Women's Marches mark Trump's first year >>Pages 4&5

BIGOT IN CHIEF!

Shabby deal with French president will lead to more deaths and worse conditions >>Page 7

Tories will pay to make Calais refugees suffer

Socialist Worker

£1 | No 2588 | 24-30 January 2018 | socialistworker.co.uk

MARCH IN LONDON 3 FEB

'WE MUST FIGHT FOR NHS NOW'

NURSE SPEAKS OUT

'Join our vital health protest'

HEALTH WORKERS are calling on people to join the demonstration on Saturday 3 February in central London.

Staffing figures released this week hammered home the scale of the NHS crisis. The number of unfilled nursing posts in England reached a new high of over 34,000 last year.

And some areas are recruiting only one nurse for every 400 jobs advertised

Mark, a nurse in Manchester, told Socialist Worker, "There's not enough funding, there are not enough staff, there are not enough beds. The winter crisis has highlighted how bad things are—we need to stop cuts and privatisation."

He added, "I work with

Mark—'Nurses need your support'

elderly people, I sit in hospital corridors with them for hours while waiting for a bed."

The scale of the NHS crisis is causing rows among the Tories. Boris Johnson briefed that he would call for extra NHS funding at a cabinet meeting this Tuesday.

Mark said, "They're all self-serving. Boris is just after Theresa May's job."

The demonstration, called by the People's Assembly and Health Campaigns Together, is an opportunity to take advantage of the Tories' problems.

We cannot wait for a Labour government—we have fight for the NHS now.

>>Page 6

THE THINGS THEY SAY

‘I told them I was on the board of a Chinese company, that I was comfortably off’

Former MP **Peter Lilley** explains why he wasn’t caught in a Channel Four sting Politicians For Hire

‘You can call me a Corbynist, but I am pro-Nato, pro-Trident and against freedom of movement’

Journalist **Paul Mason** explains to the Sunday Times his commitment to Labour

‘I have seen people die, I have seen people blown up, I have seen people shot. Even the Taliban doesn’t quite prepare you for Ukip’

Ukip leader, for now, **Henry Bolton**

‘Beautiful weather all over our great country, a perfect day for all Women to March’

US president **Donald Trump** misses the point of the Women’s march

Badger throttler clings on after Ukip no confidence vote

THE RACIST Ukip party is embroiled in a fresh crisis. Its national executive committee passed a motion of no confidence in leader Henry Bolton on Sunday—unanimously save for Bolton, who voted against.

It follows the badger throttler’s current or ex-girlfriend, depending on who you believe, Jo Marney making a number of racist comments.

Bolton was refusing to go as Socialist Worker went to press, despite other rats quickly jumping ship.

Deputy leader Margot Parker resigned as did Ukip’s immigration spokesperson John Bickley and trade spokesperson William Dartmouth. At least 12 resigned in total.

Bolton faces an emergency general meeting where members force him out.

One problem with yet another leadership election is that Ukip can’t afford to run one.

Another is the lack of credible alternatives. Neil Hamilton, leader of Ukip in Wales, made some effort to suggest otherwise. After suggesting that Bolton “seek psychological help”, Hamilton declared that a “calm, experienced person like Gerard Batten MEP or Mike Hookem MEP” would save the party.

Sad racists

This is the calm Hookem who was accused of punching fellow Ukiper Steven Woolfe in 2016.

Meanwhile the calm Batten resigned as Ukip’s Brexit spokesperson and tweeted his message to Bolton, “For God’s Sake GO!”

Refusing to go gives Bolton’s enemies more time to attack him.

Last weekend Bolton’s former campaign chief Neil Jones revealed that he resigned after Bolton bragged about “seeing” a young women while his wife was pregnant.

“We went for Sunday lunch and Henry arrived looking really pleased with himself,” said Jones.

“He said he was seeing this Italian girl and showed us a picture of her in a yellow bikini.”

If Bolton is forced out, Ukip would be looking for its fifth leader in 18 months.

Bolton insisted he has done nothing wrong, while admitting that his personal life is “a little bit of a mess”.

He also said that a new leadership election would be “unviable” financially and would spell the end of Ukip.

Here’s hoping.

THE HAIR on Prince William’s crown has been thinning for years and now he has admitted defeat by having it severely shorn.

A royal flunky dismisses reports that Prince William paid £180 for a No 1 haircut. They said, “The Duke is very amused that anyone thinks he has enough hair to justify that kind of money.”

A previous royal haircut

TWO OF Labour MP Jared O’Mara’s staff have gone on speechwriting courses that cost them £875 each. Jared has made not one Commons speech so far. The Sheffield Hallam MP had the party whip withdrawn in October after a string of misogynistic and homophobic online comments were revealed.

Judge to consider perception of bias

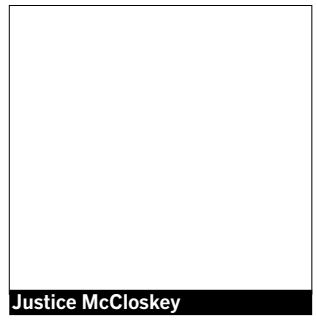
A JUDGE is to decide this week whether he will step aside from a case over a report into the Loughinisland murders.

Justice McCloskey had been due to announce whether he would quash a report into the 1994 murders.

He has been asked to withdraw from the case over a possible perception of bias.

Last month, he ruled that the police ombudsman’s finding of collusion between some officers and the killers was “unsustainable in law”.

The judge ruled in favour of two ex-police officers who brought the case.


Justice McCloskey

Six Catholic men were shot dead in the County Down village in 1994.

As a barrister, he previously represented one of the two retired police officers who mounted the judicial review.

The judge has insisted he has no memory of representing the officer in the previous case against the ombudsman.

‘Splat the chav’ Tory keeps his new job

A VICE chairman of the Conservative Party once wrote that he was looking forward to watching police play “splat the chav” during the 2011 London riots.

Ben Bradley, MP for Mansfield, wrote, “I’ll be in front of the news tonight watching police play ‘Splat the Chav’.”

In another post he wrote, “For once I think police brutality should be encouraged!”

Bradley was promoted during Theresa May’s January reshuffle to be in charge of persuading more young people to vote Conservative.

In a blog post, dating from 2012, Bradley wrote, “Sorry but how many children you have is a choice; if you can’t afford them, stop having them! Vasectomies are free.

“We’re drowning in a vast sea of unemployed wasters that we pay to keep!”

The prime minister’s press secretary said Bradley had apologised and added that his views had changed Presumably around five minutes after they became public knowledge.

Ben Bradley

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Circulation 020 7840 5601

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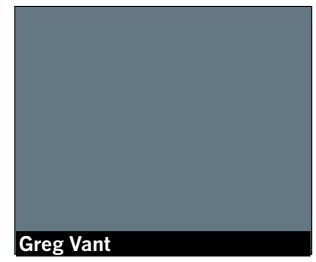

Greg Vant

Northumbria crime family

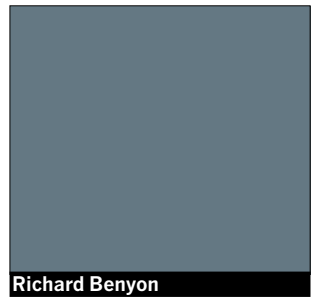
A SENIOR police officer’s son was arrested on suspicion of burglary but he was not charged. His father compensated the victim and details of the incident were deleted from the force’s database.

Matthew Vant was questioned under caution on suspicion of burglary and criminal damage.

His father Greg is a former assistant chief constable of Northumbria police. Following the arrest of his son in November 2009, the force authorised the matter to be settled through the community resolution scheme with the shop owner receiving an apology and £1,000 from Greg Vant.

When the incident was brought to the attention of senior officers, details of the crime were deleted from internal police databases.

Northumbria police said the IPCC “found no evidence of misconduct”.


Richard Benyon

Jolly junkets for the Tories

PAMPERED politicians have spent nearly £600,000 going on cushy overseas junkets as trade envoys since 2012.

MPs and peers racked up the bill for flights and hotels in four years.

They include wealthy Tory Richard Benyon, who spent £20,000 on five trips to Ethiopia, Congo and Mozambique.

Benyon was among 15 Tory MPs and five of the party’s peers who went on such jollies .

Shamed ex-trade minister Mark Garnier cost us £10,500 on three trips to Burma, Brunei and Thailand.

The cost of the envoy scheme was up from £222,377 last year.

Home care workers strike to save jobs and a service

by **SARAH BATES** in Birmingham

HOME CARE workers in Birmingham are battling the Labour council in a fight against devastating cuts to a vital service.

Bosses want to sack 40 percent of the workforce and force a punishing shift pattern on the rest.

And if they are unable to work the new rotas, many in the 350-strong home enablement team face a future of financial insecurity.

The Unison union members struck between 11am and 2.30pm last Saturday. Hundreds marched through snow chanting, "Home care workers—here to stay!"

They are determined to fight to defend their jobs and the service they provide, and plan to walk out again on Tuesday 6 February.

The team visit people who have recently been discharged from hospital, and work with them to develop the abilities for independent living.

Mandy Buckley has been a home carer for 16 years. She told Socialist Worker, "People need the quality service we deliver.

"When heavy snow fell in December, I worked from 7am-2am, then the day after from 6am-10pm. I walked in the snow to every single one of my calls.

Dedicated

"We are a dedicated, professional workforce. You have to love our job to do it."

Workers visit people with a range of needs, and Mandy says they fulfil an important social role. "Depending who opens the door, we can be a dietician, a counsellor, a district nurse, a social worker," she said. "We have to be able to do everything."

Tracey Mooney, the Birmingham Unison branch deputy secretary, explained some of the challenges of being a lone worker. "Last week a home carer was attacked, and a few weeks ago one was locked in a house and the police had to let her out," she said.

"It's difficult to mobilise people when there isn't a central workplace. We've been holding meetings so people feel they've got the support.

"We got a massive vote to strike—99 percent—so we've shown it can be done."

Cuts in 2011 meant home carers lost £5,500 a year—now they earn just £9.23 an hour. Many have taken second jobs to make up the shortfall.

Mandy said the attacks from the Labour-led council are "disgusting". "They are supposed to support us," she said. "I think they are cutting the service back so they can say that it's not needed anymore, or to sell it off."

Mandy said the rally "gives us a voice. We have got to make a stand for the people who need this service—and if we stick together we can win."

Unison must support the strike at every level. And Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn should publicly back low-paid workers, even if they are fighting a Labour council.

HOME CARE workers on strike in Birmingham last Saturday

PICTURES: GUY SMALLMAN

BACK STORY

Some 350 home care workers in Birmingham are in dispute

- The Labour council wants to sack 40 percent of the workforce and impose harsh rotas on the rest
- The workers, in the Unison union, voted by 99 percent for strikes to fight off the attacks
- Workers struck last Saturday and marched through the city. They have already had a pay cut
- Strikers explained how crucial their service is—and they are determined to defend it

What's your story?

Email with your ideas
reports@socialistworker.co.uk

Keep up Glasgow pay fight

LOW PAID women workers are one step closer to justice in their decade-long fight against Glasgow City Council. But they have to keep up the pressure.

The Unison and GMB union members are fighting to have single status agreements properly implemented in local government.

When the Scottish National Party (SNP) ran in local elections last year it promised to resolve the dispute. The SNP won—then dragged the dispute through the legal system. But in December the Court of Session threw the case out and told the council to pay up. Last week councillors unanimously voted to accept this and begin negotiations.

Celebrating Glasgow council's decision to negotiate on pay

Carol Ball, chair of Unison Glasgow City branch, said, "It's the right decision. It's time the council recognised there's pay inequality in the city and to move on and get it right."

The decision to begin talks was made possible by the determination of the workers, several strong lobbies and a refusal to back off. They should keep the pressure on council bosses until they get the equal pay they deserve.

Equal pay or we walk away demonstration—Saturday 10 February, 11am, Glasgow Green

Breakfast in red

Sign up to our morning newsletter 'Breakfast in red' and get a fresh article every day.

For news and analysis on the stories that matter go to:
socialistworker.co.uk/subscribe

New rotas will wreck lives

THE COUNCIL wants to introduce a split shift rota system. The service is currently provided from 7am-10pm.

The changes would mean carers work between 7am-10am, 12-2pm and 4-10pm.

This would mean effectively working 16 hours but only getting paid for 11.

Most of the home carers are women, and the new shift patterns would impact on unpaid caring roles many have, including looking after children or parents.

"These changes would have a huge impact," said Mandy. "It would mean you can't take your kids to school or tuck them in bed at night."

And she explained that bosses were telling carers if they couldn't do the new rotas they would have to go part time.

"If people go part time, they're going to worry about how to pay the mortgage, or put clothes on their kids' back," she said.

Striker Mandy

Details of solidarity at **bit.ly/2F0AGTr**
Send messages of support to info@birminghamunison.co.uk Make cheques payable to Birmingham Unison and make it clear it is for the hardship fund

IN THIS WEEK

1965

Tory Winston Churchill dies

FORMER TORY prime minister Winston Churchill died on 24 January 1965.

He was a racist who wanted to see the sterilisation of the "unfit", and sent troops in to back up bosses against striking miners.

Mass demos mark end of Trump's first year as the bigot in chief

by ALISTAIR FARROW

HUNDREDS OF thousands of people came onto the streets across the US to mark one year since racist, sexist US president Donald Trump's inauguration.

Over 200 protests took place across the US last weekend to make clear the fight against him and what he represents has not gone away.

Some estimates put the number marching in Los Angeles at 600,000. Some 300,000 marched in Chicago, and over 100,000 came out in New York. In many places organisers reported more people attending than last year, although numbers appeared to be down overall.

Protests took place across the world in solidarity as well. Thousands came out in London, Rome, Buenos Aires and Sydney.

Fuelled

The first Women's March a year ago was fuelled by anger at Trump boasting about sexually assaulting women in a recording that was made public.

Seemingly oblivious, this year he tweeted, "Beautiful weather all over our great country, a perfect day for all Women to March.

"Get out there now to celebrate the historic milestones and unprecedented economic success and wealth creation that has taken place over the last 12 months.

"Lowest female unemployment in 18 years!"

People are furious that Trump has survived a year of crisis.

He spoke to the anti-abortion March for Life last Friday, doubling down on his misogyny and sending a clear message to his reactionary political base. "I'm fed up with this entire administration, and I think it's important for us to press on for changes," said Suelita Maki on Saturday's New York march.

What happens to this anger is crucial. The Democratic Party want it to benefit them at elections.

"We march. We run. We vote. We win," said Nancy Pelosi, leader of the Democrats in the House of Representatives.

The Democrats are targeting states such as Nevada in the mid-term elections in November. These are for the whole of the House of Representatives and about a third of the Senate.

Hope

A Women's March statement claimed they hope to register one million voters through the campaign.

The Democrats' unprincipled fight over rights for undocumented migrants (see right) is linked to this drive.

But not everyone attending the protests sees elections as the answer.

People attended the protest for many reasons.

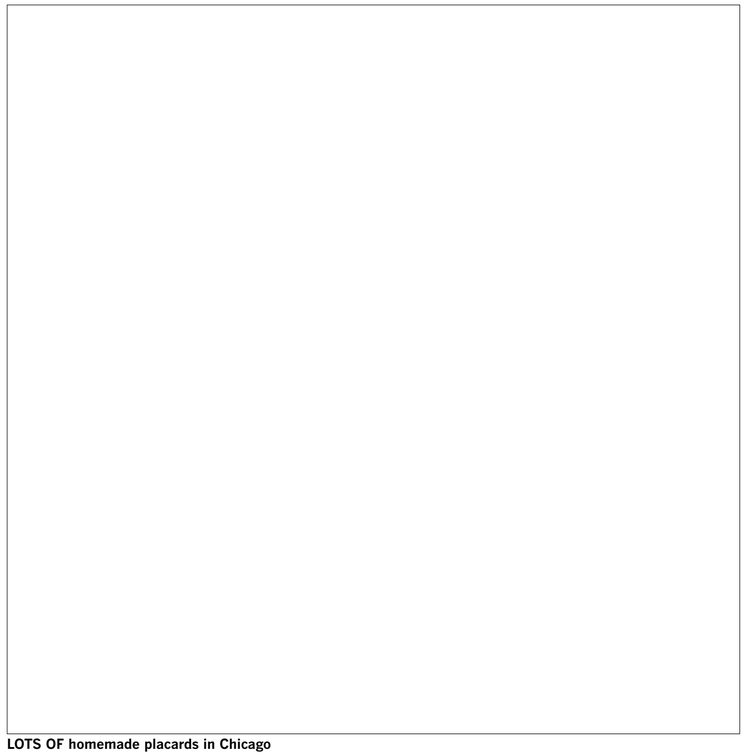
And doubtless even more would have attended if there had been a more inspirational message than just voting for change.

On the London demo

BACK STORY

Women's Marches were called on the weekend of Trump's inauguration last year

- Millions of people joined hundreds of marches
- They were partly a response to Trump bragging about grabbing women "by the pussy"
- The marches were the beginning of the resistance to Trump
- They were followed a month later by huge resistance to his "Muslim ban"


LOTS OF homemade placards in Chicago

The fight against racism is at the heart of the resistance to Trump

ANTI-RACISM WAS at the centre of this year's Women's March message. Last year the march was criticised for being too white.

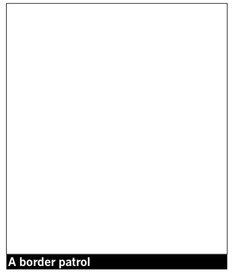
The need for an anti-racist movement against Trump was underlined by a shutdown of federal services at the start of this week. Democrats in the Senate refused to back a short-term budget if Republicans wouldn't guarantee rights for undocumented migrants who came to the US as children, known as Dreamers.

They quickly backed down after the shutdown went into its third day. They accepted Republican promises of a debate on Dreamers in the future.

Deportations

Trump undermined this by saying an immigration deal would only be made if "it is good for our country."

The Harvest Movement organises against deportations. "Every day, workers and members of our community with Daca are being used as bargaining chips in this political game," it said in a statement.


A border patrol

Resistance on the streets is making gains. The California district attorney issued notices to employers on Thursday of last week, saying they would be fined £7,000 if they cooperated with immigration raids.

Rhetorical attacks at the top of society result in brutal repression at the bottom.

A new report has found that supplies of water left at the US-Mexican border to stop people dying have been systematically sabotaged.

The report by No More Deaths and La Coalicion de Derechos Humanos alleged the US Border Force was behind the sabotage.

It found that, between 2012 and 2015, water points were vandalised 415 times and 3,586 gallons were wasted.

Attacked

Trump has consistently attacked ethnic minorities, and both he and his family have close ties with racist organisations.

For instance, Trump has endorsed right wing student organisation Turning Point USA in tweets. Donald Trump junior was a keynote speaker at one of its conferences.

The organisation has a long history of racism. In a private text conversation national field organiser Crystal Clanton said, "I HATE BLACK PEOPLE, like fuck them all… I hate blacks."

Women's March London calls time on sexism

THOUSANDS of protesters gathered outside Downing Street on Sunday declaring "Time's up" for oppression and sexual harassment.

There was anger at the deep sexism at the heart of the system.

Lily was on her first protest. "It feels like the attacks on women are constant," she told Socialist Worker.

"There was the election of Donald Trump, then all the stuff about Harvey Weinstein, then reports about pay disparity between men and women.

"This protest feels very timely. It's time to stand up. I think everyone is fired up for a better world."

Harriet came from the London Irish Abortion Campaign.

"It's ridiculous that women in Northern Ireland don't have access to abortion," she told Socialist Worker. "It's a human right.

"Thirteen women travel to England from Northern Ireland for an abortion every day. It costs hundreds in travel and accommodation."

Thousands of people joined the London rally

Protest

There was a mix of people on the protest—young and old, black and white.

Homemade placards reflected a variety of political views.

Some, such as "March to the ballot in 2018", put the focus on elections to get Trump out of office.

Others focused on individuals, getting ahead. But lots were more general, declaring that women's rights are human rights.

Sophie from Chicago said the protest was about "intersectional feminism".

"Traditional feminism hasn't paid attention to some groups of women," she said. "But this is about rights for trans women and women of colour."

She added that Trump is a "symptom" of an oppressive society and that getting him out is key.

"Do I agree with Hillary Clinton about everything? Probably not," she said.

"But she was the most qualified candidate in the election, while Trump was the least qualified."

Joanna was one of many protesters from the Women's Equality Party. She said she was there "to show solidarity with women across the UK".

"It's important to show that the current political situation needs to change," she added. "We're hoping for changes in legislation to make women more equal."

Important

Anti-racism was an important aspect of the protest.

A Muslim woman speaker thanked people for protesting against Trump's racist travel ban.

Other speakers denounced the government's treatment of refugees and migrants, and drew attention to deaths in police custody.

One homemade placard read, "Migrants—we get the job done."

Another read simply, "Black lives matter".

Student Fadumo wanted to stress that Trump should not visit Britain.

"The government here needs to understand that he can't come here. If he came, it would just increase the bigotry."

Sadie Robinson

Wall comes tumbling down

STAND UP To Racism protesters staged a protest outside the new US embassy in south London on Saturday.

"We say to Trump, 'We don't want your racism, we don't want your sexism, we don't want your anti-gay policies here,'" said Paula Peters from Disabled People Against The Cuts.

Naima Omar from Stand Up To Racism said, "We have to make sure the Stand Up To Racism demos on 17 March are large.

"Trump doesn't want to come here because he's scared of the people who are going to turn out. We will stand in unity as we did against the Muslim Ban and on the Women's March at the beginning of last year."

Protesters knocked down a symbolic wall as part of the protest.

Outside the new US Embassy

Socialist Worker
WHAT WE THINK

GLOBAL ELITE WALLOW IN WEALTH AT DAVOS SUMMIT

BOSSES, politicians and celebrities descended on Davos in Switzerland this week for the World Economic Forum (WEF).

Politicians claim they are going to secure good deals in the "national interest".

They are really there to prostrate themselves in front of bosses and do cosy business deals.

They surround themselves with celebrities and hypocritical do-gooders in the vain hope some of the stardust will rub off on them.

This year US president Donald Trump is going—something a sitting US president hasn't done since Bill Clinton in 2000.

He is likely to ridicule the international liberal elite that despise him.

Yet he has consistently delivered for the rich and corporations.

His trillion dollar tax cut last year will make inequality and poverty skyrocket.

Davos comes at the same time as the Oxfam charity releases its annual report into global poverty.

It shows that last year 82 percent of the wealth created went to the richest 1 percent. The bottom half of the global population saw no increase in their personal wealth.

"All over the world, the economy of the 1% is built on the backs of low paid workers," said the report.

It exposes the hypocrisy of the Davos attendees' claims to want an end to poverty.

The system they profit from produces poverty.

Oxfam angered the right when it tweeted, "We have an extreme form of capitalism that only works for those at the top."

The charity is right that the system only works for a few. That's how capitalism works. It is a machine that inevitably produces and deepens divisions.

> **Capitalism is a machine that inevitably produces and deepens division**

The report describes how billionaires' wealth increased by £546 billion in 12 months.

"This huge increase could have ended global extreme poverty seven times over," it said.

People attending Davos are not stupid—they know a huge amount of anger at the system exists in society. So the eight person board of co-chairs at the WEF is all women this year.

This is a direct response to the #MeToo campaign and growing anger at sexism in society.

But as the Oxfam report points out, "Women are in the worst work, and almost all the super-rich are men." Decisions about the WEF panel will not change that.

Labour's shadow chancellor John McDonnell is set to attend. It's a sign of the pressure on Labour to appear "responsible" to bosses.

McDonnell is making a big mistake—he should stay well clear of the nest of vipers.

Jeremy Corbyn did so well at last year's general election by separating himself from the normal run of besuited politicians.

Labour should stay true to that radicalism.

WE CAN PUSH BACK SEXISM

A FAWCETT SOCIETY report this week laid bare the scale of sexual harassment in Britain.

Half of all women have suffered sexual harassment at work and nearly two thirds in public places. A fifth of women over 16 have been sexually assaulted.

The findings follow a year-long review of sex discrimination law by the charity.

It said women who suffer violence, abuse and harassment "lack access to justice". Women's sexual history is being used inappropriately in court hearings.

And more than a third of people hold women's behaviour totally or partly responsible for sexual assaults they suffer.

The Unite union is surveying its members about their experiences of harassment at work.

It found that many women are made to feel that they are overreacting if they make a complaint.

Nearly half said harassment had affected their mental health.

The Fawcett report recommends changes in the law to try and protect women.

Many laws, such as the Equal Pay Act, have been important steps forward for women.

But we will need more than legal changes to stamp out abuse and harassment.

That's why it was good to see so many women, and some men, taking part in Women's Marches last weekend.

Collective action can push back sexism.

STAND UP TO RACISM

NATIONAL DEMOS

- No to racism, Islamophobia, and antisemitism
- EU nationals are here to stay

SATURDAY 17 MARCH
London, Glasgow & Cardiff

Trade union conference

- Join the debate about how to mobiilise for 17 March and give confidence to anti-racists in every workplace

SATURDAY 10 FEBRUARY
Hamilton House, London WC1H 9BD

To register go to standuptoracism.org.uk

ANALYSIS
ALEX CALLINICOS

Imperialism won't end Kurdish agony

IN A Middle East tormented by the domination of Western imperialism, the Kurdish people have been among the greatest victims.

When Britain and France carved up the Ottoman Empire nearly a century ago, the Kurds were denied their right to self-determination. Instead they were split between several states—Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran—that have usually oppressed them.

This torment continues into the present. Last weekend Turkish forces attacked Afrin, in the Kurdish-controlled region of Syria known as Rojava. But the problem isn't just the oppressor states but the choice that Kurdish leaders sometimes have made to ally themselves to imperialist powers, particularly the United States.

This has long been the strategy of the two Kurdish nationalist parties in northern Iraq, the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). They took advantage of the 1991 Gulf War led by the US against Saddam Hussein's Iraq to carve out an enclave, benefitting from the protection of American air power.

The 2003 invasion of Iraq by the US and Britain allowed the Kurdish enclave to consolidate itself. It seemed an island of relative calm amid the chaos the rest of Iraq descended into.

The rise of Isis and its seizure of Mosul in 2014 seemed to offer more opportunities. Kurdish forces took advantage of the confusion in Baghdad to seize disputed areas, above all the oilfields around Kirkuk. And they received massive US support as they fought alongside Iraqi government forces to drive ISIS out of its strongholds.

Last September, as the US-led coalition's grip tightened around Mosul, Masoud Barzani, president of Iraqi Kurdistan and KDP leader, called a referendum on independence. Even though he won an overwhelming majority, he had badly overplayed its hand.

Support

The Iraqi government was able to retake Mosul thanks to the support, not just of the US, but also of Iran. Iranian-backed Shiite militias played a crucial role in Isis's defeat. In October, after Mosul's fall, Iraqi prime minister Haider al-Abadi redirected some to retake the areas the Kurds had seized in 2014. They fell rapidly, possibly because of a deal cut with Iran by Barzani's PUK rivals.

Now there may be a rerun in Syria. Rojava was carved out by the Kurdish YPG (People's Protection Units) when the regime of Bashar al-Assad, fighting for its survival after the 2011 rising, abandoned them. The YPG is closely linked to the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), which has been waging a generation-long war against the Turkish state.

As in the case of Iraq, Washington latched onto the YPG as an ally. The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), backed by 2,000 US troops, played an important role in the campaign that finally drove Isis from its capital in Raqqa. They now control 25 percent of Syria.

The problem for the US is that Isis's defeat strengthened Iran, which backs both Assad and al-Abadi. So last week Washington announced it would keep troops in Syria. The ostensible aim was to train up the SDF into a 30,000-strong border force in north-eastern Syria.

In reality this move was aimed at Iran, towards which Donald Trump is adopting an increasingly confrontational approach. But in the complex, multi-dimensional chess game that is Middle East politics it inevitably antagonised Turkey. The government of Recep Tayyip Erdogan has escalated the war against the PKK in the last couple of years, and it doesn't want to see its enemy become stronger in Syria.

Another factor in the equation is Russia, which intervened in September 2016 decisively to tilt the balance in the Syrian civil war in Assad's favour. Russia has also supported the YPG. But, after negotiations in Moscow last week, the Russian military police based in Afrin were pulled out.

In effect Vladimir Putin gave Erdogan the green light to attack, and he has. The US stood by while its Kurdish clients were humiliated in Iraq. Will it do the same in Syria?

Whatever the answer to this question, it is the Kurdish people who are suffering. Let's hope its political leaders learn that there is no gain from allying themselves to imperialist monsters such as Trump and Putin.

THE AMBULANCE service is under strain due to Tory cuts

East of England delays saw 40 people die or suffer harm

by TOMÁŠ TENGELY-EVANS

AT LEAST 40 people died or were harmed in the East of England because of ambulance delays over the holiday period, according to a whistleblower.

It is another sign of the NHS crisis caused by Tory cuts and privatisation.

According to a damning dossier, passed to the Lowestoft Journal newspaper, the deaths included a man who waited 16 hours for an ambulance.

The document said the patient from Lowestoft appeared "to have frozen to death" on 27 December.

Cops called the ambulance because the man, who is believed to have been in his 50s, was sitting outside his home. The East of England Ambulance Trust (EEAS) decided not to send an ambulance because he had "no obvious injuries".

This meant it was not logged as an emergency call, which requires a response time of seven minutes.

Some 16 hours later a second call was made by another person, who reported that the man was not breathing and in cardiac arrest.

The ambulance arrived within eight minutes—but he was already dead.

Tens of thousands came on the last national march for the NHS

Decimation

Tory budget cuts and privatisation have combined with their decimation of council-run social services.

A new report on mental health services, published by the King's Fund think tank last week, hammers home the scale of the NHS crisis. Mental health trusts' budgets increased by less than 2.5 percent, well below the inflation rate.

This crisis means that people are forced to seek help in accident and emergency (A&E) services. Salena, a mental health nurse in Bristol, told Socialist Worker, "Support services have collapsed so A&E is the only place they can really come.

"There's nothing for people until they reach crisis point, but then the pressure is to get them back out."

Ringfenced

Labour politicians have called for funding for mental health services to be "ringfenced" and for "parity" with other services. Labour should be fighting for more funding, not trying to make the best of limited resources and just blaming the Tories.

Labour held a national campaigning day last Saturday and planned a Westminster rally with Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell this Thursday.

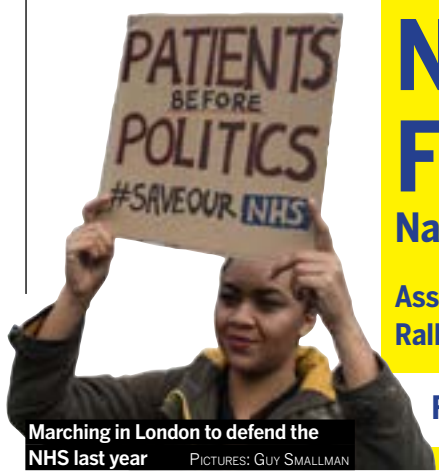
Corbyn and the Labour Party should throw their weight behind the NHS demonstration on 3 February.

Called by the People's Assembly and Health Campaigns Together, it could bring tens of thousands onto the streets of London.

Activists across Britain have booked coaches.

In Nottingham campaigners are planning a series of events in the run-up to the demonstration, including banner drops, meetings and leafleting hospitals.

Activists need to go all out to build the demonstration in the final weeks.



Marching in London to defend the NHS last year PICTURES: GUY SMALLMAN

NHS IN CRISIS
FUND IT NOW!
National demonstration 3 February

Assemble 12 noon, Gower Street, London WC1E
Rally at Whitehall

For more information go to bit.ly/2rvU60v

Theresa May pays cash to make refugees suffer

THERESA MAY has promised £45 million for a fresh clampdown on refugees trapped at Britain's border in Calais.

The money will go towards measures that make it harder for refugees to cross the border—and will mean more deaths.

May's announcement came after demands from French president Emmanuel Macron during his trip to Britain last week.

Lara, a Goldsmith's University student who recently visited refugees in Calais, told Socialist Worker, "It's appalling that they're spending money on stopping people from having a better life. Refugees should be treated as human beings".

Some 1,500 refugees are trapped around Calais and Dunkirk in northern France after the "jungle" refugee camp was bulldozed in autumn 2016. They suffer police repression, harsh weather conditions—and the risk of death if they try to get to Britain.

Lara was part of the Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) and Care4Calais south east London delegation to Calais last December.

"I was expecting to see people living in appalling conditions, but the scale of it was overwhelming," she said. "Police raid the refugees every couple of weeks. They use pepper spray, which means they can't use the sleeping bags and tents the following night."

Many of the refugees in Calais are fleeing the devastation caused by the West's imperialist wars in the Middle East.

Hazardous

They have had to make the hazardous passage across the Mediterranean Sea, where European gun boats try to stop them.

The European Union's racist "Fortress Europe" policies force refugees to take more dangerous routes. Lara said, "I'm a migrant myself, the only different between me and them is that I have a European passport."

Activists are planning another delegation to Calais the day after the SUTR Trade Union Conference on 10 February (see right).

Lara said, "We're doing stalls at railway stations to raise collections and awareness. More people need to know about it.

The delegations aren't just about charity, but about building solidarity with refugees to force the government to retreat.

The only solution to the Calais crisis is to open the border—and let the refugees into Britain.

Meanwhile, St Stephen's Primary School in Newham in east London has lifted a ban on the hijab for girls under the age of eight.

Arif Qawi, the chair of the board of governors who supported the ban, also resigned last week. A petition, started by a Muslim teenager in east London, gained a lot of support.

The Tories and schools inspectorate Ofsted have created a climate of Islamophobia in schools, primarily through their racist "Prevent" strategy.

This general racist assault is why activists are building SUTR rallies in the run up to national demonstrations in London, Glasgow and Cardiff on 17 March.

The first SUTR rally in advance of the demonstrations will take place in Bristol on Tuesday 13 February.

Love Music Hate Racism returns to Birmingham on Friday for its second gig.

And a Scottish SUTR conference on 3 February includes Scottish Labour leader Richard Leonard and SNP MSP Sandra White.

Go to Facebook events **Students Against Racism national conference** and **Stand up to Racism Scottish Conference**

REFUGEES IN Calais are forced to live in appalling conditions PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

Take campaign into unions

THE TORIES use racism to divide the working class. That's why trade unionists will debate how to take the fight against racism into the workplace at the Stand Up To Racism Trade Union Conference on 10 February.

An important workshop will be held on Brexit and the free movement of labour—tackling the myths about immigration.

It's important to oppose the vision of a right wing, nationalist Brexit.

Most unions have policy to defend freedom of movement and migrants' rights. And at the most recent TUC conference last September, delegates overwhelmingly passed a motion to defend free movement.

But the official TUC statement opened the door to a compromise.

Meanwhile, the Tories are introducing racist charges for migrants in the NHS.

And their Islamophobic "Prevent" strategy forces public sector workers to spy on Muslims for "signs of radicalisation".

We will only be able to build a mass movement that's strong enough to push the Tories out if we stand against their attempts at racist divide and rule.

Go to Facebook event **Stand Up To Racism Trade Union conference**

No charges for Rashan Charles cop

THE POLICE officer who stopped 20 year old Rashan Charles will face no charges over his death, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has said.

The officer was shown on CCTV chasing Rashan into a shop in Hackney, east London, in July last year. After wrestling him to the ground, the officer holds Rashan in a headlock.

Rashan was taken to hospital and was pronounced dead around an hour later. The exact cause of death has still not been confirmed.

The CPS said the officer could have faced a charge of common assault.

But "the evidential test for a prosecution for common assault is not met".

Rashan's family said in a statement, "The CCTV shows a police officer taking very forcible hold of Rashan from behind.

Rashan Charles

"To us, this seems to show an unnecessary use of force."

The family added that any changes to police training should not "detract from the question of whether this officer acted lawfully".

Rashan's death led to angry protests in Hackney. The Independent Office for Police Conduct, formerly the Independent Police Complaints Commission, is still investigating the officer who restrained Rashan.

He could face gross misconduct charges for his restraint of Rashan and his handling of the medical emergency.

Immediately following Rashan's death, a Scotland Yard spokesman said Rashan had been "trying to swallow an object". One health worker told Socialist Worker that police told paramedics that Rashan had died of a heart attack after swallowing cocaine.

Several media reports implied that he swallowed drugs to hide them from the cops.

It was later confirmed that a package removed from Rashan's body contained a mixture of caffeine and paracetamol.

Israeli siege leaves Gaza on the brink of collapse

The basics of life are in short supply, and an Israeli minister has called for more deaths, writes **Nick Clark**

ISRAELI SECURITY officials have admitted that the Gaza Strip is on the verge of catastrophe after more than ten years under siege.

One official told the Haaretz newspaper recently that conditions in Gaza had gone "like from zero to below zero".

The Israeli government hypocritically blames Palestinians for their own suffering. Israeli president Reuvin Rivlin claimed on Sunday, "The time is coming near when the infrastructure in Gaza will collapse leaving many civilians in distress, with no sanitary conditions, exposed to pollution, impure water and epidemics."

Yet Rivlin blamed Hamas—the Palestinian resistance group that has governed in Gaza since it was elected in 2006—for the crisis.

"Israel is the only one in the region that transfers basic essentials to the residents of Gaza, so that they can sustain the body and mind," he said. "We will not tolerate accusations of blame."

Accelerated

That's a blatant and shameless lie. In recent weeks the Israeli military has accelerated its destruction of tunnels connecting Gaza to the outside world—a supply lifeline for Palestinians.

Cuts to Gaza's electricity supply—which Israel controls—mean that there isn't enough electricity to sanitise the water supply.

Some 95 percent of Gaza's water is undrinkable. Raw sewage flows in the the sea, increasing risk of disease.

It's all part of Israel's plan to collectively punish Palestinians and crush resistance to the occupation.

Hamas appeared ready to agree to a reconciliation deal with the Fatah party, which controls the West Bank, last year. This could have alleviated conditions.

But that deal broke down and now Israel hopes to further raise the pressure on Hamas.

Earlier this month Israeli minister Uri Ariel demanded more Palestinian deaths under Israeli airstrikes, which have peppered Gaza in recent weeks.

"What is this special weapon we have that we fire and see pillars of smoke and fire, but nobody gets hurt?" he asked. "It is time for there to be injuries and deaths as well."

At the same time Israel has continued its renewed violent crackdown in the West Bank following a speech by US president Donald Trump in December.

Protests erupted across Palestine after Trump declared Palestinian city Jerusalem "Israel's capital".

Israel's military unleashed a wave of violence in response. Israeli soldiers shot dead three Palestinians—two of them teenagers—last week.

Palestinian Authority (PA) president Mahmoud Abbas said last week he would no longer accept the US as a mediator between the PA and Israel.

It was a sign that the "peace process," which saw Palestinian leaders agree to police the resistance in return for a promise of a state, may have collapsed

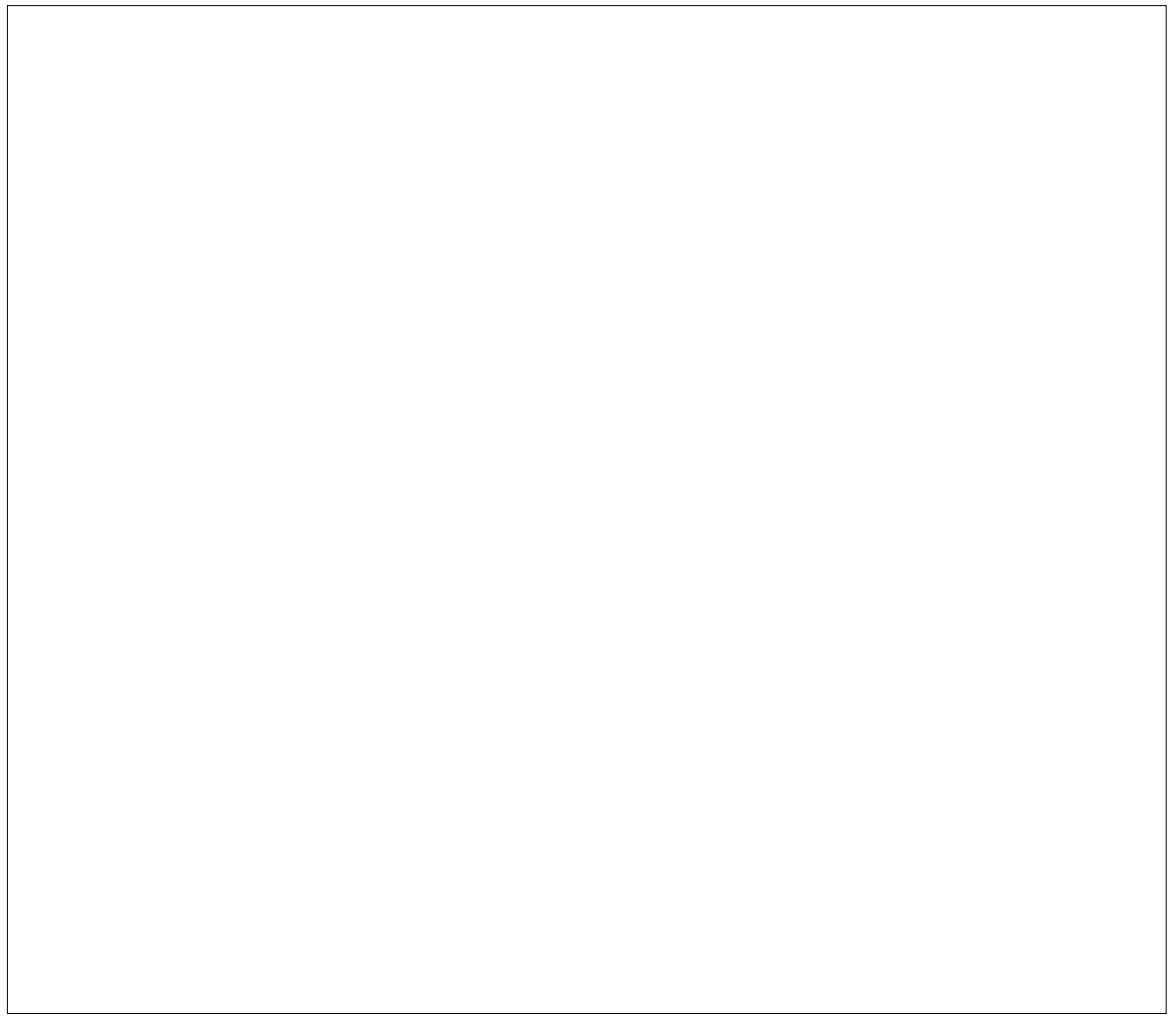
Abbas is now looking to European Union countries for support. Yet the lesson of the "peace process" is that Israel will never accept a Palestinian state anywhere.

Justice for Palestinians means resistance to the Israeli occupation—and a single secular state with equal democratic rights for all its citizens.

BACK STORY

Israel has illegally blockaded Gaza for over ten years

- Nearly two million people live in Gaza. It is over twice as densely populated as London
- Some 95 percent of Gaza's water is undrinkable
- Almost half of people in Gaza are unemployed. Two thirds of young people have no job
- Israel has launched three wars on Gaza since 2008



PROTESTS AFTER Donald Trump declared Jersualem to be Israel's capital were met with repression

ZIMBABWE

President Mnangagwa tries to woo big business and the white farmers

ZIMBABWEAN president Emmerson Mnangagwa was set to tell the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, this week that the country is "open for business".

It lays bare Mnangagwa's real aims after he came to office in a military coup against former dictator Robert Mugabe last November.

Many workers and the poor wanted Mugabe out. There was a window of opportunity to raise their own demands.

But Mnangagwa wants to snuff that out. He has called for restoring relations with former colonial power Britain and rejoining the Commonwealth, a relic of the Empire.

"What they've lost with Brexit they can come and recover from Zimbabwe," he told the bosses' Financial Times newspaper.

Plunder

British capitalism is not looking to replace European markets with Zimbabwe, a country whose economy was destroyed by decades of imperialist plunder.

Mnangagwa himself is mainly looking to Chinese investment.

He plans high level talks in the Chinese capital Beijing soon after Davos to discuss "mega deals in infrastructure and railways".

Mnangagwa wants to revive Zimbabwean capitalism by pushing through wide-ranging free market reforms. For his plan to succeed, he needs the West to end sanctions and give access to financial markets.

This means that winning approval from world rulers at Davos is key. And it's also why he plans to financially compensate descendants of the old racist regime, the white farmers, some of whom lost their land in the 2000s.

Mnangagwa, the regime's former torturer in chief, is no alternative for the Zimbabwean working class. His rise to power was a product of a bitter faction fight within the ruling Zanu PF party over how to deal with the crisis of Zimbabwean capitalism.

Mugabe began as a hero of struggle against colonialism and white minority rule. Yet once capitalism nose-dived in the 1980s, he compromised with imperialism, implemented some free market reforms and increasingly became a dictator.

This failed to solve Zimbabwean capitalism's crisis—and came to a head last autumn.

Mnangagwa needs to "open up" Zimbabwean capitalism to foreign investment—and consolidate the position of the new ruling faction.

Mnangagwa said, "The entire economy is open except for two minerals—diamonds and platinum."

These are both industries that the military profited from, the same military that brought him to power and now staff the cabinet.

The only solution is for working class people to assert their own independent demands—and bring down Zanu PF's whole rotten regime.

Tomáš Tengely-Evans

Emmerson Mnangagwa wants to be the bosses' friend

Churchill didn't bully

WHATS THE point to your article on Churchill? (Socialist Worker, 17 January).Who did he "bully", by the way? He didn't even "bully" his way into office.

If you're talking about his support for the British Empire, the word is "imperialist". But even that doesn't fit since Churchill was instrumental in destroying the empire—and he knew it.

If you want perfection, light a candle to a saint.

No politician is a paragon of virtue and most have blood on their hands in some way, even Gandhi.

Rob Kenyon
on Facebook

Churchill was a racist

ONE OF my earliest memories is Churchill's funeral on television and my grandmother laughing and shouting, "He's dead! He's dead! The bloody old warmongering bastard is dead!"

Years later when I watched Thatcher's funeral on telly I knew just how she had felt.

Sean Barker
On Facebook

CHURCHILL committed genocide in Bengal, was a rampant racist and vocal about it.

He wanted the striking Welsh miners to be machine gunned.

During the war he ordered annihilation bombing of German cities, specifically targeting civilians.

Max Caley
On Facebook

ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

Violent police will protect the bosses' elite conference

SPARE A thought for John McDonnell this week. He'll be abandoning his comfort zone to attend the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland.

It is reassuring that his summons to this invite-only shindig of the world's elite suggests that they consider him a likely contender for chancellor.

But I am left wondering what sort of reception "Labour's vision for an alternative economic approach to replace the current model of capitalism" will get?

Of the attendees, some 1,500 will be business leaders. Of the remaining 1,000 just 11 will be union leaders.

Journalists covering the event are divided by a badge system, which ensures that only those considered worthy by the organisers get full access.

Meanwhile those documenting the events outside will get to see the democratic aims of the WEF in action.

This event has understandably attracted its fair share of protests over the years. Donald Trump's decision to attend—so much for his anti-establishment "swamp draining" credentials—will probably see the protests increase in size. And masses of Swiss riot cops will be drafted in to ensure that no one spoils the party.

The Swiss police are not well known for their restraint, as I discovered in Geneva in 2003 during the G8 summit. I was photographing them attacking peaceful demonstrators when I was blown off my feet by one of their 'flashbang' grenades.

I was hospitalised for three weeks. It took nine years and three court cases to win any compensation, which was only possible with the support of my trade union. Unsurprisingly the cops got away with their actions.

The WEF states its mission as being "committed to improving the state of the world".

This seems ironic when you consider who makes up most of the guest list and the behaviour of those tasked with providing security.

Guy Smallman
South London

Treatment of racist DJ shows campaigns work

DJ MISTABISHI'S racist comments about London mayor Sadiq Khan are disgusting.

He posted an awful Facebook post after Donald Trump cancelled his visit to Britain.

Even in the creative industry, racism and homophobia are rife.

Drum and bass is a really diverse scene.

It's great that industry websites like Mixmag are talking about it.

And his record label has handled it really well—they've dropped him and have said they'll give the royalties to Love Music Hate Racism (LMHR)

The reaction to his comments show that campaigns like LMHR work.

We can fight racism in the music industry by having no tolerance for it, and calling it out at every opportunity.

Lois Browne
Love Music Hate Racism

Programme challenged stereotypes

I DISAGREE with aspects of the review of Working Class White Men (Socialist Worker, 17 January). Despite the title, I welcomed the programme challenging some stereotypes about young working class men.

One man said that people felt intimidated by him and his friends hanging around in a group in the park. But he explained, they just wanted a job and somewhere decent to live like anybody else.

Fascist groups take advantage of the vulnerable and jobless. However it ended on a hopeful note and the presenter said, "It's not colour that matters, it's class". He urged people to direct their anger to the top in society. Well said!

David Wainwright
Leicester

The programme ended on a positive note

Just a thought...

Do plastic charges work?

AM I being unduly cynical at the support from retailers for compulsory plastic bag charging?

Apart from the few companies that claim to donate this income to charity, the rest will be laughing their way to the bank.

John Hein
Edinburgh

Corrupt Tories have got to go

CARILLION HAS to be the one to bring down the Tories (Carillion's collapse puts thousands of workers' jobs and pensions at risk, Socialist Worker, 17 January).

They are corrupt to the core, and handed out milions in contracts to a company that went under.

Martin Sean Beck
On Twitter

HERE'S A thought—the last Carillion chief financial officer earned £460,000 a year, before bonuses, when he was sacked in September 2017.

Mike Healy
On Facebook

Cyrille opened up the sport

I WAS shocked to read Cyrille Regis had died.

He was a pioneer who opened the sport up to thousands of black kids that wanted to be footballers. Players like Cyrille played a huge part in challenging racism in the game.

Phil Rowan
South London

I support the guard strikes

THE RAIL strikes have my support for what it's worth (Socialist Worker, 17 January). I would support a general strike tomorrow!

Pam Thompson
On Facebook

No room for redevelopers

GREAT TO read the good news about the Elephant and Castle housing demo (Socialist Worker online, 17 January).

The council voted the proposals down—at least for now! We need to keep pressure on. Homes for people, not for profit.

P O'Neill
On Twitter

The collapse of Carillion last week has shone a spotlight on the scandal of privatisation and outsourcing. **Simon Basketter** picks apart the myths of PFI—and exposes how the bosses' scam really works

THOUSANDS OF Carillion workers will go unpaid

IT'S A long way from the partly built 40-mile £750 million Aberdeen bypass, work on which has been routinely delayed, to the £4 billion luxury development in Doha, Qatar.

But these construction projects, plus public-private partnership hospitals in Birmingham and Liverpool, meant the end of leading outsourcer Carillion.

Carillion's collapse has put the whole sector under scrutiny. For example, Interserve is under government monitoring and its share price dived.

Carillion boss Keith Cochrane claimed last year, "In too many cases, we were building a Rolls-Royce but only getting paid to build a Mini."

In fact Carillion bosses got paid the cost of many Rolls-Royces many times over in order to keep speculators and shareholders happy. And they weren't the only ones.

The Private Finance Initiative (PFI) sees private firms building hospitals, schools and roads instead of the government. It is part of an ideological attack that treats the free market as the solution to every problem.

PFI was designed to make it look as if governments were spending less than they were. In fact the deals are much more costly—as the government's own spending watchdog admitted last week.

Construction

The National Audit Office (NAO) report lays bare the scale of the PFI disaster. It said PFI schools can cost 40 percent more to build and maintain than if the government simply did the work itself.

And it used research showing that privately financed hospitals typically cost 70 percent more than state-financed ones.

There are 716 PFI projects in Britain either under construction or in operation, with a total value of £59.4 billion. Future payments for existing projects are forecast to total £199 billion, an average of £7.7 billion a year over the next 25 years.

The NAO said even a number of Whitehall departments have complained of being trapped in schemes that they want to abandon. But they can't afford the exorbitant exit fees.

Some eight out of 11 government departments have turned to consultants to reduce the huge costs, which is somewhat akin to pouring oil on the fire.

PFI was designed to make it look as if governments were spending less than they were

CONTRACT-CON

Subcontractors who subcontract

COMPANIES BID for schemes and then outsource the work as much as possible to escape responsibility.

After a firm bids to win a government contract, the whole process starts again as other firms bid to carry out sections of the work.

Carillion was made up of a number of companies. But that wasn't the end of the story.

For instance, Carillion sold Crown House to Laing O'Rourke in 2004. Drake & Scull has been owned both by Balfour Beatty and Carillion. Both companies were serial blacklisters of construction workers.

The aim of subcontracting is to produce a multi-layered false economy. As the number of participants in the market increases, so the opportunities for squeezing workforce costs are enhanced.

Wages are forced down. The responsibility for paying for training, holiday entitlements, sick leave and pension rights is displaced down the subcontracting chain onto workers.

Last week 30,000 subcontractors were waiting for money owed by Carillion. Some are small businesses but thousands are construction workers.

Work ground to a halt on all Carillion sites because no one knew who was funding the work or who they were now working for.

The watchdog said the private finance route "results in additional costs compared to publicly financed procurement".

The Tories' national infrastructure plan suggested in 2010 that capital raised through PFI cost 2 percent to 3.75 percent more than from state borrowings.

Yet the actual damning part of the report confirmed, "We have been unable to identify a robust evaluation of the actual performance of private finance at a project or programme level."

In other words, nobody really knows what all this costs or how well or badly it works.

Outbreak

Governments pretend their decisions are open and subject to debate. But corporations seek to protect themselves, their decisions and their funds from public scrutiny.

Again and again PFI companies disguise their costs from the people who are partly, often mostly, funding them.

One consequence of the outbreak of bidding and tendering for contracts was an increased determination to encourage "commercial confidentiality".

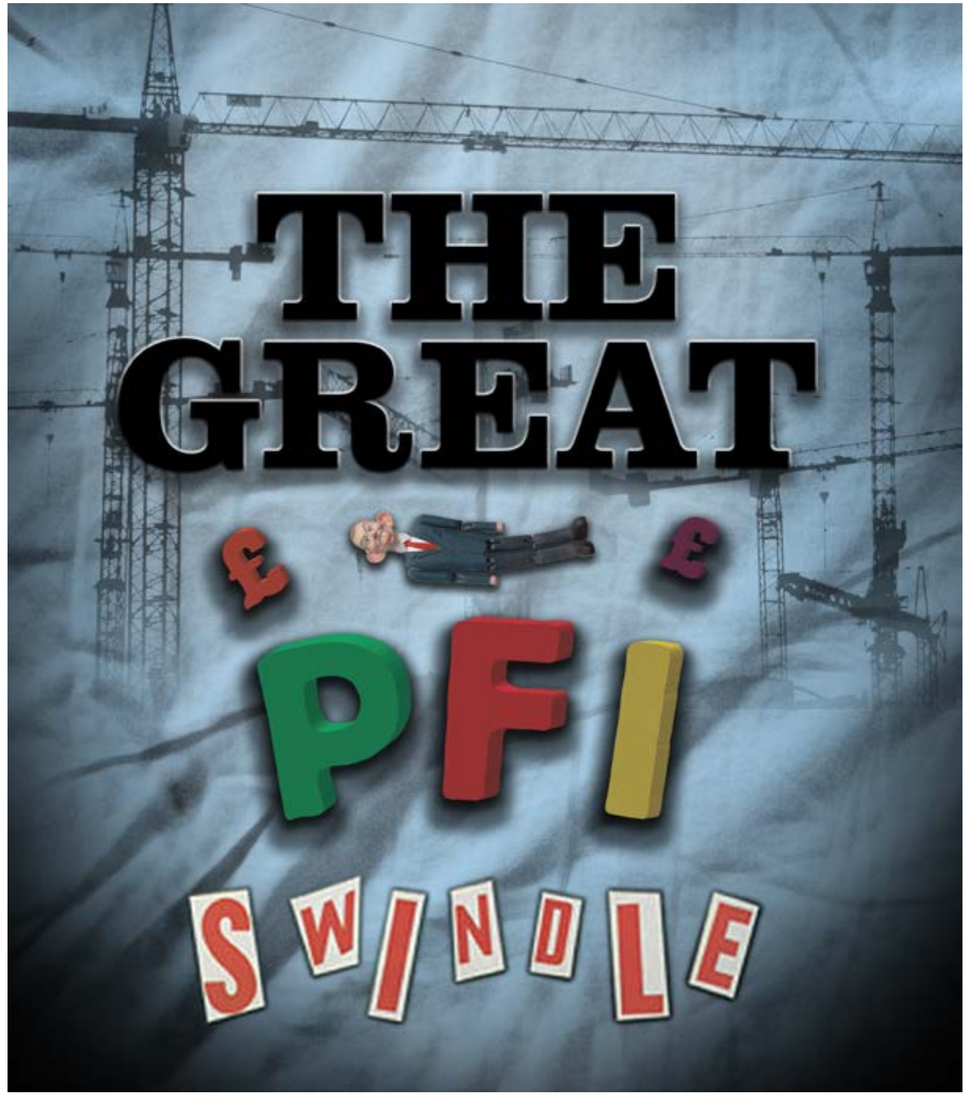
So, Carillion's trading statement in December 2016, full-year results last March and an annual meeting update in May gave no hint of the troubles ahead.

That this led to a profit warning last July and Carillion's ultimate collapse last week does not imply fraud.

In fact, Carillion was bidding for contracts to cover its debts from previous projects.

It was so crucial to win the new revenue that the tender price was pushed low, leading to soaring debt in a later phase.

But the bosses won't be paying for that crisis—we will.



Keith Cochrane and former Carillion bosses walked away loaded

Their debt and ours

AS CARILLION collapsed in debt last week another story about financial woe got much fewer headlines. This was a report from the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

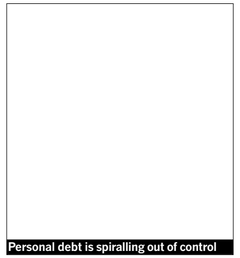
It found that one in four of the poorest households are falling behind with debt payments or spending over a quarter of their income on them.

These debts won't be written off. But banks started writing off Carillion's debts before the firm announced its liquidation, according to analysts from CreditSights.

They said this meant banks' losses "might not be as substantial as feared". It's not the first time the rich have been bailed out.

In 2008, following the financial crash, Britain's government gave the banks £37 billion in cash and £250 billion in credit.

Worldwide, governments handed trillions to the banks—transferring their debts to ordinary people. If you're rich and in trouble, capitalist states throw money at you to keep you rich. If you're poor, you're left to rot.


Personal debt is spiralling out of control

John Major's (right) Tory government brought in PFI, which was grasped enthusiastically by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown

Tory policy that won New Labour hearts

THE PFI model of handing public projects to private capital began under John Major's Tory administration in 1992. It was later enhanced by New Labour.

John Prescott, the voice of working class Old Labour, spoke to the 1993 Labour Party conference. He made it "crystal clear" that a Labour government would renationalise the railways if the Tories privatised them.

Prescott added that the PFI Birmingham relief road would be built "over my dead body". He went on to preside over the privatised railways and gave the go-ahead for the Birmingham relief road in a Labour government.

Some 24 former Labour ministers ended up in the PFI industry. The theoretical regulators of corporate power became its champions.

Private companies are supposed to fund the construction of facilities and the state then pays for their use and management.

These contracts can see private firms reaping repayments for 30 or 40 years. Some 85 percent of payments last year related to procurement decisions made more than ten years ago when Labour was in office.

It is claimed that PFI limits capital expenditure and transfers risk to the private sector. It does the opposite.

Subsidise

Under PFI the private sector finances capital expenditure, in other words borrows the money for it. Firms get credit cheaply, though not as cheaply as the government could, because they are working on projects that are underwritten by the state.

So governments first subsidise the private sector, then the public sector funds the projects through annual payments to PFI consortia.

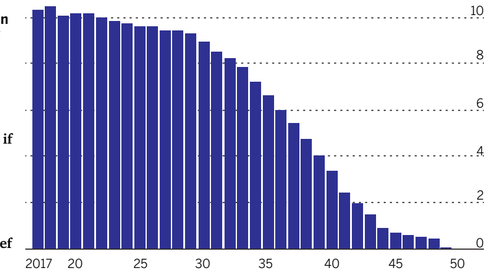
The initial cost to governments can appear small, which is why successive chancellors used PFI deals to build schools, hospitals and roads "off balance sheet". This meant the projects did not count against their own public sector borrowing rules.

Yet the total cost is enormous. Projects worth £13 billion cost the NHS £2 billion last year alone—or £3,729 every minute.

There is also the daft idea that for-profit businesses would bring market rigour to public works. Does anyone seriously believe that the key to securing the NHS is private capital plus competition?

Another self-declared advantage of PFI is that it displaces the risks of delays and overruns in building programmes onto the private contractors. And again, it does the opposite.

British governments are due to face PFI payments until the 2040s
Estimated future fees (£bn)



PFI contractors pitch low cost tenders in the hope of undercutting competitors—then squeeze costs wherever they can. This mostly hits workers' pay.

For all the claims that PFI transfers risk to the private sector, private suppliers don't like risk. So the market had to be made sufficiently attractive in order to entice them. That means there is no real competition, because it might frighten off investors.

The public sector continues to carry the ultimate risk. When private companies fail, we are left to bail them out. And by the time things go wrong, bosses have already made millions.

Carillion's former boss Richard Howson received more than £6 million in pay and bonuses since 2012. It is obvious who benefits from PFI—private sector contractors, shareholders and investors. Winners include big banks, accountancy firms, construction companies and private equity firms.

The losers of PFI are ordinary people. And that's when it works.

REPORT

Locked into high prices and poor deals

THE NATIONAL Audit Office pointed out that some PFI providers are overcharging the public sector for insurance.

It said, "In one case the PFI firm eventually agreed to return over £100,000 of insurance savings after being unable to provide evidence that part of the saving should be withheld."

●**Bristol Metropolitan Academy.** The secondary school paid £8,154 for a blind because of its PFI contract. Under "lifecycle" costs written into some deals, schools are forced to pay high prices for small items.

●**Newman RC College.** This Oldham secondary school was charged £48 after security opened the school to allow pupils to visit the lavatory. It also had to pay more than £400 for caretakers to fit some notice boards.

Shorts, spivs & speculators

AS MUCH as 80 percent of the profit made in PFI projects comes from refinancing. Firms trade on the debt to finance the project, assuming that they will reap the rewards from predicted future profits.

That's when it's going well. When it's going badly, speculators can make money by betting against the company or "shorting".

Investors borrow shares and sell them, hoping to buy them back for less, return them to the lender and keep the difference.

Ahead of the first of three profit warnings last July, more than 25 percent of Carillion's issued share capital was out on loan. When the music stopped this week it was more.

PFI bankers and speculators are taking money from the public sector. There are winners and losers on the markets but when the game is rigged by PFI, we always lose.

WHAT'S ON

Email your meetings to events@socialistworker.co.uk **or phone** 020 7840 5600

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION
Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM
The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD
The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM
The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY
To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602 for more information

SOCIALIST WORKER PUBLIC MEETINGS

BRADFORD
Abortion Wars—the Fight for Reproductive Rights
Wed 31 Jan, 7pm,
Glyde House,
Little Horton Lane
(opposite the ice rink),
BD5 0BQ.
Book launch with
author Judith Orr

BRISTOL
Politics of the Mind—Marxism and Mental Distress
Wed 28 Feb, 7.30pm,
YHA,
14 Narrow Quay,
BS1 4QA.
Book launch with author
Iain Ferguson

EXETER
The NHS in crisis—how the pursuit of profit wrecks our healthcare
Sat 3 Feb, 2pm,
Exeter Community Centre,
17 St. Davids Hill,
EX4 3RG

LIVERPOOL
Politics of the Mind—Marxism and Mental Distress
Wed 7 Mar, 7pm,
Friends Meeting House,
22 School Ln,
L1 3BT.
Book launch with author
Iain Ferguson

MANCHESTER
Politics of the Mind—Marxism and Mental Distress
Wed 21 Mar, 7pm,
Friends Meeting House,
6 Mount St,
M2 5NS.
Book launch with author
Iain Ferguson

MEDWAY
Why socialists should support transgender rights
Thu 8 Feb, 7.30pm,
Nucleus Arts Centre
(Conference Room),
272 High St,
ME4 4BP

PORTSMOUTH
Marxism and mental distress
Wed 21 Mar, 7.30pm,
Somerstown
Community Centre,
River's St,
PO5 4EZ

SWANSEA
Politics of the Mind—Marxism and Mental Distress
Thu 1 Mar, 7.30pm,
Brynmill Community Centre,
St Albans Rd,
SA20BP.
Booklaunch with author
Iain Ferguson

YORK
Why we need a revolution to end racism
Wed 31 Jan, 7.30pm,
Priory Street
Community Centre,
15 Priory St,
YO1 6ET

SOCIALIST WORKER BRANCH MEETINGS

Weekly meetings to discuss political issues and our local interventions. All welcome.

BARNSLEY
Lenin—myth and reality
Thu 1 Feb, 7pm,
YMCA,
Blucher St,
S70 1AP

BOLTON
Antonio Gramsci and the revolutionary party
Wed 31 Jan, 7pm,
Bolton Socialist Club,
16 Wood St (off
Bradshawgate),
BL1 1DY

BURNLEY AND PENDLE
From Deliveroo to McStrike—how has the working class changed?
Wed 31 Jan, 7.30pm,
Red Triangle Cafe,
160 St James's St, BB11 1NR

PFI FAT cats carve up our services for profit

ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

Carillion, crisis and why the system fails

SOCIALIST WORKER PUBLIC MEETINGS

ABERDEEN
Wed 31 Jan, 6pm,
Belmont Cinema Cafe,
49 Belmont St,
AB10 1JS

BRISTOL
Wed 31 Jan, 7.30pm,
YHA,
14 Narrow Quay,
BS1 4QA

CARDIFF
Wed 31 Jan, 7.30pm,
Cathays Community
Centre,
Cathays Terrace,
CF24 4HX

DUDLEY
Wed 31 Jan, 8pm,
The What Centre,
23 Coventry St,
Stourbridge,
DY8 1EP

EDINBURGH
Wed 31 Jan, 7.30pm,
Friends Meeting House,
7 Victoria St,
EH1 2JL

HARLOW
Thu 8 Feb, 7.30pm,
Friends Meeting House,
1 Church Leys,
Harlow,
CM18 6BX

LEEDS: CITY CENTRE
Thu 1 Feb, 7pm,
The Swarthmore Education
Centre,
2-7 Woodhouse Square,
LS3 1AD

LIVERPOOL
Thu 1 Feb, 7pm,
Friends Meeting House,
22 School Ln,
L1 3BT

LONDON: HACKNEY
Thu 1 Feb, 7.30pm,
The Round Chapel,
2 Powerscroft Rd,
E5 0PU

LONDON: ISLINGTON
Thu 1 Feb, 7pm,
The Old Fire Station,
84 Mayton St, N7 6QT

LONDON: TOWER HAMLETS
Wed 31 Jan, 7pm,
Oxford House,
Derbyshire St,
E2 6HG

LONDON: WALTHAM FOREST
Wed 31 Jan, 7.30pm,
William Morris Community
Centre, 6-8 Greenleaf Rd,
Walthamstow,
E17 6QQ

NORWICH
Thu 1 Feb, 7.30pm,
Vauxhall Centre,
Johnson Place,
NR2 2SA

OXFORD
Wed 31 Jan, 7.30pm,
Restore, Manzil Way (off
Cowley Rd), OX4 1YH

PLYMOUTH
Thu 1 Feb, 7.30pm,
Quaker House,
74 Mutley Plain,
PL4 6LF

SHEFFIELD: CITY CENTRE
Thu 1 Feb, 7pm,
Central United
Reformed Church,
60 Norfolk St (near
Crucible Theatre),
S1 2JB

CAMBRIDGE
Hollywood, Trump, sexism and the system—the fight for women's liberation
Thu 1 Feb, 7.30pm,
River Lane Centre,
River Lane, CB5 8HP

CHESTERFIELD
What are the prospects for Catalonian independence in 2018?
Thu 1 Feb, 7.30pm,
Chesterfield Library,
New Beetwell St, S40 1QN

COLCHESTER
Marxism and ecology—the fight to save our planet
Thu 22 Feb, 7.30pm,
The Odd One Out,
28 Mersea Rd, CO2 7ET

COVENTRY
The bloody history of the British Empire
Wed 31 Jan, 7.30pm,
The Golden Cross,
8 Hay Ln, CV1 5RF

DERBY
What's behind the protests in Iran and Tunisia?
Thu 1 Feb, 7pm,
West End Community Centre,
Mackworth Rd (next to
Britannia Mill), DE22 3BL

DONCASTER
Is socialism possible?
Wed 31 Jan, 7.30pm,
The Womens Centre
(Changing Lives),
5 Princes street, DN1 3NJ

GLASGOW
Scotland, Brexit and independence
Thu 1 Feb, 7pm,
Avant Garde,
33-44 King St,
Merchant City, G1 5QT

HUDDERSFIELD
The fire last time—class struggle in 1968
Wed 31 Jan, 6.30pm,
Brian Jackson House,
2 New North Parade, HD1 5JP

LANCASTER AND MORECAMBE
Going beyond the binary—Marxism, gender and trans politics
Thu 1 Feb, 7pm,
Friends Meeting House,
Meeting House Lane, LA1 1TX

LONDON: EALING
How can Palestine be free?
Thu 1 Feb, 7.30pm,
Y Lounge,
YMCA West London,
25 St Mary's Rd,
W5 2RE

LONDON: HARINGEY
As we remember the Holocaust—is fascism back?
Wed 31 Jan, 7.30pm,
St John Vianney Church Hall,
386 West Green Rd (corner
Vincent Rd), N15 3QH

LONDON: LEWISHAM
Going beyond the binary—Marxism, gender and trans politics
Wed 31 Jan, 7.30pm,
West Greenwich Community
and Arts Centre, 141
Greenwich High Rd (near
Greenwich main line and
DLR station), SE10 8JA

LONDON: NEWHAM
Palestine, Trump and resistance
Wed 31 Jan, 7pm,
Stratford Advice Arcade,
107-109 The Grove (next to
Morrisons car park), E15 1HP

LONDON: SOUTH
The NHS in crisis—how the pursuit of profit wrecks our healthcare
Wed 31 Jan, 7pm,
Vida Walsh Centre,
2b Saltoun Rd (near Effra Rd,
facing Windrush Square),
SW2 1EP

MANCHESTER: CENTRAL
How can strikes win?
Wed 31 Jan, 7pm,
Friends Meeting House,
6 Mount St, M2 5NS

NEWCASTLE
The fight for LGBT+ liberation today
Thu 1 Feb, 7pm,
Commercial Union House,
39 Pilgrim St, NE1 6QE

PORTSMOUTH
What's behind the protests in Iran?
Wed 31 Jan, 7.30pm,
Somerstown
Community Centre,
River's St, PO5 4EZ

SWANSEA
Should socialists defend free speech?
Thu 1 Feb, 7.30pm,
Brynmill Community Centre,
St Albans Rd,
SA20BP

WIGAN
The Holocaust remembered—could it happen in the 21st century?
Thu 1 Feb, 7pm,
Little Fifteen pub,
17-19 Wallgate (opposite
Wigan Post Office), WN1 1LD

MOVEMENT EVENTS

DORCHESTER
Palestine, Trump and Jerusalem
Sat 3 Feb, 1.30pm,
Colliton Club,
Colliton Park,
DT1 1XJ

EXETER
Emergency demonstration—NHS in Crisis: Fix It Now!
Sat 3 Feb, 11am,
Bedford St,
EX1 1LL

LONDON
Grenfell—how can we get justice?
Thu 1 Feb, 7pm,
Maxilla Hall Social Club,
2 Maxilla Walk,
W10 6NQ.
Speakers include Kevin
Courtney, Emma Dent
Coad, Clarrie Mendy, Brian
Richardson, Moyra Samuels,
Eileen Short, Matt Wrack.
Called by Justice4Grenfell

LONDON
Emergency Demonstration—NHS in Crisis: Fix It Now!
Sat 3 Feb, 12 noon,
Gower Street, WC1E 6HG

STAND UP TO RACISM

EXETER
Holocaust Memorial Day—why we say 'Never Again!'
Sat 27 Jan, 11am,
Bedford street,
EX1 1LL.
Public meeting co-hosted
by Unite Against Fascism

LONDON: CAMDEN
Calais children: A case to answer—film screening
Thu 1 Feb, 6.30pm,
Room 537,
UCL Institute of Education,
20 Bedford Way,
WC1H 0AL

MANCHESTER
Holocaust Memorial Day—why we say 'Never Again!'
Thu 1 Feb, 7pm,
St Peter's House Chaplaincy,
Precinct Centre,
Oxford Road,
M13 9GH.
Public meeting co-hosted
by Unite Against Fascism

NATIONAL
Stand Up To Racism trade union conference
Sat 10 Feb, 10am,
NEU Hamilton House,
Mabledon Place,
Central London,
WC1H 9BD.
Speakers include Lee
Barron, Weyman Bennett
Margaret Greer, Claude
Moraes, Clare Moseley,
Mark Rowe, Wilf Sullivan.
Book online at bit.ly/2i2TZWe

NATIONAL
Students against racism national conference
Sat 3 Mar, 11.30am,
Hamilton House, Mabledon
Place, Central
London, WC1H 9BD.
Speakers include Janet Alder,
Aman Ali, Amal Bider, Faisal
Haji, Isabel Kingscott, Colette
Levy, Lowkey, Naima Omar,
Maz Saleem. Co-hosted
by SUTR and Mend.
For more info go to
bit.ly/2mVj3xK

CONTACT THE SWP

Phone 020 7840 5600
Email enquires@swp.org.uk
Post PO Box 71327,
London SE11 9BW

Go and see The Post, but it isn't quite first class viewing

The Pentagon Papers exposed the US lies about Vietnam by successive governments. The battle to publish them could be gripping, says **Sam Lorde**

THE PRESS is under attack by a US president desperate to preserve his position and willing to stoop to any level in this aim. The year is 1971.

Stephen Spielberg's latest film has won a clutch of five star reviews.

"The best picture of the year. There is no more important film this year," said Time magazine.

The Evening Standard helpfully explains it's all a metaphor for the Trump White House and Fake News.

The Post is a good film—political and thrilling.

But it's just not as good or clever as it thinks it is.

The action centres around the leaking of the Pentagon Papers.

These were documents which showed that president after president had lied about the war in Vietnam and about the US's relationship with Vietnam before the war as well.

BEN BRADLEE (Tom Hanks) **and Kay Graham** (Meryl Streep) **discuss revealing the establishment's crimes**

Request

The papers were leaked by Daniel Ellsberg, one of the analysts. They had been compiled by a group of academics at the defence secretary Robert McNamara's request.

The film tells the real-life fight to publish them.

In the opening scenes we're shown successive presidents making statements about the war while a character reads parts of the papers which reveal these as lies.

The action moves along at enough of a clip to keep it engaging. But it trips up at the attempts to draw parallels to today.

Meryl Streep plays The Washington Post's owner Kay Graham.

She makes difficult decisions in the face of suffocating boardroom sexism. She gains confidence through the film until she throws down the gauntlet to the US state and publishes excerpts of the papers.

At the court house a member of the prosecution approaches Graham and thanks her for publishing. "My brother's still over there," she says.

We're reminded frequently that important people are looking out for our best interests.

Tom Hanks's character Ben Bradlee, executive editor of The Washington Post, tells us repeatedly, "The only way to assert the right to publish is to publish." The freedom of the press is held up as a universal truth. Brave editors and business owners stand up to other powerful people and fight on our behalf.

"The days of us smoking cigars together… are over," says Bradlee about his relationship with politicians.

Apparently the Pentagon papers are a historical turning point.

But cosy relationships between politicians and the media are far from buried—just think of Rupert Murdoch and Tony Blair,or Donald Trump and Fox News.

The problem with drawing wrong historical parallels is that there are plenty of real parallels in history.

"An operation essential to American security." That's what the Washington Post said about the 2003 Iraq War.

The Post rightly attacks Richard Nixon and the other US presidents who killed millions in Vietnam. Maybe when a film is made about Iraq its media cheerleaders will be attacked as much as they deserve to be.

See The Post if you like political thrillers, but make sure you take a pinch of salt with you.

Poignant reworking of a play that exposes injustice

THEATRE

TWILIGHT: LOS ANGELES, 1992
The Gate Theatre, London. Until 10 February

MARTIN LUTHER King said that riots are the language of the unheard—this play expresses that.

The one-person show, skilfully performed here by Nina Bowers, was first devised and performed by Anna Deavere Smith following the 1992 Los Angeles (LA) riots.

The riots were sparked by the brutal police beating of Rodney King and the murder of Latasha Harlins, a young black woman who was shot dead by a shopkeeper.

Some 63 people were killed and over 2,000 injured.

Smith interviewed more than 300 people—including jurors in the King case, cops, community activists and victims of police violence.

This interpretation weaves 19 of those interviews together.

The riots are often framed as being about tension between the black and Korean community. But this performance tells a different tale, not just one of racism but of class politics too.

Nina Bowers in Twilight

For one character it is about black people rejecting the view that they only good at "crime, sports and entertainment".

The voice of Angela King, Rodney King's aunt, is powerful one.

And the voice of a Korean resident expresses that they too were victims of institutional racism.

A juror in the second case—when two of the four cops who beat King were found guilty—speaks of the weight of the decision, the breakdown of misconceptions and how it changed all those involved.

The final voice of Twilight, an activist looking to bring about a truce between gangs in LA, demonstrates the struggle to come together.

This is powerful and poignant performance. It gives a sense of the injustice faced by black people then—and is a reminder of the brutality that continues today.

Anna Blake

EXHIBITION

COMING OUT: SEXUALITY, GENDER AND IDENTITY
Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. Until 15 April. Free

THIS EXHIBITION opened last month to mark 50 years since the Sexual Offences Act 1967 partially decriminalised homosexuality.

It features works by artists including Tracey Emin, Francis Bacon, Grayson Perry, Andy Warhol, Sarah Lucas and Sunil Gupta.

Visitors can explore over 80 artworks by renowned artists exploring themes of gender, sexuality and identity

Grayson Perry's 'Claire's Coming Out Dress' is in the exhibition

in art. The exhibition will releave new research in LGBT+ history.

As part of the exhibition, the Coming Out Gallery Trail will see a series of art interventions throughout the museum looking at changing views of sexuality and gender identity.

There is also a programme of events including curator tours and workshops.

For details of events during the exhibition go to bit.ly/2FPK4ul

TOP 5 BOOKS

Bestsellers at Bookmarks, the socialist Bookshop

1. **Politics of the Mind—Marxism and Mental Distress**
   Iain Ferguson
2. **The Ghetto Fights**
   John Rose and Marek Edelman
3. **The Cotton Famine**
   Mark Krantz
4. **Marxism and Women's Liberation**
   Judith Orr
5. **A Rebel's Guide to Eleanor Marx**
   Siobhan Brown

Phone 020 7637 1848
bookmarksbookshop.co.uk
Why not visit the shop at 1 Bloomsbury Street, London WC1B 3QE

US MARINES hide behind a tank during fierce fighting in Vietnam's historic capital Hue

VIETNAM'S BLOW TO US EMPIRE

In January 1968 Vietnamese resistance fighters inflicted a shattering defeat to US prestige. The Tet Offensive sent shockwaves across the world, writes **Alistair Farrow**

FIFTY years ago this week Vietnamese liberation forces showed the world that it was possible to resist the horrors of US imperialism.

Their Tet Offensive, launched on 31 January, was a turning point in the Vietnam War.

And it kickstarted 1968, a watershed year that saw resistance to war and oppression across the globe.

The Vietnamese had forced their French colonial rulers out of the country in 1955.

But "peace talks" partitioned the country between communist North Vietnam and the US puppet regime in South Vietnam.

The National Liberation Front (NLF), dubbed the Viet Cong, fought on against the brutal US occupation.

Vietnamese New Year on 31 January, known as Tet, traditionally marked an unofficial 36-hour ceasefire.

But by 1968 the Viet Cong had built up enough strength to launch a major offensive against the US.

Along with the North Vietnamese Army (NVA), they attacked US military installations across South Vietnam.

In the capital Saigon, Viet Cong fighters blasted a hole into a US embassy compound and stepped foot on their occupiers' soil.

Exposed

It was the moment US power was exposed as fallible. For months the US ruling class had sold the lie that there was "light at the end of the tunnel" in the Vietnam War.

Invitations to the New Year's Eve party at the US embassy in Saigon carried that same message.

Sam Oglesby, an agent for the US International Development Agency during the war, described the US military's arrogance.

He filed a report about widespread Communist infiltration in South Vietnam after accompanying a French colonist to a rubber plantation near Saigon.

"The American intelligence team scorned any effort to provide real information as 'tainted' and 'French'," Oglesby wrote.

They were "barricaded in their compound with the noise of ear-splitting generators blocking them from the real world outside and fed fabricated 'intelligence' by paid informers".

The US Army leadership was largely oblivious to NLF and NVA forces secretly encircling Southern cities.

A broadcast by North Vietnamese president Ho Chi Minh on 1 January had given the signal for tens of thousands of NVA troops to sneak across the border. Le Van Cho, an NVA soldier, remembered, "To operate in the daytime we had to look like civilians, so we pretended to be farmers and puppet officials.

"We would dress up like women and put our AKs under our dresses."

As Vietnamese forces amassed outside the cities, the NVA attacked Khe Sanh, the US's westernmost base in South Vietnam. It was a diversion—and it worked.

The scale of the Tet Offensive a few days later was huge—36 of 44 provincial cities in South Vietnam were attacked, as well as major cities and US bases.

War criminal Henry Kissinger

The US burned villages and terrorised the peasant population

Vietnamese Communist Party general secretary Le Duan argued that resistance fighters should attack the cities. "They told us to get ready for a major attack on the cities," said NVA fighter Nguyen Ngoc.

"A total attack and a total uprising. We were on the outskirts of the cities. We could go in and out easily so I thought we would be successful."

Le Duan said the local population would rise up as they had in 1945 against the Japanese and the French.

And he also believed the South Vietnamese army, which worked with the US, would switch sides.

Unfortunately Le Duan was wrong on almost every count.

Despite the anger at the US occupation, with some exceptions, workers in the Southern cities did not rise up.

They faced brutal repression from the US and South Vietnamese dictatorship, and the Communists hadn't organised among the working class in the cities.

Some of the heaviest fighting took place in the ancient city of Hue near the border.

After a 26-day battle, some 6,000 civilians were dead and 110,000 homes out of 130,000 were destroyed.

In Hue and Ben Tre, near Saigon, the Communists had been able to mobilise popular support for the offensive. They had built a base among peasants living in and around the cities.

But in Saigon itself the uprising was weakest. The working class, the vast majority of the city's population, had not been won over.

Militarily the Tet Offensive was a decisive defeat for the resistance.

Of the estimated 84,000 soldiers that took part, over 58,000 are thought to have been killed, wounded or captured.

This devastated the NLF's organisation on the ground.

BUT THE Tet Offensive showed the heroism of the Vietnamese resistance—and that the US was not all powerful.

US war criminal Henry Kissinger said, "We fought a military war—our opponents fought a political one.

"In the process we lost sight of one of the cardinal maxims of guerrilla war—the guerrilla wins if he does not lose, the conventional army loses if it does not win."

The US had been waging a brutal war on Vietnam since 1955.

US soldiers burned villages and terrorised the peasant population.

And from 1962 it sprayed 20 million gallons of Agent Orange and other chemicals onto Vietnam's forests to deprive the NLF of cover.

Children with deformities are still being born today.

The Tet Offensive exposed the bloody reality of US imperialism.

Ben Tre was razed to the ground in the battle to push the resistance fighters back.

One US general was widely reported to have said, "We had to destroy the city in order to save it."

And South Vietnamese police commander executed a NLF officer Nguyen Van Lem on live television. "Many Americans begin to ask themselves 'are we supporting the wrong side here?'" said US army adviser James Willbanks.

"It brings home to the dinner table the brutality of this war and the fact that it seems like it's never going to end."

No one believed the US ruling class's lies that it was winning the war anymore.

US society became polarised. Senior White House staff looked at protests outside their offices to see their families taking part.

By 30 March 1968 a Gallup poll showed that 63 percent of people in the US disapproved of the way Democratic president Lyndon Johnson had handled the war.

Another poll showed just 35 percent of people approved of the war.

Johnson said he would not stand for re-election.

MARXIST author Chris Harman argued, "Tet represented the turning point in the war because it persuaded key sections of big business that the US simply could not afford the cost of maintaining control of the country."

The crisis for US capitalism unfolded on an international scale.

As Kissinger argued, "A demonstration of American impotence in Asia cannot fail to lessen the credibility of American pledges in other fields. We are no longer fighting in Vietnam only for the Vietnamese, we are also fighting for ourselves and for international stability."

In truth, the US was never in Vietnam "for the Vietnamese".

As Kissinger alludes to, it was there largely to limit China's ability to export its brand of "communism" throughout Asia.

The US was desperate for an end to the war, but it did not want to be seen to surrender.

It started peace negotiations in 1968, but troops would stay in Vietnam for another five years.

Republican Richard Nixon, Johnson's predecessor, tried to continue the war after he won the presidency by promising peace.

The liberal US journalist Theodore White wrote about the impact of the Tet Offensive on the US. "Here, enshrined like myth, in January 1968, was the visible symbol of American faith.

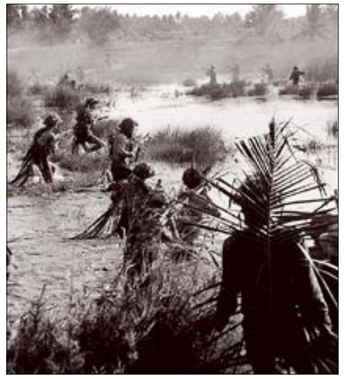
"That the power of the United States can be curbed by no one, that the instruments of American government need but the will to act and it is done.

"In 1968 this faith was shattered.

"The myth of American power broken, the confidence of the American people in their government, their institutions, their leadership, shaken as never before since 1860."

That was down to a badly-armed peasant army fighting the world's greatest military power.

Their courage sparked a remarkable year of resistance that would shape history to this day.



VIET Cong troops advance into battle (top). **They had been fighting the US for national liberation since 1955. The execution of freedom fighter Nguyen Van Lem during the Tet Offensive laid bare the horrors of the US's war** (above)

READ MORE

- **The American War—Vietnam 1960-1975** by Jonathan Neale £7.00
- **The Fire Last Time—1968 and After** by Chris Harman £9.95

Available at Bookmarks, the socialist bookshop. Phone 020 7637 1848 or go to bookmarksbookshop.co.uk

HISTORY

How big business made big money from the Holocaust

Coca Cola and IBM are just two household names that did business with the Nazis, writes **Tomáš Tengely-Evans**

JEWS LOCKED in a railway carriage. The Holocaust required an industrial-scale operation

THE HOLOCAUST is unique among genocides for its industrial-scale murder.

It wiped out one third of Europe's Jewish population in the space of just four years.

The Nazis' "Final Solution" murdered six million Jews between 1941 and 1945. A further five million LGBT+, Roma and disabled people and political opponents perished in concentration and death camps.

This slaughter required an industrial-scale operation—and it was highly profitable for a handful of multinational corporations.

After 1942 the Nazi regime began its programme to exterminate European Jews. Jews were rounded up and transported in railway cattle trucks to death camps.

Some went straight to the gas chambers on arrival. Those deemed strong enough were worked to death as slave labour in nearby factory complexes and farms.

Automated

All this required a large data management operation. In stepped International Business Machines (IBM), the largest computer company in the world. It automated death—and made sure its wheels turned efficiently.

Its German subsidiary DEHOMAG designed, leased and maintained a fleet of Hollerith punch card sorting machines. They recorded the camp and cause of death—1 was Auschwitz, 4 death by execution, 6 by "special treatment" in the gas chambers.

IBM was set up as a census management firm—and helped the Nazis identify Jews.

All of IBM's top officials, including president Thomas J Watson, knew about its subsidiaries' activities. A US State Department memo from 3 December 1941 recorded that its solicitor feared "that his company may someday be blamed for cooperating with the Germans".

After the US joined the Allied blockade against Germany, IBM's bosses in New York didn't stop doing business with the Nazis.

They kept in touch with their German subsidiary through their Swiss office, the offshore operation of its day.

IBM wasn't the only household name to bypass the blockade. Coca Cola invented Fanta and made it inside Nazi Germany. Capitalists were more than happy to go along with the Nazis.

Capitalists were more than happy to cooperate with the Nazis

Never Again!

Stand Up To Racism public meetings

- **Stand Up To Racism is organising and supporting Holocaust Memorial Day events**
- **Go to the Stand Up To Racism website at bit.ly/2BeUDUh to find an event near you**

By the late 1930s German capitalism was running short on labour. Confiscating Jewish property—and the imperialist plunder of neighbouring countries—provided a temporary boost.

But pressures increased on German capitalism as it turned to total war.

Important sections of German capital, such as steel giant Krupp and chemicals conglomerate IG Farben, grew reliant on Jewish slave labour.

IG Farben had its own dedicated subcamp, known as Auschwitz III Monowitz.

The Holocaust did not happen because it was in the interests of German capital.

Even when the Nazis were losing the war, they diverted much-needed resources from the Eastern Front to the Holocaust.

Ideology

Nazi ideology was key. Their antisemitism wasn't unique in European history—but its purpose was.

The Nazis increasingly relied on antisemitism and ultimately genocide to bind together their social base.

Capitalists didn't need the Holocaust.

But German capitalism needed the Nazis—and the Nazis needed the Holocaust.

We will say "Never Again" on Holocaust Memorial Day this Saturday.

To make that more than a phrase, we have to oppose fascism whenever it rears its head—and uproot the capitalist society that spawns it.

Developers are told to pack their trunks

by ALISTAIR FARROW

A STRONG campaign pressured Southwark council's planning committee to vote down proposals last Tuesday to redevelop the Elephant and Castle shopping centre in south London.

Hundreds of people joined an angry demonstration earlier that evening.

Developer Delancey had applied to build luxury apartments and expensive shop spaces on the site.

A document relating to the redevelopment raised concerns that "there is no traditional social rented accommodation provided".

PROTESTING IN Elephant and Castle PICTURE: SOUTHWARK DEFEND COUNCIL HOUSING

Scandalous

Tanya Murat from Southwark Defend Council Housing said, "One of the most scandalous aspects is that the company can make a £150 million profit but say it is 'unviable' to make more than 33 social homes."

Four councillors voted against Delancey's application, three voted for, and one abstained.

Protesters forced their way into the council buildings. And last Monday night University of the Arts London (UAL) students occupied part of their campus opposite the shopping centre and then joined the demonstration.

Matt Phull, the GMB union rep at UAL, told Socialist Worker that the local housing movement is pulling people in Southwark Labour Party to the left.

Similarly to Haringey in north London, Labour councillors are split over redevelopments—and not just down a left/right divide (see page 17). "The left haven't made the same gains in terms of selecting councillors as in Haringey," said Matt. "But we are seeing people on the right taking up our demands."

With local elections set to take place in May, Labour councillors are weighing up their options.

Some on the right have become opposed to social cleansing redevelopments. And some councillors are positioning themselves to ensure their political survival.

Opportunity

This is an opportunity for the left to push forward in united campaigns to defend housing from the developers.

A further meeting of the Southwark planning committee has been called for Tuesday 30 January.

There is every possibility the council leadership will try and force the committee to pass the planning application in another way then.

Campaigners plan a further demonstration at the council offices in Tooley Street.

■AROUND 50 people joined a lively protest outside the Notting Hill housing trust last Tuesday.

They were protesting against a proposed merger of the Notting Hill and Genesis housing associations. An activist from the Unite union told Socialist Worker, "This is another attack on working class families—they don't care, they just do what they want."

■TENANTS AND housing campaigners lobbied Labour-run Haringey council's cabinet last Tuesday.

It has rubber-stamped plans to knock down homes in Wood Green in north London.

Around 300 tenants at two housing association estates face the threat of demolition. Some 6,400 unaffordable homes would replace them.

■RESIDENTS AT a former miners' housing estate in Oulton, near Leeds, could get just eight weeks to move out.

Landlord Pemberstone Ltd is applying for permission to demolish the 70 homes.

They want to replace them with 71 properties for sale. Only 15 percent would be "affordable". Tenants are due to meet to plan their campaign this week

John Davies

Sign the petition at **bit.ly/2rtwidN** Longer version at **socialistworker.co.uk**

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What would Labour in office need to survive?

New books ask what a government led by Jeremy Corbyn would look like, writes **Nick Clark**

TWO NEW books published this month ask what sort of society a left wing, Labour government can create—and how it can defeat attempts to bring it down.

A collection of articles by prominent left wing activists, For The Many—Preparing Labour For Power, looks at the sort of changes a Corbyn government could make.

Editor Mike Phipps' introduction reminds us how Labour's manifesto marked a break from the pro market, austerity-lite approach of Labour's past leaders.

Director Ken Loach asks how Labour can manage society in the interests of workers when "capital and labour will always be at each other's throats".

And sociologist Hilary Wainwright uses her contribution to try and find a solution. She has more space to explain in her own book, A New Politics from the Left.

Transform

Her answer is to transform the economy by nationalising most of Britain's infrastructure and bring in co-ops, trade unions, community groups and social movements to help run it.

But what happens when this vision of society runs up against the bankers, financiers and capitalists? They would rather sabotage the economy than let their power and wealth be taken off them, as the experience of Syriza in Greece shows.

Wainwright looks to the power of movements outside of parliament to resist this. Previous left governments have failed because movements "have been subordinated to what has all too often become a decidedly old way of managing the political institutions".

Wainwright wants to transform Labour into a party that puts the needs of the movement before the needs of parliament.

Yet whether this is even possible depends on more than just the attitude of the people in control of the party. Working class people's ability to transform society is in the power they have together to bring society crashing to a halt.

Through collective action we can take the bosses' power off them and wield it against them—and build a new society ourselves.

But the Labour Party has tried to manage society through parliament in the interests of both bosses and workers.

Contributors to Phipps' book talk of how Corbynism has become the new "common sense". And it's true that for millions of ordinary people Corbyn's ideas are on the right lines.

But they don't make sense for the bosses—whose biggest fear right now is what a Corbyn-led government could unleash. They fear his election would harm their ability to make huge profits at the expense of jobs, wages and public service.

Preparing for the challenges a Corbyn government will face means building the sort of movement that can break with parliament completely.

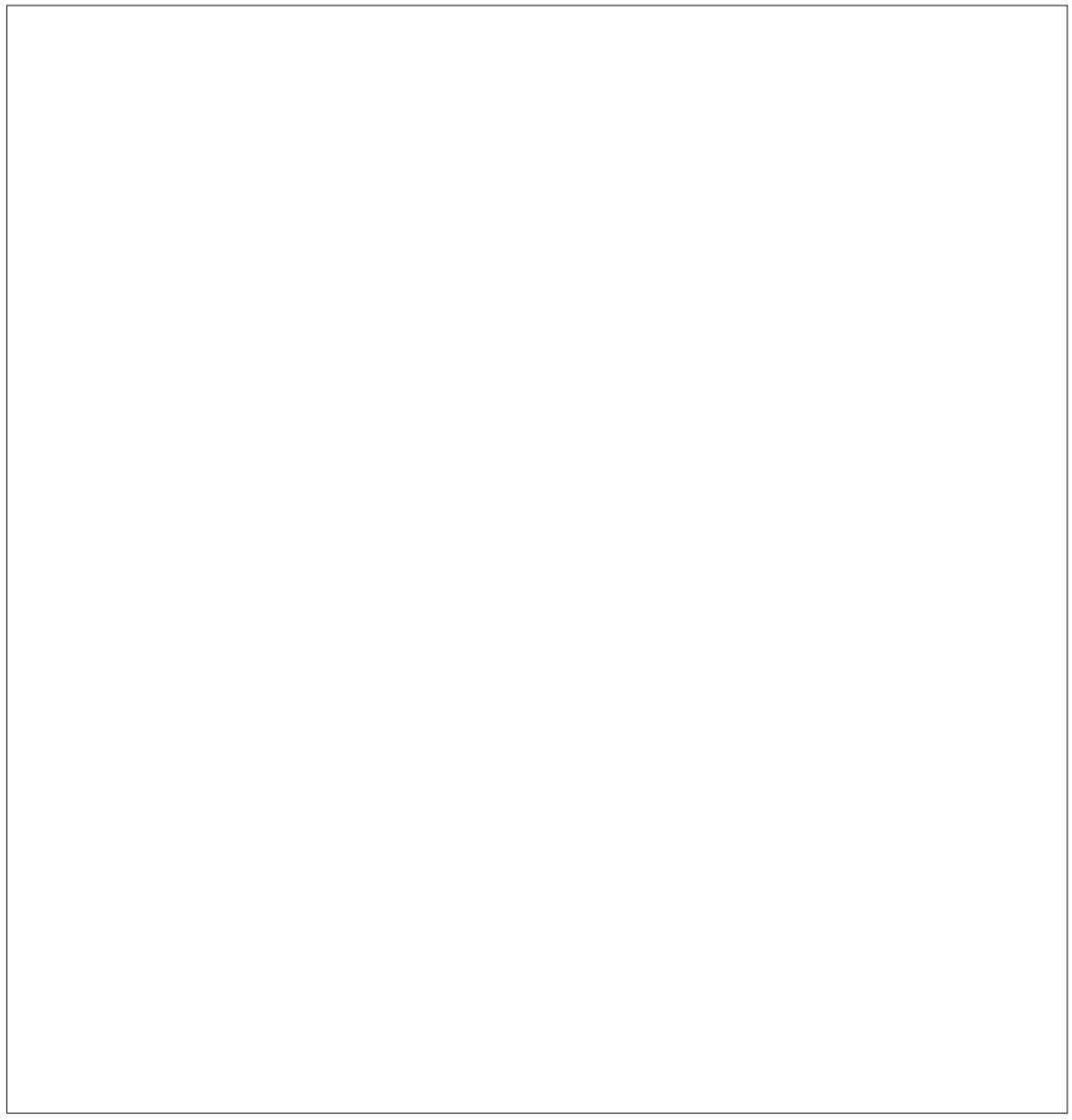
This means the needs of the working class cannot be subsumed into the needs of the Labour Party. That means the struggle can't be postponed in an effort to get Corbyn into office.

BACK STORY

Labour's leadership is aware that a Corbyn government would face hostility from the bosses

- John McDonnell has spoken about a "potential assault" from the ruling class if Corbyn became prime minister
- He also said they were doing "war game-type" planning
- An army general threatened "mutiny and mass resignations"when Corbyn was elected Labour leader

On other pages...
After Carillion—the big PFI swindle >>**Pages 10&11**



JEREMY CORBYN campaigning in Manchester during the 2017 general election

Haringey homes battle will be won on the streets—but vote against it as well

THE FIGHT against the Haringey Development Vehicle (HDV) continues to expose the contradictions inside the Labour Party.

At a recent internal Labour Party meeting the party's councillors voted by 24 votes to 22 to push ahead with the HDV.

The £2 billion scheme would see seven estates in the borough sold off to a private developer.

Councillors opposed to the HDV have stayed away from other votes on redevelopments in the council to avoid losing the party whip before the local elections in May.

Withdrawn

If the whip is withdrawn it means the councillors wouldn't have to vote with Labour policy—but they also wouldn't be recognised as part of the Labour group on the council.

Now the Liberal Democrat group on the council have challenged the anti-HDV Labour councillors.

In a motion calling for an emergency meeting of the full council the Lib Dem leader Gail Engert argues "to stop the current plans to dispose of any Council assets through the HDV." The motion points to the collapse of Carillion as a reason for reconsidering the HDV.

Joe, not his real name, from Haringey Labour Party spoke to Socialist Worker. He said the Lib Dems were behaving "opportunistically".

"We're just months away from an election which could see a raft of Labour candidates elected and an anti-HDV majority on the council," said Joe.

"I would advise left wing Labour councillors not to take any step which would lead to a pro-HDV council being returned next time round.

"Most of them would not vote in a full council meeting against the HDV. They would have their whip withdrawn, they wouldn't be allowed to stand at May's election.

"They would be replaced at short notice by the London region with right wing candidates.

"In tactical terms it would be a stupid thing to do. It's all about the best way to stop the HDV."

The best way to stop the HDV would be to strengthen the campaign which has forced Labour councillors to pick a side. That movement, which has brought hundreds onto the streets, has forced right wingers to oppose the HDV.

Labour councillors should use every opportunity to stop the HDV. This means joining the movement on the streets—but also fighting on the floor in the council chamber.

It is wrong to stay away from key votes or hope that the HDV can be stopped at a later date.

Motion

However opportunistically the Lib Dems are behaving, Labour councillors should support their motion and others like it.

Further delay could give the right wing enough time to push the HDV through the council.

If voting against the HDV results in disciplinary action, councillors should appeal to the left leadership of Labour's national executive committee.

The partial defeat of the Labour right has come from outside of the party and the struggle must continue there.

Got a story?
Email ideas to
reports@socialistworker.co.uk

IN BRIEF

Energy workers won't be tracked

SOME 270 EDF energy meter installers and fixers are planning to strike next Monday over the introduction of vehicle tracking systems in their company cars.

The Unite union members fear this will lead to bosses disciplining workers if they are found to be "driving uneconomically".

Strike ballot at Bromley council

OUTSOURCED council workers in Bromley, south east London, are balloting for strikes over working conditions.

Some 36 workers at 14 libraries in the borough are employed by Greenwich Leisure Limited.

A further 20 care workers are employed by Certitutde Support at the Astley day centre.

Fascists humiliated in South Yorkshire

SUPPORTERS OF the fascist English Defence League (EDL) were humiliated in Hexthorpe, Doncaster, last Saturday.

They drew just 37 people for a "regional" demonstration in the South Yorkshire town.

Around 150 people joined the counter-protest called by Doncaster Unite Against Fascism, Stand Up To Racism and Doncaster Anti-Fascists.

Poverty pay protest hits Weymouth

CAMPAIGNERS IN Weymouth and Portland have launched a campaign against poverty wages in the area—now the lowest on average in Britain.

The campaign was launched with a lobby of South Dorset MP Richard Drax and members of the local Chamber of Commerce in Weymouth.

Drax refused to discuss the crisis.

Phil Marfleet

Day of action called on Universal Credit

DISABLED PEOPLE Against Cuts has called a national day of action to scrap Universal Credit (UC) on 1 March.

UC aims to make it easier to harass benefit claimants and is driving people further into poverty.

Sellafield nuclear workers strike

FIREFIGHTERS AT Sellafield nuclear reprocessing plant in Cumbria struck on Monday.

It is part of a long-running dispute by the GMB union members to force a pay rise from bosses.

Meanwhile, the Unite union suspended a planned walkout by outsourced construction workers at Sellafield in a seperate pay dispute.

OIL WORKERS

UNITE UNION members at Suttons Tankers oil refinery in Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, are on continuous strike against bosses' attacks. Bosses plan to sack 30 workers then re-employ them on worse terms and conditions in February. PICTURE: ALAN GIBBONS

CINEMA WORKERS

Picturehouse bosses turn to legal threats

by **ALISTAIR FARROW**

PICTUREHOUSE cinema workers struck at five sites in London last Saturday and Sunday.

It is part of a long-running dispute for the London Living Wage of £10.20 an hour and maternity, paternity and sick pay.

The members of the Bectu arm of the Prospect union had been due to strike for 13 consecutive days from 8.30pm on each day. But they backed down after Picturehouse management issued a legal threat to their strike.

Court

The firm used a 2015 court decision relating to a strike by UCU union members to justify this. The ruling found that walking out for a few hours, rather than a full shift, could still mean the loss of an entire shift's pay.

The Hackney Picturehouse manager sent a letter to workers. "We wish to make it clear that we will not accept the working by employees of part shifts—we will not accept partial performance of contractual duties," it said.

On the picket line in Hackney

It went on to say that any strike for part of a shift would mean the loss of the whole pay for that shift.

Workers said similar letters were sent to them by managers across the Picturehouse chain.

Gruff Jones, a Hackney Picturehouse worker, said, "As a result of this move by management we have no choice but for all future strikes to last the entire day."

Workers will have to choose whether they want to directly challenge management and hold all-day strikes or back down for good. Escalating the strikes would be a step forward for the dispute.

But they must be backed up with a recruitment drive that pulls in workers from the wider Cineworld chain, which owns Picturehouse.

●To donate to the strike fund go to **bit.ly/2dLeKnv**

TRANSPORT

Bus drivers win licence to fight for more

LONDON BUS drivers are celebrating the introduction of the Licence for London, a step towards pay harmonisation across the network.

Currently drivers at different bus companies are paid different rates for doing the same job.

And if drivers take a job at another bus company, they will often start on the lowest rate—even though they may have years of experience.

The new licence promises drivers that they will be able to start at a new company at a pay grade equivalent to their level of service and experience. A London bus driver said, "We've lost terms and conditions in the time I've been a driver so to gain something is a positive.

"It's not everything we wanted, but it's a foundation to build on.

"In the past we've been told that separate companies have to negotiate separately with Transport for London, but this shows that can change."

■WORKERS ON the Docklands Light Railway in London are preparing to strike over pay. after a "comprehensive breakdown in industrial relations."

The RMT union members, who work as cleaners, security and travel safety officers, struck in December and are planning to walk out on Thursday 1 and Friday 2 February.

They're also planning a programme of work to rule between 1 and 3 February.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said management was trying to "impose fundamental changes to working conditions".

WOMEN'S AID

Protest over dismissal of activist Louise Harrison

SUPPORTERS OF South Yorkshire Women's Aid (SYWA) and Louise Harrison were set to protest in Doncaster on Saturday.

Louise worked for SYWA before its trustees decided last week not to renew her contract.

She has led campaigns to defend women's aid services and to raise money to keep SYWA going.

Her dismissal has led to widespread anger among campaigners, trade unionists and others.

Speakers at the protest include Ian Hodson, president of the Bfawu union, children's author Alan Gibbons and Maxine Bowler from Sheffield trades council.

But there is also pressure on some not to support Louise, because she has challenged funding cuts made by a Labour-run council.

So some leading trade unionists have opposed the campaign to defend Louise.

Louise Harrison

And the Morning Star newspaper last week printed claims from the trustees defending their position.

Campaigners, including Labour Party members, should stand with Louise and fight to defend SYWA.

●Protest to defend SYWA and Louise Harrison, Saturday 27 January, 12 noon, Mansion House, Doncaster. Contact **amycousens123@gmail.com** to find out more

POSTAL WORKERS

Workers showed they were up for a fight **Picture: CWU Eastern**

Is a risky pension scheme in the Royal Mail pipeline?

POSTAL workers' CWU union leaders could draw up a deal with Royal Mail bosses this week that would leave thousands of workers with a worse pension scheme.

If CWU members back the deal, it would end a dispute that last year saw workers vote by almost 90 percent for national strikes.

Bosses originally planned to transfer people who started working for Royal Mail before 2008 onto a defined contribution (DC) pension scheme. This could pay out less and be at the mercy of the stock market.

But in talks bosses backed away from that in favour of a new "collective defined contribution"—or defined ambition—scheme.

This could be an improvement for workers already on the DC scheme as it guarantees a set wage in retirement. It also means all Royal Mail workers would be on a single scheme—one of the CWU's key demands.

But the amount paid out still depends on the pension's stock market value when workers retire—meaning workers on the defined benefit scheme would lose out.

Last week CWU deputy general secretary Terry Pullinger said negotiators hoped to get a deal "nailed down next week."

Royal Mail has offered to draft the legislation needed to implement the scheme.

It is an improvement from the attack bosses had planned. That's because CWU members showed bosses they were up for a fight.

Union leaders shouldn't accept a pension deal that would harm tens of thousands of workers.

CWU members should be ready to reject the agreement—and strike for a better deal for all workers.

EDUCATION

More strikes set to stop academy plan

by **MIRIAM SCHARF**

NEU EDUCATION union members at Avenue School in Newham, east London, were set to strike on Wednesday and Thursday of next week against academisation.

The action comes after two one-day walkouts in November and December. Parents and children joined strikers on the picket line.

Avenue parents have issued a 19-page letter from Bindman's law firm challenging the consultation process that led to the school's decision to join the EKO Trust.

Local Labour MP Stephen Timms is now showing an active interest in the anti-academisation campaign, due to the uproar from parents.

TEACHERS AND parents united at Cumberland School PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

Successful

Meanwhile union members at Cumberland School are set to strike again in February following a successful 24-hour strike earlier this month.

Workers at Avenue and Cumberland could strike together on 22 February.

At Shaftesbury primary the prospective academy CEO was taken by surprise as parents packed the hall for the one day of consultation they were allowed. They are calling for an extension of the consultation period and a parent ballot.

Next week formal ballots for strikes begin at Shaftesbury and at Keir Hardie, another Newham primary school.

Newham Against Academisation campaign has taken to the streets to broaden awareness and support. Campaigners plan to lobby Newham council on 26 February.

The scandal at Carillion has shown up the dangers of handing key services to private firms. The mood against privatisation and outsourcing should boost the fight to stop academies.

●Send messages of support to **assistant.secretary.nta@gmail.com**

■THE ANTI Academies Alliance has called a meeting in London on Saturday 3 February.

It will hear from campaigners involved in local battles and discuss Labour's position on academies.

●Academies, the "middle tier" and social justice—what should be done? Sat 3 February, 2pm, The Wesley Hotel, 83-103 Euston Street, London NW1 2EZ

COLLEGES

Vote yes for FE pay strikes

WORKERS AT 19 further education colleges began balloting for strikes over pay this week.

Bosses have offered the UCU union members an insulting 1 percent "rise"—a cut in real terms. The ballot runs until 12 February.

Mandy Brown is a UCU rep at Lambeth College in South London, and is on the union's national executive committee. "We had a branch meeting last week and people were really up for the ballot," she told Socialist Worker.

"We've only had one pay rise in seven years and that was below-inflation. But they can find the money when they want to, to pay principals and contractors.

"We've had enough."

Khadeeja Ali is an hourly-paid lecturer at City and Islington College.

She told Socialist Worker that pay is just one issue among many driving workers' anger.

"Two years ago we were told our contracts might not be renewed," she said.

"On top of that we haven't had a pay rise. So many people have left because of the conditions. This is for the future, for the students and for education."

UCU members backed pay strikes by 75 percent in a consultation last year. And shadow chancellor John McDonnell pledged his support for workers at a UCU rally in London last week.

College lecturers were buoyed by the 88 percent vote for strikes by UCU member in higher education over pensions (see page 20).

That ballot showed the value of organising at department level. Mandy said, "We are going to have an extreme, militarised operation to get the vote out."

Khadeeja added, "We need a good vote to show employers we mean business. If we don't deliver that, they will get even more emboldened. They need to be told."

●The colleges balloting are City and Islington, CHENEL, Westminster Kingsway, South Thames, Carshalton, Kingston, City of Westminster, CONWL, Hackney, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets, Croydon, Epping Forest, Havering, Lambeth, Richmond Upon Thames, Sandwell, Sunderland, and Sussex Coast College Hastings

BUILDING SUPPLIES

No to a two-tier workforce

TARMAC BUILDING Products in Essex, maker of concrete breeze blocks, is set to be hit by strikes over cuts to pay, and two-tier working.

The company, based in Stanford Le Hope, wants inferior terms and conditions for new starters, creating a two tier workforce.

The Unite union represents 100 percent of the workforce.

A ballot returned a huge yes vote and a 24-hour strike is scheduled for Tuesday 30 January.

Further strikes are planned for 6, 8, 20, 22 February and then on 20 and 22 March.

Unite regional officer Guy Langston said, "Unite's members have made it totally clear they will simply not accept their terms and conditions being eroded.

"Tarmac's plan to cut pay for new starters is the thin edge of the wedge.

"Our members believe that if this is unchallenged it will lead to further attacks on terms and conditions."

SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE OF TURKEY

No to Turkish repression

OVER 300 people came to the Solidarity with the People Of Turkey (Spot) conference last Saturday.

It brought together MPs, campaigners and activists from Turkey and the solidarity movement in Britain.

Turkey's president Recep Tayyip Erdogan has unleashed fierce repression using the excuse of a failed coup in 2016.

Over 150,000 people have been arrested, and tens of thousands sacked from public sector jobs. The peace process with the Kurds has been abandoned.

The conference heard calls for increased solidarity from British trade unions to add to the present backing from the NEU, RMT, PCS, Bfawu and others.

David Lammy MP denounced the British government for its support for the repressive Turkish regime. Hisyar Ozsoy, an MP for the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) said that Turkey is now an "open prison".

But he cautioned against thinking the situation was just about Erdogan.

A debate in one workshop about the US support for the Kurds in Syria in recent years heard calls from SWP members for full support for Kurdish rights but opposition to US—and Russian—manoeuvres in the region.

During the day news came through of the Turkish assault on Afrin (see page 6). The conference applauded condemnation of the invasion and calls for the British government to halt all arms sales to Turkey.

●Spot and Stop the War statement on the invasion of Afrin at **bit.ly/2n0DI3t** For details of Spot go to **spotturkey.co.uk**

UNISON BLACK MEMBERS' CONFERENCE

THE UNISON union black workers' conference, held in Liverpool, could have been a head-nodding exercise.

However delegates discussed direct action in response to the Tories' hostile environment to migrants.

Many members talked about refusing to be agents for the Home Office and said the union should defend service users.

They added the union should develop a united approach to this.

Members also talked about the rise in racism and how the Grenfell Tower fire and austerity disproportionately affect black people.

One member said—to rapturous applause—that if protest got Robert Mugabe out in Zimbabwe then we can take on this Tory government.

People also discussed the Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) demonstrations on 17 March and building the SUTR trade union conference.

There was a successful SUTR fringe meeting.
Shazziah Rock

HOUSING MAINTENANCE WORKERS

HOUSING maintenance workers in Merseyside are carrying on strikes against the "pig headed" management.

They have overwhelmingly rejected the bosses' offer of a 2 percent pay "rise".

The 120 workers are employed by Vivark and Knowsley Housing Trust.

They have walked out every Monday and Friday since 1 December last year and have resolved to continue action until 22 February as well as an overtime ban.

The Unite union members do repairs and maintenance work on the Trust's social housing properties.

Unite regional officer John Sheppard said, "Vivark's pig headed attitude to negotiations in preventing this dispute being resolved is creating misery for tenants."

MANCHESTER

Three strikes are linking up

>>continued from back page

Allinson said bosses have threatened to take away staff bonuses for the whole year if they take any part in strikes.

He described workers' reactions as "some feel it's bullying, but it shows how important the dispute is.

"We need to redouble our efforts to raise money for the strikers."

Ian says Friday's strike rally is "very important".

"There's relatively little media coverage of our dispute and we're trying to connect up our three disputes and give each other mutual support," he said. "We've visited each other's picket lines but solidarity is a lot easier when a significant number of strikers have met each other."

And Ian said meeting up with other strikers had the effect of "reinforcing to people what they're doing really matters, and they're right to do it".

●Joint strike march and rally. Assemble Friday 26 January, 12 noon, Piccadilly Gardens, marching to Mechanics Institute, 103 Princess Street M1 6DD for strike rally at 12.30pm. For **Fujitsu** go to ouruniontest.wordpress.com **Mears** messages of support via colinpitt65@hotmail.co.uk **Rusholme buses** search for Solidarity with Rusholme on Facebook

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STUNNING VOTE FOR UNI STRIKES

by SADIE ROBINSON

THE UCU union has called 14 days of escalating strikes by lecturers across 61 universities. A two-day walkout is set to begin on or around 22 February, followed by three-day, four-day and five-day walkouts.

The move follows a stunning vote for strikes to defend pensions. In ballots across 68 universities, over 88 percent backed strikes and 93 percent backed action short of strikes on a turnout of over 58 percent.

The result is further evidence that the ballot thresholds in the anti-union laws can be beaten.

Carlo Morelli is a UCU rep at Dundee university and is on the union's national executive committee. He told Socialist Worker, "This fantastic vote shows members can be mobilised when the union shows leadership.

"No one anywhere for the past month has said this would mean anything other than extended strikes of up to five days a week."

Bosses want to change workers' defined benefit USS pension scheme to a defined contribution one.

This would mean no guaranteed income in retirement and slash the value of workers' pension by half or more.

JOHN MCDONNELL speaking at a UCU rally last week (left). **Striking over pensions in 2011** PICTURES: GUY SMALLMAN

At a UCU rally last week shadow chancellor John McDonnell pledged to back the workers.

"We will be alongside you whether in parliament or on the picket line," he said.

The dispute has helped to build the union. Roddy Slorach, a UCU rep at Imperial College London said, "Our membership is up by nearly 10 percent in two months.

"One head of department emailed his entire department about the ballot. He's never been to a union meeting before."

Lancaster university saw the third highest turnout in the country—over 73 percent. UCU chair Julie Hearn told Socialist Worker, "In November we planned our first ever 'Get the Vote Out' campaign. We had 30 reps ready to door knock for it and it worked."

In seven universities workers didn't meet the 50 percent threshold to make a strike legal, despite delivering huge votes for action.

Swansea university saw an 88.5 percent vote for strikes on a 49.7 percent turnout. Ruskin College delivered a 100 percent strike vote—but missed the turnout threshold.

The union plans to reballot the seven branches.

Carlo said, "I'm sure they will get the vote out.

"People will want to be part of this."

UCU members will now hold regional activists' meetings to prepare for the strikes. Carlo said, "The leadership must not throw this away.

"There can be no negotiation that allows for our benefits to be cut."

On other pages...

Birmingham care workers strike to save jobs and a service >>**Page 3**

MANCHESTER

Three disputes link up for day of coordinated action over jobs and pay

by SARAH BATES

STRIKERS IN Manchester from three long-running disputes are rallying together this week against penny pinching bosses.

Bus drivers, housing maintenance workers and IT workers were set to strike on Friday in the latest action in disputes that began last year. They are all members of Unite.

Drivers at the First Bus depot in Rusholme are striking for pay parity.

They are paid up to £5,000 a year less than drivers doing the same job at other First Bus depots.

Bus drivers in Rusholme PICTURE GUY SMALLMAN

Drivers are striking on alternate Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. They are due to have their first meeting with conciliation service Acas on 31 January.

But driver Robert said they weren't calling off strikes at this stage. "They're not going to get away with just calling a meeting and us giving up, so we're still on strike," he said.

Workers have struck almost every week since November. Supporters regularly visit the strikers, including trade unionists and Labour councillors. Robert said the support of others is vital to the success of the strike and said, "People are still visiting us, and we're getting loads of support from the public."

Meanwhile, housing maintenance workers at Mears housing contracting company are also striking for pay parity and an end to outsourcing. The 160 workers maintain houses owned by Northwards—the arm's length management company run by Manchester City Council.

Their contract was bought by Mears a decade ago—and they want the same pay as those who work directly for Northwards, a difference of up to £140 a week.

And after 27 days of strikes last year, workers at IT firm Fujitsu were set to walk out again this week.

They are fighting against compulsory redundancies, victimisation of reps and breaches of a redundancy agreement.

Bosses have now sacked four out of six reps who were leading the fight against job losses, including one who had an outgoing sexual harassment complaint.

Dismissed rep Ian

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Published by Larkham Printers & Publishers Ltd. Correspondence address: PO Box 71327, London, SE11 9BW. Printed by trade union labour at Trinity Mirror Printing Ltd