Now our class must fight and remove the Tories

By Graham Durham, Brent Central CLP, Unite the Union shop steward and Interim Editor Socialist Labour

THE VICTORY OF Jeremy Corbyn in the Labour Leadership election is a tremendous victory for all socialists. As Jeremy has made clear the campaign was a victory for a movement - a movement of several hundred thousand socialists and trade unionists who have rejected the vicious austerity policies of the Tory government and the ‘austerity lite’ cuts proposed by Andy Burnham, Yvette Cooper and the Tory policies of Liz Kendall.

Thousands of young people angered at a Tory ‘no future’ have joined the Corbyn campaign alongside many socialists returning to Labour after years of disillusionment with Blair, Brown and Balls. The sweetest moments of the anti-Corbyn campaign were to hear the war criminal, Blair, attacking us as lacking heart and living for our dreams.

For a neo-liberal multi-millionaire who has created with George Bush the appalling loss of life in war and caused thousands of migrants across the world to flee for their lives, to talk of heart is obscene. But yes we agree - we are proud to be part of a mass movement that ‘does give a f***’ and dares to dream of health, housing and jobs for all and an end to imperialist wars.

Dreaming however will not be enough. Groups of MPs who opposed Corbyn, some trade union barons and a host of ex-Blairite are plotting to isolate and defeat Corbyn and dilute his programme. Socialist Labour calls on all who oppose austerity and the rule of the neo-liberals to join and become active in the Labour Party, this is the best way to ensure MPs are held accountable to Party members as they should always be.

Building Labour is a key task for all socialists. Socialist Labour is a new initiative from the rank and file socialists in the party to promote debate and solidarity in this task. We welcome all socialist groups re-joining Labour and call for a united front in our fight for a Labour government as soon as possible.

As the Tories and their press allies mount a vicious campaign against Corbyn, we must open a second front of attack. At all levels, we must resist every aspect of Tory austerity. Strikes for pay and in defence of jobs must be mutually supported, local Trades Councils must be revived to co-ordinate activity on behalf of our class. Mass campaigns to recruit trade union members are essential. A start in opposing the Tories must be made with the protest at the Tory Party Conference on 4 October - Socialist Labour urges every active socialist and trade unionist to attend.

Demonstrations such as this play an important role in opposing Tory rule but we must also fight to organise every workplace and break Tory laws by striking against bosses attempts to weaken our conditions. In this we will need to challenge some trade union bureaucrats who will seek to restrain the anger at the Tories, if necessary they must be challenged and defeated. Socialist Labour wants to see all trade union officers chosen by election and paid the average worker’s wage.

This drive for solidarity action across the Labour Party and trade unions is vital, we expect every Labour Party member to take part - for example, Socialist Labour demands that every Labour councillor refuses to vote or implement a single Tory cut.

This will rally local communities to our side and drive the Tories to despair. Those Labour councillors who resisted in Liverpool, Lambeth and elsewhere against the hated Thatcher regime are our example on how to defeat Tories and defend our class.

At the moment, Socialist Labour believes that while they are a great improvement, many of the policy ideas put forward by Jeremy Corbyn require significant socialist input. The policy of further quantitative easing (printing money) to stimulate capitalist growth is inadequate to transform Britain and a programme of nationalisation of banks and all major industries without compensation is the only way in which the grip of international finance capital can be broken.

Internationally, we support Jeremy Corbyn in his opposition to bombing Syria and scrapping Trident. Socialist Labour believes we must immediately withdraw Britain from NATO and all collaboration with US imperialism and its vicious stooge regimes around the world.

These and other ideas will be debated in the strengthened Labour Party and trade union movement. Socialist Labour welcomes all who want to fight the Tories and establish a world of socialist alliances to our debates and our democratic magazine.

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Jeremy Corbyn suggests Tony Blair be tried as a war criminal for the bogus claim of weapons of mass destruction which justified the Iraq war. This raises our hopes that one day soon justice may be meted out to these criminals in the Hague ICC.

No distinction between ‘economic refugees’ and ‘genuine asylum seekers’

As socialists we will make no distinction between ‘economic refugees’ and ‘genuine asylum seekers’; they are all victims of imperialism, of transnational corporations whose will the IMF, the World Bank, trade agreements like TISA, TPP and TTIP and the US military impose on the planet right now. But the profits of transnational capitalism as decided by Wall Street and assisted in their own interests by London, Paris, Berlin, Tokyo and the other lesser imperialist powers means humanity cannot have them. Charities pose us with moral dilemmas whilst the US military prepares yet more wars against Syria, Iran, the USSR and China. And this will mean yet more refugees.

When the colonial world began to challenge their status from the late 1950s many of the new nations attempted to protect their home markets and build up native industries to reduce their dependence on imperialism’s manufactured goods and capital. But imperialism fought brutal colonial wars; the British in Kenya (1952-60), the French in Vietnam (1946-54) and Algeria (1954-62); in enforcing its global hegemony the US invaded 50 nations since 1945.

And these were supplemented by M16 and CIA assassinations and regime change plots. For example; 1949 Syrian coup, 1953 Iranian coup, 1954 Guatemalan coup, 1959 Tibetan uprising, 1961 Cuba, Bay of Pigs, 1961 Congo, Lumumba assassination, 1964 Brazilian coup, 1973 Chilean coup, 1976 Argentine coup, 1979 Afghan coup, 1988 Nicaraguan Contras. The French DGSE in Guinea, Togo and Senegal and Belgian, Dutch and Portuguese imperialism were as bad. In the Congo, the world’s most ravaged land, 10 million excess died between 1885 and 1908 and similar numbers in the war since 1998. The term ‘developing economies’ became a sick joke to describe this brutal neoliberal colonialism. US-dominated finance capital is a far more efficient weapon of exploitation than colonialism ever was, ripping the heart and soul from the planet right now. But the profits of transnational corporations whose will the IMF, the World Bank, trade agreements like TISA, TPP and TTIP and the US military impose on the planet.

From page 4 half of the capitalist state. Despite the enormous power that it holds, it still has millions of members, that is new the role it has been asked and accepted to play. This means a tight control of their trade unions, it means dismissals of socialists and lay activists to prevent any real dissent or opposition. We have witnessed this most recently in the case of John Hendy QC and the GMB.

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This occurred across all unions to varying degrees but in particular in the big unions, UNITE, UNISON and the GMB. They do their best to prevent any development of a genuine challenge to the capitalist onslaught. You may even get rewarded for services rendered like Sir Paul Kenny as he is by the GMB.

The trade union bureaucracy have become ever more arrogant and contemptuous of their members since the defeat of the miners’ strike. They frequently victimise socialist, militant shop stewards and branch officers. For instance UNISON members Onay Kasab, Glenn Kelly, Suzanne Muna and Brian Debus were awarded £49,000 in the infamous ‘three wise monkeys’ case in September 2013 for victimisation by union leader Dave Prentis.

British workers need unions more than ever but they need not just a socialist programme and fully equipped to face up to and fight the capitalist onslaught.

If you are not a union member join one now. The struggle is for broad lefts and rank and file movements fighting for democracy and to break the trade union bureaucracy. This is an historic task and one we must win if we are to truly unite our Labour party with the trade unions in a struggle for a society of fairness, justice and socialism.

Due to the crisis of capitalism what we have faced so far is not enough to satisfy the needs of the system. The Tories Trade Union Bill will effectively remove the basic right to strike to the extent that it will place the UK in breach of international law and conventions. As John Hendy QC says: “The right to strike is unnecessary to support collective bargaining. Without the right to strike collective bargaining is no more than collective begging.” Alongside this Cameron is demanding from British membership of the EU a British opt out on employment laws and workplace protection.

Socialist Labour call on all socialists to join us and struggle with all their strength to defeat this reactionary bill.
For a democratic Labour party:
- For a sovereign Labour party Annual Conference which makes party policy and elects and mandates the Executive Committee to carry out this policy and controls the PLP.
- Support the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy Charter for a Democratic Conference.
- For the abolition of the Joint Policy Committee and the National Policy Forums.
- Defend the democratic right of all CLPs to choose their own candidates, no NEC impositions!
- Ensure female and BAEM proportional representation in all party positions.
- For the right of CLPs to recall all Labour MPs, MEPs and Councillors and for these to be paid no more that the average wage of a skilled worker.
- All Labour councils to refuse to implement Tory austerity in alliance with the trade unions, local anti-cuts campaigns and local TUCs.
- End bans and proscriptions against working class and left currents, for affiliation rights for all socialist movements and societies. Exclude all anti-working class and racist currents.

Democratising trade unions and the Labour party link:
- For democratising the trade unions via rank and file control over the bureaucracies.
- Defend the Labour/trade union link and democratis it; end block votes and fight for all trade unions to affiliate to Labour and all trade union members to pay the political levy to Labour.
- All trade union leaders and full time officers to be directly elected, subject to recall, and paid no more that the average worker’s wage.
- Abolish zero and low hours contracts for all workers. Trade union pay rates and conditions for all, abolish agency sub-contractors.
- Mobilise to defeat the Tory Trade Union Bill, repeal all anti-trade union legislation, establish the right to strike, defend TU facility times, employment rights from day one, abolish Employment Tribunal fees.
- For a trade union and Labour party controlled mass media, including press and TV station.
- For workers’ democracy via local TUCs to organise trade union branches and community groups under attack by capitalism as a local basis for workers’ power.

Nationalising Industry, Council house building:
- Nationalise all major industries including the building industry, all public utilities, gas, water, electricity, Royal Mail, the railways, bus and coach services, ferries, etc. without compensation under workers and trade union control.
- Defend the NHS, abolish all privatisations, tendering and PFI initiatives; nationalise all drug companies and equipment suppliers without compensation under workers’ control.
- For a massive state programme of council house building at rents proportional to income not the bogus ‘affordable rents’. Abolish the Right to Buy. Control all rents, empower councils to seize all properties empty for more than one year.

Abolish the Monarchy and the House of Lords

By Sam McDonald, Erith and Thamesmead CLP

THE CAMPAIGN OF Jeremy Corbyn has stimulated discussions on a very wide range of issues from the Iraq war, Hamas, the Falklands/Malvinas war, NATO and many other international and key domestic issues including railway nationalisation and People’s Quantitative Easing.

Perhaps the Tory media – the Mail, Express Sun etc. – have been most apoplectic about Corbyn’s suggestion that the Queen should have her power to dismiss a government subject to agreement by the House of Commons. But Jeremy Corbyn says, “The royal prerogative should be subject to parliamentary vote and veto if necessary”.

It is now 40 years since the Queen dismissed the Australian Labour Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, because she considered his government too left-wing. That seems to some a tale from the leftovers of the British Empire but it was a sinister anti-democratic move which overturned the wishes of Australian voters. Corbyn is right to challenge this “very convenient way of bypassing parliament” which would enable the Queen to act, without Parliament, to dismiss a Labour government in Britain.

The monarchy and the House of Lords are remnants of the rule by the landholding gentry, formed in feudal times, bolstered by the profits from slavery in the British Empire. Even when slavery was abolished in 1833, the slavers in their great country and town houses across Britain were compensated whilst nothing was paid as reparations to the victims of slavery.

Feudal property relations were completely smashed in France in the bourgeois revolution of 1789, despite unsuccessful attempts at restoration by international reaction of the time led by Britain. The monarchy was finally abolished in 1848.

German feudal property relations were destroyed as a result of the first half of the great imperialist conflict of the twentieth century known as WWI. The other feudal system to fall in that conflict on their humiliating defeat was Russian Tsardom.

The British Empire was destroyed as a major player as a result of the strain put on it in both halves of this conflict, WWI and WWII. Because Britain was on the winning side both times it was able to become a willing vassal of the dominant capitalist state that emerged from that conflict, the USA. So Britain declined slowly on a cushion.

The unelected House of Lords and the unelected Queen have retained powers which date from the counter-revolution of 1660 – over 350 years ago. The key roles of the monarchy and Lords is to act as an emergency hilt on any socialist government or measures. It is time to demand not only that they be held to parliamentary account but that they are abolished
A Socialist Young Labour must fight for a future for youth

By Steve Forrest, Harrow West CLP

TODAY YOUNG PEOPLE face a continuing struggle for existence and for a decent future which should be their right. This generation are gripped by insecurity and a deep fear of the future.

There is a whole layer of youth who have never worked and have little chance of doing so. They face a life of crime, despair and drugs. There is even an American gang style and knife culture developing in some of our inner cities. Capital has given these people a life of no hope and without hope they are lost.

The situation for those lucky enough to be in work is not much better. All that is on offer is the so called ‘Jobs’ where young workers are forced into low paid jobs with no training and no future. Today the situation is bleak for young workers with the collapse of mass employment in the manufacturing industries. As a result capitalism only needs young people to work as low paid fodder in the service industries many on zero hours contracts. That is why more young people than ever are forced to seek a way out through university courses. But after struggling through university youth end up strangled by debt. Particularly since the Labour government scrapped the grant system and introduced fees and then Cameron forced those fees up to £9000 per year.

Even with a degree all that is on offer is really no more than a step up the ladder of the poorly paid jobs with no future. Even those few young people who manage to get into the professions are gripped by insecurity and stress as capitalism seeks to extract its pound of flesh. All the old certainties have been dashed and this generation is staring into the abyss.

After the twenty year campaign by the trade unions the Labour government introduced a national minimum wage. However instead of providing protection for the young workers it is actually a confiscation of low pay. Trade unions have not taken the struggle seriously enough although initiatives like Unite Community are progressive.

It has increased exploitation of young workers because there is no rate for the under eighteen and a lower rate for the under twenty ones. One million students studying in universities are also forced into these low paid jobs in order to survive. Some of these students leave university with over £50,000 in debts and find that their degrees are ultimately useless.

There are over 955,000 young people now classified as NEET (not in education, training and employment). A housing crisis is gripping Britain’s young people; it is impossible to buy or even rent a house or flat. Young people are forced to live ever longer with their parents. For some it is possible because of conflicts and abuse so every year 80,000 young people are forced to sleep rough on the streets or grab a night or two a week in a hostel run by a charity. In London alone there has been a 50% increase in homelessness for 16 to 24 year olds under the austerity agenda of Cameron.

The youth homelessness crisis is surely the ultimate damning indictment of the failure of capitalism to provide a future for the young people today. There is no future for youth because capitalism has no need to offer one; it cannot make sufficient profit out of them.

It is our responsibility as socialists in the Labour Party to offer the youth a vision of hope and a programme for the future. Young people are always the first to fight for a better society if given a way forward; this can be seen throughout history. For example it was the heroic youth in the townships like Soweto that ignited and then led the struggle against apartheid in South Africa.

But the youth need not only a programme but also to be organised and disciplined and prepared for the struggle or else their energy and heroism becomes wasted.

We need to build an organisation that will teach them how to organise and fight for the basics rights for jobs, education and a secure future that every human being on this earth deserves. Such a youth organisation can only be that which is directly linked with the Labour Party and hence the working class.

Socialist Labour will support an active Labour party youth section based on the huge success of the LPYS in the 1970s and 80s. It grew into an organisation that held regional and national conferences. By the mid 80s the national conference attracted over 2000 young people either as delegates or visitors and debates were of a very high level. It had 560 branches and 10,000 active members.

This success was only secured by the adoption and promotion of a bold socialist programme allowing the LPYS to intervene in all the major struggles of the 70s and 80s. In Britain the miners’ strike, the poll tax, anti-racist campaigns and against youth unemployment.

Internationally it led campaigns against the Franco dictatorship in Spain, Pinochet in Chile and apartheid in South Africa.

We have a responsibility to build a Young Labour that will call young workers and students to join with the rest of the working class united under the banner of a socialist Labour Party in the ultimate struggle to transform the world as we know it.

Defeat the Trade Union Bill: “Without the right to strike collective bargaining is no more than collective begging”

By Stephanie Wood, Vauxhall CLP

THE TRADE UNIONS are the basic economic defence for a worker in their workplace against the attacks brought by the employer in the centuries old struggle for surplus value. As Marx said “Capital is reckless of the health or length of life of the labourer, unless under compulsion from society.” That compulsion from society is the trade union.

Despite all the attacks from Thatcher through to Blair and now Cameron; a four decade organised assault by the British trade union movement, the laws under which it operates and even its very right to exist, it remains an ever present force and even a growing force in the workplace and society.

The TUC, the umbrella organisation of the trade unions, stands proudly with a membership of 6 million and 52 affiliated trade unions. The trade unions remain the biggest organisations in British society.

We have just experienced and lived through a catastrophic economic crisis that has had a major detrimental effect on the living standards of the working class and the profitability and sustainability of the capitalist system. What we are seeing and living through is the vicious austerity agenda of the Tories. As Trotsky explained “Capitalism can continue to maintain itself only by lowering the standard of living of the working class”.

The assault on wages continues despite the publicity given to Osborne’s announcement of the rise in the minimum wage: 1 in 5 British workers are paid less than the living wage. They are forced while working to rely on benefits and foodbanks in order to survive. There are approximately 1 million workers facing the insecurity of zero hours contracts, a throwback to the Victorian times when dockers would queue for a day’s work on the London docks.

This is the most naked expression of the insecurity faced by British workers; they are driven into temporary contracts. Britain has more temporary contracts workers than anywhere else in Europe.

The British worker faces the most draconian anti-union laws in the Western world. From the 1980s onwards Thatcher and the capitalist class brought in a series of anti-union laws which set about dismantling the legal framework within which trade unions operated. This was an historic transformation which, alongside the effective banning of secondary picketing and the ending the immunity from prosecution if in breach of the law that had existed for 80 years, gave enormous power to employers and the state in the struggle against the working class. These powers supported by these laws were used to break the back of the most organised sections of the working class; the miners in 84/85 and the printers at Wapping.

On both occasions the TUC stood aside as they had in the 1926 general strike and allowed the miners and the printers to go down to defeat. This is the real historic role of the trade union bureaucracy, it’sa policeman of the working class on be- Continued on page 2