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PAY UP!

STRIKE TO SMASH THE PAY CAP

Jim McFarlane

Unison NEC member and local government worker (personal capacity)

Since the start of the global financial crisis, worker's real wages and living standards in the UK have suffered to an extent unprecedented in modern history.

Real wages have fallen by nearly 10% since 2008. The explosion of what is described as "in work poverty" has seen millions of people struggling on a day to day basis to keep their head above water.

This vicious Tory Government are showing no sign of reversing the austerity agenda that has plunged so many into severe financial hardship. Public sector jobs and services have been decimated and the attacks on the meagre welfare system has made the situation even worse.

The Scottish Government and local councils are doing their own part in imposing the pay cap year-on-year. Playing pass-the-parcel with Tory austerity is not good enough from SNP and Labour politicians.

However, austerity isn't for everyone. The already powerful and wealthy in society have seen their

share of the wealth rocket. Figures from the Office of National Statistics reveal the average gross salary in Scotland is £22,918 a year.

The top Chief Executives in Scotland are coming out with pay packets worth more than 24 times the salary of an average worker.

The highest paid CEO in Scotland was Ross McEwan at the Royal Bank of Scotland who made £3.5 million last year, despite the bank making a loss of £7 billion. His pay is the equivalent of 152 workers on average earnings.

This is not inevitable, there is a clear alternative. Workers deserve a decent pay rise.

Smashing the pay cap and reversing the welfare attacks has to be one of the main priority of the trade union movement and the wider working class.

The demonstration called by UNISON in Edinburgh on 7th October should be the launch pad for a sustained period of industrial action.

Trade unions can not only smash the 1% pay cap across the public sector and indeed the private sector, but also win decent pay for all and bring an end to austerity.



MARCH & RALLY
SATURDAY 7 OCTOBER
11.30am
Johnstone Terrace
Edinburgh



What we think

The dramatic rise of the Scottish National Party (SNP) has been thrown into a sharp reverse recently.

The partial collapse in the electoral support for the SNP at the June 2017 general election – a loss of 21 of their 56 MPs and half a million votes – speaks to a growing mood of disappointment in a party that claimed to be “anti-austerity”. In practice, however, the opposite has been the case, as Socialist Party Scotland has explained on many occasions.

By implementing cuts on an unprecedented scale in Scotland, the SNP leadership has begun to be exposed in the eyes of broad sections of working class and young people who had hoped for far better. Increasingly they are also clashing with groups of workers taking strike action, including college lecturers, teachers, Scotrail staff and other public sector workers.

The 2014 independence referendum campaign saw the SNP come under ferocious attack from the capitalist establishment in Britain. The “Project Fear” campaign, however, was largely a failure. Even though the referendum was narrowly lost, the SNP gained a landslide victory in the 2015 Westminster elections as hundreds of thousands of radicalised independence supporters rallied to the “anti-establishment” SNP. The growth of this middle class-led radical nationalist party to over 100,000 – including many new working class and young members – was itself a distorted reflection of the space for a mass workers’ party in Scotland.

Not Left

Unlike Syriza in Greece, which was a coalition of left forces, and other formations in Europe like Podemos, the SNP has never been a left party. It emerged historically based on the Scottish middle class, totally supportive of capitalism and has never adopted a left or even a mild reformist platform, never mind a socialist one. SNP policy has generally opposed tax rises on the rich and big business and indeed for decades advocated major tax cuts for corporations in their blueprint for an independent Scotland.

It is true that as Labour stam- peded to the right under Blair

Where is Scotland going the struggle for socialism



Workers at Scottish colleges (above) and councils (opposite) are among those who have been striking against SNP and Labour cuts

and Brown the SNP successfully positioned themselves to the left of New Labour, making significant electoral gains as a result. However, it’s radical populism has, so far, never gone beyond a stout defence of capitalism, albeit of a “fairer” variety. Jeremy Corbyn, despite his mistakes on the national question, has significantly outflanked the SNP to the left in his call for limited public ownership, tax increases on the corporations and support for workers in struggle. This contrasted sharply with the SNP leadership and had an impact in the recent general election where Labour made a modest recovery in working class areas of Scotland.

The experience of working class communities in Scotland has been that SNP politicians have acted no differently from right wing Labour. Avowedly pro-business, the cuts keep coming. An SNP-led Scottish Government for over a decade, and now in control of many

local councils, has seen them largely act as a conveyor belt for Tory austerity. Albeit prone to working class pressure over issues like the Bedroom Tax which they were dragged into mitigating when faced with a major campaign.

Brexit

A marked turn to the right by Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP leaders has followed the Brexit vote of June 2016. While the 2014 referendum was fought as a proxy for opposition to vast inequality, cuts and was a mass expression of class anger at the establishment, today Sturgeon et al have sought to frame a second referendum as being necessary to “protect access to the European single market”. Alongside the role of the SNP in making cuts, the prioritisation of big-business interests is undermining the SNP’s base of support among the working class in Scotland.

This is especially pro-

nounced among the one third of pro-independence supporters who are opposed to the EU. At the June 2017 Westminster election the SNP lost 4 in 10 of their voters who backed Leave in 2016. Socialist Party Scotland along with the RMT trade union made a socialist, internationalist case for exit from the bosses EU during that referendum.

The conduct of SNP politicians has also come under increasing scrutiny, the overwhelming majority of whom are drawn from the middle class, managerial, small and medium business community. Writing in the Herald newspaper in August, political columnist Kevin McKenna accurately described the following after the Michelle Thomson controversy:

“You can understand why the police investigation into a solicitor used by former SNP MP Michelle Thomson caused the party leadership so many difficulties. The property busi-

ness partly owned by Ms Thomson was wound up in 2011 before she became MP for Edinburgh West in 2015. It specialised in buying property cheap and selling it on quickly for a profit. Her property “empire” was reported to be worth around £1 million, comprising fewer than 10 properties. These numbers hinted at what end of the market Ms Thomson’s business was concerned with. Several transactions involved people who had begun to experience financial difficulty. It seemed an exercise in raw capitalism.

“The Herald published a story in 2015 revealing that almost one-third of the SNP’s Westminster class of 2015 owned multiple properties. There is nothing illegal or indeed questionable about this. It did suggest though, that a party that had traded on its socialist identity was not as left-facing as it portrayed itself as.

“The euphoria of widespread grassroots engagement in the

ng? Build st change



Nicola Sturgeon's SNP has moved to the right following the EU referendum in June 2016



The exposing of the SNP as a party that is not remotely a left force has weakened its appeal, especially among the working class and young people who stand significantly to the left of the SNP.

independence referendum of 2014 coupled with the egregiously pro-Union stance of the Scottish Labour leadership had bequeathed to the SNP an astonishing windfall of more than 100,000 new members. A significant proportion were attracted by the implied promise of being part of a left-wing bulwark, standing strong against an increasingly hard-right and reactionary Conservative government at Westminster. Many would have been dismayed that a seam of unalloyed capitalism lay just below the surface of the party."

"Dismay" is an accurate depiction of the mood of many of those who looked to the SNP following the 2014 indyref. Polls and consistent evidence on the ground point to the fact that this mood is most pronounced among young people who were so energised by the independence movement. This change in outlook has also impacted on the national question and the prospects for a second referendum.

Indyref 2?

SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon "reset" the Scottish Government's plans for a second independence referendum at the end of June following the party's heavy losses at the general election. Their plans to legislate immediately for a second referendum, voted through the Scottish parliament in March

2017, have now been shelved. Significantly, Sturgeon admitted that "there was no widespread support in Scotland for a second vote on independence before the UK leaves the EU." Indeed current polling evidence shows support for an immediate second referendum as low as 20%.

Faced with a new reality the SNP's approach has slowly changed tack, in the words of Nicola Sturgeon: "At the end of this period of negotiation with the EU – likely to be around next autumn – when the terms of Brexit will be clearer, we will come back to parliament to set out our judgment on the best way forward at that time, including our view on the precise timescale for offering people a choice over the country's future."

This reflects a dramatic shift in approach. Indeed Sturgeon's speech from June 2017 no longer proposes a definitive second referendum, merely to set out a judgement on the "best way forward". The Brexit vote, the SNP strategists calculated, should have led to a rapid rise in support for Scottish independence as sections of the middle class who backed the union in 2014 moved over to support independence. While there is some evidence that this did happen it was offset by some of the estimated 400,000 independence supporters, mainly working class, who voted to leave the EU. The erosion in support for the SNP

among the working class is the most striking feature of the past year.

A deep polarisation has now set in over the national question. The Tory gains in Scotland at the general election saw large parts of rural and middle class Scotland swing towards the Scottish Tories. Ruth Davidson's single issue campaign – no to indyref 2 – effectively mobilised a large part of the anti-independence vote from 2014, allowing the Tories to win 13 seats.

The exposing of the SNP as a party that is not remotely a left force has weakened its appeal, especially among the working class and young people who stand significantly to the left of the SNP. Not only did the nationalists lose seats to Labour in working class areas in June, but their majorities in the seats they held onto in Glasgow and the west of Scotland were slashed. There was also a big increase in abstentionism in 2017 compared to 2015. 250,000 fewer people voted, overwhelmingly these would have been previous SNP supporters.

Significantly, support for independence is still at the same level as it was in 2014 at around

45%, an historic high, despite falling support for the SNP.

Moreover demands for a second referendum could erupt again, given the ongoing falling living standards and the crisis facing capitalism in Scotland and internationally. Yet it is clearly the case that the intensity of the mood on the national question has dipped. No longer do a section of radicalised working class and young people currently believe that the SNP offer a real alternative to fighting austerity. And this has had an impact on the immediate prospect for a second referendum as the SNP have moved in a more explicit pro-business direction.

Socialist Party Scotland did not believe that the SNP would undergo an evolution to the left, even after the huge influx of members into the party following the 2014 referendum. Since then, if anything, the evolution by the SNP leadership has been to the right. On Brexit, the SNP's position is at all costs to fight to retain access to the single market and the customs union. Increasingly, the SNP leadership is acting openly to defend the interests of Scottish and British big business. The single market, after all, is the

condensed essence of a neo-liberal, anti-worker and pro-privatisation framework, underpinned by the European Commission and the European Court of Justice that ensure that their rules are stuck to. It is with the Blairite wing of Labour that the SNP are closest to on Europe, whose representatives are using the Brexit process to undermine Corbyn's call for a Brexit in the interests of "jobs, living standards and workers' rights".

A socialist policy, in contrast to the SNP and right wing Labour, stands for an end to privatisation, a £10 an hour living wage, public ownership and democratic planning of the economy and the cancellation of all laws that undermine the interests of the working class. Such policies are incompatible with membership of the EU and its institutions and pose the need to fight for a socialist Europe.

Labour's mistakes

Labour's modest recovery in Scotland, winning back 6 of the 40 seats they lost in 2015, was a pale reflection of what would have been possible if Corbyn and his allies had been pre-

Where is Scotland going? ...continued



Blairite Kezia Dugdale's resignation as Scottish Labour leader gives the left an opportunity (see article on page 12)

pared to openly reassess their utterly mistaken policy on the national question. Continuing to oppose independence outright and a second referendum is a huge barrier to winning over the many anti-austerity workers and young people who are attracted to Corbyn's left policies.

At the very least Corbyn should adopt a more sensitive policy, emphasising his and Labour's support for the right of the Scottish people to decide their own relationship with the rest of the UK through a referendum. As well as making clear that Labour under his leadership would never again side with the Tories in opposition to independence.

In practice, however, the Labour left have carried on with a policy that is in reality identical to that of Kezia Dugdale and the anti-Corbyn Labour right. At its root is the analysis – whose “theoretical” wellspring is derived from that of the Communist Party of Britain – that Scotland was never an oppressed nation and therefore has no legitimate national question, unlike Ireland. We oppose this view and have written at some length on the historical origins of the national question in Scotland (here). For Marxists, the key issue is the outlook of the working class and the youth and the need to fashion a programme that takes account of that consciousness and links it to the need to forge a socialist solution.

The idea that the left adopt a policy based on a series of events over 300 years ago and are unable to adapt or update that policy in the face of changing circumstances is absurd. It



Corbyn's supporters must challenge for the Labour leadership in Scotland, following Kezia Dugdale's resignation.

led directly to the situation that in the face of a mass anti-establishment upsurge in support of independence, as happened in 2014, sections of the left campaigned for a No vote, cutting themselves off from hundreds of thousands of the most radicalised working class people who are open to socialist and left ideas.

Ironically this policy only aided the SNP and ensured Labour's electoral collapse. Labour were widely seen as opposing democratic rights in Scotland and siding with the capitalist establishment. The SNP gained massively as a result by championing democratic rights but also posing as an anti-austerity alternative to Labour.

The consequences of Corbyn allowing the Labour right in Scotland to frame the manifesto on Scotland and indyref2 for the general election was to limit hugely the potential gains they could have made, given the tide of support flowing away from the SNP.

By standing on a fighting platform in favour of an independent socialist Scotland and a reversal of all austerity, socialist ideas could grow dramatically. There is no solution to any of the problems we face: poverty, deprivation and cuts, within the crushing straitjacket of capitalism. It is this approach that Socialist Party

Scotland argues that the trade unions, the Corbyn movement and the socialist left should adopt.

Tasks for trade unions and the left

The building of a insurgent, principled left in Scotland – as the SNP are further exposed – is an urgent task. There are three elements to this. Firstly, a serious struggle by the Labour left to wrestle control from the right wing in Scotland.

Corbyn's supporters must challenge for the Labour leadership in Scotland following Kezia Dugdale's resignation. We have also called on Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters to campaign for the necessary democratic changes to the Labour party, including the right to re-select MPs, councillors and MSPs who oppose Corbyn and have a record of carrying out cuts etc. This should be allied to a pledge that under the new leadership all Labour's elected politicians must refuse to vote for cuts in councils, the Scottish parliament or at Westminster.

Labour is still two parties in one. A Blairite, capitalist dominated parliamentary party who will never accept Corbyn's leadership, and a majority of the membership who are anti-austerity and pro-Corbyn. As well as removing the extreme capi-

talist wing through the democratic renewal of the Labour Party's structures, the trade unions who are affiliated to Labour should have their full rights restored. In addition, the party should be opened up to all socialists and left and anti-austerity activists to join, including those who were expelled in the past.

The second element, particularly important given the reluctance of the Labour left to challenge the out-and-out capitalist elements in their party, is to build an electoral alternative to cuts and austerity. While of course this means not standing against left Labour candidates who pledge to fight cuts, in most cases that is not currently the case. Both Labour and SNP councillors in Scotland are preparing a new round of austerity budgets for early 2018, in some cases in coalition with each other. In Aberdeen, Labour councillors have formed a coalition with the Tories and were rightly suspended, although not expelled!

Socialist Party Scotland has since 2010 pioneered, alongside the RMT union, the building of the Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) and local anti-cuts groups to stand in elections. We would appeal to trade unions and left activists to discuss how we can take this further in the new situation that now opens for building left and socialist ideas in Scotland.

And thirdly, the building of organised and coordinated mass struggle by the trade unions and communities is essential in order to defeat ongoing austerity. The recent victory by the Glasgow Janitors after 67 days of strike action and a 20 month-long campaign shows what is possible. As did the recent victory by college lecturers over pay. The 63% vote by Unison members in local government in favour of strike action, again on pay, albeit stymied by the new anti-union ballot thresholds, also indicates a growing mood to take action.

Socialism

Socialist Party Scotland has always opposed the SNP leaders and their pro-capitalist policies, including during the referendum when we fought for a Yes majority. At times that meant holding the line and even swimming against the stream of the prevailing mood of illusions that the SNP would deliver for the working class. That period has now largely



Lack of quality affordable housing, spiralling costs

come to an end. We did not make the fundamental errors of groups on the left who to one degree or another gave uncritical support to the SNP, both during and since the 2014 referendum. These mistakes included offering the SNP an electoral alliance (SSP), calling workers to explicitly (Solidarity) or implicitly (RISE) vote for the SNP.

The key task facing the working class, young people, the trade unions and the left is to build a mass combative movement to end austerity and oppose all the parties who inflict it.

To fight for the establishment of a mass working class party armed with socialist ideas that becomes a majority in society.

To forge a real instrument that can lead to an independent socialist Scotland and lay the basis for a voluntary and democratic confederation with a socialist England, Wales and Ireland as a contribution to the struggle for socialism internationally.

Socialist policies can end the housing crisis

Robyn Smith, Aberdeen

Over the past few years Aberdeen has faced a housing crisis in both the council and private housing sectors. As a result, more people are struggling to maintain a roof over their heads and many are facing homelessness.

One of the biggest issues in Aberdeen, and really the whole of Scotland, is the lack of affordable, quality council housing. Rents have increased, conditions are below an acceptable level and the application process has left people waiting several years before they are offered a place to live.

Shelter have shown that in 2005 the average weekly rent for local authority housing was just under £43. Since then this figure has rocketed to £62 in 2014 and is now even as much as £90 in some parts of Scotland. This leaves a great deal of households struggling to provide for their families as there has been little improvement to the average wages.

On top of the increasing rents, council residents are also forced to live in homes that are of a poor quality and can pose a health and safety risk. This was demonstrated in Shelter Scotland's report showing that

1 in 10 households in the country are facing problems with dampness. If homes were built with better quality materials to begin with, these health issues would be eradicated and in turn would reduce the strain on our health services. The Grenfell tower tragedy has proven that working people live in homes where budgets takes priority over safety. It is therefore crucial that we campaign to ensure that the safety of the residents is paramount.

Homelessness

In the last year local councils in Scotland received over 34,000 individual reports of homelessness. This is almost a 6,000 increase from 2015. Charities are being pushed to breaking point to try and reduce the problem but realistically there is little in the way of actual improvements that the charitable sector can make. Only with a more socialist approach to housing policy will we see a significant difference.

It is also massively important that local authorities work harder to reduce the time homeless families spend in temporary accommodation. Currently there are over 10,000

families in Scotland living in temporary accommodation. For some this means living in a hostel. One third will remain in temporary accommodation for more than 6 months. We need to ensure that people are spending as little time as possible in temporary accommodation because it does not provide the level of security that they need, not to mention the mental health issues like depression that many in these situation suffer from as a result.

The Scottish government have pledged to build 35,000 more council houses by 2021 but it is becoming more apparent that this is insufficient..

Families across the country are really struggling to keep up with rent payments as the cost of living continues to rise every year, but at the same time wages barely increase at all.

With socialist policies such as allowing councils to takeover private empty homes, rent caps in the private sector, a fairer living wage of £10 an hour for all workers over 18 and, above all, a massive programme of building quality council homes, we could see a society that has a better quality and more readily available housing plan, helping to end the current crisis.



High living costs, poverty and low pay has created a housing crisis in Scotland

End the cruelty - Stop the cuts

Lynda McEwan

The migration of sick and disabled people from DLA (Disability Living Allowance) to PIP (Personal Independent Payment) has been strategically designed under the Tory government's savage austerity programme to move as many people as possible off benefits pushing them into poverty.

A freedom of information request has revealed that half of all DLA claimants lose their higher rate mobility payments when transitioning to PIP.

New and stricter criteria markers have made it almost impossible to gain enough points to receive the enhanced components that are available in the Motability scheme.

Claimants are losing between £1,872.00 and £3,016.00 per year, with 900 disabled people every week losing their mobility cars.

The introduction of the mandatory reconsideration notice as a precursor to the appeal procedure works to slow the appeal rate as it confuses and derails claimants who feel under too much pressure to continue through the system.

The process has also been exposed as being extremely costly as over 65% of appeals are successful at tribunal, rendering the private, profit driven contractors such as ATOS and CAPITA as negligent and incompetent at assessing the needs of people at the face-to-face interview stage. Numerous cases of assessors lying in their

reports have been documented, an example of which is no points for mobility being awarded to claimants presenting in wheelchairs who then get the maximum at tribunal.

SNP

Disability rights groups are under no illusions that the SNP will immediately use their new powers when welfare benefits are devolved to the Scottish government later next year.

Jeane Freeman, the minister charged with setting up Scotland's new social security system, has stated that it could take until as late as 2021, which means the current arrangement will continue. An estimated 100,000 Scots will lose either some or all of their dis-



ability payments during this time with campaigners warning that this could lead to an increase in suicides amongst claimants who live in fear of their much needed benefits being taken away.

DWP (department for work and pensions) figures show that between the period of 2011 and 2014, 2,380 people

died after their disability benefits ended.

Trade unions must now join with disabled activist groups and socialists to demand an end to this cruel practise. A fighting campaign to scrap the criteria that hinders disabled people from being awarded the correct rates must be mounted as a matter of urgency.

Strike victory for Glasgow Jannies



Glasgow Janitors outside the Glasgow Unison office following their mass meeting which agreed the offer from the council

Glasgow janitors, after an industrial action campaign lasting almost two years, have won an inspiring victory.

The members of public service union Unison are employed by outsourcing 'arm's-length external organisation' Cordia for the council.

They have won all their demands, including raises of over £1,000, a guarantee of one janitor per school, and extra jobs

This proves yet again that workers can win if they take determined action alongside a leadership like Glasgow City Unison which is prepared to fight.

Socialist Party Scotland and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition supported the janitors' action throughout. Well done, the Glasgow school janitors! You won #Justice4Jannies!

The Unison branch reports:

In January 2016 Unison members began a boycott of all heavy lifting, outside and dirty duties. In March 2016 strike action began and the janitors took 67 strike days in blocks of three, five and then ten days.

Mass meetings of all members took place on a regular basis with the janitors debating and voting on all key aspects of strategy and tactics. The branch's strike fund, and do-

nations from across the trade union movement, supported the action.

The janitors engaged in numerous loud and colourful protests outside the city chambers and Cordia HQ, and in Glasgow city centre. They highlighted their case on social media, #Justice4Jannies, they organised a mop, brushes and pail march outside the city chambers, and they targeted

the wards of key councillors.

They spoke at the Scottish Trade Union Congress conference in April 2016, led the Glasgow May Day march, demonstrated outside the Scottish parliament on two occasions, and organised a two-day, 25-mile fundraising walk.

The janitors also won the support of school parents' councils across the city, particularly after January 2017.

The Labour council offered a wage rise but wanted to pay for it by cutting jobs through 'clustering' - meaning fewer janitors than schools. Parents began to organise protests during the Scottish local council elections campaign.

In late March, the Labour council withdrew its clustering proposal. The election campaign saw both the SNP and Green Party committed to one janitor per one school and to resolving the pay dispute.

The janitors welcomed these commitments, which are the basis on which the dispute has eventually been settled with the new SNP administration - but only after the threat of more action.

Unison has seen a 20% increase in membership, and new shop stewards, since the dispute started. This victory shows what is possible.

Barts health workers fight Serco bosses

Paula Mitchell
London Socialist Party

As we go to press talks are taking place in the boldly fought Barts NHS strike against greedy private company employer Serco.

Twenty-four days of strike action have brought a new confidence and new levels of organisation to the workforce of cleaners, catering staff and porters across four hospitals in this massive east London NHS trust. One cleaner explained to Socialist Party members: "I see cleaners stand up for themselves at work now. They're more confident." We see cleaners who are now confident to publicly explain how essential their work is - they, like all health workers, are the basis on which the entire NHS rests.

Support has come from far and wide in the form of donations, messages and visits to the picket lines. Importantly,

from other NHS staff within the trust, but also from other trade unionists and socialists across London, and even internationally.

But most important has been the fighting spirit of the strikers themselves, who have not only chanted, sang and danced on the liveliest of picket lines, but have held meetings and thousands of one-to-one conversations to democratically maintain the resolve of the workforce.

One striker, Amelia, summed up their simple message, which she asked Socialist Party members to publicise:

"The main reason for our strike is our low pay, and loads of extra work created. Serco only think about profits. Of course the patients are our priority. I feel bad not being at my post. But we need people to understand, all we ask for is 3%, 30p."

This is from a company that

makes £82 million profit from the NHS. A striker, who wishes for her name not to be used, adds: "We don't want a private company. We want to go back to the NHS."

Pressure must continue on Serco and on the trust management, who continue to stand aside.

How can a multi-million pound company with millionaire executives not pay an extra 30p an hour to its essential workers - and how can an NHS trust turn a blind eye to this outrage?

They should tell Serco to pay up or they won't have the contract! If Serco still digs in, the ideas to protest at the company HQ and at trust events must go ahead.

The trade union leaders should seek to link up the strikes and generalise the demand for fair pay. This would give essential back up to all the disparate disputes that have



Barts strikers Picture Paul Mattson

occurred this summer, from the Barts workers to the Bank of England. Everywhere workers are crying out for a pay rise and for the TUC to take a lead in making it happen.

Send messages of support to

len.hockey@unitetheunion.org
Donations to Unite
LE/7384L, sort code 60-83-01,
account number 20344885

Protest to Serco, email to
generalenquiries@serco.com
and sign the online petition

Civil service fight continues on pay, jobs and services

Dave Semple,
Chair, PCS Scotland
(personal capacity)

More than twenty office closures in Scotland were confirmed by the Department for Work and Pensions in July. In August DWP announced 800 potential UK redundancies, locations unspecified.

Despite opposition from the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union, which organises civil servants, the government has continued its wholesale retreat from communities such as Paisley, Coatbridge and Cumnock.

The government has not had everything its own way, despite their determination to ram through cuts.

A magnificent community and union campaign of petitions, public meetings and protests, even supported by local politicians and the press, saw the DWP retreat from plans to close Castlemilk and Cambuslang Jobcentres in Glasgow, but six other Jobcentres in the city are still due to close.

Meanwhile, the union's socialist-led DWP executive committee have persistently argued for a mass campaign, including industrial action, to defeat the office closures programme.

As a result, four sites have taken action, some taking a month of strike action, and the union's leadership continues to work with branches to expand the campaign by building the mood of members to struggle.

pay ballot

Nationally, the PCS is preparing members for a national consultative ballot on pay, to be launched in the autumn. Faced with a 15-20% drop in real earnings since 2008, civil servants are increasingly hard pressed by Tory pay austerity.

At Holyrood, the SNP have promised to break the pay cap for Scottish Government staff for 2018 - but this is unlikely to cancel out what staff have lost since 2008 and questions are still being asked about whether the SNP's finance minister Derek Mackay's promised pay rise will be above inflation.

Workers across the public and private sector are faced with the same situation; falling real wages, as pay rises fail to cope with inflation.

Young people coming into the Civil Service and other jobs are faced with jobs at risk and the running down of public services.



PCS members on the picket line (Dave Semple is on the far right of the picture)

The PCS national consultative ballot on pay will test the mood of members and test the ability of activists to turn out the vote, so as to beat the turnout requirements of the anti-union laws.

Socialist Party Scotland calls for a YES vote to support action on pay and calls for coordinated action across all trade unions whose members are affected by austerity.

Capitalism is ripping us off....

● PFI payments in Scotland for 2016/17 - for schools and hospitals built via hugely expensive public/private sector contracts - were over £1 billion. More than half of this (£544 million) was paid out by local councils to the privateers. End this rip-off and stop the cuts.

● Median pay for chief executives in Scotland for 2016/17 was £556,000. The average salary in Scotland is £22,918, a ratio of 24:1 in favour of the millionaire class. You do wonder why the SNP Government refuse to implement a policy of tax rises for the richest?

McStrike against low pay

Have you got some news for us?



The paper of Socialist Party Scotland
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As we go to press, McDonald's workers at two restaurants in England are striking on September 4th. These will be the first ever strikes at McDonald's in the UK. Richard is a McDonald's worker and a member of the Socialist Party.

"I have experienced first-hand the insecurity of zero-hour contracts, low pay and abuse by the management, to both me and my fellow work-mates"

These grievances will be all too familiar to many workers and are among the reasons McDonald's staff are striking for

the first time. The workers, members of bakers' union BFAWU, balloted at Crayford, south east London, and Cambridge stores have voted by an incredible 95.7% in favour of strike action.

The failure of the company to roll out fixed-term contracts and the continued utilisation of exploitative zero-hour contracts, low pay, job insecurity and bullying management are reasons for the strikes." Workers are also fighting for a £10 an hour minimum wage now, and union recognition.

The workers have forced Mc-

Donald's to implement the twice-promised offer of guaranteed hours for every McDonald's worker in the UK.

Their inspiring strike action shows other low-paid, exploited workers that we can fight back and organise to get rid of zero-hour contracts, bullying bosses and poverty pay. Workers are also fighting for a £10 an hour minimum wage now, and union recognition. The Socialist Party is supporting the McDonald's strikers in their dispute. Keep up to date with the strikes at: fastfoodrights.wordpress.com

STUDENTS GETTING ORGANISED GETTING SOCIALIST AND FIGHTING

Students are heading to college and university facing record levels of debt for the “privilege” of being educated, low paid work for the many who have to juggle study and employment just to get by, stress, rocketing rents and an increasing impact on mental health. Capitalism offers no decent future for the majority, only a life of insecurity and lack of fulfillments. In this feature **Socialist Students members**, who are organising in campuses across Scotland, explain why young people need to fight for a socialist future.

www.socialiststudents.org.uk

Rather than offering a pathway to a future, college and university education is becoming unaffordable with many students trapped in poverty. Private companies charge extortionate rents on campuses.

Student debt is also rising. In Aberdeen in 2015, the average amount owed by 20 to 24-year-olds in the city was £6,219, it is now £17,072.

The Royal Bank of Scotland's Student Living Index has found Glasgow to be among the UK's most expensive cities for students to live in.

Socialist Students calls for free education and living grants, not loans, for all. All student debt should be scrapped. Students who work should be paid a minimum wage of £10 an hour. We need to fight for publicly owned affordable student housing with rent control.

Socialist Students calls for Student Associations and unions to begin to build a mass campaign linked with the trade unions on these issues and against education cuts, the fight of Scottish students can be linked with students in England against tuition fees.

The victory of students in Spain last year against austerity attacks on education with mass strikes and demonstrations should be an inspiration. Socialist Students sister organisation Sindicato De Estudiantes played a leading role in this struggle.

Theresa May's Tory government of the 1% has no mandate, she is clinging onto power to save the capitalist establishment from a Corbyn-led government that would threaten their interests. Confronted with a mass movement of workers and young people, this Tory government can be forced from power.

In 2014 a significant number of students and youth joined the SNP after seeing independence as a possible way out of capitalist austerity and kicking back against the establishment.

But the SNP have betrayed their hopes by implementing Tory cuts in the Scottish government and councils, just like right wing Labour. Socialist Students demanded the powers of independence be used to benefit the lives of the 99%, with socialist policies.

Socialist Students is an active campaigning organisation on campuses across the country that discusses socialist and Marxist ideas. It's time to organise and discuss how can change this rotten rigged society join us today!

We need socialism

The left, radical policies in Jeremy Corbyn's election manifesto, which socialists support, including a £10 an hour minimum wage, a building program of affordable housing, the ending of tuition fees and austerity ex-



cited a lot of young people.

Unfortunately, many Labour politician's including the Scottish leadership are hostile to these policies and to Corbyn and do not want to see Labour transformed into a fighting organisation.

The left needs to mobilise, including in student organisations to democratise the party, defend Corbyn's policies and push the right wing aside.

We need a mass party, based on the working class, open and inclusive to all who want to fight

for socialist and an austerity policies. It's necessary not only to carry out renationalisation of rail, mail and water, but to take on the major companies, banks and industries that dominate our economy and – by extension – the lives of millions. It means nationalising them under democratic workers control with compensation paid to shareholders only on the basis of proven need.

A socialist economy would mean sustainable planning under democratic public owner-

ship, rather than a system driven by profit and the short term interests of the 1% super wealthy and bosses.

It means being prepared to rely on the mass action and organisation of working class and young people to push for this programme.

In short, it means being prepared to fully transform society along socialist lines – to do what is necessary to build a society for the many not the few. As socialists we are internationalists and are fighting for a socialist world.

UNIFIED, FIGHTING BACK



Socialists stand for changing the world:

- Full education maintenance living grants not loans, write off student debt
- A £10 an hour minimum wage now! No age exemptions. Ban zero hour contracts. Full trade union rights at work
- A mass building program of affordable owned council housing. Rent control now
- End discrimination and oppression. Mass movements against bigotry and the far right
- No to all cuts. Fully fund public services. Council and the Scottish government should set no cuts budgets
- A mass anti austerity party for workers and youth fighting on socialist policies
- Public ownership of the major corporations, transport and services under democratic sustainable planning for the 99%.
- No to war, terror and environmental destruction. For a socialist world

To discuss these ideas and find out more contact us.

Text join plus your name and uni/ college to 07927342060

The rent's too high



William Campbell
Aberdeen University Socialist Students

Since the market crash of 2008/9, the average rent for students has increased from £120 to £147, as reported by the Guardian.

This stat however only represents the cost of living in 'purpose built' student accommodation and not students living in private accommodation.

For those students, the National Union of Students (NUS) published their 'Homes fit for study' report that showed students paid on average between £200 to £400 a month.

It is no wonder then, that there have been concerted efforts since 2009 by Socialist Students and student campaigns to combat the rises in rent.

Socialist Students in Coventry won a victory in changing their student union policy to campaign on housing issues. Socialist Students also led another victory at the University of York to run a not-for-profit letting agency for student accommodation.

At the University College London, the UCL "cut the rent" campaign won a major victory at forcing the university to freeze its rent rates and even provide a greater accommodation bursary in the coming academic year of 2017/18. This victory must serve as a lesson to all students that protests, mass campaigning and rent strikes can work

A victory no doubt that has spurred other similar campaigns. At University of Aberdeen Socialist Students have worked with other groups on campus to bring about the demands of lowering rent rates at 50% of the SAAS loan students receive.

With the strain of paying rent comes with it, the strain of having to pay for basic utilities and food. Across the UK students are forced to choose between rent or food. At the University of Hull, welfare officers reported

near 200 students, and growing, are having to use local foodbanks and the University of East Anglia having to launch its own foodbank to tackle the rising student poverty at their university.

'The Trussell Trust', released statistics showing that '4 in 5 foodbank users go hungry multiple times a year - with price rises and insecure incomes to blame'.

The victories and movements seen in the past year are only concessions for as long as the source of the problem is not dealt with. That source being the lack of publicly owned and funded housing to guarantee the right of all people, student and workers alike, to an affordable home.

Easing the cost of rent would allow students and workers to be able to afford more food as well other amenities necessary for a decent standard of living.

united campaign

Students, student unions workers and trade unions need to unite to fight back against the rent hikes. We should consider effective forms of mass campaigning including demonstrations, protests, class walkouts and rent strikes.

We cannot tolerate a society where much of either publicly funded benefits or hard-earned wages go straight into the pockets of landlords and agencies who only seek to inflate their profit margins even if it endangers their tenant to becoming homeless.

This coming year, Socialist Students will be taking up the issue of rent for students to cultivate support on campuses across the UK to fight on the issue of rent to universities.

To stand up against the landlords and universities and to build a confident generation of socialists who will take up the fight for socialism even well after they have graduated. We need rent controlled publicly owned affordable student accommodation.

Trump backlash deepens in the US

Seven months after Trump's inauguration, his regime is mired in deep crisis and key parts of his agenda are stalled, despite Republican control of Congress. Trump is desperately looking to divert attention from the political setbacks and the crisis of his administration. This is certainly a factor in the sabre rattling against North Korea and the inflammatory commentary on the events in Charlottesville. **Matt Dobson**, who recently visited the US, reports.

The constant stalling of "Trumpcare" in particular is a severe blow to Trump and the Republican leadership as a whole.

After making the repeal of Obamacare a central party plank for seven years, none of the variations of Trumpcare could muster even 20% support in opinion polls. And for good reason: Trumpcare was a vicious attack against working people generally, but especially the poor, women, and disabled people in order to give the super rich a massive tax break.

As Socialist Alternative has pointed out, what the Republicans have actually accomplished is to make Medicare for All and single-payer health care far more popular than ever before. But this victory against the right did not happen by itself: it took tens of thousands protesting, standing up in Republican politicians' town halls, and calling and emailing their representatives.

Bernie Sanders led the way, holding rallies in key areas and inspiring people with his advocacy for Medicare for All, but the Democratic Party leadership refused to mobilize ordinary people in the streets while the unions and other progressive organizations missed a key opportunity to take the mass movement against Trump to a new level.

Trumpcare also put the serious divisions within the Republican Party on vivid display. One wing will not be satisfied unless all "entitlements" including Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security are gutted and privatized, while another wing correctly fears for their jobs if they follow this line. These divisions will continue to play out in the fall of 2017 with the budget and tax reform.

It has been hard to stop watching the train wreck that is Trump's White House.

At the time of writing we have seen the crisis around press secretaries and Trump advisor Steve Bannon resigning. Trump faces questions about his presidential campaign's ties to the Russian regime and its dubious finances. There is much talk in the US press and among liberal commentators about a possible impeachment. The net effect of this is that Trump has distanced himself further from the Republican leadership. Many Republican politicians are becoming more confident to attack Trump.

Conservatives

Meanwhile Trump has moved ever closer to the so-called "movement conservatives", including the Christian right, anti-immigration groups, the extreme anti-taxation crowd, Fox News and the NRA. Many of these groups represent the traditional far right, before the arrival of the alt-right.

These layers see the Trump administration as getting things done and he spoke to them after Charlottesville.

It's becoming clearer under Trump that the police will be "let of the leash". There will be maximum sentences in drug cases and crackdowns on immigration, with the overall aim of cutting it in half. The latest development is Trump's threatened ban on transgender people in the military, a clear sop to the Christian right. And there is more to come including trying to criminalize dissent and bolder anti-union measures.

All told, these "movement conservative" groups have the

support of only a small minority of the American population but it is a very big part of those who vote in Republican primaries. In this way, Trump can keep most of the restive Republican politicians in tow, at least for now, by threatening to unleash the movement conservatives against them, even as his overall poll numbers continue to drop.

One factor that has prevented an even worse cratering of Trump's support are the relatively good economic figures, even though they mask massive inequality and the deep social crisis facing the working class. There are, however, signs of economic overheating and a tipping into recession would decisively end any illusions that Trump was "bringing good jobs back".

Corporate Democrats

The other factor that has helped Trump is the weakness of the Democratic Party. It is remarkable that seven months into this deeply unpopular and unhinged regime, the Democrats have lower favourability ratings than Trump!

The party establishment, including Chuck Schumer and Nancy Pelosi, recently launched its "Better Deal" initiative to appeal to working class voters in advance of the 2018 mid-term elections and answer the question of what they stand for besides getting rid of Trump. While this did include calling for a federal \$15 minimum wage it remarkably did not call for Medicare for All, which is overwhelmingly popular in the party's base.

The reason is that it would be completely unacceptable to



Socialist Alternative contingent marching in Boston against Trump

their corporate donors. What the Democratic establishment and the ruling class as a whole fear most is inadvertently igniting a social upheaval that brings to the surface all the pent-up anger at the system. This was seen in California recently where corporate Democrats blocked the progress of a single payer healthcare bill.

The Democrats' political weakness is fuelling a left insurgency within the party. How far this develops remains to be seen, but the possibility exists of a "Tea Party of the left" type development in Congress if some of the Berniecrat insurgents are elected in 2018. At the going rate, the Democrats have a real opportunity to win back control of the House, if only because Trump will weigh like a millstone around the necks of the Republicans.

But even with a further development of the struggle within the Democratic Party what is almost certainly ruled out is transforming it into a People's Party as hundreds of thousands fervently wish.

A party representing the 99% would have to refuse all corporate donations, have a progressive platform that its public representatives were required to adhere to, and real, accountable democratic structures. The establishment wing of the Democrats will resist all these things to the death and, despite the deep crisis of legitimacy

they face, they still hold the levers of power within the party. One way or another, what is posed is the necessity of a new independent party as those calling to "Draft Bernie for a Peoples Party", a petition which has gathered 50,000 signatures with major events in the autumn in which Socialist Alternative's Seattle city councillor Kshama Sawant is participating.

The real question is when the mass movement on the streets will be reignited. The millions who came out in early 2017, which saw mass movements of women's marches, which attracted tens of millions in the US and internationally, and the mass shutdowns of airports against Trump's travel ban have not been defeated or generally demoralized, and they are certainly angrier than ever.

There is however a serious lack of leadership and a real questioning about the way forward.

This shows why the growing socialist left in the U.S - with thousands joining socialist organisations like the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and Socialist Alternative - has a critical role to play. It means articulating a strategy to unite all those targeted by Trump around a bold working class program, including using a range of tactics like mass occupations and political strike action to put the right firmly on the defensive.



Against racism and the far right

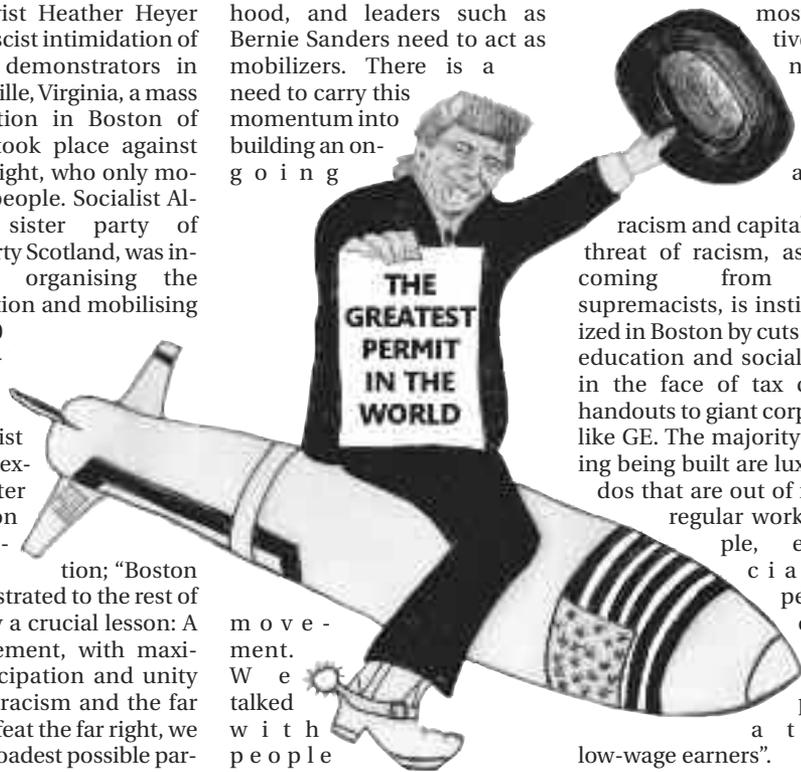
40,000 march against racism and the right

In the wake of the murder of a left activist Heather Heyer and neo-fascist intimidation of anti-racist demonstrators in Charlottesville, Virginia, a mass demonstration in Boston of 40,000 took place against the far right, who only mobilised 25 people. Socialist Alternative, sister party of Socialist Party Scotland, was involved in organising the demonstration and mobilising a 1,000 strong "socialist contingent".

As Socialist Alternative explained after the Boston mobilisation: "Boston has demonstrated to the rest of the country a crucial lesson: A mass movement, with maximum participation and unity can defeat racism and the far right. To defeat the far right, we need the broadest possible participation in the movement. This means that labor unions, key progressive organizations such as the

NAACP and Planned Parenthood, and leaders such as Bernie Sanders need to act as mobilizers. There is a need to carry this momentum into building an ongoing

and that to challenge racism most effectively we need to build a movement against



racism and capitalism. The threat of racism, as well as coming from white supremacists, is institutionalized in Boston by cuts to public education and social services in the face of tax cuts and handouts to giant corporations like GE. The majority of housing being built are luxury condos that are out of reach for regular working people, especially people of color who are disproportionatelyately low-wage earners".

Cartoon: Elaine Mallon

Trump on the neo-fascist attacks in Charlottesville:
 "You had a group on the other side that came charging in without a permit, and they were very, very violent. . . . You had a lot of people in that [white nationalist] group that were there to innocently protest and very legally protest, because you know — I don't know if you know — they had a permit. The other group didn't have a permit."

Socialist election campaign in Minneapolis



Local and city council elections take place in November which could be a key platform for the left. In cities like Minneapolis, sitting councillors stood on the \$15 minimum wage platform, alongside other demands for racial equity reforms. These have emerged as

a central dividing line in the hotly contested 2017 city council races. Big-business-backed Democrats in City Hall faced growing pressure from insurgent left Berniecrat challengers, fuelling record turnout in the Democratic Party caucus this spring.

Socialist Alternative and their city council candidate Ginger Jentzen (see picture) have played a vital role in Minneapolis becoming the first Midwestern city to enact a \$15 an hour minimum wage. The proposal will benefit 71,000 workers, overwhelmingly women and workers of colour. Winning \$15 in Minneapolis shows another way cities can push back against Trump's corporate-backed agenda.

no corporate money

Ginger's election campaign, which accepts no corporate money, has growing momentum. So far, the campaign has raised \$60,000, three times the amount of her Democrat opponent. Ginger's campaign has focused on demands to tax big property developers and build affordable public housing as well as an end to police brutality and racial bias and de-

manding a democratically elected civilian control board.

Ginger's campaign makes the point that Bernie's call for a political revolution against the billionaire class produced a deep echo in Minneapolis, though few in City Hall supported him.

The fact that so many left-insurgent candidates are running viable campaigns against incumbents is a step

forward. However, Socialist Alternative urges more candidates to join Ginger Jentzen and Kshama Sawant in refusing to take a penny from the corporate executives and big business lobbyists.

We urge a clean break with the Democrats and a program based on unapologetic demands that speak to the real needs of working-class people.



The latest issue of **Socialism Today**, the theoretical journal of the Socialist Party in England and Wales, is available now from Socialist Party Scotland. It includes features on Trump and the US. For more on the US see socialistalternative.org

Elect a left Labour leader for Scotland



Richard Leonard MSP (pictured in the centre), a member of the Campaign for Socialism, will be contesting the Scottish Labour leadership following Kezia Dugdale's resignation

Following Kezia Dugdale's resignation as leader of the Scottish Labour Party, Socialist Party Scotland welcomes the announcement by Richard Leonard that he is to stand in the leadership contest. Leonard is an MSP, a member of the Campaign for Socialism, a former GMB industrial organiser and has a record of support for Jeremy Corbyn and left policies generally.

Indeed we have called on the Labour left to challenge the Blairite leadership in Scotland ever since Corbyn was elected as UK leader in 2015. Although this was mistakenly not done, now that Dugdale has resigned a major campaign to turn Scottish Labour into a fighting left and anti-austerity party must now be launched.

The election is likely to be a contest between Richard Leonard and the Blairite millionaire Anus Sarwar. Both Sarwar and Kezia Dugdale called on Jeremy Corbyn to resign as UK leader in 2016 as part of the attempted coup by the Labour right to force Corbyn out. These actions alone should have led to a challenge to remove them from their positions.

The contest for Scottish Labour leader comes at a crucial juncture. The SNP have seen their support fall dramatically, most recently at the recent June general election when they lost 21 of their 56 MPs. A big space to the left of

the SNP has opened up and with the correct policies and approach an anti-austerity and left Labour Party in Scotland could make major gains. Indeed Labour's partial recovery in Scotland in June – from 1 to 7 MPs – was due entirely to the Corbyn factor. However, it was hampered enormously by a completely wrong policy on Scottish independence and opposition in principle to an indyref 2. (see pages 2,3 and 4)

By no means is this contest a straightforward one. Labour's membership in Scotland has not seen the surge of pro-Corbyn workers and young people witnessed in other parts of the UK. In fact Scotland was the only area where Owen Smith, Corbyn's right wing challenger, won in the 2016 contest.

Nevertheless, a fighting campaign by Richard Leonard and the left in the Labour Party and the trade unions can defeat the pro-capitalist right represented by Sarwar.

To achieve this Leonard needs to put forward a clear and unambiguous case for the transformation of Scottish Labour into a democratic and socialist party. That means full rights must be given to party members and the trade unions to be able to deselect MPs, MSPs and councillors who fail to fight cuts and refuse to defend left policies and seek to undermine Corbyn. He should support the opening up of the

Labour Party for affiliation and membership rights for all left, socialist and anti-austerity forces, including those previously expelled for opposing the right, like Socialist Party Scotland members – formerly Militant.

Richard Leonard's campaign should also stand on the policy of unions like Unison, Unite and others who campaign for councils to set no-cuts needs budgets. There is nothing more damaging for Labour than if, like the SNP, their elected representatives continually vote to pass-on Tory austerity. Labour's collapse in Glasgow and across the west of Scotland is rooted in the domination of the right wing for decades.

For this reason, it's not just a question of defeating the Blairite right wing in this leadership contest, but of a root-and-branch transformation of the Labour in Scotland. Labour is still, despite Corbyn's successes, two parties in one. The Richard Leonard campaign, if it is taken across Scotland to Labour Party members and into the trade unions, with public meetings, through social media and on the streets, can lay the basis for that transformation into a fighting left party.

We would therefore appeal to Labour Party members and trade unionists, if they have a vote through their affiliated unions, to back Richard Leonard in the election.

Young workers fight exploitation



By a young GMB member

Having just finished an apprenticeship with a joinery firm, I have been exposed and subjected to some of the most exploitative methods used by the bosses.

My apprenticeship started at age 20 on a shopfloor, with an hourly rate of £3.52. I was quickly expected to produce at the same rate as time served staff. This gives the bosses the perfect opportunity to engage in super exploitation of young workers, making mega profits from our labour.

The older shopfloor workers too are unsatisfied with their working conditions, pay and bullying from the bosses. Overtime is also used as a tool to keep the workforce smaller and more productive, allowing them to suck more profit from us for less pay.

Over the last decade the workers of the firm fought for union recognition and won. Many of the older workers on the shopfloor are approaching retirement age, younger workers who are stepping in are often not in the union, which will lower the overall trade union density in the factory. The result of this will be the bosses being able to undermine working conditions even further.

At the start of 2017 I was the only shopfloor worker below the age of 35 who was a union member. Through discussions with apprentices about management mistreatment and below minimum wage pay rates, a further four apprentices, all aged between 17-25, have signed up to the GMB. To put this in context, these four workers represent almost 20% of the workers in the factory.

One of these young workers quickly put in a formal complaint against bullying from management, knowing he had the union on his side. A recent recruitment drive by GMB saw some more workers sign up. We will now be able to go from

having one shop steward to two.

Democratising GMB

Some Labour Party members within the GMB have begun efforts to build a Grassroots Left within the union. This could be a step forward towards democratising the bureaucratic structures of the GMB.

The draft programme of the GMB Grassroots Left contains many positive features, including regular elections and the right of members to recall any elected official. There is also a clear commitment to fighting against low pay, for public ownership and for socialist change.

However, little is done to build support for this programme, beyond social media pages, with little involvement from workers outside of the ranks of the Labour Party, and other left wing groups.

At the same time we have seen the leadership of the GMB in a scandalous move, accept the introduction of flexible contracts for Asda workers. The need for a fighting left leadership in the GMB has never been clearer.

The decision of General Secretary, Tim Roache, to back Owen Smith for the Labour leadership, despite 2016 congress delegates overwhelmingly backing Corbyn, shows that a mood exists to the left of the union leadership. This was also shown in the decision of conference to support councils setting legal, no cuts budgets.

The anger that exists must be turned into action. Socialist and left activists within the GMB must continue to raise the ideas of coordinated industrial action with other unions across the public and private sector. This would be an important step forward in the fight against the ongoing assault workers in Scotland and the rest of the UK are facing against their wages and terms and conditions.

LABOUR RETREATS ON EUROPE

Reject the single market Fight for a socialist exit

**Editorial from the Socialist
Paper of the Socialist Party in
England and Wales**

"The Labour Party's announcement that it wants the UK to remain within all the EU structures in the years right after Brexit is the best news to come out of British politics in a long time." So read the 28 August editorial of the Financial Times, one of the main mouthpieces of big business and the super-rich.

The glee of the establishment press of all persuasions, along with the pro-EU wing of the Tories and Blairite Labour politicians, shows who will benefit from and be satisfied with this wrong u-turn.

This position - coming just four weeks before the Labour Party conference where members and affiliates can supposedly have their say on policy - will anger the millions of working class people who voted Leave. It risks undermining the hard-won support garnered for Jeremy Corbyn's Labour during the general election campaign by his pro-worker manifesto.

But it would also be false to suggest that it will appease those Labour voters who voted

Remain, mainly as a result of revulsion at the reactionary, racist leadership of the establishment Leave campaign and to express a desire to defend the rights of EU migrants.

In fact the new turn seems to be a big step back in terms of these issues. The party won't rule out remaining in the Single Market and Customs Union permanently - as long as a deal could be struck to opt out of the EU's free movement rules. The message is that all that needs to be achieved through Brexit is lower immigration.

Where is the 'workers' Brexit' that Jeremy Corbyn spoke about during the general election campaign in this plan? Where is the promise to reject the EU rules which place barriers in the way of nationalisation - like that of the railways and energy companies promised in Corbyn's manifesto - or which say that companies' right to make money trumps workers' right to strike? From its inception [the EU] has aimed to drive through neoliberal, anti-working class measures in order to maximise the profits of the capitalist elite. This is a fact that Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell have long argued.

After all, it was only weeks before this announcement that Corbyn said that under a Labour government Brexit would definitely mean leaving the Single Market. And only two months ago Corbyn, filled with confidence after the mass support his programme won in the general election, rightly sacked three front benchers for voting, against the Labour whip, for a parliamentary amendment saying that membership of the Single Market should be retained.

There urgently needs to be a statement from Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell clearly opposing the position put by Starmer, and calling for a socialist Brexit in the interests of the working class. Unless that happens, it will seem that, as with their agreement to campaign for Remain in the referendum, Corbyn and McDonnell have conceded to the right wing on this issue.

This is a mistake which only weakens the position of Corbyn and the left within the Labour Party and their standing among the working class in general. As the Socialist Party has argued since Jeremy first won the leadership, in the civil war within the Labour Party



The EU has attacked workers right for decades

concession will only invite aggression, and instil among workers a scepticism that the left has the determination necessary to transform the party and implement their programme.

Blairites

The Blairite wing of the Labour Party, having been weakened by the general election result, has been using the issue of a 'soft Brexit' as their main lever to organise against Corbyn. At the behest of the capitalist class they are openly collaborating with pro-EU big business MPs in all parties, including the Tory Party. If it is not countered Starmer's announcement will be a significant victory for these pro-capitalist, neoliberal forces.

Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell should urgently come out fighting, mobilising all those workers and young peo-

ple who have joined Labour, attended rallies and given support to Corbyn to carry out a top-to-bottom transformation of the party. The Socialist Party calls for:

- Mandatory reselection to allow Labour Party members a democratic say in who their elected representatives are - kick out the Blairites!
- Open up the Labour Party. Restore the rights of the trade unions within Labour. Readmit the socialists, with the right to organise in an inclusive federation
- No more cuts budgets from Labour councils! Let the Tories dare to take on councils protecting our local services!
- Fight for a socialist Brexit. Organise a campaign with European socialists and workers' organisations to use the Brexit talks to tear up the EU bosses' club rules. For a new collaboration of the peoples of Europe on a socialist basis

Bad Art tour coming to Glasgow

Elaine Mallon

The Bad Art World Tour will be hosting an event in Glasgow on the 14th October, 2017.

The evening will run alongside events all over the world including Australia, Spain, Belgium, Austria, Germany, Sweden and several events taking place in England.

It's going to be a real celebration of working class musicians and artists. Bad Art Scotland are delighted to be involved and are very excited about the months ahead. Our event in Scotland will take place at 7pm on Saturday the 14th October at The Old Hairdressers

in Glasgow. We have some fantastic musicians lined up, from acoustic vibes to twisted piano songs to raw guitar bands to looper pedals and experimental rhythms. All this set to the back drop of visual improvisation with lots more, including poets and art displays.

We'll also have an info stall and a great wee raffle! For the bargain price of £3 entry you will enjoy a night of fantastic art and music.

Bad Art aims to build a movement from the ground up in working class communities that unites the struggle of artists around the world. The global austerity measures that have taken place have had a

detrimental effect on the arts: venues are closing, tuition is being privatised and low wages prevent the purchase of essential tools and materials.

Young working class artists are among those hit hardest by these brutal cuts and we believe that a successful fight back requires the mass of ordinary makers and consumers of the arts not big names. We need to organise together and Bad Art aims to facilitate this as much as possible.

Please come along to our event, get involved and support the creative struggle.

If you'd like more information please don't hesitate to contact us:



info@badartworld.net
www.badartworld.net

www.facebook.com/badartworldnet

Inspiring international event culminates in historic unification



Over 600 people attended the rally in Barcelona to celebrate 100 years since the Russian revolution

Socialist Party Scotland is part of the worldwide socialist organisation the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI). The CWI held a hugely successful summer school in Barcelona in July that brought together more than 400 socialists from around the world for a weeks discussion and debate. A major highlight was the discussion and vote in favour of unification of the CWI with Izquierda Revolucionaria (Revolutionary Left) from Spain, Venezuela and Mexico. This report highlights some of the inspiring discussions that took place.

"This has been the biggest school the CWI has ever organised", said Peter Taaffe from the International Secretariat of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), when opening (together with Juan Ignacio Ramos, general secretary of Izquierda Revolucionaria in the Spanish state) the special unification congress which finished a historic week for the CWI and Izquierda Revolucionaria. It was not only in numbers attending where the impact of this extremely confident gathering was reflected, but also in the political level of the discussions and the electric atmosphere which ran throughout the event.

Over 400 revolutionary socialists from 31 countries attended the week-long school, in some cases reflecting the strides forward which the CWI has taken in the recent period.

A large and vibrant delegation from Socialist Alternative in the USA, which has seen transformative growth in recent years on the back of the successful battle for \$15 in a number of key cities, and the historic election and re-election of Kshama Sawant to Seattle City Council, made its clear mark on the event.

The school opened with a plenary discussion on the situation in Europe, introduced by Peter Taaffe and replied to by

Tony Saunois. The themes which were developed in this discussion – the unresolved and structural nature of capitalism's ongoing crisis, the rise of new mass Left formations in a number of key countries and the importance of principled socialist leadership both in the struggle in communities and workplaces against austerity and in offering a Marxist alternative to reformist leaderships in mass movements of workers and youth – were central to all discussions during the week.

mass movements

The school heard examples of how CWI and Izquierda Revolucionaria in Britain, the Spanish state, Germany, Brazil, France and elsewhere, approached the mass movements around new Left parties and leaders, from Corbyn to PSOL (Party of Socialism and Liberty - Brazil). Our unique approach - of positive engagement to build these movements into powerful mass parties of the working class, combined with an honest criticism of the limits of reformism and defence of a socialist, internationalist programme – has allowed our forces to become increasingly significant factors within and around these developments.

Comrades from South Africa, Greece and other countries ex-

plained how, even in the absence of such mass forces at this stage, Marxists can play a leading role in attempts to gather the forces from the ranks of the movement for the building of mass political alternatives which can undergo rapid growth and development.

Plenary sessions were also held on World Perspectives (introduced by Hannah Sell and replied to by Robert Bechert), Socialist Feminism (introduced and replied to by Judy Beishon) and Building the CWI (introduced by Clare Doyle). Over 20 commissions were organised throughout the week which looked in greater depth key political and theoretical questions and at perspectives and the work of the CWI in various countries and regions.

revolutionary leadership

The school took place in the immediate aftermath of the acquittal of the Jobstown defendants in Ireland, including Paul Murphy and two other Socialist Party (CWI in Ireland) members. This campaign, in which the CWI mobilised support internationally, was a great victory. Alongside Socialist Party members' leading role in the mass struggle in Ireland against

the troika-imposed water charges, when a mass boycott led to the charges being scrapped, this victory underlines the importance of steadfast principled socialist leadership for the waging of successful class battles.

The same can be said for the victories achieved in the US under the leadership of Socialist Alternative, where the election of Kshama Sawant in 2013 to Seattle City Council, as the first openly socialist public representative in that city for 100 years, put the CWI firmly on the map in the 'belly of the beast'. Socialist Alternative's leading role ensured that Seattle became the first major city to win a \$15 minimum wage, propelling a mass movement spreading throughout the country.

Just before the school, Minneapolis became the latest major city to win \$15, again spearheaded by Socialist Alternative, including Ginger Jentzen, SA candidate in council elections this coming November. Along with our Irish comrades' example, Socialist Alternative in the USA shows how to use elected positions in capitalist institutions: not to subordinate or sell out the struggle on the streets and in workplaces, but to magnify and strengthen struggles.

The leadership provided by

Izquierda Revolucionaria members in the Sindicato de Estudiantes (students' union) - through repeated mass mobilisations and general strikes - was also fundamental to the recent defeat of the PP government's Francoist-inspired "revalidation" exams.

Compare these victories and principled mass struggles with the shameful policy of demobilisation and class collaboration implemented by the majority of the world's major trade union leaders. The school's discussions and the historic unification with IR, will be important milestones in building the CWI during the coming class battles internationally.

The energy, confidence and enthusiasm which has reverberated throughout the ranks of the CWI as a result of these victories, and of the historic re-unification of our forces with Izquierda Revolucionaria in Spain, Mexico and Venezuela, set the tone for this unforgettable school.

During the course of the school, which took place outside Barcelona, the CWI and IR took the bold initiative of holding a public rally in the centre of Barcelona to celebrate the centenary of the 1917 October socialist revolution. Over 600 people attended the event in the searing July heat of Barcelona, to hear Ana Garcia, Paul Murphy, Juan Ignacio Ramos, Peter Taaffe and Kshama Sawant.

Unification

The participation of comrades from IR enriched the course of the whole School,



Peter Taaffe addressing the rally in Barcelona



This was my first time at the CWI summer school and it was a great experience. I came out of it having a much better grasp on many topics discussed and I am more aware on what is going on internationally. It was great being able to meet comrades from all over the world and learn from their experiences. The commissions I attended included one on the Russian Revolution. I feel like it is still very relevant and aspects of it can be applied when helping to build a strong party here in Scotland. I also found the commission on the environmental catastrophe interesting and can see that under a capitalist economy it would be difficult to combat such a worldwide problem. It showed again the importance of the CWI for spreading the ideas of socialism internationally.

Yolanda Piotrowicz, Aberdeen

with key contributions on Europe, the national question, trade union and youth work, and the rise of new Left formations, among many others.

A special unification congress was organised on the last day of the school. Delegates elected from the democratic bodies of the CWI national sections and the IR, voted on a document outlining the political basis for the unification, and elected leading members of IR onto the CWI's International Executive Committee.

The unification congress was opened and closed by Peter Taaffe and Juan Ignacio Ramos. Comrades young and old, from the Spanish state, Mexico, Venezuela, Britain, Germany, Greece, Belgium and the US spoke in a joyful but serious meeting. After 25 years of separation, this congress was not one of sentimental nostalgia but one of strength and confidence for the future.

The "homecoming" as it was repeatedly described, of IR back into the CWI, is far more

than the righting of an historic wrong, and far more than the adding of IR's hundreds of members to the CWI's militant ranks.

It represents a qualitative strengthening of the CWI and its ability to intervene and influence events in the next period.

It is a unification brought about by the capitalist crisis, which has tested all revolutionary tendencies, and the revolutionary winds which are blowing around the world.

Amid the crises, splits and pessimism which is the lot of others on the Left in this period, this principled and enthusiastic unification of our forces will be noticed by workers, youth and revolutionaries around the world searching for a powerful socialist alternative.

We invite them all to contact, discuss and fight with us for the building of a mass world party of socialist revolution.

● Keep up to date on the work and analysis of the CWI at: www.socialistworld.net



what we stand for

Socialist Party Scotland fights for a socialist society, democratically run for the needs of all and not for the profits of the few.

We oppose every cut and austerity measure by fighting in the trade unions, communities, colleges and schools for every possible improvement in the lives of working class people. Organised, we, the working class and the 99%, have the potential to change society.

Because capitalism is a world system, the struggle for democratic socialism must be international. Socialist Party Scotland is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a socialist organisation that organises in over 40 countries.

www.socialistworld.net

work and income

- For trade union action for a £10 an hour minimum wage. No age exemptions. For an annual increase in the minimum wage, linked to average earnings.
- Reject Workfare; for the right to decent benefits, training or a job without compulsion.
- A maximum 35-hour week without loss of pay.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, sickness and holiday rights from the first day of employment. End zero-hour contracts.
- Scrap the anti-union laws. Build fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time officials should be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension. Reinstate the link with average earnings now.

environment

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy. End the problems of early obsolescence and unrecycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy industry. No to nuclear power. No to Trident
- A democratically planned, low fare, publicly owned transport system, to protect the environment.



public services

- Fight all cuts. No to privatisation. Renationalise all privatised utilities and services.
- Free, high quality education for all from nursery to university; with a living grant. No to the return of tuition fees in Scotland. Cancel the student debt and end the cuts in education funding.
- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health - free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out the private contractors from all parts of the NHS.
- Keep council housing public. For a massive programme of publicly owned housing to provide good quality homes at low rents.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of workers and service users.

rights

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

A mass working class party

- For a mass workers party that draws together workers, young people and activists from other movements to build a political alternative to the big business parties.
- Trade unions should play a central role in helping to build a new workers' party.

socialism and internationalism

- Tax the rich. For a socialist government that takes the major companies in Scotland into public ownership Run them under democratic working class control and management. Compensation should be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- For an independent socialist Scotland. A free and voluntary socialist federation of Scotland with England Wales and Ireland.
- A democratic socialist, environmentally secure plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority.
- No to the bosses European Union. For a socialist Europe and a socialist world free from poverty.

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DEFEND OUR

NHS

By an NHS worker

Scotland's NHS is massively underfunded. Cuts to services and attacks on workers pay, conditions and workload are increasing.

Take NHS Tayside as an example. Consultation on the possible closure of psychiatric units in Perth and Angus has begun. These are vital services for mental health care provision.

Driven by the £214m planned budget cuts by 2021, not far off £1m per week, this level of cuts will have a major impact, including that pa-

tients will not get the care they need.

Tayside is proposing to remove services from its new facilities in mental health, while still having to pay for them under the Private Finance Initiative, which allowed private companies to build facilities and lease them back to the NHS.

New hospitals like Murray Royal in Perth still need to be paid for even though their services are being reduced.

The health board has liabilities to pay for the private provision of facilities of up to £14m per year until 2042 for new hospitals built in Angus,

Perth and Dundee over 15 years.

At the same time senior management shared £87,000 last year in performance related bonuses - including a 2.3% bonus to chief executive Lesley McLay - when the board posted a deficit of £11.6m!

This crisis will directly impact patient services. Shortages in staff will increase. Already they are being cited as the reason behind relocating services to single sites. In Tayside, current shortages are covered by spiralling increases in bank and agency costs, up ten-fold in 5 years.

Across clinical posts - nurses and doctors - there are vacancies which are filled by agency staff to the tune of £9.7m last year alone, 39% of that went on covering nurse shortages alone.

The provision of local services are under threat as never before. This situation indicates that austerity in the health service is getting worse, and that after 10 years in government the SNP have no answer to budget cuts apart from more of the same.

We need a campaign of resistance across the region to keep services accessible. Socialist Party Scotland de-

mands that the threat over the Moredun ward in Perth has to be lifted. Mental health services in Perth, Angus and Dundee must be defended and the cost-cutting agenda of centralisation of care in single sites must end.

We demand that the SNP government cancel the debt of NHS Tayside. Massive payments for PFI/PPP NHS projects must end.

The NHS in Scotland should be spending money on health not leases to private companies or loans to banks.

We want a fully funded health service free at the point of need.