

No to cuts, poverty and war

TORIES OUT

Build a mass socialist alternative to Sunak and Starmer



Unwavering support for the Israeli regime's brutal siege of Gaza; cruel, anti-migrant rhetoric; and promises for cut backs 'more painful' than those we have already had inflicted on our public

services. The Tories just keep making things worse

By January 2025, households will be £1,900 a year worse off than they were when Boris Johnson took over in 2019. This will be the first parliament in 70 years where living standards have gone backwards.

The Autumn Statement will mean more misery. 14% cuts for 'unprotected' public services, including bankruptcy-ridden local

government. And for all the bluster about tax cuts, this Tory government will have increased taxes by £70 billion – the vast majority of it paid by ordinary workers.

The Tories are so universally hated, even their own leading figures are preparing for life after an election defeat.

Millions hope against hope that anyone but the Tories will be better.

But Labour under Keir Starmer refuses to back a Gaza ceasefire, his frontbenchers parrot the Tories' anti-migrant sentiments and promise

'ironclad fiscal responsibility' – a continuation of cutbacks.

One Labour spokesperson revealed the Labour leadership's attitude that so-called, self-inflicted 'fiscal rules' are more important than any policy.

The money is there to pay for the building of millions of high-quality council homes, a decent pay rise for NHS workers and others linked to the rising cost of living, and a huge investment in renewable energy and home insulation. The money is there for free education and a

reversal of the public service cuts of the last 13 years of Tory rule.

The problem being that it is in the bank accounts of the super-rich.

We need a new mass workers' party that fights to take the wealth off the super-rich to fund the services we need; that fights for nationalisation of rail, mail and the utilities; that wholeheartedly backs workers fighting for pay rises and supports the Palestinians' struggle for national self-determination. We need a new mass workers' party that fights for socialism.

Mass Gaza demos major factor in temporary ceasefire

Build the anti-war movement, fight for socialist change

Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

After the start of the initial four-day Israeli ceasefire, aid workers who entered the Gaza Strip reported scenes of humanitarian catastrophe. Devastating injuries, overwhelmed hospitals, over 50,000 buildings destroyed or damaged, a dire shortage of basic goods and more than two-thirds of the population displaced with nowhere to go. The death toll reached 15,000, with 40% of them children, and thousands missing.

Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister, had wanted to press on with the war with no interruption. He unwillingly sanctioned a break because of demands within Israel for hostage release deals to be prioritised and international pressure over the rising death toll and humanitarian crisis. It wasn't Israel's enormous military might that led to the release of Israelis held in captive. Netanyahu had to concede to negotiations with Hamas leaders, who he had ordered the Israeli military (IDF) to wipe out, a climbdown from his bellicose intransigence and illustrating the underlying weakness of his position.

Israeli prisons

Only a small fraction of the near 7,000 Palestinians imprisoned in Israel jails have been released in exchange for hostages held by Hamas and other militias, but it has carried a significance beyond the number. They were met with jubilation on their return to the West Bank. Israelis, on their part, celebrated the return of some of the Israelis and Thai workers from captivity.

Anti-war demonstrators across the globe can claim most of the credit for the ceasefire. Millions of people have protested as part of thousands of demonstrations, placing pressure on their governments to intervene and in any case being impossible for Israel's leaders to completely ignore. Hundreds of thousands have marched against the war in Britain and Suella Braverman was removed as home secretary after exposing too much the hypocrisy of the Tories' backing for it - including denigrating the mass protests as "hate marches". Overall, the scope of the anti-war movement worldwide, including across the Middle East, led to increased pressure being applied on Netanyahu.



The latest huge demonstration in London ROGER THOMAS

The movement cannot yet stop. As Netanyahu made clear, he intends to carry on with the war. Israeli military leaders and ministers have spoken of trying to force over two million destitute Palestinians in the Gaza Strip into a tiny patch of barren land, so that the IDF can engage in appearing to annihilate Hamas in the Strip's south. It would be a crash-and-burn strategy; Hamas isn't just a military apparatus but is also a reflection of the Palestinian aspiration for national liberation that cannot be defeated militarily. It is a product of the desperation of the Palestinians following decades of repressive occupation, in the absence of them having yet built a left-wing party based on democratically organised mass struggle and genuine socialist ideology.

Israel's right-wing government has no solution whatsoever on who will rule Gaza in place of Hamas. It has spoken of imposing direct military occupation, along with some of its ministers advocating expulsion of part or all of the population. It has also touted whether an occupying force could be drawn in from elsewhere internationally. That prospect was derided by an editorial in the Financial Times: "No outside actor will want to be seen to be riding into the wreckage of Gaza on the back of Israeli tanks, take responsibility for a desolate population, and face an insurgency" (23 November).

West Bank

At the same time, Israel's leaders have escalated the conflict in the West Bank. More than 200

to its Israeli ruling-class ally in global capitalist markets.

An analysis by journalist Amos Harel in Israeli newspaper Haaretz reminded readers that the US supports an ongoing war by Israel after the ceasefire, but elaborated on the divergence: "The Biden administration objects to the character of the offensive that is looming in the southern Gaza Strip - and is still stunned by Netanyahu's determined refusal to discuss any day-after scenarios. It's possible that over time the result will be more concentrated pressure on Israel to refrain from a sweeping move in the south", and the US would prefer "focused IDF raids in the northern Gaza Strip". Harel concluded: "American measures of restraint are likely to accelerate a collision between Biden and Netanyahu", in a situation where "the IDF is totally dependent on the United States for the use of specific munitions ... The use of the IDF is making of ammunition, in the course of fighting in a densely inhabited urban area, is far higher than the advance forecasts".

In Israel, as well as that US pressure and from the widespread concern for the hostages and their families, there is unease in capitalist circles because economic deterioration is being worsened by the war, partly due to the mobilisation of 360,000 reservists away from their normal jobs and the cost of 126,000 people being evacuated from border areas. To help finance the war, \$6 billion has been borrowed on the international finance markets.

Pressure is on Netanyahu from the opposite direction too. He has political reasons to prolong the war, as opinion polls in Israel indicate his party will be swept out of power after the war; and corruption charges against him will once again be pursued. He is also under pressure from the ultra-nationalist and far right in Israel who are demanding no let-up in the onslaught on Gaza.

Pressure

All the above factors and more will influence when the war will end, but workers' movements in Britain and internationally cannot look to western imperialism - or its friends in the Arab elites, or the turmoil in Israel - to end it without further terrible bloodshed and displacement. Demonstrations in Britain for an end to the war need to continue, with trade unions taking part and stepping up their role in the anti-war movement in other ways, such as by more discussion and plans for workers' sanctions against the arms trade with Israel.

As well as the urgency of a lasting ceasefire, Socialist Party members argue in the movement for the immediate withdrawal of the IDF from the occupied territories and for workers' organisations to be built in the Palestinian territories and in Israel - and be supported by workers internationally. The only way to end future rounds of bloodshed is for those organisations to adopt socialist programmes for removing capitalism and replacing it with a socialist Palestine alongside a socialist Israel.

On that basis - the ending of capitalism with its inequality, poverty and need for competition - discussion and cooperation will be possible between elected working-class representatives from both sides to resolve all the key issues, including borders, and guarantees for the rights of minorities.



Queen Mary JAMES IVENS

Queen Mary, east London - power in the collective

There was a student-organised sit-in at Queen Mary University to protest against the genocide of Palestinians in Gaza, and the university's involvement in it. Queen Mary issued a statement expressing sympathy with the victims of this violence. However, it refused to condemn the actions of the Israeli state.

Queen Mary invests millions of pounds in Barclays. The bank funds weaponry sent to Israel from the UK.

We, the students, find this unacceptable and sickening. This is yet another example of universities prioritising money in their pockets over the cries of their students for change.

Queen Mary students are calling

for the university to condemn the actions of the Israeli state, demand an immediate and permanent ceasefire, and divest funds that are supporting war crimes.

Queen Mary Socialist Students got involved in this protest. We were able to share our views that were very well received. And some students expressed interest in getting involved with our campaigns.

NANDI SHALITA

Nandi also spoke at the protest:

“They're looking at us in the face and telling us what we're seeing with our own eyes is a lie. They're trying to scare us into silence.”

Netanyahu used the Hamas attacks to make it seem like he is the protector of the Israeli people. He is not. He doesn't care about his people. He is using October 7 as a scapegoat.

Palestinians need an intifada - an

The protests are not stopping

London - another huge demo

Leicester Socialist Party members Alex Gillham and Sam Ward participated in the latest huge London demonstration on 25 November.

We attended the London demonstration, and the Saturday evening rally at Socialism 2023 afterwards (see pages 6-7).

As soon as we left Bond Street station, the first thing we spotted was a Socialist Party gazebo, run by party members. It was very effective seeing a large number of stands, where protesters could buy the Socialist paper, and get our materials.

It is a busy time for Socialist Party members. In Leicestershire, we have attended demonstrations every week since 7 October.

A march in Leicester on 19 November attracted 2,000 protesters - our

uprising against the occupation. A socialist intifada led by the people.

Let us not be fooled into thinking there is nothing we can do about what's happening. We demand the government condemn the actions of the Israeli state. Its compliance in this genocide is appalling and unforgivable. And we will not forget.

And our own representative - Tower Hamlets Labour MP Rushanara Ali - refused to vote for a ceasefire. ["Shame!" - shouts from crowd] They do not speak for us. And they do not represent us.

This Tory government is trying to ban discussion and the waving of flags. They're trying to silence us.

It's because they see the power we hold. They're afraid.

There have recently been hundreds of thousands of people on the streets of London every Saturday for over a month. There is power in the collective. And we need to utilise it to demand Palestinian liberation.

Birmingham - Tory and Labour shame

Over 200 parents and children gathered in Centenary Square, part of a national school strike against the war and occupation of Gaza.

Many there snatched the words out of our mouths, talking about the political establishment in the UK ignoring public support for a ceasefire, as they do on so many issues closer to home.

One protester said: "Maybe one day we'll have leaders who've protested for peace. For now, we're led by donkeys".

One parent who came to speak to us was all the more willing to donate to our Socialist Party fighting fund when we explained that we weren't a charity. We use the funds that we raise to produce material to explain the situation in Gaza to people here in the UK, campaign for a ceasefire, and against the pro-war, pro-occupation politicians.

Speaking to Free Radio, Birmingham Socialist Party member Louie said: "The role that the Tories and Labour have played in this is shameful. There is a need for a political alternative that can fight for a ceasefire and for people who work".

NICK HART

Manchester and Salford - from infants to elderly

Dozens of people, from infants to the elderly, gathered in Manchester to show solidarity with Palestinian people during the national student strike. Following this success, Socialist Students held a stall outside the University of Salford, where we raised awareness about Gaza.

The students we spoke to were opposed to the university on this issue, and some were planning on taking action to change its position. We are planning on organising future walkouts.

AMY RATHBONE

University of the West of Scotland - youth have role to play

Socialist Students organised a protest with other student groups at the Paisley campus on 27 November.

Daniel Lauchlan, from Socialist Students, said: "Thousands of young people have been part of the millions who have marched in recent weeks against the murderous siege of Gaza by the Israeli state. Students and young people can play a key role in building the struggle for Palestinian liberation here in Scotland. That's why we need to build our movement, organising protests locally to keep up the pressure on and expose all politicians who support war and cutbacks".

Hackney, east London - "Sunak is a wasteman"

Over 200 primary school children, parents, and some older students filled the steps in front of Hackney Town Hall and the concourse below on Friday 24 November.

One 9 or 10 year old, with a maturity beyond his age, led several of the chants, including: "Sunak is a wasteman". The chanting and speakers went on for well over an hour.

Our leaflets and paper were readily received by many of the parents and older students.

BRIAN DEBUS

Camden, north London - boisterous support

150 demonstrators were in a boisterous mood, chanting slogans, and waving flags and banners. And people on the pavement were filming and taking photos in support.

DARA FITZGERALD

1,000 stood around the lit pool in front of the town hall.

This was an opportunity to not only protest at the needless murder in the Middle East, but to express dissatisfaction with the leadership at all levels in this country, including the Starmer-loving Labour council.

No sooner had we brought out our Socialist papers, leaflets and collecting tins for people to donate to fund our message, young people were showing an interest. One asked to join the Socialist Party.

On a cold, dark Friday night the main communication was the, now familiar, songs from the Palestinian repertoire. But amongst the crowd, it was still possible to have those vital, incisive conversations that enable people to see a way out of the madness.

The Socialist Party calls for a socialist intifada. At these gatherings, when people hear our socialist programme and tune in to our ideas, they very often respond positively.

Many Socialist Party branches around the country will identify with this scenario. It is worth participating in every minute of the protests.

ROY WILLS

biggest Palestine event to-date. But the London march was on another scale.

It was fantastic to see the very strong presence of the Socialist Party. Our socialist messaging could be seen everywhere across the demonstration.

People were proud to display our placards. And we were able to sell the Socialist paper to people who approached us because they recognised our material.

We observed a significant level of anti-Starmer sentiment, including a large number of homemade signs criticising Starmer's Labour.

Waltham Forest, east London - dissatisfied with Labour

A demonstration, primarily for students in support of a ceasefire in Gaza, was well-attended. About

the Socialist

formerly **Militant**

Issue 1253

30 November - 6 December 2023

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The Socialist is written, read, sold and bought by ordinary workers, trade unionists, young people and Socialist Party members. We want you to write for the Socialist.

Send us reports of your workplace and community campaigns, short letters on working-class issues, or ideas for other articles.

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Friday before publication, or Monday morning for urgent news, unless otherwise agreed with the editors.

The Socialist goes to press on a Tuesday night. We publish online on Wednesday and in print on Thursday.

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The Socialist is the weekly newspaper of the Socialist Party, the England and Wales section of the Committee for a Workers' International
socialistparty.org.uk
socialistworld.net



BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS

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ISSN 1366-9621

Published by Socialist Publications,

PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT

Registered as a newspaper

at the Post Office

Printed by trade union labour

at Reach Printing Services

Militant issue 1: October 1964

The Socialist issue 1: 7 February 1997

"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."

Karl Marx

Tory anti-union attacks – join the lobby of TUC

Fight minimum service levels in the Civil Service

PCS REP

Civil Service workers, particularly in the Home Office, are the latest to be hit by the government's undemocratic minimum service levels legislation.

In an incredibly out-of-touch statement, former Home Secretary Suella Braverman, before being fired by Sunak, said "We must never allow strike action to compromise our border security or cause significant disruption to passengers or goods at our borders". As someone who has worked for Border Force, at car ports and airports, Braverman's statement astonished me!

Border Force teams are already understaffed and rely on relief provided by civil servants from HMRC's Surge and Rapid Response Teams (SRRT), on days when there is no industrial action. A call for help is issued every Easter, summer and Christmas period. In similar circumstances to those faced by the NHS, the employer does not recruit and retain enough staff to adequately run the service to the level it will expect the unions to do so on strike days!

Emphasising its contempt for the rights of working people, and perhaps even to punish workers for taking five weeks of strike action earlier this year, the government has also targeted areas of the Passport Office, without any consultation. This in spite of the Act, passed in July, stipulating a required consultation period for each affected sector.



NSSN lobby of TUC in Liverpool, September 2023. LOUIE FULTON

These attacks are a reminder that we need fighting, member-led unions and not least in the Civil Service. Unions not afraid to strike while the iron is hot and while momentum is on our side, to fight to the end. In the case of the largest Civil Service union, the PCS leadership, dominated by the Left Unity grouping of general secretary Mark Serwotka, is happy to talk tough while

at the same time, and in practice, having recently wound down action while members were willing to fight on.

We need action, not words! That is why I am supporting and campaigning for the Broad Left Network (BLN) candidate Marion Lloyd and the incumbent John Maloney during the PCS elections for General Secretary and Assistant General Secretary.

Resist Tory attempts to stop education workers striking back

NEU REP

"I am asking the teaching unions to engage with us and agree to put children and young people's education first – and above and beyond any dispute," was the statement of Tory education secretary, Gillian Keegan, in October.

But Keegan has made it clear that the government will introduce minimum service levels (MSLs) during any future strike action in schools and colleges, should a voluntary agreement with education unions not be reached. However, there cannot be an agreement by the unions over legislation that removes the basic right of its members.

In schools and colleges, if MSLs were imposed it could mean that classes of high-needs students, children of 'key workers', and students on free school meals, would continue to be taught during an industrial dispute. Support staff, amongst the lowest-paid workers in education, would be prevented from taking strike action in order to help staff these classes.

The Tory government claims that MSL agreements are a way of guaranteeing the rights of students in schools and colleges. But it is the unions who put children first by fighting for fully funded schools and well-paid staff, not the Tories with their funding cuts. The MSL legislation is the Tories' backhanded way of limiting the effectiveness of fighting trade unions and of strike action.

Any attempts to impose MSLs on school strikes must be resisted. Socialist Party member Sheila Caffrey is standing as a candidate in the election for Vice-President of the National Education Union (NEU). "Our union should call on all employers – especially Labour-led authorities – to refuse to comply with this anti-union legislation. I am supporting the lobby of the TUC Special Congress on Saturday 9 December, called by the National Shop Stewards Network. If ever there was a time for the TUC to act, uniting all trade unions in the fight to defend workers' rights, it is now. Education workers cannot afford to lose the right to strike. Only trade union action can defend education workers against excessive workload and cuts in education funding."



MARTIN POWELL-DAVIES

Tory Autumn Statement cuts already ravaged public services

Education

MARTIN POWELL-DAVIES
NEU MEMBER

National Education Union (NEU) members took solid strike action before the summer to win both a real-terms' pay rise and the extra funding to pay for it. The Tories were forced to up their offer – although it was still less than what could, and should, have been won.

One of the key factors in persuading members to accept the final deal was the promise that it was "fully funded", so that school budgets wouldn't be hit even harder than they have been already. But the Autumn Statement shows once again that the Tories can't be trusted. Budgets are going to be cut again. That means more job losses and more children with their needs unmet. There's also no extra money for the urgent capital spending needed by schools and colleges.

The "School Cuts" website – allowing parents to see how badly their local schools are threatened – has been relaunched. It warns that 92% of mainstream schools face real-terms cuts from April.

The NEU General Secretary Daniel Kebede was right to respond to the Autumn Statement by saying

that "more of the same is not good enough" and to demand the investment needed to address pay, workload and building repairs. But with shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves making clear that Keir Starmer's Labour is the "party of economic and fiscal responsibility", it's going to take action to win those demands, who-ever wins the next general election.

Nominate Sheila Caffrey for NEU VP

Sheila Caffrey, socialist candidate for NEU Vice-President, unlike her rivals on the union's National Executive, warned that the union was settling for too little over this year's pay and funding deal. As her letter to NEU districts appealing for nominations says, now "we need a strong leadership that leads from the front showing the power of a national union. We must show our colleagues and pupils that it is worth fighting! That there will be an education system for the next generation. An education system that is fully funded".

The answer to yet more years of cuts must be to organise the kind of union strength that Sheila stands for. If not, then school and college cuts are going to ruin our children's education.

£1,900

worse off for the average household between 2019 and 2025

£90 bn

of tax rises since the beginning of this parliament, compared to Sunak's much-trumpeted £20 billion 'cut'

£0

of extra money for the NHS with the longest waiting lists ever

'More painful still'

than George Osborne's austerity programme, according to the Director of the Institute of Fiscal Studies



Protesting at COP26 in Glasgow. SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND

COP28: No solution while profit and capitalist competition reign

CALLUM JOYCE
SOCIALIST PARTY SOUTHERN REGIONAL ORGANISER

The COP28 climate summit, an annual conference for countries to discuss the ongoing climate crisis and attempt to agree concrete steps that they can take to combat it, begins on 30 November in Dubai.

The importance of the issue needs little reinforcement – this July saw the hottest temperatures ever recorded, and numerous floods, droughts, and other extreme weather events in past years have left thousands dead, injured, or displaced.

This year's COP president, Sultan Al Jaber, while being the climate envoy for the United Arab Emirates (UAE, this year's conference host) is also the chief executive of Adnoc – the UAE's state-run oil and gas company.

It has been reported that al-Jaber has planned to use the conference to promote business deals between Adnoc and some of the countries in attendance, in the hope of reaching future agreements for further oil and gas extraction. Adnoc has also pledged to spend at least \$150 billion over the next few years expanding its fossil fuel extraction capabilities.

The UAE is not the only country guilty of climate hypocrisy however. Rishi Sunak recently delayed UK plans to phase out new petrol and diesel vehicles and the government continues to issue new oil and gas licences in the North Sea, all of this despite commitments made at previous COPs to take serious steps towards stopping fossil fuel emissions.

The majority of capitalist politicians are well aware of the need to

take coordinated action against climate change, so why are they undermining their own efforts by allowing the further expansion of the fossil fuel industry?

Capitalism, despite the existence of world markets and international trade, remains based on competing nation states. If one capitalist government is too eager in restricting the activity of its domestic fossil fuel companies then this will hurt those companies' profits and even drive them to relocate abroad, allowing rival foreign companies (and the states in which they are based) to gain an advantage.

For the sake of their own economic and political interests, capitalist governments are compelled to allow fossil fuel companies to expand and continue reaping huge profits, despite the environmental consequences.

Global cooperation is needed to stop the climate crisis, but this will not work if it is the half-hearted co-operation of competing capitalist states. To draw up a plan for production means taking the energy companies, other major industries and the banks out of the hands of the profiteers. Placed under democratic workers' control, a plan could be developed to meet the needs of all while still protecting the environment. Only on this basis would the level of collaboration needed be possible.

Global leaders will meet in Dubai as war and economic crisis wrack the world – the inevitable consequences of profit-driven, competition-based capitalism. Socialist change is needed to solve climate crisis, join the Socialist Party to fight for it.

Lobby of TUC Special Congress

9-10am Saturday 9 December
TUC Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS

Get all the latest union news with the NSSN bulletin shopstewards.net

Coventry strike at the centre of 'biggest walkout in Amazon history'

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

On Black Friday, Amazon workers across the world organised strikes and other actions at Amazon sites. This was a powerful coordinated protest against poverty pay and awful work conditions, organised under the banner of 'Make Amazon Pay'.

The BHX4 site in Coventry, where GMB members have been striking, was centre of attention nationally and internationally. TV crews were already on site when Socialist Party members arrived early in the morning. Members of the Socialist Party from Coventry, Nuneaton, and Northampton branches joined the picket line along with Warwick Socialist Students, which really

illustrates how much enthusiasm there is to help the strike fight and build. Several BHX4 strikers have now expressed interest in joining the Socialist Party.

Record pickets

One striking worker spoke to the Socialist, and told us they registered 780 on the picket line – a new record, nearly double the previous! Alongside the hundreds of strikers were many supporters, including trade unionists from abroad. The striker said: "It was great to see people from the other unions from the other countries".

"The campaign 'Make Amazon Pay' has gone global, with workers from Italy, Germany, Spain, India and USA all getting together, which is what is needed". Members of the

Teamsters union in the US, ver.di in Germany, and CGIL in Italy joined the BHX4 picket line. They refused to just observe the picket; they helped the workers stop traffic! "We managed to cause trouble for two hours". The road into BHX4 was gridlocked. Usually, police divert traffic onto the wrong side of the road to try and get strike-breakers through the picket. On Friday, that wasn't an option.

Tens of thousands of Amazon workers in Britain are struggling with the same issues. Many will look to BHX4 for inspiration. There is potential to unionise at every site and launch a massive strike wave to bring Amazon to heel. As the Socialist Party said in our latest bulletin, "GMB must throw everything at this fight, because Amazon bosses will!"



COVENTRY TUC

Get behind striking train drivers

Train drivers in Aslef union are striking in 16 different companies on different days between 2 and 8 December. And striking workers are also carrying out an overtime ban between 1 and 9 December.

Tory transport secretary Mark Harper has lied, saying that "an offer is on the table". But this was already rejected by train drivers back in April!

Aslef's Mick Whelan says that the "offer – a land grab for all our terms and conditions – was made in the full knowledge that it couldn't, and wouldn't, be accepted.

"We have received overwhelming mandates, on enormous turnouts, for more industrial action! We will continue to take industrial action until the train companies – and/or the government – sit down and negotiate".

Civil Service

The Tory Autumn Statement means cuts to civil service departments and jobs, and attacks on benefit claimants. What is needed is an end to cutbacks and to increase staffing to deliver effective public services for all.

Socialist Party member Marion Lloyd is standing to be the general secretary of the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) as part of the Broad Left Network and on a joint ticket with Independent Left AGS candidate John Moloney.

Whether it's Tories or Starmer's Labour in government, Marion and John will campaign for trade union action for a workers' budget including:

- **Halt 66,000 civil service job cuts, invest in local services**
- **A minimum wage of £15 per hour, plus London weighting**
- **Protect the triple lock for pensions**
- **Raise Universal Credit and other benefits to a liveable level**
- **Tax the super-rich to fund public services**
- **Nationalise energy, water, rail, banks – people over profits!**

Vote Marion Lloyd for PCS general secretary
Vote John Moloney AGS



MARY FINCH

Local Authorities

TUSC prepares fighting platform

Tory Hampshire County Council says: "The government must intervene if we and the whole local government sector are to avoid financial meltdown". And the Tory Autumn Statement has done nothing to address the crisis.

More than ever we need councillors prepared to stand up to whoever is in power in Westminster – Tories or Labour – to demand the funding our communities need.

In preparation for May's council elections, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), which the Socialist Party is a part of, has announced its core policy platform for any candidate who wants to stand under its banner in the May 2024 elections.

● The core policies can be found in full by visiting tusc.org.uk

'HOW DO WE TAKE THE FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM FORWARD?' SOCIALISM 2023 - A PLACE TO DISCUSS THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION OF THEM ALL

SARAH SACHS-ELDRIDGE
SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Socialism 2023 was a weekend attended by hundreds of people who want to change the world. Many have been involved in the strike wave. Many found out about the event on the anti-war demos - or were prompted to look for opportunities to discuss socialist ideas by the horror of the war, the climate catastrophe, and the cost-of-living crisis.

When she spoke at the main Saturday rally, socialist ex-**MP Emma Dent Coad** expressed delight at the opportunity to speak to an audience containing so many young faces.

Socialism 2023, like the Socialist Party, was populated by both youth and experience. Together, over 700 attendees grappled in the workshops with all the complicated questions that confront us: how a Palestinian state can be achieved; how Africa can break the chains of imperialism; how Marxists work in the trade unions; the fight for women's rights, for trans rights, and against racism; how we fight for socialism, a society run democratically in the interests of all rather than for the profits of a few; and much, much more.

The agenda had been drastically adjusted at short notice to allow those attending to participate in the Gaza demonstration. Nonetheless Socialism still included 28 workshops, a book launch, three closing rallies, a free crèche, a social, as well as the main Saturday night rally.

This was the biggest Socialism weekend since 2020, when the pandemic meant only an online event was possible. But more importantly, it showed how the Socialist Party is winning new layers of workers and young people and is growing in strength. Socialism revealed that we are developing party organisers who strive to apply Marxism to all the complexities thrown up by the struggle for united workers' action against the bosses and their system.

The theme of the main rally was 'Capitalism means war and crisis'. But this was not an event that merely announced itself as revolutionary, nor one that only described the horror of war, climate catastrophe and poverty, much as there is to say on all of that.

An essential part of the role of Marxists is to argue for the next steps needed to take the

movement forward.

As Socialist Party general secretary **Hannah Sell** summarised it, this was an event "to address how we take the struggle for socialism forward".

The test for the support for these ideas can be measured - in cold, hard finance. Swansea branch secretary **Linda Thraves** introduced the fighting fund appeal, starting with the slaughter in Gaza and the anti-war movement.

"Capitalism", she said, "you take heed! The millions of people protesting are not just rejecting war and its devastation. They believe they must act together to stop this horror... In the Socialist Party, we are always confident and optimistic that the working class, with the correct leadership and programme, can successfully fight back and overcome the attacks... But we also get frustrated when we get overwhelmed by numbers. We can have the best ideas in the world but we need the resources to get the ideas out." We need more!

And the audience agreed! This year's target of £35,000, £10,000 higher than last year's target, was smashed. £44,565.75 was raised.

Chairing the rally was Bristol North Socialist Party member **Sheila Caffrey**, a candidate for the vice-president of the National Education Union. In the context of the working class being "loud, proud and back in Britain", Sheila is offering a necessary socialist lead - starting with our party's confidence in NEU members to fight back against Tory attacks when such a lead is given.

Fighting union leaders

This theme was continued by the opening speaker, **Marion Lloyd**, candidate for general secretary of civil service union PCS, another militant in the necessary struggle to transform the trade unions into fighting organisations of the working class. Socialist Party member **Marion** argued that the trade unions must be at the heart of the movement against war, as well as all the attacks on workers' rights.

A union with a fighting socialist leadership could have influence

across the trade unions. Back in 2011 PCS had that. In the battle against the Conservative-Lib Dem coalition attacks on pensions, PCS won support for the call for a 24-hour general strike. That kind of leadership is urgently needed today in developing the response to the Tories' anti-strike, anti-union legislation.

Marion thanked the hundreds of socialists in the PCS and beyond campaigning for her election. What she offers is a leadership willing to send a clear message to Keir Starmer as well as the Tories. As she said Starmer's objections to even backing a ceasefire are an indictment of the Labour Party - but also a reason to fight for and to build an alternative party based on the needs of working people.

Sheila had to explain that unfortunately **Garfield Hyton**, a striking Amazon worker from Coventry, had sent apologies as he was unable to get to London due to railway disruption. Garfield has played an important part in the unionisation drive, taking on Amazon billionaire boss Jeff Bezos.

Mila Hughes, a young worker, then spoke on behalf of Young Socialists Against War. She made the point that, "for most young people, all we've witnessed is an endless economic crisis. People born in 2007 are now 16 - and on the streets protesting."

"Young Socialists and the Socialist Party are launching our call to further build school and college walkouts and that includes actively engaging and discussing what we need to fight for, getting organised, building for the protests to kick all the Tories out and replace the rotten system of capitalism?"

Young people at the Socialism weekend took leaflets away raising the ideas that Mila outlined and will now organise distributing them at schools and colleges in their areas.

Next up was **Emma Dent Coad**, barred from standing for Starmer's Labour despite the backing of Unite the Union, and is standing in Kensington against Starmer's Labour.

Emma said that the best answer to the attacks, lies, and slander is presenting the socialist alternative. She correctly said: "The Tories are finished - if David Cameron is going to save them, they're so done!"

She has not been cowed by the false claim that standing against Labour risks a Tory victory. Even the Tories don't expect that.

"There's a big void waiting for us to fill it", she said. Her appeal was to "support any socialists and independents in your area" because "we're going to get in there and really mess up Labour and scrutinise them properly, and they won't like it."



The rally PHOTO: IAN PATTISON



The rally speakers including l-r Hannah, Marion, Mila, Tony and Emma PHOTO: RAGAVAN



PHOTO: RAGAVAN

Tony Saunois is the secretary of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), the world socialist organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated. A third of the fighting fund appeal is pledged to help build the CWI. Tony spoke of the wars in Gaza and Ukraine as well as the "social and economic wars, with bombs raining down on the working class and poor".

"The global billionaires accumulate \$27bn every day while one in ten of the world's population go hungry. Even in the richest countries the young generation can only look forward to a future that is far worse than that of previous generations." Tony also rightly spoke of how this is expressed in the environmental catastrophe. "The 1% produce more carbon emissions than 66% of the rest of us."

In the absence of a clear lead from the workers' and socialist movement so far, a cry of despair is expressed in the rioting in Dublin. Tony rightly pointed to the "need for new parties of the working class in all countries that can challenge the system and offer a new way forward". He said: "The need for the building of a mass socialist alternative is greater than ever."

Fighting for socialism

What this task means in 2023 was addressed by Hannah in her speech closing the rally. Fighting for socialism starts with an assessment of where we are, what are the balance of forces between the working class and the capitalist class, and then, what do we do now?

"Over the last eighteen months we have seen - or rather begun to see - the potential power of our class, the working-class majority in this society, in the biggest wave of strike action for over three decades. We have seen in the last few weeks the power of our movement against the onslaught in Gaza", including "Cruella Braverman out on her ear. That was a victory for our movement."

For the other side, Hannah spoke of the fears of the capitalist class internationally. They fear escalation into a regional war in the Middle East, "but above all they fear another Arab Spring". Hannah explained to younger audience members that that referred to the mass movements that overthrew dictatorships in Arab and North African countries in 2011.

Addressing the question of how we take the movement forward today includes the sober learning of lessons of previous movements. Back in 2011, "those potential victories were not consolidated. The old order rolled back... ultimately those revolutions were defeated because the working class did not have their own parties with a programme for the socialist transformation of society."

"But", Hannah explained, "the capitalists, the elites, are terrified that they might not be so lucky next time". We

fight to realise those fears!

Hannah explained that there is no solution to the hell on offer on the basis of capitalism. "Capitalism will never deliver a genuine state for the Palestinians". But capitalism can be overthrown. She invited us to "imagine if we had democratically elected workers' governments in the Middle East, that had taken the corporations and banks into public ownership" - that could lay the basis for organising society to meet the needs of all, including democratic rights.

The fight for that starts in what was being outlined in the rally. Here in Britain, millions of us will be glad to see the back of the Tories. "Thirteen million people don't get enough to eat. Yet, even according to government figures, the energy companies made £170 billion in 'excess profits' over the last two years."

But Starmer, "the man set to replace Sunak, ordered his MPs and councillors not to protest for Palestine, and not go on workers' picket lines. It tells you all you need to know about how he will behave in government... Every pledge Labour made in the Corbyn - and Dent Coad - period to improve the lives of working-class people has been ditched. Mass council house building, abolishing tuition fees, nationalising rail, mail, energy, the green new deal - all gone, thrown out along with Jeremy Corbyn himself."

"Instead we have 'ironclad fiscal responsibility' or - as it otherwise known - doing the bidding of the capitalist class and the international finance markets." And, Hannah warned, the dire economic situation means that will be more brutal than under Tony Blair's New Labour Mark One.

That's because Starmer will come to power with the capitalist system he defends in crisis, a potential new global recession, an NHS on its knees, 26 councils or more facing bankruptcy, and a working class that has suffered the worst fall in real wages since the second world war.

But, Hannah explained, this isn't because there is 'no money' as they'd have us believe. "In the midst of our misery, the top 100 companies in Britain paid £79 billion in dividends to shareholders last year." But... "the working class will be the ones expected to pay for the crisis of the capitalist system, with only the most minor concessions given to try and show Labour is different."

One of the tasks of socialists in Britain today is to prepare for this, even when it might be complicated. Hannah warned that some of the union leaders - probably a majority of them - will argue that we can't take action against this government - because it's 'our' Labour government. And there can be, temporarily, a feeling that we have got to give them a chance - at least they're not the Tories. "But that mood will be shallow, and it won't prevent struggle for long when Starmer doesn't deliver."

Significantly, the working class and young people have learned the

value of fighting back. We can see new movements develop on a whole range of issues. We can also see strikes, on an even-bigger scale than we have yet seen.

As Sheila said in opening, teachers, especially young teachers, now know that they do not have to just accept derisory pay offers - they can fight and win more! Thousands of workers have also begun to realise that to build the movement they need to become reps, as thousands of teachers have done, and need to be active between strikes.

"That's partly why it's possible there could be a further wave of mass strikes before the general election, particularly if the new minimum service legislation is used against a union or group of workers. Then the whole movement will need to come to their aid," Hannah said.

Hannah pointed to the ceasefire vote. The Scottish National Party (SNP) is not a party of the working class, but if it hadn't, for its own reasons, moved a vote on a ceasefire, Labour MPs would not have been put on the spot. We need workers' MPs who do that, on war, to oppose anti-union laws, and on every issue.

That is why the Socialist Party is working to build the strongest-possible stand in the general election, including co-hosting a convention on 3 February next year initiated by the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition to bring all those who want a working-class challenge at the general election.

That vital preparation must also include discussing what programme we fight for. Unite the Union is running a good campaign for the nationalisation of energy. We would say that the energy profiteers should not get a penny - that compensation should be paid only on the basis of proven need.

But Starmer's not going to do any of that. That requires the working class having a political voice - it's about the fight for a mass workers' party, for a workers' government.

Such a government should not just nationalise energy! "All the giant corporations and banks that dominate the economy should be nationalised, so that we can begin to build a democratic socialist planned economy, harnessing the huge resources created by capitalism to meet the needs of all and carry out a real socialist green transition."

If you agree, if you want to be part of this, building support for a socialist programme and building the Socialist Party to fight for it, join us.

Join the fightback
JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

- Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join
- or call **020 8988 8777**
- or text your name and postcode to **07761 818 206**

to find out more today!

Counting the fighting fund appeal PHOTO: RAGAVAN



WHAT WE STAND FOR

Capitalism is an ailing, crisis-ridden system based on the exploitation of the majority of the world's population by a small, super-rich elite who own most of the wealth and the means of producing it. This way of organising society, in which the pursuit of profit comes before everything else, causes poverty, inequality, environmental destruction, wars and oppression across the globe.

The Socialist Party organises working-class people to fight against the attacks from this rotten system on our lives and livelihoods, and for a socialist alternative: a society which takes the wealth out of the hands of the super-rich and is democratically run by working-class people to meet the needs of all not the profits of a few.

Building fighting democratic trade unions in the workplaces and a new mass workers' party is a vital part of the struggle to change society along socialist lines.

Because capitalism is a world system, the struggle for socialism must also be international. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International which organises across the world. Our demands include:

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

- A £15-an-hour minimum wage for all, without exemptions. For the minimum wage to automatically increase linked to average earnings or inflation, whichever is higher.

- Share out the work. A maximum 32-hour working week with no loss of pay or worsening of conditions. The right to flexible working, under the control of workers not employers. An end to insecure working, for the right to full-time work for all who want it; ban zero-hour contracts.

- All workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness, parental and holiday rights from day one of employment. End bosses using bogus 'self-employment' as a means to avoid giving workers rights.

- No to austerity through inflation. For all wage rates to be automatically increased at least in line with price rises.

- Open the books of all companies cutting jobs or claiming they can't afford to pay a real living wage. State subsidies, where genuinely needed, for socially-useful small businesses.

- For trade unions independent of the capitalist state, with members having democratic control over their own policies, constitutions and democratic procedures. For all trade union officials to be regularly elected, subject to recall by their members and paid a worker's wage.

- Reduce the state retirement and pension age to 55. For decent living pensions.

- Replace universal credit and the punitive benefit system with living benefits for all who need them.

PUBLIC SERVICES

- A massive expansion of public services including the NHS and council services. Reverse all the cuts, kick out the privateers. Bring private social care and childcare facilities into public

ownership under democratic control, in order to provide free, high-quality services for all who need them. Expand services for all women suffering violence.

- For local councillors who are committed to opposing austerity and all cuts to local services, jobs, pay and conditions.

- For a socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs, including dental and eye care – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out the private companies! Nationalise the pharmaceutical industry under democratic workers' control and management.

- Renationalise privatised utilities – including rail, mail, water, telecoms and power – under democratic workers' control and management.

- Free, publicly funded and democratically run, good-quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees and write off student debt, end marketisation, and introduce a living grant. No to academisation. For all schools to be under the genuine democratic control of local education authorities, school staff, parents and student organisations.

- The right to a safe secure home for all. For the mass building of genuinely affordable, high-quality, carbon-neutral council housing. For rent controls that cap the level of rent. Fair rent decisions should be made by elected bodies of tenants, housing workers and representatives of trade unions. For cheap low-interest mortgages for home buyers. Nationalise the privately owned large building companies, land banks and estates.

- Oppose the dictatorship of the billionaire owners of the media. For the nationalisation of newspaper printing facilities, radio, TV and social media platforms. Access to these facilities should be under democratic control, with political parties' coverage being allocated in proportion to the popular vote at elections.

- For a new mass workers' party, based on the trade unions, and drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplaces, and community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, socialist political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

ENVIRONMENT

- Prioritising major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels and nuclear power with renewable energy, and ending the problems of early obsolescence – where products are designed to 'wear out' and be replaced - and unrecycled waste.

- Nationalisation of the energy companies, under democratic workers' control and management, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need, in order to carry out a major switch to clean, green energy, without any loss of jobs, pay or conditions.

- A democratically planned, massively expanded, free to use, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

- For a major, publicly funded, insulation and energy transition plan for existing housing stock.

- Agribusiness to be taken into democratic public ownership. For a food processing and retail industry under workers' control to ensure that standards are set by consumers, small farmers, and

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all workers involved in the production, processing, distribution and retail of food.

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

- For united working-class struggle to end discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice and oppression.

- Repeal the anti-trade union laws and all others that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest and to strike! End police harassment. For the police to be accountable to local committees, made up of democratically elected representatives of trade unions, local community organisations and local authorities.

- For the right to choose when and whether to have children – for the right to access abortion, contraception and fertility treatment for all who need it.

- For the right to asylum – with democratic community control and oversight of emergency funding resources. No to racist immigration laws.

- Expand democracy. For the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. For all MPs to be subject to the right of recall by their constituents at any time, and to only receive a worker's wage.

- For proportional representation and the right to vote at 16.

- For the right of nations to self-determination. For an independent socialist Scotland and for a socialist Wales, both part of a voluntary socialist confederation of Wales, England, Scotland and Ireland.

- Oppose the dictatorship of the billionaire owners of the media. For the nationalisation of newspaper printing facilities, radio, TV and social media platforms. Access to these facilities should be under democratic control, with political parties' coverage being allocated in proportion to the popular vote at elections.

- For a new mass workers' party, based on the trade unions, and drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplaces, and community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, socialist political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

- Take the wealth off the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need, not to the fat cats.

- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.

- No to the EU bosses' club. Organise a campaign with European socialists and workers' organisations to use the talks on post-Brexit relations to tear up the EU pro-capitalist rules. For a real collaboration of the peoples of Europe on a socialist basis as a step towards a socialist world.

- No to imperialist wars and occupations!

- Take the wealth off the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need, not to the fat cats.

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Huge movement

Another great year. As always, Socialism 2023 was fantastic.

With the last-minute change to the agenda, we could attend the Palestine demonstration, which was a great experience. Seeing so many Socialist Party members successfully participate in such a huge movement, especially new members, was a real confidence-inducing moment.

The rallies and workshops at Socialism 2023 showed the desire to build for radical change, and the breadth of ideas and issues that we engage with.

OWEN LEES, BLACK COUNTRY SOCIALIST PARTY AND BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Nailed it

Socialism 2023 was my first, and I absolutely loved it. It's not easy to organise something as big as this, but we nailed it.

So many interesting workshops on offer, it was really hard to choose. From Alan Hardman's cartoons to spy cops, to education and socialism. Each session was well-delivered, enlightening, and was great to hear many contributors from those attending.

I can't end without mentioning the rallies. Some amazing speakers, very inspiring, and the fact that there were more of us at Socialism 2023 than at the Tory party conference. We really collectively can make a difference.

CLAIRE WRAITH, SHEFFIELD NORTH WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

Making things happen

As a new member of the Socialist Party, I was unsure what to expect. I needn't have worried, as the atmosphere was friendly and inclusive.

The rally on Saturday evening was inspiring, it really made me feel part of something that can make a difference.

I learned a lot at the sessions I attended, discussions on housing and Liverpool's socialist council in the 1980s. Lots of food for thought, and I've another book to read on Liverpool.

I'd recommend attending for anyone, either a member, or someone with an interest in socialism. It's positive to share ideas, and see how members across the country are making things happen.

DAVE ELLIS, SHEFFIELD SOUTH EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

Inspiring, informative and growing

As a first-time attendee, it was fantastic to mix with many fellow socialists from all over the country, and beyond. The whole weekend was inspiring, informative and hugely educational.

MATT FRYER, SOUTH YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Will absolutely go again

A really wonderful experience. The workshops were difficult to choose from, since they all looked interesting.

The rally especially was great, because many people believe that all political parties are all talk no walk. But we heard about plans moving forward, what unions could do, who can help, etc.

And the hostel was perfect, friendly faces and open discussion, no judgement passed on for any questions.

TIRANA QEFALIA, SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY AND COLLEGE STUDENT

Hope

Despair is an anti-revolutionary force. But Socialism 2023 gave me hope.

The workshops on climate change and imperialism provided avenues of thought, by allowing people with varied perspectives to have an open and engaging discussion.

KAI, SHEFFIELD

Impacting the movement

It was fantastic. More focused than last year, the political discussions were even sharper. Members are thinking really seriously about the issues.

With us participating so well in the Palestine protests, and having members running and potentially winning important positions in the unions, there's a sense that we're having a material effect on the movement. Which inspires people to do more, give more money, read more of our material. Very positive.

DUNCAN MOORE, PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Plot to smash capitalism

This was my second Socialism event, and I loved it. A great opportunity to plot to smash capitalism. I was inspired by the rally speakers, especially Hannah Sell. I love singing the Internationale. There was great workshop choice – something for everyone.

MELANIE DENT, READING SOCIALIST PARTY

Newham Labour rocked by independent anti-war candidate victory in by-election

NIALL MULHOLLAND
NEWHAM AND EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The Labour Party in Newham, east London, is reeling from the result of the Plaistow North council by-election, which saw the Independent anti-war candidate, Sophia Naqvi, win with 46% of the vote (1,266 votes). Labour lost the seat, securing only 750 votes - a collapse of 39.1 percentage points.

Sophia had resigned as women's officer of the local Labour Party a few weeks earlier in protest at Keir Starmer's appalling support for the Israeli state's bombardment of Gaza, and his refusal to condemn Israel for cutting off water and electricity to the strip. After a Labour councillor in Plaistow North ward resigned, Sophia stood for Newham Independents, with the backing of Newham Socialist Labour (mainly made up of purged members of Newham Labour Party).

Sophia also had the endorsement of figures in the local trade union movement, including officers of Newham Trades Union Council.

After her spectacular win, Sophia reported that on the doorsteps during the election campaign many voters in the largely Muslim ward described themselves as deeply "pained" by Gaza and appalled by the response of the Labour Party both locally and nationally. "The Labour Party is no longer a party for us; it can't be our representative and voice," said Sophia. "Working-class people in the borough feel let down by the Labour Party, the mayor and councillors, and also Lyn Brown MP, who did not vote for a ceasefire." The "arrogant and out of touch" Labour councillors and mayor "could not bring themselves to call for the resignation of Keir Starmer for his shameful comments about Gaza."

As well as the attacks on Gaza, Sophia said local people are "fed up with record council tax bills, crumbling infrastructure and the filthy state of our streets." Newham is one of the most deprived boroughs in London, with the worst overcrowding and high levels of child poverty. After a Labour councillor, Zuber

Gulamussen, defected last week to Newham Independents in protest at Labour's position on Gaza, the group is now the official opposition. "We believe change is needed for everyone, whatever their faith or no faith," Sophia said.

East London Socialist Party and Newham TUSC warmly welcome Sophia's victory. We look forward to further collaboration with the Newham Independent councillors in opposition to the war and to the Tory-lite policies of the Labour-run council. As part of this, we will be discussing the possibility of tabling an alternative needs budget that means no more devastating cuts by the council. With three Newham Independent and two Green Party councillors, the Labour Party in Newham no longer holds all the seats and faces potentially more divisions, defections and splits. For years, Labour in Newham has arrogantly carried out cuts and taken voters for granted. Now, the building of a working-class, anti-war and anti-cuts opposition is starting to take off.



Protesting against the war in Stratford, Newham PHOTO: ANGHARAD HILLIER

Stockton is not a 'shithole'

ALAN DOCHERTY
TEESSIDE SOCIALIST PARTY

There has been uproar on Teesside about Home Secretary James Cleverly's alleged remark to Stockton North MP Alex Cunningham - "it's a shithole" - in response to his question: "Why are 34% of children in my constituency living in poverty?". Even the Tory Metro Mayor demanded an apology!

Despite some of us perpetuating the myth that it is 'grim up north' to avoid being inundated with southern

tourists, the North East is a great place to live. On the surface, Stockton town centre is magnificent! It is the widest high street in England, peppered with art works, and it still has a thriving market.

But it is not all fine; in addition to child poverty, the statistics show the borough has sickness and health figures all worse than the national average for obesity, alcohol and drug addiction, and with life expectancy 15 years lower than the national average. Unemployment is about 4.1% - nationally it's 3.8%.

However, this is not a full picture, Stockton is a borough of two halves. It also has very affluent areas. Life expectancy differs across the borough's electoral wards by 20 years. This masks the pockets of deprivation which probably have double the rate of measurable problems.

Cleverly should be aware of the £270 million-plus capital programme, to be invested in Stockton's 'six towns of the borough' as

'levelling up'. This is a desperate attempt to reverse economic decline. Stockton High Street has suffered a long decline. Firstly, being squeezed out by the Teesside Park, a massive retail development and now the cost-of-living crisis. This has been compounded by deindustrialisation, the once-massive ICI chemical factories no longer exist. What remains only employs hundreds of people, not thousands.

Stockton High Street is being redeveloped at a cost of £30 million with a planned park on the site of the demolished Castlegate Shopping Centre (which was about half the town's shop units).

However, these capital projects miss the key problems that are not being addressed, the need for well-paid jobs and investment in health and public services.

It is only a socialist plan of production that can equally share out the wealth and provide well-paid useful jobs for all.

Proposal for East London MSG Sphere blocked



The MSG sphere in Las Vegas PHOTO: CORY DOCTOROW/CC

ANGHARAD HILLIER
NEWHAM AND EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Residents of the east London borough of Newham have celebrated the recent news that Labour London mayor Sadiq Khan has blocked the proposal for the development of the giant MSG Sphere in Stratford. The proposal will now be passed to communities secretary Michael Gove.

Sadiq Khan has cited issues with light pollution and possible harm to local residents - issues that were raised by campaigners and local councillors when the proposals were first made public and planning application was approved by London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC). These concerns were largely ignored. In fact, it was reported at the time of the initial proposal that residents were outrageously advised to use 'black-out blinds' by developers.

Stratford is one of London's busiest stations. Within a very short distance of each other, the area already 'boasts' the Westfield Shopping Centre, the Copperbox Arena, the London Stadium and the Olympic Park. Campaigners have pointed out that an additional gigantic arena could not only be detrimental

to the wellbeing of the residents of the area but may lead to dangerous overcrowding of the area and serious congestion on the roads.

Public health issues remain a pressing concern for the residents of Newham - particularly with the development of the Silvertown Tunnel, which community activists and members of the Socialist Party have campaigned against. Newham remains a dangerously polluted area, with residents exposed to levels of airborne particle matter that is 36% greater than World Health Organisation guidelines. The local council's own website tells us that 96 residents die a year from the effects of pollution.

Members of the Socialist Party have always maintained that the land would be better used for affordable housing, which is lacking in Newham. The area has seen a great deal of recent development with very few affordable elements for local people.

The power of the recent protests against the war in Gaza must not be underestimated in this decision - particularly locally, as it was discovered that local Labour MP Lyn Brown did not vote for a ceasefire. Anger is increasing in what has always been a safe Labour seat.



Stockton High Street PHOTO: PETEGAL-HALL/CC

Scottish revolutionary socialist John Maclean died a hundred years ago on 30 November 1923. As part of our occasional working-class history series, **Brian McLelland** of Socialist Party Scotland looks back at the events of Red Clydeside and Maclean's role.

Red Clydeside refers to a significant era of the labour movement in early 20th-century Scotland, centred around Glasgow and the River Clyde industrial area. This period holds great importance for socialists today, offering inspiration and valuable lessons for ongoing industrial struggles.

The key lesson of Red Clydeside is the critical potential power of the working class to challenge and overthrow capitalism. Several notable events unfolded during this era, including rent strikes in 1915, huge anti-war demonstrations, a massive engineering workers' strike in January 1919, and the Battle of George Square later that month.

Red Clydeside emerged with the 1911 strike at the Singer factory in Clydebank - the world's largest sewing machine factory at the time. The unfair dismissal of three women workers resulted in a strike by 12 women workers on the morning of 21 March 1911.

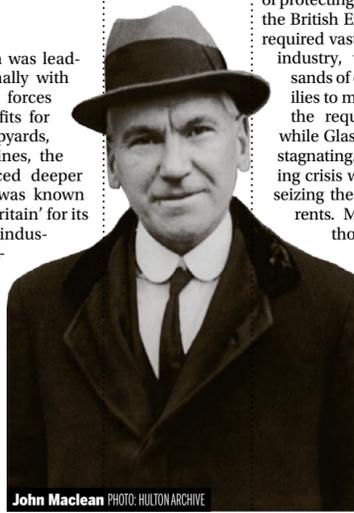
The strike quickly gained solidarity, with over 10,000 workers striking by noon, even without trade union involvement. However, due to a lack of leadership and collective organisation, the strike failed to achieve a victory, and 400 leading activists were dismissed. Despite the defeat, the strike showcased the spirit of class solidarity and foreshadowed future struggles.

From 1910 to 1914, Clydeside experienced a surge of industrial action. Working days lost to strike activity in this period were four times the level recorded for 1900-10. Previously acquiescent groups of workers became increasingly radicalised, with women and unskilled workers playing significant roles.

Trade union membership rose sharply, with the number affiliated to the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) rising from 129,000 in 1909 to 230,000 in 1914.

Housing

While British capitalism was leading the way internationally with its mighty productive forces generating colossal profits for the owners of the shipyards, steelworks and coal mines, the working class was forced deeper into poverty. Glasgow was known as 'the engine room of Britain' for its concentration of heavy industry. However, those workers tending the 'engine room' were living in terrible conditions as the city failed to accommodate its hugely increasing workforce, with overcrowding and poor sanitation rife. The population expanded from 200,000 in 1851 to around one million in 1911.



John Maclean PHOTO: HULTON ARCHIVE

Lessons of Red Clydeside 1911-1919

Workers' potential power on display



Battle of George Square

As war broke out in 1914, thousands of working-class men left their homes to join the armed forces, being led to the slaughter in the name of protecting the profits and stature of the British Empire. The war machine required vast production in the arms industry, which led many thousands of other men and their families to move to the city to provide the required workforce. Meanwhile Glasgow's housing stock was stagnating. The developing housing crisis worsened, with landlords seizing the opportunity to increase rents. Many families, especially those with absent main

wage earners serving in the war, could not afford the higher rents. The housing stock was increasingly overcrowded and dilapidated - in the years 1912-15 alone, the population of Glasgow increased by 65,000 while only 1,500 new housing units were constructed.

Soon after the rent increases, eviction orders were being put in place as well as intimidation tactics by landlords. In response, local people in Glasgow organised a widespread campaign against evictions and rent increases. The Glasgow Women's Housing Association, led by figures like Mary Barbour, spearheaded the rent strike movement courageously. The first rent strike took place in Govan, with tenants staging mass demonstrations against evictions. Similar protests erupted in various areas around the city, culminating in large-scale demonstrations of up to 25,000 people in the city centre.

While the organised labour movement supported the rent strikes, direct involvement only came when attempts were made to break the strikes by targeting strikers' wages through arrestment orders. 18 strikers were summoned by the Small Debt Court. Thousands of shipyard workers showed solidarity by donating tools and marching alongside 'Mrs. Barbour's Army' to the court where the case was being heard. The pressure exerted on the authorities resulted in the abandonment of the

court proceedings and the implementation of a Rent Restrictions Act, securing a victory for the working class. And although the act itself was only meant to be in place until six months after the end of the war, certain sections of it were not actually repealed until Thatcher's third term in office!

John Maclean

Red Clydeside witnessed influential anti-war activism driven by the working class. The Clyde Workers Committee (CWC) emerged as a key force, uniting Clydeside workers against repressive legislation like the Defence of the Realm Act 1914 and the Munitions of War Act 1915. Led by trade unionist Willie Gallacher, the CWC represented workers in shipyards and engineering works in Glasgow. Revolutionary socialist John Maclean and his political allies aided the CWC, countered media attacks on striking workers, exposing government and employer hypocrisy in prioritising profits over workers' lives through weekly and sometimes daily bulletins. Maclean was always calling for the industrial struggle

Chambers.

Significant events in Russia in 1917, starting with the overthrow of the Tsar in February and particularly the working class taking power in October led by the Bolsheviks, rejuvenated the revolutionary spirit of Red Clydeside. A massive May Day demonstration of around 80,000 people championed the defence of the Russian Revolution, socialism in Britain, and the release of John Maclean, who had been imprisoned in early 1916 for his anti-war propaganda. The ruling class feared Maclean's influential Marxist teachings that inspired Glasgow's working class. Eventually the determined campaign to free Maclean was granted its aim - the demonstrators all marched to Duke Street prison to celebrate their victory.

Maclean and other workers' leaders on Clydeside ardently supported the Bolsheviks and vocally advocated for their cause. Maclean's appointment as Russian Consul in early 1918 further intensified support, and a massive march and demonstration followed.

However, Maclean was arrested again in April 1918, and sentenced to five years in prison for sedition. Maclean made his own defence in the court and gave a famous speech from the dock, which included the immortal words: "No human being on the face of the earth, no government is going to take from me my right to speak, my right to protest against wrong, my right to do everything that is for the benefit of mankind. I am not here, then, as the accused; I am here as the accuser of capitalism dripping with blood from head to foot."

The Glasgow May Day demonstration in 1918 shared similar goals as the previous year but now took place on a working day, bringing many workers out on strike. They expressed support for the Bolshevik government, demanded an immediate end to the war, and called for Maclean's release with increased fervour.

Later in 1918, the workers achieved the aims they had been campaigning for so courageously, with the armistice signed on 11 November, and Maclean released from Peterhead Prison seven months into his five-year sentence. He returned to Glasgow on 3 December to a tumultuous welcome. The genuine prospect of a workers' revolution in Germany, the growing strength of the labour movement in Glasgow and across Britain, and the possibility of revolution across Europe was a major factor that ended the war.

The fact that the anti-war campaign survived at all in the atmosphere of substantial government anti-German, pro-war propaganda and an obnoxious jingoistic pro-war press is a testament to the principled radicalism and outstanding courage of John Maclean and his comrades, the workers, women, and youth involved throughout Red Clydeside and across the isles.

The war's end brought disillusionment as returning soldiers were promised a "land fit for heroes" but the reality was far from it! The fear of mass unemployment loomed as demobilisation reduced orders in industries like shipbuilding, railways, and munitions. The labour movement rallied behind the CWC campaign for a shorter working week to address the impending crisis, advocating a 30-hour week. However, the leadership of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE) ignored

the workers' position and negotiated for a 47-hour week with employers. This led the CWC to organise a shop stewards' conference demanding a stronger campaign for a 30-hour week, which resulted in a compromise of a 40-hour week demand. The conference also agreed to call for a general strike on 27 January 1919.

The response to the general strike call was overwhelming, with 40,000 workers from Clydeside factories and engineering works out by 29 January. Miners from nearby regions joined in with solidarity strikes, and discharged servicemen served as flying pickets, expanding the action. The ASE and miners' union leadership opposed the strike but couldn't assert much influence. Striking miners occupied their union headquarters, demanding support for a general strike.

George Square

On the Wednesday, another rally took place in George Square wherein the Lord Provost met with the strikers' delegates. They were promised representation to the government and asked to return on Friday for a response. However, this turned out to be a critical mistake, the ruling class began actively drawing up plans to break the strike as they feared it spreading across Britain. 100,000 workers in Belfast were already striking for a 44-hour week.

On Friday 31 January, tens of thousands of workers assembled in George Square to hear the negotiation outcome. Police surrounded the square, and at 12.20pm, they launched a fierce baton charge, attacking and arresting CWC leaders Davie Kirkwood, Manny Shinwell, and Willie Gallacher. Accounts vary on the police charge with some saying it was unprovoked, others that it was from workers raising the red flag above the crowd, others that it was from strikers forcibly stopping trams running through the adjacent streets. At any rate, the police were fully intent on intervening to break the strike.

Despite the attack, the demonstrators stood their ground, engaging in

battles with the police and eventually driving them back. They regrouped and marched, with ex-servicemen leading, to Glasgow Green where the police awaited. Again, the strikers fought back, forcing the police to retreat. The government had ordered troops into the city to restore order among what the Secretary of State for Scotland, David Munro, had named "a Bolshevik uprising." Young, mostly untried, troops were specifically deployed from other areas of Scotland and northern England, despite there being a military barracks in Maryhill (within the city area) - this was because they were all veterans of the front and could not be trusted to obey orders and set their sights on the strikers. 10,000 troops and six tanks were deployed to Glasgow.

Ultimately the revolutionary potential of Red Clydeside was not fully realised. The strike was led by industrial organisers who focused on their immediate industrial goals rather than a broader political struggle. Willie Gallacher would later acknowledge that there should have been a march to the Maryhill barracks to enlist the support of the troops stationed within, easily persuading the soldiers to come out in support of their fellow Glaswegians. "We were carrying on a strike when we ought to have been making revolution."

The lack of a political organisation armed with a socialist programme to direct all the pressure of the working class into a weapon with which the capitalist state can be overthrown was ultimately a decisive factor for the Red Clydeside movement. Only through this means, convincing the working class to be conscious of the power they wield through a politically armed industrial struggle, of the need to finally break with capitalism, would the working class have come to power - as in the Russian Revolution of October 1917. If a Bolshevik-style revolution had truly occurred in Glasgow in 1919, it could have spread like wildfire across Britain, particularly the industrial areas, and beyond.

Instead, the outcome of the Battle

of George Square, was that the bosses retained their power and the strike ended within a week. Although the working class secured a reduction in the working week to 47 hours, the movement faced increasing challenges as the revolutionary wave post-1917 ebbed for a period.

Repressive measures and anti-working class legislation from the ruling class, coupled with its influence on the bureaucratic trade union leadership, also contributed to the movement's decline. Although a couple of years later it erupted at an even higher level during the 1926 general strike in Britain.

The poor health of Maclean, owing to his endless programme of political activity and his spells in prison being force-fed and undertaking hard labour, led him to meet an unfortunate early demise on 30 November, 1923, aged 44. Scotland had lost its greatest ever socialist. Thousands of workers and their families around Glasgow attended his funeral, his name never to be forgotten and his ideas never to perish.

We must continue to organise against such measures and unite in struggle across the board to fight for the socialist transformation of society, taking inspiration from the legacy of Red Clydeside. The industrial base on the Clyde has diminished since those days but the basic chorus of united struggle against the bosses for a fairer, socialist society must be remembered and brought to life once again, to reverberate throughout the various public and private sector disputes we encounter today.



Glasgow rent strike 1915

£1/£2 solidarity price

socialistparty.org.uk



the Socialist

Issue 1253

30 November - 6 December 2023

formerly **Militant**

Build the student walkouts

ROGER THOMAS



END WAR

FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM

The latest huge protest in London SCOTT HUNTER



ADAM POWELL DAVIES
SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Over ten thousand slaughtered at the hands of the Israeli state in Gaza. It's no wonder that the demos across Britain and the world have been so big.

Young people have been spearheading the movement, motivated by anger at what the Israeli state is doing, but also anger at the

hypocrisy of politicians, Tories and Labour.

Suella Braverman tried to stop us from protesting, she tried to brand the marches as 'hate marches', but now she is out of her job. The Tories are there for the taking. We don't have to stop at getting Braverman out, we can get the whole lot out!

Thousands of students have already walked out of their classes to protest against the war on Gaza. We want to see more of that, and

discussion about the ideas needed to end war and oppression.

We want to see protests outside of school gates, marches to local MPs' offices or a lobby to demand they explain their position on the Israeli state's onslaught in Gaza.

We should say to those politicians that if they are unprepared to stand against war and to fight for a decent future for young people, then we are going to organise to stand candidates against them.

We have to continue to build this movement against war and capitalism. Young people can be the fiercest fighters for that kind of movement and for a socialist future. Because we have only ever known capitalism as a system in crisis - with a lack of affordable housing, cost of living rising and our education system crumbling.

Black Lives Matter, the Sarah Everard protests, and now over Gaza - young people are fighting back

against racism, sexism and war. We need to fight for an end to the system that produces and reproduces all these horrors.

That's why young socialists in the Socialist Party and Socialist Students are launching a campaign to build a socialist youth movement against war - centred on schools, colleges and universities.

Get in touch, join us, and help build the socialist movement against war and oppression in your area.

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on p8

