses have relied on cheap, hyper-exploited, migrant labour in order to fill positions, drive down pay and conditions, and make super profits. But the restrictions on free movement internationally due to the pandemic (and Brexit) cut off this supply, causing convulsions throughout the system.

When economies reopened and demand shot up, many companies were unprepared. They either went bust, or found that they had overworked and burnt out their remaining workforce, with many quitting these jobs or switching careers.

Increasingly, given the current crisis, companies facing the worst labour



**In any case, the bosses’ desperate response is a case of too little, too late. The short-termism of the capitalists is coming back to bite them. And the anarchy gripping the global economy shows no signs of letting up any time soon.**

shortages are now being forced to increase pay and entice workers back.

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics, for example, has revealed that the average hourly earnings of all private sector employees in the country rose to \$30.85 in September. Similarly, HGV drivers in Britain are being offered pay of £60,000 or more, along with sign-on bonuses, in order to sign up.

Any extra costs, the bosses hope, will be passed onto consumers. This, in turn, has provoked fears of a return of ‘stagflation’ – rising prices alongside stalling economic output.

In any case, the bosses’ desperate response is a case of too little, too late. The short-termism of the capitalists is coming back to bite them. And the anarchy gripping the global economy shows no signs of letting up any time soon.

## For planning, not profit

All of this reflects the general malaise of the capitalist system – a system whose foundations are so fragile, that all it takes is a few knocks to send it spiralling into chaos and collapse; a system in which you have the absurd contradiction of labour shortages alongside high unemployment.

Under a socialist planned economy, with democratic workers’ control and management, such crises and contradictions would easily be resolved.

With investment in technology and automation, the hours of the working day could be dramatically reduced for all. Any remaining work would be shared out, without any loss of pay.

Lifelong training and education would be a matter of course, allowing obsolete industries to be shut down, with workers’ transitioning to new roles, rather than being thrown onto the scrapheap of the free market’s so-called ‘creative destruction’.

Changing careers would create no tensions or uncertainty. Workers – in control of workplaces and the wider economy – would be paid a real living wage, and would feel respect and dignity in their work.

But such a society will not come about on its own; nor will it evolve naturally from the decaying capitalist system. It must be consciously fought for.

Only through a revolutionary socialist transformation of society can the chaos and anarchy of capitalism be ended once and for all. ■

# ENERGY CRISIS REVEALS BANKRUPTCY OF THE MARKET NATIONALISE THE LOT!

Stan Laight,

Kensington Marxists

**S**ky-high wholesale gas and electricity prices have caused 12 energy suppliers to go bust already this year. This has led to 1.7m 'orphaned' customers being re-allocated to surviving suppliers.

Coupled with predictions of a long, cold winter, millions of workers could face up to 30% higher energy bills by next year. And compounded by the end of furlough and cuts to Universal Credit, this means millions being pushed even further into poverty.

The 'free market' has failed spectacularly, leaving millions in the cold. Only socialism can solve the energy crisis.

## Running on empty

This fuel crisis has been years in the making. For example, in 2017 Ofgem allowed Centrica, British Gas' owner, to close down the UK's largest gas storage facility off the Yorkshire coast. This resulted in the loss of 70% of the country's gas storage capacity.

This was despite warnings that it would make Britain more reliant on imports and lead to 'volatile prices'.

The current global gas shortage has triggered soaring wholesale prices, causing smaller retail energy suppliers to go bust. The growing number of customers that surviving suppliers will be required to absorb means they will also have to absorb a greater financial loss in the short term.

This is resulting in a domino effect, with some experts predicting that only 10 energy companies – or fewer – could survive the winter. Furthermore, if the number of orphaned customers reaches a critical level, concerns are growing that none of these remaining companies will be strong enough to absorb them.

Industry bosses are therefore worried that, with the collapse of the market, the state will be required to step in as a 'provider of last resort'. So much for the wonders of the 'free market'!



## Shutdown

A knock-on effect of rising gas prices is that electricity costs are also increasing.

Bosses in the steel, chemicals, and ceramics industries are warning of imminent bankruptcies, if nothing is done by the government.

Of course it will be the workers of these companies that will be made to suffer, as they are forced to join the dole queue.

There are tensions within the Tories over whether the state should intervene to save businesses and avoid the crisis escalating further.

Officials at the Treasury, however, have distanced themselves from rumours about a possible bailout of energy companies.

has stated point blank that he would refuse to support nationalisation, all in the name of 'pragmatism' – that is, to reassure the capitalists.

But British capitalism is experiencing its deepest crisis for over 300 years. The system is on its knees. The only real 'pragmatic' solution is to put the system out of its misery.

## For public ownership

The 'free market' has clearly failed. The only way forward is on the basis of clear socialist policies.

This means nationalising the giant energy monopolies and failed suppliers, and the whole energy network, without compensation to the former fat-cat owners.

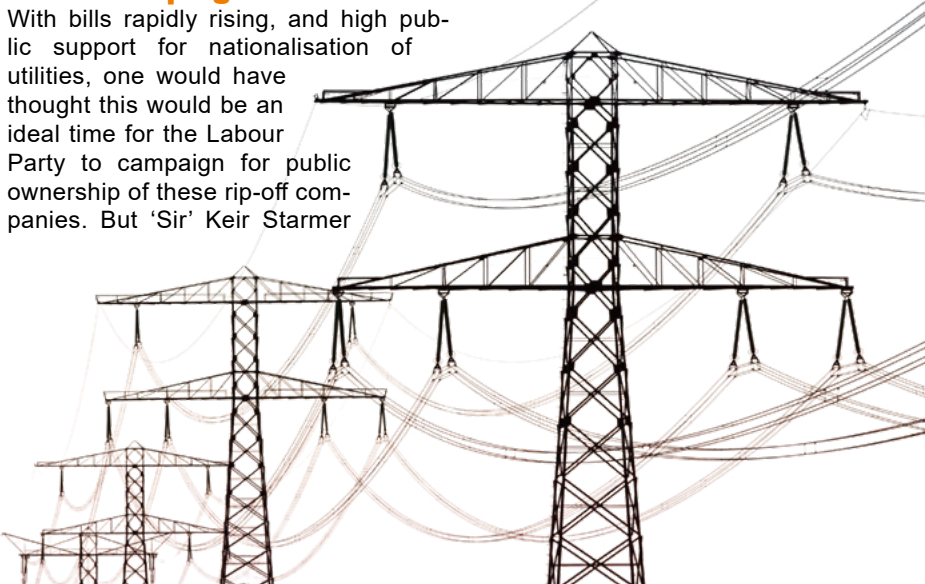
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This ultimately means that the £1bn-plus cost of rescuing customers from failed suppliers will eventually be passed onto consumers through higher bills, leaving many households with a desperate choice between heating and eating this winter.

## Starmer's 'pragmatism'

With bills rapidly rising, and high public support for nationalisation of utilities, one would have thought this would be an ideal time for the Labour Party to campaign for public ownership of these rip-off companies. But 'Sir' Keir Starmer

Under capitalism, we face a bleak future of blackouts and bailouts. Placed under democratic workers' control and management, however, as part of a rationally planned economy, the energy sector could provide a sustainable and secure supply for all. ■





# PANDORA PAPERS

## RULING CLASS' DIRTY DEALINGS EXPOSED

**AGAIN!**
**Manon Powrie**

A data leak containing millions of documents – amounting to 2.94 terabytes of information – has partially lifted the curtain on the offshore deals and assets of more than 100 billionaires, world leaders, and public officials.

This leak has exposed the tremendous parasitism of the ruling class, totalling anywhere from US\$5.6 trillion to US\$32 trillion in offshore wealth.

Russian oligarchs are especially well represented in the leaks, with no fewer than 52 appearing in the documents, whose concealed wealth amounts to hundreds of billions of dollars. This includes oil tycoon Leonid Lebedev, who fled Russia in 2016 following accusations of embezzlement.

One of the biggest hoards belongs to Jordan's King Abdullah II, whose \$100m property empire was revealed in the documents.

### Political parasites

Alongside these tycoons and despots, a number of leading politicians are identified in the leaks. This goes to show that the so-called democratically-elected representatives of capitalism eat from the same trough as the rest of the ruling class.

For instance, the Czech Republic's prime minister, Andrej Babis, came to power after promising to

crack down on tax evasion and economic fraud – supposedly to create a country where “entrepreneurs will be happy to pay taxes”.

But it seems that Mr Babis must crack down on himself, as this latest leak reveals that he funneled \$22 million through shell companies to buy a chateau in the French Riviera.

Meanwhile, Uhuru Kenyatta – President of Kenya, a country with a total poverty rate of 36 percent, and extreme poverty rate of over 25 percent – has been exposed as a beneficiary of a secret foundation in Panama, while his family own five offshore companies with assets worth over \$30 million.

### The billionaires vs the billions

The so-called Pandora Papers (named for opening a veritable ‘Pandora's Box’ of shameless wealth hoarding) reveal what we already know: that those who hold the most wealth and power are also the most corrupt.

The lengths they will go to in order to protect ‘their’ money and privileges have been exposed countless times, most recently in the Panama Papers in 2016, followed by the Paradise Papers in 2017.

This rotten capitalist society certainly does constitute a ‘paradise’ for the rich, as they hide their wealth and avoid paying tax, using a combination of exclusive bank accounts, trusts and foundations in offshore financial centres.

Notably, many of these measures are perfectly ‘legal’ in the formal sense. The system itself is rigged in favour of the rich, who seek to enrich themselves further still.

In short: these are not isolated examples. The entire upper strata of capitalist society is riddled with obscene wealth and dodgy financial dealings.

These revelations come at a time when capitalism has never had anything less to offer, with workers and youth being hit with the brunt of the crisis, whilst the rich relax in one of their many multi-million pound homes.

### Epicentre of corruption

Britain represents a nexus point in this web of secret wealth accumulation.

For instance, the leaks detail the sale of 1,500 British properties through offshore firms. Through this mechanism, super-rich investors have been able to hide their wealth, anonymously speculate on property, and build up their real estate portfolios.

For the rich, the property market in London represents a haven to stash their spare cash. As the leaks demonstrate, the capital city is a playground for oligarchs, money laundering criminals and corrupt politicians.

These include high-profile figures such as members of the Qatari ruling family, who purchased two of the world's most expensive homes in London through offshore companies, saving millions in tax in the process.

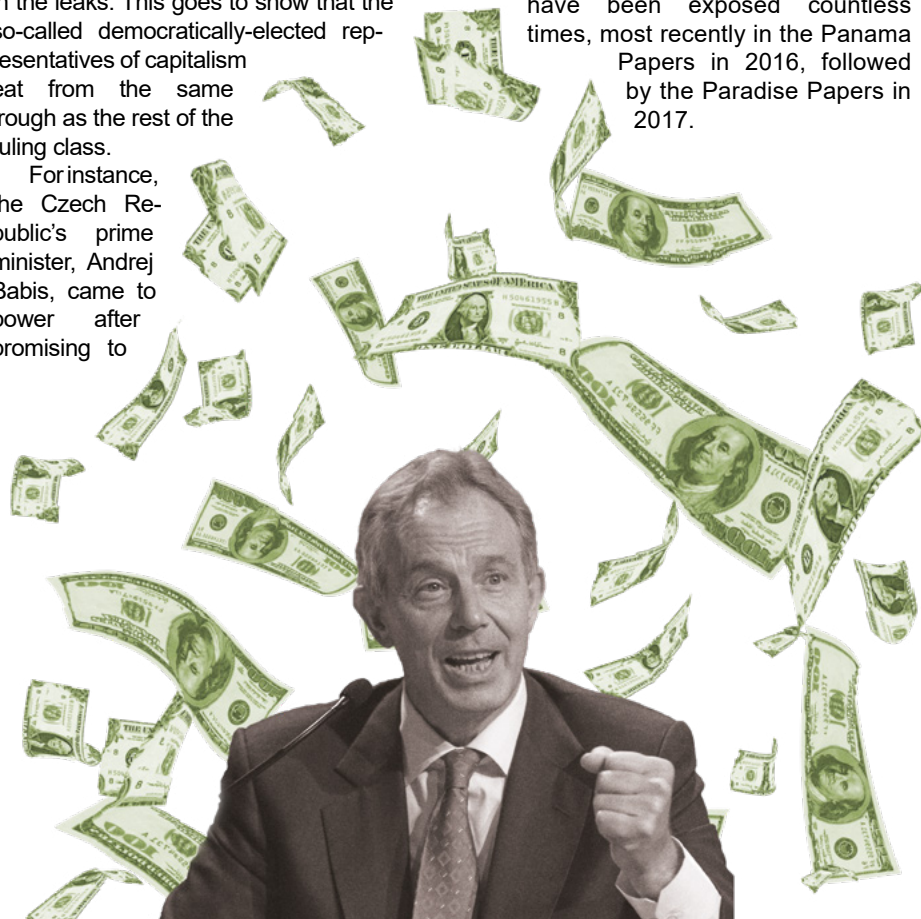
Many of these parasites are the very same people funding the ruling Conservative Party.

Take Mohammed Amersi: a prominent Tory donor with a mansion in the Cotswolds and a townhouse in affluent Mayfair, London – both acquired through offshore companies.

Similarly, Lubov Chernukhin – ex-banker and wife of the former Russian deputy minister of finance – cosied up to

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the Tories with over £1.8 million in donations since 2012, whilst owning both a house in London and a mansion in the countryside.

These donations are not mere generosity, but a quid pro quo arrangement in which the Tories reward their capitalist chums with policies that assist them in maintaining their ill-gotten gains. These include favourable tax rates and lax financial oversight; not to mention the opportunity to score lucrative government contracts for their business interests.

The capitalist class and their representatives in government are bound by a thousand threads.

Several leading figures in British business appear in the leaks, whose gross mismanagement of their companies has little bearing on their opulent lifestyles.

For instance, the Pandora Papers reveal that retail tycoon Philip Green and his wife splashed out on a luxury property, just as their BHS retail chain went bust under the pressure of huge debts and a massive hole in its pension fund. While they arranged furniture in their swanky new pad, 11,000 BHS employees were pushed into unemployment and precarity.

Of course, they made this purchase anonymously through an offshore fund, which the papers trace back directly to the respectable 'Lady' and 'Sir' Green. A year later, they generously bought their daughter a £10.6 million home around the corner, while the Arcadia

group (which owned major retail outlets, including Topshop) was driven into liquidation in November 2020 – again due to huge debts and a giant pensions deficit.

The super-rich seem to live in a different universe to the rest of us. Even when their companies collapse – condemning thousands of workers to destitution in the process – these bloated leeches continue to enjoy the lap of luxury.

### Blair fraud project

But it is not only rich Tory donors and decadent business people named in the leaks.

Living up to his reputation as a corrupt figurehead of the capitalist class, former Labour Party leader Tony Blair also features in the Pandora Papers.

He and his wife Cherie have stressed they had purchased a multi-million pound property in a "normal way", and have "never used offshore schemes either to hide transactions or avoid tax".

Yet the papers reveal the Blairs made savings of £312,000 by avoiding stamp duty on their lavish townhouse in Marylebone. They did this by acquiring the holding company of the property, rather than the building directly.

To any ordinary working-class person, it is plain that there is nothing 'normal' about schemes like this.

The list goes on and on.

The scale of this avarice and greed ultimately reflects the deep crisis of capitalism. The capitalists are not capable of carrying society forwards. They have become a fetter on human development through their parasitic tendencies: sitting on huge piles of money rather than investing it back into developing production for the betterment of mankind.

### Capitalism is corruption

The capitalist state is certainly a Pandora's Box full of corruption and scandal.

But this is no accident. It is a very conscious decision on the part of capitalists to use all the tricks at their disposal to maximise their privileges.

It is clear that no matter what rules and reforms are put into place against offshore tax havens and the like, the rich will always find a way to escape the net.

The hypocrisy on display here is staggering. The capitalist class and its political representatives will continue to attack the poor and working class through cuts, austerity, and privatisations, whilst at the same time bending over backwards to protect their own wealth and privilege.

At the Tory Party conference for example, Boris Johnson confirmed the implementation of a £20-a-week cut to Universal Credit. At the same time, however, Conservative MPs consistently shied away from discussing how their party's biggest donors have been revealed as tax dodgers in these papers.

The parasitic rich once again have egg on their face. But just like in 2016 and 2017, they will wait for the furore to pass and then carry on as before.

This cannot be allowed to stand. This mountain of wealth – the product of workers' labour, which is drained by the bourgeoisie through exploitation, and accumulated or gambled through speculation – must be expropriated and put to productive use in a society run under workers' control.

Only by overthrowing capitalism can we do away with the immense corruption and greed of the tiny minority, which goes on alongside the impoverishment and suffering of the majority of humanity. ■







## WHAT WE SAY

## *UK crisis: Bankrupt Britain is heading for the rocks*

**Rob Sewell,**

**editor of Socialist Appeal**

**B**ritain is in turmoil, with the crisis in the economy spreading at relentless speed, affecting one sector after another – from empty shelves and food shortages, to supply chain disruption and fights at petrol stations.

In his speech at the recent Tory Party conference, Boris Johnson blustered on, oblivious to the calamity unfolding. Meanwhile, millions of families face a daunting and uncertain winter.

### **Iceberg ahead**

Interviewed by the BBC, the Prime Minister denied that there was any economic crisis. “On the contrary,” Johnson asserted; it was in fact “an extremely interesting moment” for the country.

He has all the presence of the captain of the Titanic. As the *Financial Times*, the bosses’ paper, explained:

“Johnson, a leader with a reputation for being a lucky general, will need to keep his fingers crossed this winter that two other potential problems – COVID-19 and a critical gas shortage – do not compound his woes.”

But the energy ‘market’ is already in meltdown, with wholesale gas prices rising fivefold in the last year. As a result, households have seen energy prices rocketing to previously unimaginable levels.

Ten energy firms, which previously supplied millions of households, have gone bust since the start of August. And this is just the beginning – well before the winter has even started. On top of this is the ever-present danger of a new flare up of the pandemic, which could force the government to bring in another lockdown.

Kwasi Kwarteng, the Tory business secretary, has had to reassure MPs that there is “no question of lights going out”. But a cold snap could very easily shatter this rosy perspective.

According to James Huckstepp, head of EMEA Gas Analytics: “We’re not talking about a one-in-100-year bad weather event, we’re really talking about a one-in-three.”

“We are still very much uncertain how we will make it through this winter without the UK running into very severe supply issues,” Huckstepp ominously added.

Millions are experiencing a ‘cost of living’ crisis, with cuts to Universal Credit

and inflation predicted to climb above 4% by the end of the year. In addition, around one million workers are being shifted off furlough into an uncertain future, with many likely to join the dole queue. National insurance contributions – a tax on workers – are also rising.

### **Winter of discontent**

A number of economists are worried about a return to stagflation: rising prices alongside stalling economic output.

Such a scenario would be a nightmare for the ruling class, leaving the government with no option but to attack the working class even further, paving the way for a wave of unrest and struggle.

One Tory MP, David Morris, warned of a new “winter of discontent”: a story period of industrial battles, like that seen under the Callaghan Labour government in 1978-79.

“I can remember the winter of discontent,” Morris explained, “and I remember what was building up to it; and this – to me – feels very, very reminiscent.”

It was the build up of frustration and anger – especially amongst the low-paid

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– that resulted in this explosion of class struggle in the 1970s. And the same conditions are being prepared today.

Coming on top of a decade of falling real wages, workers are already in the process of voting for industrial action.

Recently, for example, health workers organised by Unite overwhelmingly voted to reject the government's 3% pay offer for NHS staff. They were joined by GMB and Unison members in rejecting this proposal, putting the question of strike action firmly on the agenda.

## Head in the sand

The captains of industry are already warning the government that their measures (issuing temporary visas for overseas HGV drivers; extending driver hours; coaxing retirees back to work) are a case of 'too little, too late' when it comes to avoiding further chaos and disruption in the run-up to Christmas.

Lady Ruby McGregor-Smith, the president of the British Chamber of Commerce, described the government's visa package as "the equivalent of throwing a thimble of water on a bonfire".

Farmers are ploughing food back into the ground, as they don't have the necessary labour to harvest their crops. Next year they will plant less.

Elsewhere, a cull of pigs has begun, due to a lack of abattoir workers and lack of space on farms, evoking memories of the foot-and-mouth crisis of 2001.

Asked about this dire situation on *Times Radio* yesterday, Johnson nonchalantly replied: "I'm afraid they're eaten very often in this country – I don't know, do you have a bacon sandwich?"

In reply to the crisis, the Tory government has doubled down on Brexit and told businesses to find their own solutions. In the meantime, supply chains are breaking down and transport costs are going through the roof.

Despite the pandemonium, the Prime Minister is saying that this is all just a blip, and that everything will soon right itself.

"I don't think there will be much risk at

# All attempts to reform capitalism or to make it 'nicer' and 'kinder' have completely failed. It is impossible to change the nature of capitalism: a system of exploitation based upon extracting the maximum surplus value from the labour of the working class.

Christmas time," says one member of the Johnson government. "There's a transition period which we are experiencing. The low-skill, low-wage, high-immigration model was essentially voted out in the Brexit vote."

This is called burying your head in the sand.

## Backlogs and breakdown

COVID-19 continues to disrupt global supply chains and dampen demand. Shipping rates from Asia to Britain are now 14 times pre-pandemic levels, at \$18,000 per container, while transit times have doubled.

The shortage of semiconductors has caused car plants to close. Warehouses are full. Backlogs at ports are at a breaking-point. "I wouldn't be surprised if the ports come to a standstill," says Alan Williams, director of one of the largest independent freight companies.

David Jinks, the head of consumer research at ParcelHero, an express delivery company, says the UK's supply chain is now "riddled" with holes.

The result is a destructive domino effect throughout the economy, at a time when supposedly 'Global Britain' has broken its ties with the European Union.

In a further twist, there are threats of a trade war over French fishing rights and the Northern Ireland protocol, which could lead to dire consequences.

The question of further austerity in Britain is one of *when*, not *if*. Last year, in a 12 month period, GDP fell by an

unprecedented 10%. In comparison, in the whole of the 1930s, the British economy fell by 5%.

This is the deepest crisis of capitalism in 300 years. Government debt and deficits have gone through the roof. And – while the ruling class hide their wealth in off-shore tax havens – the working class is being asked to pay the bill through falling living standards and wage cuts.

It is clear that Johnson and his corrupt government have no solutions to this endemic crisis – a reflection of the crisis of British capitalism and his beloved 'market economy'.

The whole nature of capitalism is to cut costs and cut corners, in order to boost profits.

For decades, supply chains have been based on 'just-in-time' production, leaving them vulnerable and exposed to any accident or disruption. One break at any point would ripple through the entire system.

## Fight for revolution

The pandemic has only added a further layer of uncertainty to the process. As a consequence, capitalism has driven us into a perfect storm, the likes of which we have never seen.

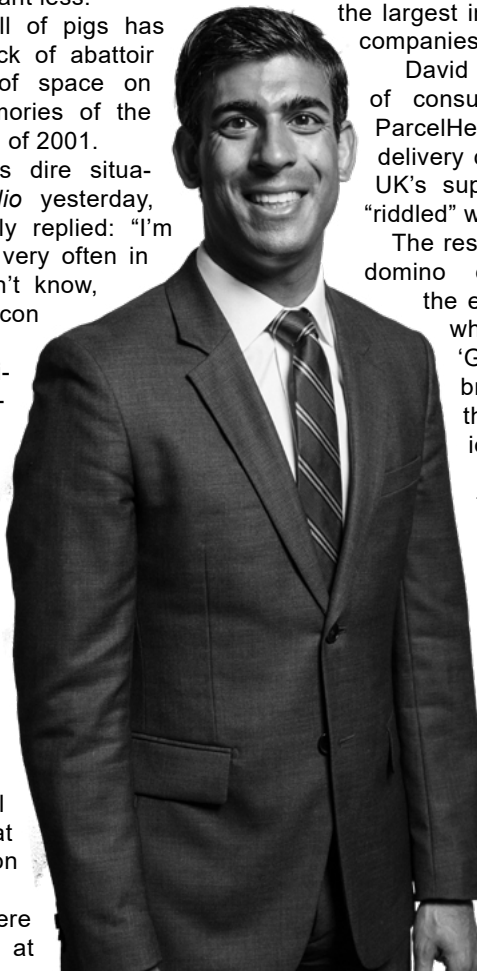
This is a recipe for intense class struggle. On a capitalist basis, the working class faces years of blood, sweat, and tears.

Millions will draw the conclusion that there is no way out on the basis of capitalism. Many, especially the youth, will draw revolutionary conclusions. The ideas of Marxism will increasingly find an echo amongst this radicalised layer.

All attempts to reform capitalism or to make it 'nicer' and 'kinder' have completely failed.

It is impossible to change the nature of capitalism: a system of exploitation based upon extracting the maximum surplus value from the labour of the working class.

Only through the overthrow of this bankrupt system and its replacement with a socialist planned economy – under workers' control and management – can we resolve this crisis in the interests of our class. Nothing more, nothing less. ■





# LABOUR CONFERENCE

## Starmer's stitch-up secures right-wing victory

### Socialist Appeal

**A**t this year's Labour conference, Starmer and an insurgent right wing drove through a counter-revolution of rule changes to secure their position, and to prevent any left challenge from ever arising again.

Lacking confidence in their forces on the ground, the right wing resorted to outrageous gerrymandering and bureaucratic manoeuvring. Points of order were raised and ignored; votes were rigged; left-wing speakers were abused and heckled; and numerous left-wing delegates were expelled in the week prior to conference.

Socialist Appeal supporters who were elected as conference delegates were particularly affected by these shameless antics. Scandalously, for example, Kate Osborne – an elected delegate from Hexham CLP – was actually prevented from entering the conference due to the 'crime' of supporting Socialist Appeal.

Other Socialist Appeal supporters faced even more heavy-handed treatment. Jonathan Lees – a delegate from Leeds Central CLP – was dragged off the conference floor by multiple security guards; targeted for wearing a t-shirt that said 'Starmer Out! Fight Tories Not Socialists!'

These antics, however, did not go unchallenged by other delegates on the conference floor.

With left-wing delegates seething over the right wing's antics on the first day of conference, Joe Attard – a Socialist Appeal supporter and delegate for Ealing Central & Acton CLP – gave a rousing speech that denounced Keir Starmer and David Evans and their attacks on party democracy and grassroots members.

In response, Joe received a standing ovation from fellow delegates. Unsurprisingly, he was also expelled from the party.



Pictured: Socialist Appeal supporters speaking on the platform

### Counter-revolution

The key battle on the first day of conference was around the vote to ratify David Evans as general secretary. This saw a big win for the witch-finder-in-chief, and thereby the right wing also, with a recounted card vote showing 57% support for Evans and 43% against.

And on the Sunday, having earlier been forced to retreat over plans to reintroduce the electoral college system, Starmer and the right wing chalked up a significant victory, increasing the nomination threshold for future leadership elections from 10% of Labour MPs to 20%.

Notably, this vote was carried by the right-wing unions, with the majority of CLP delegates against. Most scandalously, delegates from Unison, under the direction of the union's right-wing bureaucracy, voted in support of this rule change, despite having no mandate to do so.

Other rule changes, however, such as those around the EHRC recommendations and antisemitism, saw the left lose amongst both CLP delegates and affiliated organisations.

This shows the impact both of the right wing's gerrymandering and clampdown on party democracy, and of the general demoralisation amongst rank-and-file members, which has weakened the grassroots left significantly, with tens-of-thousands of activists leaving Labour.

### Support for socialism

Nevertheless, there was plenty of evidence at conference that socialist policies are still incredibly popular among the rank and file of the party.

A motion for a socialist Green New Deal, for example, which had initially been thrown out by the Conference Arrangements Committee, was passed overwhelmingly.

The sad – but important – reality, however, is that such policies will be meaningless, unless the current right wing leadership is replaced.

This is why the struggle for socialism must also be a struggle to drive the right wing out of the labour movement; to transform the Labour Party and the trade unions into real fighting organisations for the working class.

### Join the Marxists!

Events at conference have no doubt caused widespread anger, outrage, and demoralisation amongst left-wing activists. But amidst this darkness, the Socialist Appeal fringe meeting on the Saturday evening offered a beacon of light.

Around 70 conference delegates, visitors, and local workers and youth came to hear Rob Sewell speak on the Marxist traditions within the labour movement, and the inspiring lessons that we can draw from past struggles.

Rob explained that no matter how much they purge socialists from the party; no matter how dire the situation in the Labour Party may be, the right wing and the ruling class cannot hold back the rising tide of class struggle. Summing up the discussion, Rob explained that – despite the Labour right wing's best attempts to ban and expel *Socialist Appeal* – the ideas of Marxism cannot be separated from the labour movement.

In his conclusion, Rob made a rousing call to arms, imploring those inside and outside the Labour Party to join the fight for socialism and help build the Marxist tendency: in the labour movement; in workplaces and on campuses; and on the streets.

In the wake of this year's conference, this is the urgent challenge that lies ahead of us: to build the forces of Marxism, in Britain and internationally. We call on militant workers and youth to join us in this task. ■





# STARMER BREACHES S\*N BOYCOTT SCOUSERS SAY STARMER OUT!

Ricky O'Hanrahan

Liverpool Marxists

**22** months ago at a leadership hustings in Liverpool, Keir Starmer vowed never to write for *The Sun*. This promise very likely won him votes amongst Labour members in Liverpool – and importantly, won him their trust.

But like the rest of Starmer's promises during the leadership election, this promise has now been abandoned. In an affront to the people of Liverpool, Starmer wrote an opinion piece in *The Sun* on 3 October.

## Total eclipse

The so-called 'Scum' newspaper is widely boycotted across Merseyside. It is actually banned from retailers in Liverpool city centre, due to their despicable treatment of the victims of the Hillsborough disaster in 1989.

The Murdoch-owned paper actively helped to cover up the pernicious role of the South Yorkshire police in this tragedy. Their aim, like all the capitalist press, was to defend the capitalist state by any means necessary – even if that meant smearing the names of the victims.

As a result, a 'total eclipse of *The Sun*' has been enforced in Merseyside and in the labour movement ever since.

## Backlash

Starmer's breach of this boycott has rightly provoked a backlash from across the labour movement.

Liverpool Labour MPs – with the notable exceptions of Blairites Angela and Maria Eagle – have called out the Labour leader for his decision to write for *The Sun*.

Liverpool West Derby MP Ian Byrne's statement was particularly strong, making it plain that if "any leader of any components of our great Labour and trade union movement write in the rag, they are not fit to be in that position".

This sentiment is widely shared by the Labour membership across Merseyside. Ford branch in Bootle CLP, for example, expressed their disgust by passing a motion which stated that the hurt caused by Starmer's appalling decision could "only be rectified with his resignation".

Local trade union branches have also voiced their anger. Merseyside Fire Brigades Union have put forward a similarly scathing motion that states:

*"This Brigade Committee believes that Starmer's position as leader of the Labour party is now untenable and demands a personal and public apology for his actions and for him to step down from his leadership role to try and save what little credibility he has left as a human being."*

## Class enemy

This latest betrayal, however, should come as no surprise. Already, Starmer's Labour saw the shameful invitation of *The Sun* to this year's Labour conference, while Socialist Appeal reporters were denied press passes. Even before this, Starmer and other right-wing Labour MPs have already been writing in *The Sun* and other Murdoch rags.

These Blairites will excuse this by saying writing for these rags is how the party can 'reach voters'.

This is nonsense. *The Sun's* readership has been in freefall for years, and only 2% of voters actually read it. Labour should be trying to appeal to the working class, not cosying up to the editors and owners of the reactionary press. But writing for *The Sun* will only alienate the party's working-class supporters even further.

The truth of the matter is that Starmer will write for the Murdoch press to prove himself a loyal agent to the capitalists. Just as with his support for the police or patriotism, Starmer's support for the capitalist press is yet another signal to the ruling class that they can trust him.

The Murdoch rags have proven time and again to be hostile to the working class. There can be no collaboration with our class enemies from anyone within our movement. **We say: Starmer out!** ■





# WHERE IS LABOUR HEADING?

**Rob Sewell**

**Editor of Socialist Appeal**

**T**his year's Labour Party conference will be regarded as a defining moment for the party. The right wing is clearly cock-a-hoop with the result, having secured rule changes to prevent the return of Corbynism. The left, meanwhile, despite winning some votes on policy, are very much on the retreat.

Keir Starmer, the establishment's man, came to the conference with one thing in mind: to introduce rule changes that would prevent the left from ever taking control of the party again.

In many ways, therefore, this conference marks the end of Corbynism.

*Socialist Appeal* has made abundantly clear our attitude to Labour's right wing. They are bourgeois agents, a Fifth Column, operating in the Labour Party. They serve the interests of capitalism and the ruling class. They are ruthless when it comes to their role, as they feel the weight of the capitalist establishment behind them.

## Counter-revolution

Starmer lied through his teeth to gain the leadership. Once accomplished, he and the right wing embarked on an all-out civil war against the membership.

Expelling and suspending members, including Corbyn himself, and even whole local parties, he has gone further in attacking the left than even Kinnock and Blair.

There has been outrage in the party. But the left leaders have failed to provide the fight and backbone needed to counter these attacks.

This has led in turn to demoralisation and the resignations of around 150,000 members.

At this year's Labour Party conference, Starmer's counter-revolutionary task was largely accomplished, with the help of the right-wing trade union leaders and the suspension and gerrymandering of delegates.

Although he was forced to retreat on his proposal to bring back the electoral college, other rule changes served the same end: to block the left.

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## Stارmer's purge

All these changes were designed to keep the party in the hands of the right wing. Never again would MPs 'lend their vote' to allow a left-winger to get onto the ballot. Lord Mandelson expressly said that the rule changes were designed to "keep out another Corbyn".

To leave no room for doubt, when Starmer was asked if he wanted unity or to win elections, he said winning elections. He has never had any interest in unity, despite his past promises, and despite the pleas of the lefts.

This also means that the war against the left – Starmer's purge – will continue, with the aim of demoralising grassroots activists and driving them out.

"Now we've got control again," said a shadow cabinet member, "and yes it feels good". This accurately sums up the glee within the party's right wing.

Starmer could not hide his jubilation when he welcomed back Louise Ellman, a right-wing former Labour MP, who had previously resigned as part of the attack against Corbyn. No doubt, this will be the start of the return of a gaggle of right-wing traitors who sabotaged the party under Corbyn.

In complete contrast, the bakers' union have taken the decision to disaffiliate from the party after more than 100 years of Labour membership, following moves to expel the union's president, Ian Hodson.

## Compromise and 'unity'

The aim of the right wing is not simply to boot out Corbyn, who will never again be allowed to stand as a Labour MP, but to destroy all vestiges of Corbynism.

In July, the right wing proscribed Socialist Appeal and three other groups. But this is only the opening shot. Others will now be banned, including Momentum.

There have already been noises from the right-wing Jewish Labour Movement for Momentum to be investigated for anti-semitism. Momentum's leaders hope that they might survive if they keep their heads down. But they are sadly mistaken.

Frankly, this approach reveals the whole bankruptcy of the left. They have

**Even in the run-up to this year's Labour conference, despite everything, the left were afraid to challenge Starmer head on. When local parties were passing motions of no confidence in the leadership, they failed to put themselves at the head of this movement.**

run away from a fight with the right. They had the power to completely transform the Labour Party under Corbyn, but they instead preferred 'unity' with the right wing in a so-called 'broad church'.

While the right-wing traitors were openly sabotaging the party, including Labour's general election campaigns, the left tried to appease them at every opportunity.

When the right wing in the cesspit of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) carried a vote of no confidence in Corbyn in 2016, the left should have demanded that all these MPs faced reselection meetings in their local parties. But this was not done.

In 2018, when open selection (mandatory reselection) of MPs was raised at Labour conference, the Corbyn leadership vehemently opposed the move, due to concerns that this would lead to a split in the PLP. They were desperate to maintain 'unity'. Meanwhile, the right wing were stabbing them in the back.

When the right wing spat in their face, the left leaders simply wiped it off. It was painful to see the right wing getting away with

*murder. To be absolutely blunt, it was this failure that led to the mess we are in today, with the Blairites back in the saddle.*

Some may think this is harsh, but it is nevertheless a fact.

## Civil war

Even in the run-up to this year's Labour conference, despite everything, the left were afraid to challenge Starmer head on. When local parties were passing motions of no confidence in the leadership, they failed to put themselves at the head of this movement.

When *Socialist Appeal* and others were proscribed, there was not a peep from the Socialist Campaign Group (SCG) or from Momentum. They preferred to keep silent, hoping that things would blow over.

Rather than a bold campaign against Starmer and the right, they instead focused their attention on refusing to endorse David Evans, the general secretary.

Instead of leading a campaign to force a vote of no confidence and a leadership contest, Momentum refused, saying they were in "for the long haul". They completely misunderstood the nature of this counter-revolution – the aim of which is to destroy the left.

Incredibly, when Starmer came forward with his proposal for an electoral college to give more power to the PLP, Callum Bell, the Momentum vice-chair, stated: "Any attempt to take these rule changes to conference would mark the start of a civil war in the party."

This at a time when a civil war had already been raging for years!

## Defeatism

This weakness of the official lefts simply encouraged and emboldened the right wing. As we know, weakness invites aggression. But even now, the left is playing down the seriousness of the situation.

The lefts reassure themselves with the fact that the right were defeated on a number of policy resolutions at conference. But this counts for nothing. The Starmer leadership will simply ignore such resolutions, as they have ignored the call for Corbyn's suspension to be lifted.

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This is an attempt by the left to put on a brave face when the situation is dire – a situation of their own making.

Once again, Callum Bell, Momentum vice-chair, made the position clear. “At Momentum ... we are also playing the long game...our organising now requires much greater focus on leadership development, network building at a local level and political education...Overall, this is a strategy for movement building.”

“For this reason we have launched ‘Refounding Momentum’... for some this may be seen as unnecessary introspection...This isn’t defeatist...But over the longer term, if we get it right, we can transform the entire Labour Party and campaign for a socialist Labour government once again. We have the ideas and we have the plan, we just need to do it.” (LabourList, 4/8/21)

Well, we must be honest: this is introspection, and it is completely defeatist.

### Hollow talk

There is increased talk on the left of a fightback, but this remains simply talk. ‘Stay and fight’ sounds incredibly hollow when there has been no fight. We warned where this would lead. In reply to the rule changes, one of which was to raise the nominations threshold to 20% of the PLP in a leadership contest, Momentum put out an email saying:

“But this isn’t an impassable barrier for a left challenger. The Socialist Campaign Group [SCG] has 36 members, so we only need 4 more to get on the next leadership ballot. In 2015, Jeremy Corbyn got 36 nominations, and that was with far fewer left-wing MPs and a much less socialist membership.”

In reality, this is a case of burying one’s head in the sand. The SCG is not politically homogeneous, and has a large layer of ‘soft’ lefts in its ranks. In the summer, such people were canvassing support for a leadership challenge from the ‘left’ Angela Rayner. Such is their ‘left’ politics.

Not all the SCG even signed the letter demanding the lifting of Jeremy’s suspension.

And in 2015, the right ‘lent’ their votes to Jeremy, believing he was a no-hoper. Soon after his victory, Margaret Beckett described herself as a ‘moron’ for lending her vote. It was a painful lesson. And the right wing will never make that mistake again.

The same Momentum email talked of putting ‘pressure’ on the right wing to carry out left policies. As if these traitors can be won over!



**Without real resistance from the left, these attacks will only add to the general demoralisation in the party. And tens of thousands will simply tear up their membership cards and leave in disgust. Even some delegates at the Labour conference said they were on the verge of resigning.**

“But we know we are in a long-term struggle... Our long-term strategy remains the same...” says Momentum. But as John Maynard Keynes once remarked: “In the long run we are all dead.” The right wing will now build on their success. They realise how weak the left are – all words and no deeds – and will step up their purge against socialists in the party.

### Last gasp

The apparatus is already in place to accelerate the witch-hunt. By fair means or foul, they will try to push the balance of forces further in their favour.

Without real resistance from the left, these attacks will only add to the general demoralisation in the party. And tens of thousands will simply tear up their membership cards and leave in disgust. Even some delegates at the Labour conference said they were on the verge of resigning.

The SCG rally at the Labour Party conference provided a golden opportunity to launch a struggle. But there was nothing of the kind. There was no plan; no strategy; no perspective.

Incredibly, the only guidance on offer was the need to fight for *party unity*. In the middle of a civil war, the left leaders

call for unity with the right wing! “Divided parties don’t win elections”, left MPs pleaded, as if the right cared.

Some said the attacks on the left were ‘unfair’. Another said that we needed to ‘build the membership’ – which is surreal, given that tens of thousands are leaving in their droves.

There was absolutely no realisation that the right wing are the agents of capitalism, not party ‘comrades’. This is a reflection of the dead-end in which left reformism finds itself.

The meeting was not so much a council of war as a case of huddling together for warmth. It was, in reality, the last gasp of the Corbynite left in terminal decline.

### Epoch of struggle

To believe that we can simply carry on as usual, as the left does, is the height of naivety. As night follows day, the right wing will step up their attacks and turn their attention to getting rid of any remaining left councillors and MPs, starting with Corbyn.

This is just the beginning. “For all the credit due to Starmer, this is only a good start,” pressed the *Financial*

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*Times*. Of course, the right wing is drunk with success. They think that they have everything sewn up. But they are sadly mistaken. The rule changes will not abolish the class struggle or the growing anger in society, which will seek a point of reference.

This is not the 1950s, or even the 1990s, where there was a world upswing and boom for capitalism, which provided the right wing with a material basis.

Back then, they were able to offer some concessions while operating on the basis of capitalism. Today, the world situation is radically different. There is a deep crisis and there is no basis for lasting reforms – only counter-reforms. They are sitting on top of a volcano.

These apostles of capitalism have come to the head of the Labour Party at a time when capitalism is deeply unpopular. A *Survation* poll at Brighton showed that 69% of potential Labour voters agree that “the economy is rigged against ordinary people”, while 74% want more public ownership of assets. There has never been a greater hostility to big business and their system.

Labour’s right wing will become increasingly unpopular as workers turn away from the party and look to the trade unions to fight for their interests. We can already see a ‘winter of discontent’ looming in the months ahead. A new epoch of struggle will open up on the trade union front.

Workers will not stand by idly after sacrificing so much in the pandemic and see their living standards forced down. This will mean an intensification of the class struggle. Even the ruling class is fearful of a

return to the militancy of the 1970s.

## Crises and splits

One thing is for sure, there will be no such thing as business as usual. The struggle will turn the trade unions upside down. There will be enormous pressure on the leaders to deliver on their promises. The shifts to the left in Unite and Unison are early tremors; an indication of the huge earthquakes that are still to come.

By the time of the next general election, the Johnson government will be thoroughly discredited, given the austerity that we face. The ruling class will want to dump Boris, for fear of a social explosion.

The right wing within the Labour Party may also look to dump Starmer – who would have done his job of purging the left – for a more charismatic right-winger.

With Tory support collapsing, however, there will not be the enthusiasm for Labour to carry it into power. It is too early to guess the parliamentary arithmetic in several years’ time, but there could well be a hung parliament.

In such circumstances, Labour’s right wing could easily jump into bed with the Tories and Liberals to form a National Government. This, in turn, would provoke crises and splits.

These crises will lead to an enormous radicalisation, especially amongst the youth. At a certain stage, given the lack of an alternative, this will spill back into the Labour Party. No amount of rules are going to stop the class struggle as splits open up. Given the objective situation, the position of the right wing will be completely undermined.

It is therefore vital that we do not bury our heads, but learn the lessons of the failure of the Labour left. In the words of the philosopher George Santayana: “Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.”

Above all, this is a failure of left reformism. Calling for ‘unity’, the Labour left hangs onto the coat-tails of the right wing. But, in turn, the right wing is holding onto the coat-tails of the ruling class.

When they had the chance, the left failed to sweep away the right wing. In the face of aggression, they backed away. This weakness is a political weakness.

## Forces of Marxism

Despite paying occasional lip-service, the left leaders do not really believe in socialism or revolutionary change. They seek to reform capitalism; to bring about a nicer, kinder capitalism, without wars and bad employers.

This is a utopian pipedream, and nothing more.

What is needed is a powerful Marxist tendency, to provide a genuine, bold strategy to defeat the right. Only the forces of Marxism can provide the necessary backbone for the left.

We fully understand that there can be no compromise with capitalism or their right-wing agents. We have no truck with patching up capitalism. We stand for revolutionary change in society; for the abolition of capitalist rule.

Given the deep crisis of capitalism, the deepest in history, this is the only way forward for the working class in Britain and internationally. Marxism has never been more relevant.

We therefore call on workers and youth to join us in the struggle for socialism. ■







# CAPITALISM WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS

**Daniel Morley**

China is discovering that, under capitalism, what goes up must come down. The impending collapse of property developer Evergrande, as it struggles with \$300bn of debt, is reminiscent of the subprime mortgage crisis. The Chinese government is facing the same dilemmas as the US over a decade ago, as it stares into the abyss of capitalist crisis.

The Chinese property industry's total debt is \$2.8trn. According to the *Economist*, "mortgage debt [is] about 76% of total household liabilities". (2.10.21)

Evergrande, one of the biggest property developers in the world, has total liabilities amounting to around three per cent of total Chinese GDP. Its collapse threatens the world's second biggest economy.

Already, closely related companies are folding. Fantasia Holdings, a smaller property developer, has just defaulted on its debt. Modern Land this week asked for a three-month extension on repayments on a \$250m bond.

This is already leading to a full scale crisis in China's property sector, which itself makes up a massive 29 per cent of

China's GDP. Properties are being flogged with 30% discounts so that companies can quickly gain cash.

## Crisis

It is hard to overstate the significance of this, because property has been the main driver of Chinese growth in recent decades. This in turn has been the main driver of the world economy.

China's massive fiscal stimulus in 2008 is widely recognised to have pulled the world economy out of an outright depression. Because China was by then a capitalist economy, this stimulus was delivered by means of an explosion of debt, instead of a plan of production.

As Marx explained, credit allows capital to expand beyond its natural limits, and to temporarily overcome its crisis – but at the cost of an even greater crisis when those debts have to be repaid.

As more debt is issued, it becomes less effective. It now takes around \$4 of debt to produce an extra dollar of growth, whereas before the stimulus it took around \$1.40. This is because the extra debt is largely taken on to pay off existing, unsustainable debts.

In other words, there is an avalanche of bad debt just waiting to be defaulted on.

## Debt

Before 2008, total Chinese debt was around 160% of GDP. By 2016, it was up to 260%.

It is important to understand that this debt pile did not appear simply because of bad, short sighted decisions by the government.

One way or another, debt is inherent to capitalism. It grows out of, and (temporarily) papers over, capitalism's contradictions.

The Chinese government funded the stimulus through debt because, in a market economy, there is no other way to stimulate growth. They could not launch a plan of production because the levers of the economy are in private hands, and are motivated by profit making and not social need.

As always with capitalism, debt has a way of generalising the contradictions of the system.

As explained by Chang Che in *Sup-China*:

"Real estate, which constitutes 40% of all bank loans, epitomizes the debt problem. For decades, property

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developers raised debts through unregulated channels known as 'shadow banking' to finance massive construction booms.

"Families funneled their savings into real estate to get in on the action. Speculative buyers bought up houses with abandon, leaving one-fifth of China's total housing stock in big cities empty.

"But the build, build, build days have reached their natural limit. In August, 15 half-built apartment towers in the south-western city of Kunming were reduced to rubble after developers ran out of cash and abandoned the project." (04.10.21)

## Interconnected

This speculative boom has sucked in and swallowed up local government finances. Local governments are not allowed to increase the rate of tax they collect, and their tax intake has declined to half what it was in the 1990s.

Local governments are also not allowed to issue bonds. And yet the stimulus of the central government demands that they must finance the infrastructure and property developments that have kept the economy growing.

To finance this, local governments have therefore sold off vast tracts of public land to rapacious developers. By 2010 land sales accounted for more than 70% of municipal incomes a year (*The Economist* 2.10.21).

In this way, not only are individual savers caught up in this speculative boom, but all the local governments of China as well. Additionally, they have created *Local Government Financing Vehicles* (LGFVs) to get around the ban on issuing bonds, in order to fund the development projects they want to invest in.

According to Goldman Sachs, the debt associated with these LGFVs now amounts to \$8.2tn. This is three times the figure of 2013, and more than the entire stock of central government debt.

Thus, the collapse of this house of cards threatens not only the largest single industry in China but, through the financial system's interconnections, all other industries, local government and by extension, central government.

## Bursting the bubble

It is true that the collapse of Evergrande has been triggered not directly by market forces, but by a change in government policy which has started to make it much harder for companies to take on more debt.

But the fact that Evergrande could not survive without taking on more and more debt, shows that it was fundamentally unsound.



**Evergrande is like a microcosm of the latent crisis of Chinese capitalism. Indeed, of the country's fifteen biggest property developers, only one was in full compliance with the government's new debt regulations.**

In this respect, Evergrande is like a microcosm of the latent crisis of Chinese capitalism. Indeed, of the country's fifteen biggest property developers, only one was in full compliance with the government's new debt regulations.

The government is trying to burst this bubble before it gets too big. The trouble is, the bubble may already be too big and bursting it is not something the government can keep control of.

Anger is already spilling out onto the streets as small investors in Evergrande demand their money back.

Bursting this bubble is part of Xi Jinping's strategy to address China's rampant inequality, which when combined with the housing speculation boom, means that large Chinese cities are some of the least affordable places in the world. The Gini coefficient, which measures inequality, puts the country as more unequal than the US and Britain.

The regime is walking a tightrope and it cannot maintain balance forever. The crisis of capitalism is catching up with it.

The eventuality of a rise in class struggle is something that the CCP regime is ultimately preparing for. Behind their pompous triumphalist propaganda, they cannot fail to note the actual mood summed up by a Chang Che:

"Evergrande is not a trigger of calamity, but it is an externality: a sign that the engine of China's decades-long growth has sputtered, its warning lights flashing for the world to see. Driving across China, you can tell something is not quite right: empty apartment towers fill the expanse between cities; factories lie idle, and real estate prices are prohibitively high.

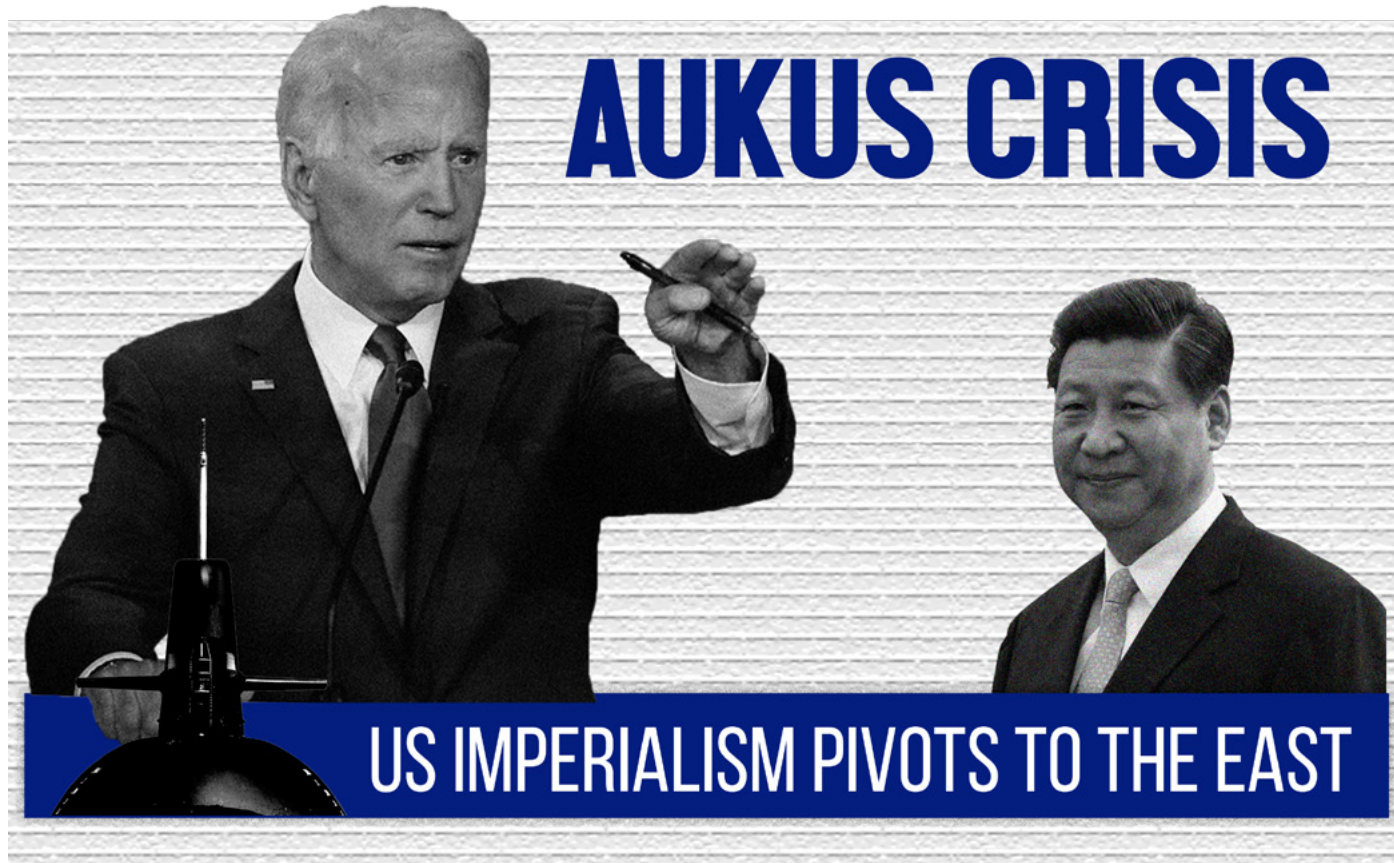
"These are not, contrary to the image China presents, signs of a prosperous and strong nation. They are indicators of a country that is registering the weight of an over-leveraged economy."

In many ways, the CCP as a state apparatus is far more attuned to which way the wind blows than their idiotic western counterparts. Yet as fundamentally co-defenders of the same capitalist system, their foresight ultimately does little to prevent acceleration of events from slipping out of their grasp.

In the long run, they can only empirically react to all the sharp and sudden changes that will befall in China. In the process, all that is 'stable' and 'coherent' will melt into air.

The seemingly all powerful regime will find that the contradictions of capitalism are more powerful still, and an epoch of class struggle will sweep the country. ■





### Niklas Albin Svensson

**T**he recent agreement between Australia, the UK and the US - AUKUS for short - has caused a crisis in international relations. With France temporarily recalling its ambassador from Washington and China issuing a protest, the new agreement has upset feelings across the board. This deal, however, merely constituted one more step in a wider realignment among the imperialist powers.

The deal announced on 15 September included joint work on providing nuclear-powered submarines (without nuclear weapons) and long-range missiles to Australia. The US and UK are already using these technologies and have been collaborating on them for decades. Now they have begun sharing them with Australia. The deal also includes increased intelligence and cybertechnology cooperation.

It is no wonder that the Chinese government condemned the deal in strong terms – it clearly represents an attempt to counter Chinese military capability in the Indo-Pacific region.

Furthermore, the announcement has also upset the EU powers, primarily France, which had been left out of the negotiations. France now stands to lose tens of billions of dollars worth of submarine contracts.

The strength of the EU's reaction seemed to take the US administration by surprise. It is evident that there was more to this than the loss of a submarine

contract, even if it was a sizable contract. The real source of the friction was that the US didn't feel the need to include them in the discussions.

When Biden was elected, there was an audible sigh of relief among European governments. Finally, they thought, the US would be governed by a president committed to transatlantic cooperation and NATO. Western imperialism would be reunited.

Biden's recent actions however have shown that Trump's foreign policy wasn't a temporary blip, but part of a wider shift in the policy of the US ruling class away from Europe and the Middle East.

### Pivot to Asia

In the wake of the 2008 financial crash, the US ruling class started realising that their strategic priority had shifted. Their interests had become intricately tied to the Pacific region, and the South China Sea in particular.

The US imperialists have come to realise what the Chinese had realised: 70 per cent of world trade flows through the South China Sea, and much of it is crucial to the supply chains of US companies. The (successful) attempts by the Chinese to militarise some of the islands in the sea were therefore a significant threat to US interests.

This new situation prompted Obama's 'pivot to Asia', although his predecessor, Bush, had already taken some measures in this direction. The expansion of fracking in the US also helped by making the US

independent of Middle Eastern oil. Trump's clashes with China were just an extension of this policy, albeit conducted with all the brashness and clumsiness that characterise Trump. Indeed, the Democrats were often demanding harsher measures against China.

In all this, Europe is being left behind. European governments increasingly feel like a backwater of world politics, and that's not just a feeling. The centre of gravity has decisively shifted from the Atlantic to the Pacific, as Trotsky predicted a hundred years ago. China is, of course, central to this, but crucial parts in the supply chains are also played by Japan, Taiwan and South Korea.

US imperialism is increasingly seeing its most important allies in the Pacific region, not the European continent. Japan and Australia are at the top of that list. Of course, the US would like to remain on good terms with its allies in Europe, but its priorities have decisively shifted.

The AUKUS deal between Australia, the United States and the UK very impolitely rubbed French noses in this uncomfortable truth.

Firstly, there was the fact that Australia didn't see France as an ally, or French military technology as sufficient. Secondly, France's supposed ally, the United States, didn't even bother lifting the phone and letting the French know beforehand. The

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French supposedly only found out about it through the Australian press.

## Nations and interests

The way that the US made its announcement was a massive humiliation to the French, and by extension to the European Union. It didn't help that Biden invited the British along for an undeserved moment in the sunshine, at a time when the British and the European Union are at loggerheads.

The priorities and interests of the US and the EU are diverging. According to EU commissioner Breton, "something is broken" in US-EU relations. Clearly, Trump wasn't the only problem here. He was merely a crude expression of a wider process.

To claim that the alliance between Western Europe and the US is over would be to exaggerate. But as Lord Palmerston put it, nations do not have permanent friends or enemies – they only have interests. And the interests of France, Germany and the US are diverging to a greater degree than in the past.

## Arms race in the Pacific

US relations with the EU have taken a hit. Relations with China are getting worse. Inevitably, increased military presence of the US in the region, particularly the South China Sea, will provoke a response from the Chinese government.

Like Germany and Japan, the Chinese government has spent relatively limited sums on its military, but these sums are increasing rapidly in line with the growth of its GDP. At the moment military spending is more or less increasing in proportion to GDP. But as the crisis intensifies in China, this too will change.

The focus of China's military has shifted from defending its own borders, which is relatively cheap, to pursuing the interests of Chinese capital abroad, which is much more expensive.

This 'modernisation', as the Chinese government calls it, is planned to reach completion by 2035. It includes new aircraft carriers, aircraft and naval vessels – everything that China would need to join that select group of countries whose armed forces have the ability to operate outside of their immediate vicinity.

For China, this is first and foremost a question of the East and South China Seas, and secondly a question of extending its reach into the Pacific and the Indian Ocean. The present generation of aircraft carriers are suitable for the former, but not the latter.

The need for China to increase its military power is going to increase as the crisis intensifies. As protectionism is



**The need for China to increase its military power is going to increase as the crisis intensifies. As protectionism is rising, and competition for existing markets intensifies, so too will the need to protect these markets. This is what drives the arms race in the Pacific.**

rising, and competition for existing markets intensifies, so too will the need to protect these markets. This is what drives the arms race in the Pacific.

## Recalibration

The US is no longer the undisputed 'world police'. In 1960, the US share of the world economy was 40%, today it is merely 24%, with China not far behind on 17%.

The relative decline in economic power of the US eventually had to translate into a relative decline in its military and diplomatic power. This is what is now taking place.

In military terms, China remains a far cry from being able to confront the US directly. Nonetheless, it has the strength to begin flexing its military muscles in the South China Sea and a few other places.

The relative decline of US imperialism will inevitably lead to increased conflict as other powers feel emboldened to challenge US domination in various parts of the world. China is the world's foremost rising economic power, which now is being reflected in its growing military power.

No power can challenge the US directly, which is one reason why world war is ruled out. However, some nations are quite capable of asserting themselves against weaker US allies.

A recalibration is taking place in world relations, with the inevitable consequence being proxy wars, military coups, airstrikes, drone strikes and civil war. Behind the glossy images of submarines and military contracts, lies the bloody reality of war for hundreds of millions of people around the world.

The AUKUS deal is therefore just another sign of the dead end of capitalism, and the misery that this dying economic system has to offer the world. Caught between the competing imperialist powers will be the masses of the world.

The fate of Afghanistan, Somalia, Syria, Iraq and Libya will be the future fate of others. It is no more possible to ask these imperialist powers to respect 'the rule of law', human rights and peace, than a wolf can be asked to become a vegetarian.

The arms race and wars will only end when capitalism is overthrown, and that's the real task before humanity. ■





## IRELAND: STOP SCANDALOUS STATE REPRESSION OF YOUNG CLIMATE ACTIVISTS!

### Irish Marxists

As the world toboggans towards an environmental catastrophe created by the capitalist system, how is Ireland – one of Europe's most polluting nations – responding to the crisis? By using state repression against young environmental activists.

On 19 March, Orla Murphy walked up to the Department of Foreign Affairs building in Dublin and splashed pink paint against the building before spray painting the words “No More Empty Promises” on the front of the building. Meanwhile, her friend, fellow activist and supporter of the Irish Marxists (the IMT in Ireland), Zac Lumley, live-streamed her protest.

For this justified protest at the inaction of the Irish state, gardaí arrested both Orla and Zac, applying extremely harsh bail conditions amounting to €3,000. Zac was, naturally, unable to get this money at short notice, and as a result spent three nights in prison. Orla, meanwhile, refused to sign her bail conditions and was imprisoned for five weeks.

Since their release, both have had to face harsh bail terms. These include: Zac being banned from much of Dublin city centre and Orla being banned from Dublin entirely; being banned from approaching

government buildings; and having to sign in at a police station every day – Zac alone has had to sign on 112 times since March.

The two now face serious charges of criminal damage, which could potentially include custodial sentences.

We believe this outrageous prosecution of two young activists – who caused an insignificant amount of superficial damage to a building in their fight against the cataclysmic damage the ruling class are doing to our planet – is an attempt to intimidate young environmental activists across Ireland.

It proves once more that the first job of the capitalist state – in Ireland and elsewhere – is not the defence of the democratic right to protest, nor the right to a civilised existence on this planet free from the horrors of climate change. Its sole purpose is to defend property and the right of the very profiteers who have caused the environmental crisis to go on enriching themselves.

### ‘No more empty promises’

Like millions of school students worldwide, Orla and Zac had been involved in the school strike movement from its inception.

In her last year in further education, Orla undertook this action to bring

attention to the fact that Ireland – which currently holds a seat on the UN Security Council, and indeed holds the presidency of that UN Security Council – has done nothing to highlight the biggest threat to the ‘security’ of billions of people: the degradation of the environment by the capitalist class.

The climate catastrophe that the world is being plunged into by capitalism threatens to displace hundreds of millions of people; to wipe small island nations off the map; to increasingly stoke national wars for limited resources – in short, to rob the youth of a future and to plunge humanity into barbarism.

### For mass action!

The real polluters are the capitalist giants of the IT industry, agribusiness, and other sectors.

No amount of individual lifestyle changes, or for that matter ‘green austerity’, can ever make a dent in emissions or environmental degradation. On a world scale, 100 companies are responsible for 71% of greenhouse gas emissions, whilst just 20 companies are responsible for 55% of single-use plastic waste.

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The only solution to this crisis lies in the complete, planned reorganisation of the world economy to place human need and the environment at its heart.

The problem is there is no planning under capitalism. The market is completely anarchic, with each capitalist operating only for profit. Indeed, each capitalist must operate to make the greatest possible profit if they are to outcompete their competitors and stay in business. Everything that fails to appear on the balance sheet is an 'externality' to be ignored.

Only by taking big agribusiness, the IT giants, and all the other monopolies – including and above all the big banks – out of the hands of the tiny clique of private capitalists who now own them, and uniting them in an economic plan under the democratic control of the working class, can we bring about the sharp change of direction needed to mitigate climate change.

But the Irish ruling class will not give up their wealth voluntarily. And the Irish state exists to defend that wealth. As Zac explained:

"Under capitalism, action on the climate and ecological crises is impossible, as profit accumulation is sought at all cost to the environment, health and human life. The only solution is revolution, with the working class taking power to plan the economy democratically, for the interest of humanity, not profit."

## Protest is not a crime!

Only the mass mobilisation of the working class around a socialist programme can challenge the capitalist polluters. But without a fighting lead from the labour movement, and with no party offering a clear way forward, it is no wonder that young people will bravely attempt to take matters into their own hands through individual acts of direct action. This is wholly understandable. But in itself it does not contain the solution to the crisis.

The state and the ruling class will happily ignore such individual acts. In other cases, as we see with Orla and Zac, they will even attempt to demonise, criminalise and make an example out of militant youth. Groups like Extinction Rebellion have made a principle out of the tactics of direct action and civil disobedience. However, our tactics must flow from the movement's political programme.

Only the organised working class can challenge the capitalist system and the destruction it is wreaking by carrying out a socialist revolution. It is therefore necessary to move forward from individual direct action to mass direct action.



The school strike movement has shown the way. Again, however, the ruling class has simply ignored striking school students and could continue to do so.

Should the working class more broadly – taking its lead from the school students – also commit to a programme of strike action and mass mobilisation, however, the ruling class would have to sit up and pay attention. Not a lightbulb shines, not a wheel turns without the kind permission of the working class.

Ultimately the power not only to bring this system to a halt, but to abolish capitalism and reorganise society on a socialist basis, lies collectively in the hands of the working class.

The tactics of the movement must follow from this understanding about the role of the working class in transforming society. Mass strike action by the school students generates sympathy amongst working people in general, their parents. That sympathy can and must be transformed into active participation and action.

It should also be noted, however, that certain acts of direct action and civil disobedience tactics by the environmental movement can have the opposite effect.

The Fridays for Future movement and young environmental activists can play an important role in this process by connecting up with the workers' movement – injecting the same militant, fighting spirit that we've seen among school students.

The most radical workers and youth need to get organised and bring revolutionary, socialist ideas and militant

methods into the workers' movement. Just a few years ago, in 2014, we saw peaceful water charge activists including Paul Murphy TD accused of 'false imprisonment' after staging a sit-down protest in Jobstown in front of a TD's car.

The defendants faced collusion by politicians, gardaí, the media, the court system, and the whole establishment in an attempt to secure extremely serious convictions.

Only public outrage following a campaign in solidarity with the accused scuppered the wrath of the establishment and secured a verdict of 'not guilty'.

Faced with the repression of the Irish state, we call upon environmentalists, socialists and trade unionists in Ireland and internationally to raise their voices in solidarity with Orla and Zac.

The establishment wants to turn protest into a criminal act. The real criminals are big business, who have committed wanton destruction to the environment in their pursuit of profit, and the millionaire's club of politicians who have aided and abetted them.

1. Sign the petition from the Marxist Student Federation.

2. Send an email to the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Minister for Justice.

3. Post pictures and messages of solidarity with Orla and Zac using hashtags #ClimateProtestNotACrime and #NoMoreEmptyPromises.

We say: Drop the charges! Protest is not a crime! ■



# REVIEW: SQUID GAME NO WINNERS UNDER CAPITALISM

Raj Mistry

In Hwang Dong-Hyuk's massively popular TV series *Squid Game*, fictional contestants risk their lives for a chance to make a massive fortune in a competition where the losers face death.

Beyond the brilliant acting and graphic violence, *Squid Game* reflects the real horrors of capitalism and its death agonies. No wonder it has attracted huge viewing figures and considerable media interest even in the British press.

In this chart-topping Netflix series (currently at number one in over 90 countries), we see hundreds of impoverished Koreans compete in a series of deadly playground games to win a £30 million cash prize. United by their suffering under capitalism, the series tracks their miserable lives and their utter desperation to win.

## Desperate

The show starts by introducing the main character, Seong Gi-Hun, as he negotiates a miserable life of gambling debts and strained family ties. When a stranger invites him to take part in a competition with a very large prize as a reward, the offer seems too good to refuse.

Each brutal round of the game creates (artificial) scarcity to drive the participants towards more ever more desperate measures.

Food is unfairly distributed, violence is condoned, betrayal is rewarded. Divisions fester into bigotry as contestants eschew solidarity based on race, gender or age.

The players are free to leave the competition, if a majority vote to do so. Yet this freedom is an illusion, much like bourgeois democracy.

Offered the chance to return to their usual lives, the contestants are faced with the inescapable, grim reality of their existence. As one character dejectedly puts it, life is "just as bad out there as it is in here".

Rules are enforced by

a rigid hierarchy of armed bodies of masked men. They maintain a complete monopoly on violence, using pistols and machine guns to execute those players who break the rules and those who have lost a round. The parallels with the security apparatus of the Korean ruling class are difficult to ignore.

But the similarities between fiction and reality are no coincidence. As director Hwang Dong-Hyuk put it: "I wanted to write a story that was an allegory or fable about modern capitalist society, something that depicts an extreme competition, somewhat like the extreme competition of life."

## Beyond the screen

*Squid Game* joins a growing collection of Korean social realism, with films like *The Host* and *Parasite* also exposing class exploitation in South Korea. Despite its surreal themes, *Squid Game* is not too far removed from the gruelling material conditions facing South Korean workers in real life.

2020 brought South Korea's worst unemployment crisis since 1997. Exacerbated by the COVID pandemic, South Korea has seen over a decade of steady decline in employment. Amongst the youth, the figure stands at 9.5 per cent. It's little wonder that Korean youth have taken to calling their homeland "Hell Korea".

For each of the *Squid Game* contestants, the large cash prize offers an escape from their debt bondage. In reality, South Korean household debt has sky-rocketed, with

the average household debt-to-disposable-income ratio sitting at 191%.

Towards the end of the series, we are introduced (spoiler alert!) to the VIP guests who fund the *Squid Game*. While the contestants and game's staff are Korean, these wealthy observers mostly have American accents.

## Power in numbers

While the Korean working class suffer under the dual oppression of the Korean capitalist class, composed of *chaebols* (Korean industrial conglomerates run by wealthy dynasties), and US imperialism, their history is one of militancy.

In 2015, South Korea saw a wave of three general strikes. Led by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), tens of thousands of workers took to the streets to protest against right-wing President Park Geun-Hye and her anti-worker laws.

In response, the state launched mass repression, with police brutality and targeted arrests of trade union leaders. Although the laws were passed with minor adjustments, the Korean working class drew important lessons from the struggle.

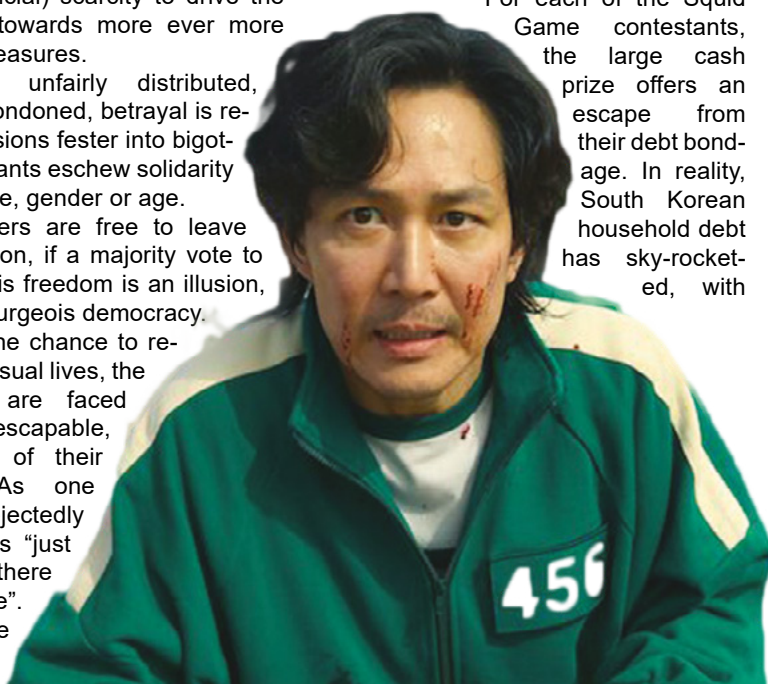
This month, the KCTU is mobilising for a new general strike on October 20th to express their anger against the exploitative system. To promote the strike, the KCTU has created their own advertisement in the style of *Squid Game* called "General Strike Game."

## Revolution

It is clear that global class consciousness is growing, driven by worsening material conditions.

The suffering of Seong Gi-Hun and his fellow debt-ridden players in *Squid Game* is not restricted to the small screen, nor to South Korea itself. There is no solution under capitalism, any more than there is through blood-drenched games.

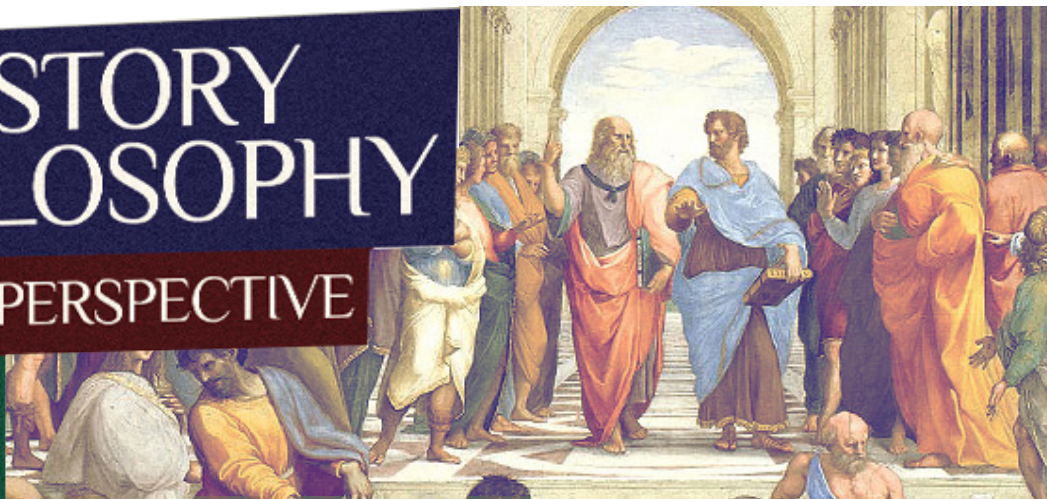
For the Korean working class, the task is that of revolution. A united working class movement united around concrete, socialist demands, with support from the KCTU and other workers' organisations, could kick out the bosses and the imperialists, and bring the *chaebols* and the rest of the bosses' system under worker control. ■



# THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

## A MARXIST PERSPECTIVE

BY ALAN WOODS



Alan Woods' book takes a unique look at the development of philosophical thinking from the Ancient Greeks, until the final emergence of dialectical materialism, the philosophical outlook of Marxism.

But why study philosophy?

As society has evolved, science has advanced human knowledge. As that storehouse of knowledge has grown, the philosophical approach we adopt can either assist us in achieving greater clarity and understanding, or else it can obfuscate reality.

Ever since philosophy really began with the Ancient Greeks, philosophers have been divided into roughly two camps.

On the one hand there were the materialists. The early Greek philosophers all adhered to this outlook. Materialism takes as its point of departure the view that there is a material reality independent of the human mind: a reality that can be known and analysed.

Later there emerged those adhering, on the contrary, to an idealist outlook. They viewed the material world as unreal and only a product of the mind – ultimately the mind of God – which gives existence to everything else. As the book explains:

“Materialism rejects the notion that mind and consciousness is something separate from matter. Thought is merely the mode of existence of the brain, which, like life itself, is only matter organised in a certain way. Mind is what we call the sum total of the activity of the brain and the nervous system. But dialectically, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. This view corresponds closely to the discoveries of science, which is gradually uncovering the workings of the brain and revealing its secrets.

This book also explains the development of the dialectical approach to reality. Dialectics explains that the world is in constant change. This was an approach already present among some of the Ancient Greek philosophers, later re-emerging in the works of Hegel. It would become a key element in the development of Marxism.

It was with Marx and Engels that the conclusion was reached that dialectical development is a fundamental characteristic of matter. Dialectics was thus combined with materialism, producing what became known as “dialectical materialism”: the philosophy of Marxism.

Marxists do not study history as a series of isolated events: as lists of kings and popes, of wars and revolutions, disconnected from each other. Rather, we look at each development as part of a long historical process.

This process began with early, primitive humans, and their struggle for survival. It proceeded through the

emergence of class societies.

Finally, this long historical process has created the material prerequisites for ending class society itself. The potential now exists to unleash the flowering of a new society free from oppression and exploitation.

The history of philosophy represented a genuine search for a scientific, rational approach to knowledge.

However, since Marx and Engels' day, bourgeois philosophy has dedicated all its energies to denying the final conclusions of thousands of years of human thought.

It denies rational thought and replaces it with unscientific thought. It denies the very idea that human society moves forward in a progressive manner.

This is known as ‘postmodernism’, which despite presenting itself as new, is really a rehash of all the old ideas of the idealist camp.

A genuinely scientific approach to the development of society inevitably leads to the conclusion that capitalism is not the final goal of history but merely one phase which must give way to a superior form, socialism.

For this reason, all latter-day bourgeois philosophy is dedicated to denying rational thinking and historical progress.

This book is not written for the seminar room of prestigious universities, it is written for ordinary workers and young people who are looking for answers as to why the world is in such a mess.

It gives such readers the historical background to Marxist philosophy, and it combats the revisionism of reactionary bourgeois philosophy. ■

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# LETTERS

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## LIFE ON THE ROAD

Dear Editor,

After 46 years working as a tradesman in the construction industry my knees had become riddled with osteoarthritis, which greatly affected my mobility and ability to work in construction anymore.

Therefore, I decided to try the private hire taxi business. It cost a few bob to get up and running and it took three months before I had everything in place for me to hit the road.

Basically taxi driving averages out at £10/hour. If you do a 50 hour week, that gets you £500, out of which you have to pay £100 radio "settle", £70 weekly insurance and £100 in fuel - leaving you with just £230 to take home. The overheads are horrendous and since COVID a lot of drivers have got wise and left the business.

The only way to make it pay is to do 70 or 80 hours a week, which is allowed as there's no tachographs for taxis; it's unregulated and unsafe. I went into taxiing not thinking it was so bad and found out the hard way that I couldn't make it pay just working normal hours.

*D Farnham,  
Merseyside*

## ENERGY COSTS

Dear Editor,

I read the editorial article on the Gas crisis in issue 355 with particular interest as I am one of the customers affected by the collapse of the utilities company Green. The one-year fixed tariff deal I agreed to - which would have cost me £72 in early exit fees to leave - has been torn up. Needless to say, Green isn't paying me £72 for my inconvenience!

Ofgem have assigned me to Shell Energy, a company of their choosing, and they have now placed me on their deemed tariff, which is twice the cost of my original tariff with Green. This is so Shell can pass the cost of the increase in gas prices onto consumers like myself.

While I can probably absorb this financial hit, many other ordinary people will struggle, especially those relying on Universal Credit

to top up low wages or to tide them over until they find work.

With the £20 uplift going at the same time as energy companies are collapsing, it's not out of the question that somebody else who was transferred from Green to Shell who was just managing to get by at the end of August could find themselves £160 short at the end of the month over winter.

There aren't enough words to describe how outrageous it is that people will be forced to choose between heating and eating while we produce enough food for everybody in the world to eat, and leeches like Branson and Bezos are launching themselves into space.

As the editorial points out, this whole debacle has illustrated the need for public ownership and planning, as well as the rottenness of capitalism.

Between the Tory government handing out huge sums to prop up the big energy companies who have failed to invest in energy infrastructure, the shocking business practices of smaller companies like Avro, and the poverty we see amidst plenty, it couldn't be clearer that capitalism needs to be consigned to the dustbin of history.

*Isaiah Johnson,  
Loughborough*

## AUTO EXCLUSION

Dear Comrades,

May I in the letters page of your paper praise the officials of the Labour Party for creating the term 'auto exclusion', a term that is now being applied to many members of the Party.

It is beautiful in its simplicity because it removes the Right of Appeal, and therefore a Human Right, for those who have had it applied to them.

If you are auto excluded, you have excluded yourself. You can't appeal against something that you have done to yourself, as you are appealing against yourself for your own actions. As you are now auto excluded, you are no longer in the Party so you cannot appeal against an action that you did to yourself when you were in the Party. Being out of the Party means that

there is no Party process that you could use to appeal against yourself.

As you auto excluded yourself by what you did or said, Party officials are absolved from any blame for your own actions. You are out and they are happy that you are out and they played no part in your own actions.

And finally, it can be applied retrospectively. You can now exclude yourself for something you said or did in the past before the term of auto exclusion became a rule in the Party. This has the effect of forcing Party members to say and do nothing just in case what they say or do becomes incompatible with Party 'values' at some time in the future.

Taken all together, Stalin would have looked at Labour Party officials with envy as if the term 'auto exclusion' had been in existence in his time, you could have saved him a lot of trouble by shooting yourself or throwing yourself out of windows as you tried to escape your captors.

They are really clever people, these officials. They can now continue to rule in the Party without being bothered by appeals. Simple, really.

*A Coventry reader*

## WHEEL OF FORTUNE

Dear Editor,

Supporters of capitalism like to crow on about how money is made in the financial markets by virtue of great skill and knowledge on the part of a group of 'financial wizards'. They read the spreadsheets and deduce where great fortunes are to be made and lost.

So step forward Mr. Goxx, who since he started investing and trading on the market in June has seen his portfolio rise by a whopping 24%. This run has outpaced even the S&P 500, according to Protos.com.

This is pretty good when you consider that Mr. Goxx is a hamster. Evidently, he strolls into his 'office' from his main residence (a hutch) and determines investments based on operating a 'intention' wheel before picking one of two 'decision' tunnels to run through. He started with \$390 and now has \$580. Given his track record they are looking to expand his portfolio.

Of course there is a reason behind letting Mr. Goxx onto the market. His stirring efforts show just what a casino the stock market is.

The human equivalents of our hamster friend trade with billions to try and make a killing at the expense of us all.

The message Mr. Goxx is sending is that we need to fight for a system that defends the many not the few.

*Tony Hazard (Essex)*

# TELL THE TRUTH



## THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY

The actions of British imperialism during the Anti-British National Liberation War – also known as the ‘Malayan Emergency’ – are often kept hidden from us by school curriculums and museums.

The war is often held up as a positive example of ways in which ‘hearts and minds’ tactics can be used to overcome revolutionary forces. In reality, this episode in history shows the extent to which the British ruling class was happy to employ brutal and racist tactics to destroy a revolutionary movement.

The Malayan Emergency saw revolutionary forces battle against 450,000 British colonial troops and police from 1948 up to 1960.

Following the killing of three plantation owners by young peasants, the British forces banned trade unions and the Malayan Communist Party (MCP). In response the MCP retreated to rural areas and formed the Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA).

The British army was unable to make any progress for the first two years of the war. This was despite the MNLA being vastly outnumbered, with only around 7,000 guerrillas. Yet the British had no support from the workers and peasants, who hid, fed, and defended the revolutionaries.

Frustrated, the British elites turned to divide and rule tactics. Malaysians of Chinese descent were targeted, due to their apparent high levels of support for the Communists.

At first, the British authorities arbitrarily deported 26,000 Chinese Malaysians to mainland China, despite many of these people having lived in Malaysia for generations. The British Governor then decided this was not a ‘practical solution’ and a new policy of forced relocation was enacted.

From 1950 to 1952, 500,000 people (around 10% of the population) were forcibly relocated to internment camps because they were Malaysian Chinese or belonged to the Orang Asli indigenous group. Villagers were given a week’s notice to tear down their homes, pack their possessions and build new houses in the camps.

The internment camps, euphemistically called ‘New Villages’, were fortified with barbed wire fences and guard towers, with residents searched upon entry. They were forced to carry ID cards and were subject to spot-checks by guards at any time.

Villagers were not allowed over a certain quantity of food and were subject to arbitrary communal punishment. British soldiers burned down houses and used Agent Orange and other chemical weapons to ensure that the peasants and indigenous people could never return to their land.

Over 1.2 million people still live in what remains of these camps today.

However, the British Army Museum in Chelsea proudly states that: “Chinese squatters were rehoused in purpose built new villages. Clean water, proper housing, education and medical care were provided.”

Historian Marc Opper for one is clear that this narrative is a barefaced lie: “Many New Villages lacked even the most basic amenities. Roads were not paved and did not have drainage ditches. Public taps were either not supplied or their number insufficient. Electricity was either not supplied or supplied in limited quantities. Medical clinics were in short supply, and sanitation non-existent or questionable.”

The RAF also conducted 4,500 airstrikes throughout the war killing

between 670 and 995 innocent civilians. Agent Orange and other chemical weapons left over 10,000 people with defects, and an untold impact on the environment.

The Batang Kali massacre saw British troops surround a village, shoot 24 unarmed civilians, mutilate their bodies, and burn the village to the ground. The British authorities attempted to retrospectively legalise the massacre. When this failed, a cover-up was carried out.

However, in 1969 some of the soldiers involved confessed to their crimes in an interview with the People Magazine. The Metropolitan police was forced to investigate, and has confessions from six soldiers stating they murdered the villagers.

Despite this there has been no investigation or charges, with the government suspending investigations in 1970 and in 1993.

It has been left to the families of those killed to fight for justice. In 2015 a case was brought to the British Supreme court demanding an official inquiry into the massacre.

Characteristically the British ruling class stood in defence of its imperialist atrocities rather than admit any wrongdoing. Lord Kerr stated that while it is very likely “wholly innocent men were mercilessly murdered... our courts have decided there is no legal right to an explanation.”

The British ruling class has no interest in acknowledging the atrocities committed by the British empire. We must fight for a Socialist World Federation which can acknowledge the crimes of imperialism in the past and build a future based on the solidarity of workers across the globe.



# CIVIL WAR IN UNISON

## FIGHT TO TRANSFORM THE UNION!

### Our Unison

#### correspondent

**A**t the most recent meeting of the Unison National Executive Council (NEC), on 6 October, the left majority – organised around the #TimeForRealChange banner – attempted to break the bureaucratic log-jam that has been plaguing them since they democratically won their positions earlier this year.

Ever since losing control of the NEC and its committees, the union's right wing has engaged in a non-stop campaign of sabotage. Making up the rules as they go along, full-time officials have consistently blocked any attempt by the left to transform Unison into a fighting union that can defend its members. Now they have played their hand openly.

Before this NEC meeting was due to take place, one right-wing member of the council leaked six motions that had been put forward by the left – motions that were intended to move past the current deadlock. This was a clear attempt to discredit the left and their motions before they were even discussed.

### Intimidation

What followed was a slew of attempts to bully the left into withdrawing their motions. As part of this, the entire left slate were contacted by Unison's appointed lawyer, who threatened comrades with all kinds of bloodcurdling legal implications.

According to this well-paid lawyer, if these motions were passed, the union's apparatus would be under no obligation to carry them out, and could not be disciplined for refusing to do so. Such nonsense was clearly cooked up to try and scare the left into a retreat.

Predictably, this obstructionism continued straight into the meeting itself. The left majority stood firm, however, and each motion was passed. Not to be outdone, however, the bureaucracy has taken things a step further.

Using their control over the union's official communications, they have put up a statement on the Unison website,



decrying the left majority on the NEC for passing these motions, and claiming that executive members had no right to do so. They have also sent this statement to all members via email.

### Lessons

This cannot be seen as anything other than a direct challenge to the legitimacy of the left majority on the NEC.

The right wing is prepared to sabotage the left majority and prevent the union from functioning, all in order to safeguard their privileges. For them, it is a case of rule or ruin.

The parallels with the Corbyn movement are very clear. In 2016, for example, the Labour right wing tried every trick in the book to prevent Corbyn from getting reelected as Labour leader. They even turned to the courts to try and keep him off the ballot.

The Unison right wing – with many links to their counterparts in the Labour Party – are clearly prepared to go to similar lengths.

In this civil war inside the Labour Party, the left leadership made a grave error in attempting to compromise with the right wing.

As part of this, Corbyn's office prevented rank-and-file party members from going on the offensive against the right – blocking moves to introduce open selection, for example.

In the end, this proved to be a fatal mistake. The right wing were able to continue their sabotage, leading to Labour's electoral defeats – and, in turn, to the downfall of the Corbyn movement.

### Mobilisation

Instead of falling into this same trap, the Unison left must go the whole way in the fight to transform the union.

This means going to the membership, explaining clearly what is happening, and mobilising grassroots activists to bring them into the struggle.

This is the only way to fight back against the shenanigans of the right wing.

#TimeForRealChange should start by calling a mass meeting of the rank-and-file activists, in order to clarify the situation and point the way forward.

Faced with a backlash from below, and with a resolute left majority on the NEC, the bureaucracy's gamble of openly going public would blow up in their faces.

This is a golden opportunity to fight for the real change that was promised to Unison members. The left must be prepared to seize it. There has never been a greater need to transform our unions into fighting weapons for the working class. ■

# HEALTH SECTOR PAY SHOWDOWN

## UNITE AND STRIKE FOR 15%!

**Dan Langley**

**Royal College of Nursing**

**(personal capacity)**

Over the last few months, following the announcement of the pathetic 3% pay offer made to healthcare workers by the government, trade unions have held their first round of consultative ballots, asking members whether to accept or reject this deal.

The RCN – which currently represents around 500,000 nurses – saw an overwhelming majority of those who took part in the ballot vote to reject the Tories' offer, with 92% of respondents voting against.

Shortly after, we heard that 93% of voting members in GMB were also against the pay deal. Similarly, Unite's result saw 90% of the union's health members voting to reject, while 80% of Unison's members in the NHS also voted against the government.

This paves the way for the potential of united strike action by healthcare staff across the NHS – that is, by the very workers who have fought tirelessly throughout the pandemic, with no reward in return from Tory ministers but claps and hollow words.

### Make the bosses pay

There is absolutely no respect for our health professionals from the Tories. Budget cuts; below-inflation pay offers; 170,000 vacancies, with traumatised staff leaving in droves; long queues in A&Es; privatisation of vital services: all of this is not normal.

Not only will rising inflation single-handedly wipe out the meagre offering made by the government, but this comes alongside a National Insurance (NI) tax hike, which will see nurses and other healthcare staff pay between £130-255 more a month. In other words, what crumbs the Tories throw our way with one hand will be snatched back with the other.

In short, workers are being made to pay for 10 years of brutal cuts to the health and social care system. This is a scandal. We say: make the bosses and billionaires pay for this crisis!

### Mandate for action

The RCN, Unite, GMB, and Unison are all now beginning to move to the indicative ballot stage. And all the unions have rightfully stated that they will work together moving forward.

Unfortunately, however, sections of the union leadership are already making excuses, even with this thumping mandate for action.

Unite's health officials, for example, are claiming that they will only consider limited industrial action in workplaces where "feelings are strong" – ignoring those who (for understandable reasons) may not have been reached or persuaded by the unions' pay campaigns thus far.

It is true that each ballot saw only 20-30% of members voting. While these are higher turnouts figures than those in years previous, it is clear that more must be done.

### Question of leadership

What is needed now is not excuses and pessimism but a bold and determined campaign for a national ballot for strike action in each union, with the aim of smashing through the Tory-imposed turnout threshold.

To achieve this, the unions must prepare reps for the biggest campaign of their lives, in order to get the vote out.

As part of this, union leaders must make it clear that members aren't voting for mere symbolic action, but for an outright fight to gain what they deserve: the full 15% pay rise that health campaigners and unions are rightly demanding.

This ultimately comes down to a question of leadership. Rank-and-file members know how bad things are in the health service; they live and experience this dire situation each and every day.

What is needed is confidence: to see that our unions – far from playing with words, as in the past – are prepared to go all the way this time in our defence.

### Fight for socialism

With the mood that currently exists inside the health service, and with the crisis only set to get worse, there has never been a better time for a bold campaign for militant industrial action.

United in action, healthcare members in Unite, Unison, GMB, and the RCN would be more than a match for any government. This makes the need for a strong lead all the more important.

Ultimately, the struggle to defend the NHS is a struggle for socialism. But to get there, healthcare workers must feel emboldened, and given the confidence that they have the strength to fight – and win. ■





# FIRE AND REHIRE

## DEFEAT THE BOSSES' ATTACKS!

**Nick Hallsworth**

**Unite the Union**

**(personal capacity)**

**F**ire-and-rehire has become the watchword for an all-out offensive by the bosses' against workers. This heinous practice consists of employers telling their workers they will be dismissed if they do not sign on to new contracts, with significantly worse pay, terms, and conditions.

This is not a new phenomenon, however. In 2019, for example, Asda threatened 12,000 staff with a similar measure, in order to drive down their pay.

The economic fallout of the coronavirus pandemic has prompted a huge surge in such attacks. Even highly profitable businesses have greedily seized on the opportunity presented by the pandemic to cut costs.

Fire-and-rehire has been most prevalent in the private sector, where union density is lower. Nevertheless, as the case of Tower Hamlets council shows, no group of workers is safe – even those in the public sector.

### Fightback

Every action has its reaction, however. And these assaults have provoked a wave of strikes and industrial action, with workers getting organised and fighting back. We have seen victorious strikes take place among British Airways cargo handlers, Go North West bus drivers in Manchester, refuse workers for Thurrock Council, and at SPS Technologies in Leicester.

And in Northamptonshire recently, Weetabix workers – subject to whopping pay cuts of £5,000 per year – have begun their strike, with new Unite general secretary Sharon Graham visiting them on the picket line to offer her support.

### Militancy pays

While only a minority of strikes have been able to overcome the attacks of the employers so far, these battles nevertheless provide important lessons in



how to fight back against fire and rehire and defeat it for good.

On the positive side, victories like those at BA and Go North West show that militancy pays.

It is vital that workplaces are organised, and that trade unions give their full support to workers in preparing for strike action. But we also need a militant, proactive strategy from across the trade union movement to tie together these struggles and push them to victory.

What is holding us back in the fight against fire-and-rehire is that each struggle is being fought in isolation, allowing employers to pick off different groups of workers one by one.

The Go North West Manchester bus strike, for example, was a welcome victory. However, the drivers were reportedly asked not to speak to workers at other companies' depots during the strike, for fear of falling foul of Tory anti-trade union laws.

Similarly, British Gas workers in GMB ultimately went down to defeat in their battle against Centrica, despite 43 days of heroic action, because their struggle was not escalated, broadened out, and joined up with workers in other unions at the same company.

If we hope to win the battles ahead, our unions must also be willing to go beyond the confines of the law and the limits set by the state, otherwise we will constantly be fighting the bosses with

one hand tied behind our back.

This is why the struggle against fire-and-rehire is both industrial and political.

Unite has launched a national campaign for legislation to ban fire-and-rehire, with backing from Labour MPs such as Barry Gardiner. This campaign should be supported with action as well as words. The only way such legislation will be passed is by mobilising all our forces in industrial action.

In this, we will face opposition from both the Tories and the Blairites in the Labour Party – especially as the practice is being used by right-wing Labour councils against council workers!

### Socialist programme

Ultimately, the trade union movement must be prepared to bring its ranks into a decisive struggle against the government and the whole rotten system that allows 'fire-and-rehire' tactics to be used in the first place.

This means ensuring the whole labour movement is united behind a bold socialist programme based on nationalising industry under workers' control – planning the economy for need, and not profit.

Only by ending the profit system and taking industry out of private hands can we end this brutal race to the bottom that the capitalists are imposing on the working class. ■

# PERFECT STORM BREWING ON CAMPUSES FOR COORDINATED STRIKE ACTION!

## UCU Marxists

**T**he struggle of higher education (HE) workers in the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) has escalated significantly in recent weeks.

A national strike ballot is set to open on 18 October and close on 4 November, relating to the ongoing disputes over the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) and the 'Four Fights' campaign, which covers matters relating to pay, workload, casualisation, and inequalities.

UCU Marxists call on all UCU members to vote in favour of both strike action and action short of a strike.

## Coordinated disputes

This renewal of the struggle comes after almost a year of stalemate, and heated discussion within the union about strategy.

Far from being resolved, both issues – around pensions and the Four Fights – have been exacerbated dramatically during the pandemic. The decision to take on the two disputes means that the union needs to double its efforts to get out the vote and communicate a clear and coordinated strategy.

To win on both counts, it is necessary to point out the common cause of these two disputes, and to link them – both on campuses, and to struggles beyond campuses.

## USS

After two separate rounds of strike action to defend the defined benefit scheme (in 2018, and 2019-20), the employers and other governing parties in USS are once again uniting to destroy the pensions of UCU members.

UCU general secretary Jo Grady has highlighted the links between this attack and the broader context of attacks on education; the

undermining of conditions for academics and other workers in higher education; and the marketisation of the sector, which drives employers to cut staff costs.

With a pay 'offer' below the inflation rate, managers of the USS are essentially financing their £488,000 average salary by squeezing employees even more. The USS, for most of its governors, is not a scheme designed to provide stable and decent pensions for retired workers. Instead, it is a source of profit for private finance.

This is the root cause of the current attacks, and that message must be carried to members at every level of the union.

The union's long-term perspective, however, needs to go beyond 'governance reform' of USS and a more optimistic valuation. We need guaranteed, decent pensions for all. This is the rallying call UCU leaders should be issuing. Unfortunately, the UCU leaders have been lamentably quiet about the

ongoing strike ballot among Unison HE staff – despite the clear opportunity this presents to increase the scale and effectiveness of industrial action. Such a parochial attitude must be challenged.

The problem of pensions that are at the mercy of financial markets is shared by the rest of the labour movement, whether they are in the UCU or not. We have a huge amount of common ground in our struggles.

## Four Fights

We must prepare for co-ordinated action with unions from across the sector, therefore, and must begin raising the call for a one-day public sector strike with comrades from across the movement, as the culminating point of this coordination.

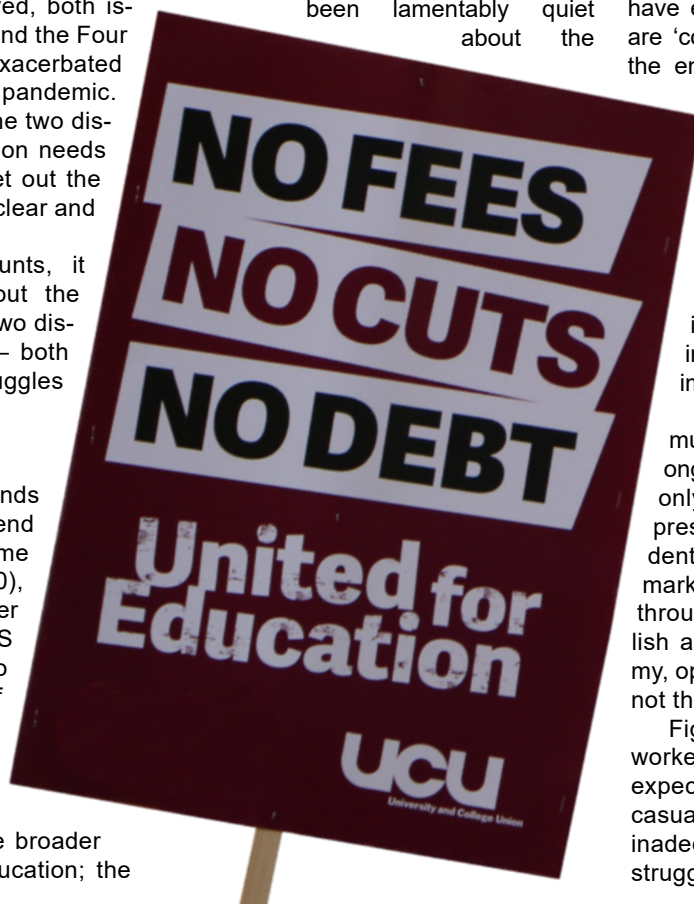
Only on the basis of united industrial action – involving the whole trade union movement – can this multi-sided attack be resisted.

Over recent years, UCU leaders have emphasised that the Four Fights are 'core' issues for the union. UCEA, the employers' body, have repeatedly failed to address issues of low wages, casualisation, workload, and gender and ethnicity pay gaps.

These problems have a more chronic character than that of pensions. Yet all of them have the same root cause: a capitalist system in terminal decline, incapable of offering even mild improvements to workers' lives.

UCU's leadership, therefore, must find stronger words for the ongoing crisis, and draw out the only real long-term solution to the pressures facing workers and students in higher education: to end marketisation; to fund education through expropriation; and to establish a democratically planned economy, operating in the interest of society, not the bankers and bosses.

Fighting union leaders must raise workers' sights, not moderate their expectations. The struggle against casualisation, low pay, overwork, and inadequate pensions is ultimately a struggle against capitalism. ■





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