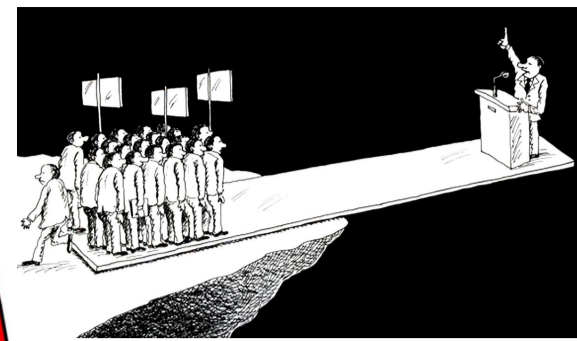


# AURORA



## Don't Play the Capitalist Game! Don't Vote!

As the Brexit pantomime plays on, a General Election is now thrust upon us. Like all capitalist elections it will be a sham. About a third of the electorate (mostly working class) already have no illusions that a vote will do anything for them. In the UK the sham does not mean that ballot boxes will be stuffed with fake votes. Our rulers don't need to do that. They have worked out how to get a result acceptable to the system without it.

### A Cruel Deception

It is a cruel deception because it looks so plausible. The capitalists can sneer at the electoral failure of all those "socialists" who stand as candidates never to win. They can say that this proves that there is no support for socialism. In fact what it really proves is that without the millions of pounds required to fund newspapers or TV channels and set up media companies which constantly drip feed the capitalist message (whether of left or right) there is little hope that workers will vote for candidates who "have no chance".

But the issue goes deeper than that. It is a way of getting us to accept that the system, however much we might hate what it does to us, is "democratic". We

thus accept it and its rules. In fact this "democratic consultation" is just a fig leaf. It disguises the nakedness of the capitalist dictatorship over us.

Individually workers are nobodies. We have zero clout. Collectively though we are a social force to be reckoned with. However, going into the polling booth is to enter "a fine and private place". Here each individual is isolated. Faced with the choices on offer most go for the immediate. If the Tories offer to let you buy your council house, or Labour to scrap student loans, you might go for either even though you realise the promises will almost certainly be broken. The sense of being one on your own undermines the fact that our strength lies in collective action and fighting together. It is the same at work where more and more of us are on individual, part-time and precarious contracts. They want to undermine our capacity to act as a class.

### Legitimising the System

In fact a cross on the ballot paper helps legitimise the system which has brought

worsening living standards for two generations. It is like an invitation to be kicked in the teeth yet again.

To some this might seem far-fetched. After all our working class ancestors fought to get the vote. In this struggle they were shot, hanged, imprisoned and transported. But we still did not get the vote. The capitalist class only gradually conceded to it once they were sure elections would be no threat to their rule. By this time they had established a nation-wide police force and created political parties. One of these parties has always claimed to be fighting for "workers' rights" (first the Liberals, and after World War One, Labour). "Workers' rights" were sometimes conceded but only because the ruling class trembled that workers might go further and question the very existence of the whole system. Corbyn, and all the leftist hangers on, are selling a deception, a dangerous illusion.

The fantasy that capitalism can be reformed for the benefit of the majority. Hope for the hopeless. But capitalism today is not attacking the conditions of the

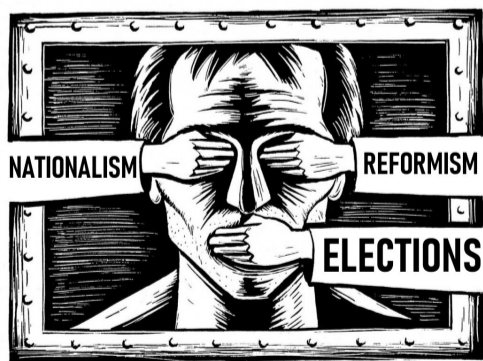
majority and transferring ever more wealth to a tiny minority because the wrong party sits in Parliament. It is doing so because that is the only way capitalism can maintain profitability, the only way it can squeeze enough profits to carry on functioning.

There will be no end to exploitation through voting for a Parliament in which the ruling class always wins. As capitalism lurches towards another crash, there is no way that things are going to get better. If we are going to put up a real fight we have to organise for ourselves against all the attacks. In the course of this we can forge our own organisations to coordinate the fight and set up our own "democracy". This would not be a "representative" system where you elect someone for five years and never see them again. It would be a direct system where workers delegate one another to workers' councils. We can recall delegates when we need to, and mandate or re-elect them according to our real needs.

This is workers' democracy if you like and it is vastly superior to the current system which works only for the moneybags of capital.

## Brexit: Ruling Class Crisis

The "synchronised stagnation" of the global economy since 2008 shows the capitalist class everywhere has no solution to economic crisis. Hence ever more strident nationalism has been adopted across the globe. It even engulfs its two greatest powers, now locked in a trade war. This nationalism is their "alternative". For them the problem is not capitalism but one form of it – globalisation. The fact is that the continued existence of the system in any form means more misery for most.



"Brexit" is the British version. It was the political expedient forced on 54 million voters to hold together a Conservative party of 125,000. Thanks to the 2016 referendum the capitalist class in the UK lost control of its own agenda. Even the capitalist aficionados of Brexit, in their saner moments, admit that in economic terms the ruling class is shooting itself in the foot.

### Spinning Out of Control

"Taking back control" now looks more like politically "spinning out of control". The 2016 referendum marked the start of

unresolved chaos in the bosses' political superstructure. That political crisis of the British ruling classes is now well into its fourth and most turbulent year. During 2019 the unresolved divisions have seen spasm after spasm disrupt the customary smooth running bosses' Parliamentary Punch and Judy show. Both Tory and Labour have fractured into squabbling factions, all with their own hard, soft or no Brexit quack remedies for the underlying capitalist crisis. Boris Johnson's talk about "turbo charging" Brexit quickly turned into accelerating that political chaos in the established order.

The glaring contradictions in the Brexit conundrum on the island of Ireland reached the point where no further bribes could maintain the Democratic Unionist Party's support for the Tories. Groups of Labour MPs and supposed Independents picked and chose when to support the Government and Opposition. The anti-Brexit faction of capital turned out a massive stage army in London for an extra Referendum on 19th October only to see its demand immediately evaporate in the Parliamentary faction fight. Unable to deliver any of their preferred "hard Brexit" options, Johnson's Government turned back to the traditional democratic General Election trick. This might "get Brexit done" but at what price? A hard border in the Irish Sea? A removal of the Unionist veto on future relations with the EU (aka relations with the Republic)? A Scottish Nationalist Party's demand for another independence vote legitimised? Little England anyone?

### A Colossal Distraction

It is important for revolutionaries to expose the Brexit pantomime for what it is – namely, a colossal distraction. The whole fiasco is a domestic row between two wings of the British ruling class. On one side, there is the Europhile faction of the ruling class, made up of those who understand that Britain's continuing relevance on the world stage relies on its ability to act as a safe haven for international capital and transnational corporations. These "Remainers" identify Britain's EU membership as an effective means to this end. On the other side, there is a Europhobic faction of the ruling class – the "Leavers" – who manage to combine a yearning for the pre-Suez glory days of cosy Anglo-American relations with a quaint enthusiasm for "independence". It goes without saying that neither of these options have anything to do with the working class.

Of course, this hasn't prevented each side from attracting its fair share of "useful idiots" on the left. The Remain camp has styled itself as a force for liberal internationalism and has thus managed to secure support from those elements of the left which can always be counted on to prop up the most "progressive" faction of the ruling class. Meanwhile, the Leave camp is backed by a constellation of leftist groupings, each of which champions their own pet version of a "Worker's Brexit". This, we are asked to believe, will create the conditions for a renewed "Spirit of '45", in which an ascendant "socialist" Labour government will bring back jobs, reopen

the pits, and nationalise heavy industry once free from the yoke of the EU. This thinly veiled social chauvinism is usually justified with reference to stipulations in the Maastricht Treaty which are said to "make socialism illegal" – as if a social revolution could ever have legal sanction from the authorities!

Whatever relationship is ultimately arranged between the British state and its European counterparts will be of little importance to the working class. The real division we face is not Leave versus Remain, or No-Deal versus soft Brexit, but between those who have an interest in creating a fundamentally different kind of society and those who do not. None of the bosses' alternatives will be allowed to present a real threat to the rule of private property. It is the responsibility of revolutionaries who recognise this fact to prevent themselves from being drawn into the internecine disputes of the ruling class.

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# Workers are Paying for the Bosses' Crisis

For years now the whole Brexit issue has diverted attention from the declining quality of life experienced by the working class in the aftermath of the financial crash. Now we have an election campaign where Labour and the Conservatives are vying to outdo each other as to how much they will increase state spending in order to end austerity. Labour's plans for a kind of soft nationalisation (a sort of John Lewis employee share scheme, "when the market will allow it") and Boris' gob shite about the NHS (as the break-up continues) are not going to alter the fact that the working class is paying for capitalism's crisis.

## Official Boasts — but Workers Suffer

One of the consequences of the biggest financial crash in capitalism's history was a leap in unemployment. More than a decade on we are told that unemployment is lower than it's been for decades. Hardly surprising, given the obstacles put in the path of anyone trying to claim Universal Credit or Job Seekers' Allowance. Anyone who can stand up (and some who can't) is now classed as fit for work and being classified as 'employed' doesn't necessarily mean that the work you do pays enough to live on.

The real situation of the working class tells a different story. On top of all the benefit cuts the whole range of government services and amenities have been abolished or pared down. From libraries to bus services, to reduced funding for schools and house building programmes, and of course the NHS. Inadequate funding has pushed areas of

public health and education to the brink of collapse. The number of food banks is increasing, the shortage of "affordable housing" will remain and reports of hidden and not-so-hidden homelessness will continue.

So, when we are told that more people than ever are "in work", that Labour, Tory or whoever are ready to 'turn the country around' back to the good old days when there was a bright future for themselves and their kids we have every reason to be sceptical. Above all, we don't believe any of the political parties' claims to have the formula for a better life because we know that today's world is the outcome of decades of capitalist crisis: a crisis which will not go away. This is what we have to face up to as a class. More and more precarious, low-paid work; where the prospect of a decent pension is diminishing by the day and more and more pension-age people have to keep on working; where nominal wages have barely reached the level they were a decade ago (though

inflation has not gone away); where life without resorting to the credit card and/or loan sharks is unthinkable for many. If you want a reliable statistic, check out the United Nations facts and figures — 60% of people "in poverty" in Britain are from working families, including 2.8 million in a family with a full-time worker.

Everyone knows that the gap between the rich and everyone else is now a chasm. However the ONS (Office for National Statistics) added insult to injury when it announced in March that it has been miscalculating "the very highest incomes in the country". In fact "top earners (sic) incomes are twice as high" as previously portrayed and, what do you know, "This means income inequality is higher than thought". In fact, the ONS admits, "even using the current method, top incomes grew sharply in 2018 while incomes for the poorest fifth fell". (Financial Times, 4.3.19). Even the Financial Times is getting worried about the gross unfairness of it and has launched its own campaign for capitalism

to become responsible! But a tiny increase in the top bracket of the income tax is not going to change that.

## Hardship is Worldwide — Class Resistance Must Be Global

In any case, the answer to a worldwide capitalist crisis is not to dream of a better capitalism, a more egalitarian capitalism, a capitalism without 'elites'. As we write this, anti-establishment protest movements against the deteriorating quality of life are going on across the world but they are not demanding an end to the real cause of our misery — the capitalist system. For more and more people everyday life is a constant struggle to stay clothed, housed and fed. The local states prop up the capitalist system that generates this living hell. Many of our class sisters and brothers are forced to flee as refugees, risking their lives to seek any sort of hope for the future.

This picture is not changing for the better. We are not living in the post-war boom period of the 1950s and 60s. For decades now global capitalism has been grappling with its inevitable crisis of falling profit rates in the 'real economy' and turning more and more to financial speculation. The 2007-8 banking crash was the inevitable consequence. But the 'solution' to the crash — dole out billions of pretend-dollars, pounds and euros to the banks — has only postponed the next crash and made the capitalist debt mountain even higher.

Put simply, capitalism is unsustainable. It has no future to offer the working class anywhere. It is time to organise the resistance.



## The Working Class needs its own Political Organisation

On the left of the political spectrum there is no shortage of calls for the formation of "workers' parties", the transformation of existing parties into "real workers' parties", or this or that clique declaring itself to be "the party". An endless alphabet soup of Trotskyist and Stalinist groups have dedicated their resources towards depriving this slogan of all meaning. So it's no surprise at all that at first glance our work towards the formation of an **independent** and **international** political organisation of the working class, can come across as just more of the same.

### A Party Against the Capitalist State

The fundamental difference lies in what we mean by these words as well as the political perspectives which motivate them. Unlike the left-wing of capital which masquerades as socialist, we recognise the State for what it is. Rather than some metaphysical institution, hanging over and above society just waiting to be captured by the working class, the State is a very tangible formation that arose at a specific historical period. To paraphrase Marx: the army, the police, the bureaucracy, the clergy, and the judiciary, everything that came to comprise the modern centralised capitalist State, was utilised by the capitalist class in its struggle against feudalism back in the days of absolute monarchy. As modern industry developed, that state power assumed more and more the character of a national power of capital over labour, of a public force enforcing a hierarchical division of labour.

Depending on the particular political and historical circumstances, State power may appear different in different countries. But whether the political superstructure takes the form of a "multi-party" system (like in Germany and Sweden), a "two-party" system (like in the US and in some ways the UK), or a "one-party" system (like in

China and Cuba), the objective remains the same: administration of the capitalist economy in a given territory. Towards that end a mountain of institutions have been erected and thousands of different laws and regulations devised. The different political parties (where they are allowed) compete based on who can carry out the task of administration in a more efficient manner and satisfy both their electoral base and the section of the capitalist class that funds and supports their activities.

### Unlike Labour

The Labour Party is only a "workers' party" in so far as its electoral base has historically been primarily composed of the working class. This means that yes, it might want to represent workers' interests, but only as long as these interests don't disturb the process of capitalist accumulation (which is why, whenever in power, Labour has been no less hesitant in putting down strikes than their Tory peers). No matter how well meaning the original intentions, the left in government ends up carrying out the very same functions that it once claimed to oppose (the SPD in Germany serves as a clear example from the past, but so more recently do Syriza in Greece or the PSUV in Venezuela). This is because it is enmeshed within the State.

### It Must Be International

On the other hand, what we mean by an **independent** and **international** political organisation of the working class is one that is outside and against the logic of the State — it cannot be simply an appendage of a faction within the capitalist political system (which Trotskyist and Stalinist groups reduce themselves to through Labour Party entryism or support for various rivals of US imperialism). The political organisation that we speak of is, as we always repeat, not a government in waiting, but a political compass with a clear understanding of the line of march, the

conditions, and the ultimate goal of the working class movement (that is, abolition of class society and the emancipation of humanity from the dictatorship of capital). It also passes on the lessons of the past, one of these being that the working class expresses its fight for freedom via mass assemblies, strike committees and workers' councils rather than parliamentary masquerades!

In order for such an organisation to come about, we cannot wait for day X. The 2007/8 financial crisis may have sparked a wave of mass anti-austerity protests across the globe, but it did not give birth to a new political force (instead, in its absence, it breathed new life into old political formations like the Labour Party). If communists want to have any influence over events, if they want to help to guide

the movements of the future towards emancipatory goals, they cannot remain isolated. There is a need for an organisation to exist prior to the outbreak of such movements, so that it can disseminate an alternative message among the class, that there is another way of organising society, that capitalism, which drives the world towards imperialist wars and ecological collapse, is not the be-all and end-all. While the existence of such a political organisation does not ensure victory, without it every revolt will surely exhaust itself within the system, just like the anti-austerity movement has done.



### What We Stand For

**Aurora** is published by the Communist Workers' Organisation (CWO).

The CWO stands for a global society where production is for need and not profit (and is therefore sustainable), where the state, national frontiers and money have been abolished, where collective power is exercised through class-wide organisations like workers' councils. This has to mean the active, daily participation of the majority aiming for the interests of all. Only then can the world be rid of the capitalist offspring of poverty, hunger, oppression and war: we call it communism but this vision has nothing in common with Stalinist state capitalism and the old USSR.

In order to get there we are working to create a world working class political organisation — a 'party' for want of a better word — not a government in waiting but a guide in the struggle for a new world. We by no means claim to be that party but we do aim to be one of the elements which will need to come together in its formation. As the working class is more and more faced with the consequences of a crumbling capitalist system it will have to unite and confront capitalist power.

We are not in competition with other organisations but seeks to unite on a clearly agreed political programme to prepare the way for the majority of the world's population, the exploited of the earth, to overthrow the capitalist system and its bloody imperialist appetites.

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