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the Socialist

Issue 1150

7-13 October 2021

formerly **Militant**



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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
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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

Bakers' union disaffiliates from Labour Now step up the fight for a new workers' politics



“The decision taken by delegates who predominantly live in what's regarded as Labour red wall seats shows how far the Labour Party has travelled away from the aims and hopes of working-class organisations like ours.”

This is how the BFAWU bakers' union opened up its statement to explain why its special conference on September 28 had disaffiliated from Labour and broken the union's link with the organisation that it had “levied its poorly paid members” for in 1902, in order “to build a party that would bring about real change to their lives”.

This is an historic moment and brings centre stage the question as to how the unions and their members build a political vehicle that can complement industrial struggle and offer an alternative to the big business political consensus. That the Labour Party under the leadership of Sir Keir Starmer is firmly back in that groove was confirmed at its annual conference last week.

The Labour leadership was determined to send a clear message to the capitalist establishment that Corbynism is over and Labour is again a reliable tool for the rich, as it was under Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and Ed Miliband. Starmer decidedly rowed back on public ownership and on a £15-an-hour minimum wage, forcing Andy McDonald to resign from the shadow cabinet.

And when Starmer said in his conference speech that “we will never under my leadership go into an election with a manifesto that is not a serious plan for government”, he meant one that is not a serious alternative to brutal capitalism.

The BFAWU had decided to recall its annual conference even before

these policy retreats. The discussion to disaffiliate was prompted by the threatened expulsion of the union's national president Ian Hodson. But the statement indicates that the Blairite policies of Starmer's revived New Labour underpin the dissatisfaction of BFAWU members as well as the increasingly authoritarian methods that expel Ian Hodson and give more powers to right-wing MPs in order to shut the door on the possibility of another Corbyn.

But correctly, the BFAWU statement says: “The decision taken by our delegates doesn't mean we are leaving the political scene, it means we will become more political and we will ensure our members' political voice is heard”.

The discussion will now start on how to build that ‘political voice’, or a new ‘workers’ politics’, as the recently elected Unite general secretary Sharon Graham posed it. One that fights for a minimum wage of £15 an hour, repeals the anti-union laws of Thatcher, Major and Cameron that were retained by Blair and Brown, and also targets the town halls of Labour councils, committing to refuse to pass on Tory cuts. It is these cutting councillors alongside the Blairite MPs that form the backbone of Starmer's regime.

Before the start of the Labour conference, Sharon Graham tweeted the main tenets of her ‘workers’ politics’, including opposing “any local authority, including Labour, if they attempt to force through cuts to jobs and services”. But it also committed to asking the Unite executive council (EC) “to support candidates who oppose cuts to Unite members’ jobs and services and councils and councillors who fight against them”.

But this wouldn't include anyone in Starmer's army of cutting councillors. And any rebel councillor who did look to stand up to the cuts would face the prospect of summary expulsion. All this poses Unite supporting council candidates outside of Labour next May.

In fact, they should go further and actively call for Unite members and reps to stand in the local elections. Such a stand could be the platform

for the union to approach the BFAWU and other non-affiliated unions like the RMT - but also Labour-affiliated unions like the FBU as well as the CWU and TSSA - to call a conference on the issue of political representation for workers.

The CWU has a motion calling for such a conference going to their national conference in November, where delegates will be asking whether Starmer now supports the re-nationalisation of Royal Mail and BT that was policy under Jeremy Corbyn. The TSSA also passed a motion at its recent conference calling for members to be consulted on the union's affiliation to Labour.

In the meantime, the BFAWU should join with the RMT in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), as an interim step to any possible new formation which may develop in the future. This could include taking part in local People's Budget campaigns to fight for what working-class communities will need from their councils post-Covid, rather than what the Tories' austerity policies will demand.

Such bold moves by the left-led unions would build on the BFAWU's decision and immediately begin to offer an alternative to working-class people. The potential would be huge. At Labour's conference, Starmer said that “our politics is so small”, but under Corbyn's left leadership Labour grew to over 600,000 members, and many more were mobilised to campaign for the more radical 2017 general election manifesto that nearly pulled off a shock victory.

Starmer's pro-big business agenda is inevitably a turn-off to those looking for a programme and party that can face up to the Covid crisis and the brutal bosses' offensive. Allied to the Labour right's witch-hunt of the left, over 140,000 have departed since Starmer's victory.

A political vacuum is opening up as anger rises against the Tories and the instability that is developing, highlighted by the petrol shortage debacle. It is essential that the unions provide a voice for workers and “bring about real change to their lives”.



A political vacuum is opening up as anger rises against the Tories. It is essential that the unions provide a voice for workers

Unison right defy new left NEC majority to back Starmer

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN UNISON

At the Labour Party conference Keir Starmer moved to decisively reverse Jeremy Corbyn's policies and tighten the grip of the right wing on the Labour Party. Disgracefully, this was done with the aid of the delegation from the Unison public sector union, which is presently still affiliated to the Labour Party.

The delegation, which included the general secretary Christina McAnea and assistant general secretary Liz Snape, voted against union policy and backed Starmer.

Following Starmer's speech, McAnea made comments that do not at all represent the views of Unison members. As Starmer effectively abandoned Corbyn's 2019 manifesto, she praised him for “offering just what the country needs after 11 years of Tory mismanagement”.

The Unison national executive council (NEC) meets on 6 October and Socialist Party members will be calling for the NEC, the highest elected body in the union, to disassociate itself from these remarks, and put out its own statement opposing

the ruthless driving out of supporters of Jeremy Corbyn and the anti-austerity, pro-working class policies he stood for.

For years the Socialist Party has warned that the union's affiliation has been used to back up and bankroll the right of the Labour Party rather than take union policy into the Labour Party.

A warning of the lengths the right will go to defend Starmer and Co was given on the 13 September, before Labour's conference, at a meeting of the union's national Labour Link committee, which oversees Unison's participation in the Labour Party. The left had submitted motions against Starmer's proposed

rule changes and for Corbyn to be reinstated to the Parliamentary Labour Party. ‘Somehow’ these never made it onto the agenda. Despite this the meeting voted 11-8 to put them back onto the agenda but the leadership refused, with an unelected full-time official suddenly coming up with a new rule that a two-thirds majority was needed to get them back on.

It is clear that the recently elected new left majority on the NEC must take control of the union for the members, which means taking decisive measures against the bureaucratic machine that believes it has the right to run the union and not its elected members.

Socialist Party WHAT WE STAND FOR

The Socialist Party fights for socialism - a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also oppose every cut, fighting in our day-to-day campaigning for every possible improvement for working-class people. The organised working class has the potential power to stop the cuts and transform society.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) which organises across the world.

Our demands include...

- PUBLIC SERVICES**
 - No to ALL cuts in jobs, public services and benefits. Defend our pensions.
 - No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
 - Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.
 - Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and ‘free schools’!
 - A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs - free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!
 - Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

- ENVIRONMENT**
 - Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and un-recycled waste.
 - Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
 - A democratically planned, low-fare, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

- RIGHTS**
 - Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
 - Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.
 - Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
 - For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.
 - For the right to vote at 16.

- MASS WORKERS' PARTY**
 - For a mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

- SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM**
 - No to imperialist wars and occupations.
 - Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominates the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
 - 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 bosses' neoliberal European Union and single market. For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!



PAUL MATTISON

Sarah Everard trial reveals police abuse of power

- For democratic control of the police
- Fight to end sexism, inequality and capitalism



CORINTHIA WARD BIRMINGHAM NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

The horrific and brutal details surrounding the abduction, rape and murder of Sarah Everard were made known to the public on 29 September as the sentencing against her murderer, Met police officer Wayne Couzens, began. Couzens abused his power as a police officer to falsely arrest Sarah Everard as she walked home, citing she had broken Covid restrictions. The premeditated murder has once again brought into question women's safety and the accountability of the police.

The fact that Sarah was tricked by a police officer under the guise of the law has made many women ask: how can we be safe when the very people we are told will protect us can do this? In response, the Met police has released 'advice' to women suggesting that if they find themselves in a similar position to Sarah, then they should do things such as 'dial 999' and 'wave down a bus'. This is rich considering directly after Sarah's murder, the Tory government was suggesting using undercover officers in nightclubs and other places to help 'protect' women - now women have been advised how to escape them!

Over decades the Met has enabled undercover police officers to trick women into sexual relationships in order to spy on left-wing groups. On the same day as Couzens' life sentencing for Sarah's murder, activist Kate Wilson, who was deceived by an undercover police officer, won a tribunal against the Met police for its abuse of her human rights (see below).

While the Tories talk about how murderers like Sarah's should never happen again, their actions speak otherwise. They push through legislation such as the Spycops bill which would give police more power, and help protect officers from charges of

rape. This is the same bill that in October 2020 Kier Starmer did not oppose, but rather told Labour MPs to



We should demand the democratic community and trade union control and oversight of policing as well as the criminal justice system

abstain on.

Additionally, cuts to public services have had a massive effect on the safety of women. Street lighting, which many councils - both blue and red - have dimmed to cut costs, is just one example of how women's safety has been impacted in the name of austerity. These cuts should be reversed, and the services fully funded to ensure the safety of all women.

The misogyny and sexism in the police does not stop at Couzens or a few bad apples. Another Met police officer from Couzens' unit was

charged with rape, and a WhatsApp group where police officers shared sexist and pornographic material is being investigated. 26 police colleagues of Couzens have committed sex crimes since 2016, and more than 750 Met police employees have faced sexual misconduct investigations since 2010!

Women and the working class should no longer accept the lack of accountability of the police, instead we should demand the democratic community and trade union control and oversight of policing as well as the criminal justice system. There should be independent workers' and community inquiries into police misconduct. Couzens' crimes did not occur out of the blue, so why were the warning flags ignored?

The culture in the police reflects that of society as a whole. The levels of harassment, violence and abuse that women face are systemic. Women should not be told to change their behaviour, but society should be fundamentally changed to end the inequalities embedded in capitalism which perpetuate sexism and abuse.

• See also 'Violence against women - we will not be silenced' at socialistparty.org.uk

We say

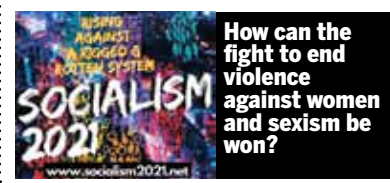
- Democratic community and trade union control of the police and criminal justice system
- Fully fund services and support for all women affected by domestic violence, rape and abuse, including refuges and permanent, affordable social housing
- Services must be specialised, publicly funded and democratically controlled by service workers and users, and open to all women
- Safe, affordable, well-staffed public transport and adequate street lighting
- Build a united struggle for zero tolerance of sexism and sexual harassment in workplaces, schools, colleges and universities
- Fight for a socialist alternative to the sexism, inequality and crisis of capitalism

opinions and exchange information and ideas must include the right to do so without attracting the attention of the police and being monitored and placed under surveillance. In this case, it concluded, the claimant's political views were the reason she was subject to surveillance.

Kate Wilson said: "The events in my case happened years ago, however the failure of the police to protect women from sexual predators within their own ranks, and police attempts to criminalise protestors are both still very live issues today. The Tribunal has gone some way towards recognising how deep the

abuses run. We need to tackle the misogyny and institutional sexism of the police, and there needs to be a fundamental rethink of the powers they are given for the policing of demonstrations and the surveillance of those who take part."

• Read more, visit: campaignopposingpolicesurveillance.com



Met Police found guilty

CLARE WILKINS NOTTINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

On 30 September, the Investigatory Powers Tribunal handed down its ruling in Kate Wilson's epic ten-year legal battle over the use of undercover police against protest movements. The groundbreaking ruling identified a "formidable list" of breaches of fundamental human rights by the Metropolitan Police.

The case was part of the battle for justice by Kate and other women, following revelations that they had been deceived into relationships by undercover police. Having exhausted other routes, she took her fight for answers to the secretive Investigatory Powers Tribunal.

The court's ruling stressed that the sexual relationship Kate was deceived into by Mark Kennedy was conducted with the knowledge of

his principal cover officer, and that his deployment manager and other senior officers knew about the sexual relationship.

The tribunal found that police took steps to interfere with Ms Wilson's political rights to hold opinions and with her rights to freedom of expression and association, as well as violating her right to a private and family life.

It ruled that the right to hold



PHOTO: GARETH BROMHALL

Pay NHS and care staff to address worker shortages

HOSPITAL WORKER

Boris Johnson's suggestion of a pay rise for HGV drivers to attract more workers into this essential job is very welcome. There are 100,000 vacancies in the NHS, and 120,000 vacancies for care workers, so it is about time the government gave us big pay rise too!

The NHS and care sector are on their knees. Health and care workers are facing financial disaster, as well as chronic understaffing that undermines patient care.

Even the 3% pay 'rise' many NHS

staff got in September leaves them with less money in their pockets because of increased pension contributions, energy and other bills skyrocketing, and a Universal Credit cut of £20 a week. This is before they are asked to pay for the NHS and social care funding shortfall out of their own pockets, with the planned increase in National Insurance.

Between 2010 and 2021, NHS workers lost an average of 20% of their wages. It's time for them to get that back and more. Strike action by health workers could force the government into yet another U-turn.

34.7% of all global tax losses were the responsibility of the UK and its overseas territories and crown dependencies in 2019 - \$160 billion, according to the Tax Justice Network

8,950,963 nurses' salaries could be paid by the tax losses of the world's two worst tax offenders - the UK and British overseas territory, Cayman Islands

Capitalist climate hypocrisy

ROBERT OSENEY NORTH LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Boris Johnson and the Tories see the COP26 conference in November as an opportunity to showcase their vision for a 'Global Britain' leading the way on climate change. Unwilling to take on the big business super-polluters, the Tories have no credible plan to reach net-zero emissions by 2050, and Labour isn't any better.

One of the stated goals for COP26, is a move away from coal-fired power plants, which release a number of other greenhouse gases as well as carbon dioxide. But faced with

a crisis of the energy market, with natural gas prices soaring, old coal-powered plants have been fired up to provide cheaper energy.

The crisis has also highlighted another key source of UK emissions: housing, which accounts for 15% of the UK's total carbon emissions. Old, inefficient gas heating systems need to be replaced, and old drafty houses need to be insulated. So far the Tories have shown no sign of addressing this issue.

A paltry 'green voucher' program was announced in March 2020 that would have given some homeowners money for upgrades. But the

Tories plunge millions further into poverty with Universal Credit cut

LINDSEY MORGAN LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

£6 billion has been ripped from the hands of working-class people through the removal of the £20 Universal Credit (UC) uplift. With an ongoing cost of living crisis, the loss of a grand year will hit pockets hard this winter. Many low-paid workers, including many of the carers that risked their lives and got claps in return, will face hardship as costs go up. Food banks, which shouldn't be needed in the first place, are bracing themselves for demand to massively outstrip the supplies they are given, often by people with barely any money to spare themselves.

The government, in its unceasing and unrelenting wisdom, has yet again decided that paying any more money to feed children is immoral. So instead of £6 billion, they have set up a £500 million 'Household Support Fund', managed by local authorities, to give to people who can't afford essentials such as heating and eating. In itself this is an admission of the poverty we'll be plunged further into.

Councils' already stretched services will be responsible for finding those who need the money. The people they will find will be those known to services already and local authorities could easily miss those who are most in need. Long-term cuts to council budgets, and the refusal from Labour councils to implement legal no-cuts budgets, means devastated local services will be under even more pressure.

Our households need much more than what many have described as a temporary sticking plaster. We need ongoing financial support: through a £15-an-hour minimum wage and the immediate reinstatement of the



PHOTO: CARDIFFSP

UC uplift. That money shouldn't be given to us on the whim of councils through grants. We shouldn't be treated as charity cases hoping for scraps. We should be given the money directly for us to manage our own budgets - give us the £6 billion back! The 'Warm Homes Discount' of £140 should be given to all households that need it to help deal with the energy price increases too.

A well overdue long-term overhaul and uplift to the whole benefit

system is needed, and a united class battle against the bosses who pit workers and the unemployed against each other in a 'race to the bottom'.

We need to take the wealth for ourselves by nationalising the top 150 companies and big banks under democratic workers' control and management. As part of a socialist plan, the wealth can be used to end low pay and poverty benefits for good.

has provided no credible alternative. At the recent Labour Party conference, activists tried to propose a motion calling for a bold "Green New Deal," including expansion of public transport, mass investment in green technologies and the retrofitting of homes. Rather than allowing these measures to be debated and voted upon, the party bureaucracy ruled the motion 'out of order', preventing it from being put before the membership.

Soon afterwards, party leader Sir Keir Starmer said he would refuse to nationalise the 'big six' energy companies as part of a transition to clean energy. This is a reversal of his previous stance during the party leadership election, where he claimed that he would preserve the bold, socialist policies of his predecessor Jeremy Corbyn.

We call for a new mass workers' party that can take the necessary steps to ensure a bright future for all of us. A just climate transition requires the nationalisation of the major energy companies in order to quickly move to cleaner energy sources; likewise for industries such as shipping and aviation. And it is clear that the mass retrofitting of homes will not be accomplished with a simple voucher programme. Instead, we will need socialist, democratic planning and workers' control of the economy to accomplish this transition in the timeframe that is necessary.



Victimised Tesco warehouse rep fighting for reinstatement

An Usdaw rep at a Tesco warehouse who is also a Socialist Party member has been wrongfully dismissed for organising in his workplace, both on the shopfloor and in his union branch, of which he was recently elected secretary.

The cover for this clear example of harassment and victimisation, comes from multiple trumped up warnings layered on each other. He was not let go for gross misconduct; rather the case for this politically motivated sacking rests on being falsely accused of theft, then given a final written warning due to lack of evidence for something that should, if proven, result in instant dismissal. But it was clear management would lose if they went to tribunal.

He went on to win a harassment grievance against his line manager but the ruling was upheld regardless, and his final written warning was then used to attempt to keep him on eggshells and hinder trade union activities.

Recently he helped a pregnant co-worker change her forklift battery, and in doing so received an electrical burn due to system faults consistent-ly ignored by management. He put in a claim through the union which was dismissed for alleged falsification

of injury, even though he provided photo evidence of it, and his first aider gave a statement clarifying that he had indeed suffered this injury.

He was given another warning for this which tipped his final written warning over into a dismissal.

The past victories of Usdaw in the depot include a pushback on unsafe business practices, of which this rep played an active role in organising, alongside building a mass grievance in relation to Covid safety and performance, as well as encouraging workers to cite Section 44 to combat these attacks through the union.

Often what would not even pass in court passes in the meetings of managers against workers. This rep is adamant that he will take his case to court, with the union and the Socialist Party behind him. A union branch meeting has been called at the depot and the support of fellow workers is growing.

This attack comes at a time when Tesco is in freefall, the crisis of worker retention, stagnant wages, and health and safety issues in the job have all culminated in workers leaving the company. In this depot alone people leave every other week.

The Socialist Party stands with the rep in his fight for reinstatement.

Unison local government members emphatically reject insulting pay offer



UNISON MEMBER AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKER

In a Unison consultative ballot of local government workers, 79% of members in England, Wales and Northern Ireland who voted put a cross on the ballot form to reject the employers' insulting offer of 1.75%. This is clear indication of the anger and frustration of members who have seen the value of their pay decline by 25% since 2010. They now face increasing gas bills and inflation around 4%. Many are having their Universal Credit cut and/or face increased national insurance payments. The size of the majority rejecting the pay offer clearly put pressure on Unison's National Joint Council (NJC) to move to ballot members about taking strike action on pay.

Unison and the other local authority unions Unite and GMB are calling for a 10% pay increase. The whole of the union must now be mobilised to

assist and support branches in getting the vote out to surpass the Tories' 50% voting threshold. Rallies, marches and meetings need to be organised to mobilise members to vote for industrial action.

The left-led national executive council needs to ensure that the resources of the union are harnessed to get out the vote. Members need to hear from the national executive and the NJC that they are prepared to lead from the front and help organise mass sustained strike action, coordinated with other Unison service groups such as health where possible, and with Unite, GMB and other public sector unions.

In order to win our pay claim, the main weapon in our armoury must be deployed, and that is mass strike action across local government. Selective or targeted strike action will not win the day on their own and they should only be used as an auxiliary to mass strike action.

Unite health members say no to 3% and vote for action

Health service members of Unite the Union in England have voted by 90% to reject the government's 3% pay offer for this year.

Unite, which represents 100,000 members in the health service, will now plan for a "comprehensive programme" of targeted industrial action in the coming months.

The consultative ballot also highlighted that of the 90% rejecting the offer, a total of 84% were willing to take some form of industrial action. Unite said it would now be liaising with other health trade unions, all of whose members have also overwhelmingly rejected the offer, to coordinate pay campaign actions.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: "Our members in the NHS in England have voted overwhelmingly to show their disdain at what is effectively another pay cut for those who cared for the dying and sick during the pandemic.

"With the cost of living soaring and tax hikes on the way, Unite is determined to ensure the government thinks again and offers our NHS workers the fair and decent pay they undeniably deserve."

Unite's long-standing policy has been for a pay rise of £3,000 a year or 15%, whichever is greater for all health sector workers.



Scaffolders strike at Scunthorpe steelworks for pay rise

"I've worked here eleven years and only ever had one pay rise", one scaffolder told me on the picket line. Another added: "That was three years ago but was self-funded!"

That's why around 60 scaffolders, members of Unite the Union, started

an all-out strike on Monday 4 October at British Steel in Scunthorpe. They are striking for the national industry NAECI rate for the job, which is 10-15% more than they get paid now.

This dispute started two years ago and the scaffs took several days of strike action against their previous contractor Brand last winter. A pathetic 6% pay rise over two years is all that's come out of months of 'non-negotiations' with new contractor Actavo. But the scaffs want the NAECI rate that's paid to others

at the steelworks. And they're fed up of being fobbed off, hence the 95% vote for an all-out strike. Picketing has been stepped up to all three main gates from 5.30am to 2.30pm. Encouragingly, on the first morning, several scaffs from other firms turned around at the picket or didn't come in. As the Actavo contract maintains around 500 structures on the steelworks, the scaffs don't expect it will be long before their action really begins to bite.

ALISTAIR TICE, YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

NEU: National executive agrees campaign on pay

Vote Martin Powell-Davies for DGS to ensure a campaigning, socialist lead from the top

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN NEU

Socialist Party members on the National Education Union (NEU) executive are able to report to their members that, following the national executive meeting that took place on 2 October, there will now be a national campaign on pay, including 'potentially' industrial action.

The executive agreed to mount a campaign for a 2022 increase that reverses the impact of the 2021 pay freeze and begins to restore previous losses. This campaign will encompass both teachers and support staff, in England and Wales.

An amendment that would have considerably strengthened this campaign, put forward by the five Socialist Party executive members and other campaigners in the Education Solidarity Network, was defeated by the majority leadership of the union, who are supporters of the 'NEU left'.

This includes the Socialist Workers Party and the NEU Left deputy general secretary candidate Gawain Little, who is a member of the Communist Party.

Our amendments would have

given a clear timetable of escalating action: an indicative ballot in the spring term to enable a formal ballot for industrial action to be held in time for action to take place before the pay review body meets in July.

Nonetheless, the launch of this campaign is a big achievement for all those members who have campaigned for preparation for national action. Socialist Party members have argued for this since the Tories threatened a potential pay freeze at the end of 2020.

Socialist Party member Martin Powell-Davies, standing for deputy general secretary, has argued the case in hundreds of meetings, tens of thousands of leaflets, and many online statements since nominations began in January, only to be told repeatedly by Gawain Little and NEU Left supporters that it was not possible to build for national action.

When the pay freeze was announced, Martin immediately put out the call to mount a major campaign of preparation for national action, warning "weakness only invites aggression". But when the executive met at the start of September, it was claimed that NEU members wouldn't

fight and many weren't aware of the pay freeze. The national leadership then proposed a campaign comprising an app to compare pay, a postcard campaign and press releases.

Members up and down the country made it clear that this was not enough. Socialist Party and Education Solidarity Network executive members submitted a motion to the 2 October meeting calling for national action on pay. The NEU Left has felt this pressure - as well as from the fact that unions in the NHS have been running consultative ballots.

The union officers then drew up their own strategy, one that, although suggesting possible action, was not concrete on when or even whether that should take place. Under pressure, that strategy was strengthened and talk was more robust from those who have, for so long, refused to accept that a national ballot can be won on this issue. The pressure needs to be maintained consistently on the union leadership, so they stay true to these words. There is still room in the wording of the strategy for the national leadership not to move to a national ballot for action, but only national action can defeat the Tories' pay freeze and deliver a reversal of this year's attack on our living standards.

Now it is vital that a major campaign is launched to mobilise the support of NEU members all over the country, with serious support to build in the local areas and a clear, bold national lead.

To ensure a campaigning, socialist leadership from the top that supports the work to build from below, NEU members should vote Martin Powell-Davies 1 on the deputy general secretary ballot papers dropping through letter boxes this week.



Brighton waste workers walk out

The Socialist Party joined the GMB union and Brighton's Cityclean, recycling, commercial waste and HGV drivers and workers on their picket line on 5 October as they fight for better pay and working conditions.

Once again the Green Party council is trying to make the lives of the working class in Brighton harder. The

council has told local media it had offered a deal but this was news to the union and workers. Strikers on the picket didn't hold much hope for this 'deal' and saw it as a time wasting tactic.

Head of the council Geoff Raw isn't worried about rubbish piling up on his street though, because he had a truck come to his area for an extra pickup the day before the strike began. This comes weeks after a PR campaign by the Greens promising electric trucks being added to the

fleet. The strikers told me that in reality the electric truck used in the photos was on loan and only stayed for the day. They have since had one electric vehicle work a route but it had to be recovered after breaking down on Wilson Avenue.

We welcome the introduction of clean vehicles, but we also support the fair treatment of workers. The Greens need to stop governing our city via publicity stunts and listen to the people of the city.

JOE MOTT, BRIGHTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Co-ordinated further education strike action against measly pay offer



SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN UCU

College workers at ten University and College Union (UCU) branches initiated strike action as part of a coordinated fightback on pay on 28 September. Socialist Party members were out showing solidarity on the picket lines and engaging in discussion on the way forward for the disputes. We also spoke about how to tackle the wider problems facing workers in colleges, many of which relate to running colleges as if they were a business.

Everyone we spoke to was angry about the measly 1% pay offer - a real-term pay cut - especially as they were working longer hours and with a higher workload than ever before.

At City and Islington College, workers were working longer hours and with a higher workload than ever before.

Everyone we spoke to was angry about the measly 1% pay offer - a real-term pay cut - especially as they were working longer hours and with a higher workload than ever before.

"We just want fair pay for the work we do. We just want to afford to live. I love my job and the students, but there's so much workload, so much we have to do outside of working hours."

"For me, workload is a big issue. The PCs, the whiteboards, nothing works properly. There's no time to do your job. One day there weren't enough chairs. I have to come in one and a half hours earlier to get things done. The students are great, and there's a good team of staff here. We

want to be happy in our job. We don't want to be stressed all the time."

The threat of strike action was enough to force managers back to the negotiating table at five of 15 colleges that voted to take action, with all offering higher rates of pay plus other pay-related concessions.

Workers we spoke to in Tottenham were confident that their action would also result in a better deal from management. However, they were willing to see the dispute through if it came to it, including taking action beyond the currently planned ten days.

The rise in national insurance, inflation and the fuel shortage was also a common talking point on the picket.

As one picketer said: "We know it's all connected, the petrol shortage, the low pay, the workload... it's the accumulation of wealth by the few that is affecting the mass of people and families are really struggling."

The strike continued from 5-7 October, and once again, Socialist Party members have been out on the pickets. The UCU has indicated that it will announce further dates if better offers are not forthcoming.

The Socialist Party calls for:

- Full public funding to provide quality education to all; reverse the cuts and end privatisation and marketisation in colleges
- A national contract for further education workers giving:
 - A pay rise for all further education workers of at least 10% (as voted for at UCU further education conference)
 - A maximum limit on work hours
 - An end to the college-by-college fight on pay; reinstate national, collective pay bargaining

CAPITALISM'S ECONOMIC INSTABILITY IN THE 'NEW NORMAL'

Volatility in world supply chains



JUDY BEISHON
SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The recent acute shortages of energy, goods and labour in some sectors in the UK stems in large part from UK-specific capitalist failings. But the volatile world situation is part of the background to those crises, in particular because of the Covid pandemic disruption to supply chains and travel internationally.

Following the sharp economic falls during the lockdowns, rapid rebounds in export volumes and overall economic growth have put great stress on the 'just-in-time' connections in supply chains. This is together with trade and economies still being adversely affected by ongoing post-lockdown pandemic control measures, especially those affecting travel and transport.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) stated in its September 2021 assessment: "Economic growth has picked up this year, helped by strong policy support, the deployment of effective vaccines and the resumption of many economic activities... Global GDP has now surpassed its pre-pandemic level, but output and employment gaps remain in many countries, particularly in emerging-market and developing economies where vaccination rates are low... Sizeable uncertainty remains".

Rises in commodity prices and shipping costs are key factors in the uncertainty and turmoil, and are being reflected in increases in inflation

in a number of countries. Extreme weather events also contribute to the uncertainty - there are many recent examples of them impacting on economies and trade, including the disruption of rail, sea and air transport when a typhoon hit China in July 2021.

Protectionism

The growth rate of world trade was already in decline before the pandemic and the post-pandemic outlook doesn't point towards a reversal of that trend. A key factor behind the decline has been the increasing trade protectionism of the US and other countries, including against China. The average US tariff on Chinese imports last year was 19.3% - over six times higher than the average rate in 2017.

Another factor has been firms moving some or all of their production back 'home', whether due to costs, logistics, or other reasons. Also, some corporations have reduced the quantity of product parts they import from other companies abroad, instead sourcing more from within their home country than previously, as many firms in China have done.

The pandemic has only increased the pressures on governments and big business to resort to protectionist measures. This is partly because it has brought out the futility of relying on 'market forces' in a capitalist world to deliver vital products to the places of need.

This protectionism isn't on the whole favourable for the capitalist classes internationally. Ideally, they

want the highest possible levels of trade to try to extend their own markets and for the competition generated to be an impetus to investment, productivity and therefore the health of the entire capitalist system. But the insurmountable contradictions in the system - analysed and explained over 170 years ago by Marx and Engels - underlie what is today a system in long-term decline, unable to deliver 'healthy' growth.

None of the problems and fault-lines that led to the 2008-09 recession have since been solved. Among them, debt levels are now greater than ever; an enormous potentially destabilising factor. The present bounce back of many economies can appear superficially as a sign of healthy growth, but it's mainly just an inevitable sequel to the lockdown semi-paralysis of huge sectors. As such, a return to the pre-pandemic cycles of weak growth rates interspersed with recessions - which could be very severe - looms ahead.

Complex supply chains

This doesn't mean that the highly complicated, web-like supply chains - built up particularly in the last decades of the last century - will be coming to an end. Rather, they have been facing changes that limit their expansion, which has contributed to the global slowing of trade in relation to the rate of economic growth.

Multinationals have been reviewing whether they rely too much on suppliers that might become unreliable or otherwise counterproductive. Along with this is pressure to step back somewhat from just-in-time

deliveries, as the economic upheavals of 2007-09 and during the pandemic have exposed the dangers for them of keeping stock levels at ultra-low levels at every stage of production.

Journalist Samantha Subramanian gave an example of the complexity of the chains: "A T-shirt sold in New Delhi might be made of cotton grown in India, blended with other cotton from Australia, spun into yarn in Vietnam, woven into cloth in Turkey, sown and cut in Portugal, bought by a Norwegian company and shipped back to India - and that's a relatively simple supply chain".

He outlined a case that took place five years ago: bed linen company Welspun was caught out for labelling much of its product as 100% Egyptian cotton when a large quantity of it hadn't come from Egypt at all. Welspun had bought its cotton from many different companies and had difficulty in identifying where in the chain the fraud had arisen.

Workers' power

Nevertheless, whatever company bosses do to try to improve the reliability of their trading, or in many cases to deliberately obfuscate their sources, they aren't able to end their reliance on workers' labour.

The recent shortages and logistics problems have had the side effect of workers in the affected sectors being in a position of having greater potential power in their trade union struggles for better wages and conditions. Also, during the pandemic the increase in online buying and selling - due to more of it being done from homes - has led to higher numbers of workers being needed in warehouses and delivery jobs, so they have a boost to their negotiating power too.

As well, the pandemic has raised consciousness worldwide on the crucial role played by the working class - that has delivered health care, cleaning, food supplies and all the other basic tasks that have kept society running. Capitalist governments deny those workers a decent wage in most countries, while at the same time they have resorted to spending vast sums of money on 'quantitative easing' programmes to prop up their system and primarily serve the interests of big business.

This adds to the urgency of workers turning to the political front as well as fighting industrially - to the task of building new mass workers' parties that can put forward a socialist alternative to capitalism.



A return to the pre-pandemic cycles of weak growth rates interspersed with recessions - which could be very severe - looms ahead

British capitalism's bleak future

DAVE REID
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

A leading capitalist think tank has outlined the bleak situation facing British capitalism. And unless society is changed, this means a desperate future for working people.

The Resolution Foundation is a think tank of Blairites and Tories that aims to "improve outcomes for people on low and modest incomes". It wants to persuade governments to introduce mild reforms that mitigate the worse effects of capitalism, and in doing so hopes to protect the system from the working-class anger that its conditions provoke.

Together with the London School of Economics it has established a two-year 'The Economy 2030 Inquiry', to examine the huge challenges facing the UK economy in the 2020s. Specifically: the recovery from Covid-19, the effects of Brexit, and decarbonisation of the economy, in the context of already existing technological and demographic changes.

Its initial report presents a devastating indictment of British capitalism in the 2020s. The report describes a country more unproductive, lower-paid and more unequal than its rivals, and falling further behind.

Just a few facts show the parlous state of British capitalism:

- The weakest job mobility since the 1930s
- The poorest productivity record for 120 years, causing real wages to stagnate
- Average earnings stalled at the same level in real terms as they were in 2008
- Almost no income growth for low-paid workers for 15 years
- A worse record for inequality than any EU country apart from Bulgaria.

The report correctly criticises the promises of the Johnson government to 'build back better' and 'level up' because neither it, nor the current Labour leadership, has an economic plan for achieving those objectives. In fact, the Financial Times has warned of a 'levelling down' - with London hit by the continued absence of office workers, Brexit damaging manufacturing areas and the pandemic still ravaging disadvantaged communities.

Nevertheless, this report plays a useful role for the workers' movement by providing a mass of data to describe the dire situation of British capitalism.

British capitalism, which once

controlled one quarter of the world's economy, is falling further and further behind its rivals: "On the eve of the [2008-09] financial crisis, GDP per capita in the UK was just 6% lower than in Germany, but after a large downturn and slower recovery this gap had risen to 12% by 2019". This is a warning that Britain could join the emasculated Italian economy at the bottom of the league tables for advanced capitalist nations.

British capital decline

According to the Economist: "Since 2005 British firms' share of world market capitalisation has fallen from over 7% to 3%". British capital has halved in relative value in 15 years.

After decades of Tory and Blairite undiluted neoliberal policies in Britain, Germany and France are about 15% more productive than the UK.

In addition, British capitalism is posed with new problems, the consequences of which the capitalists and their governments will try and unload on to working people. The report lists the following:

- Covid-19: More home working as a result of the pandemic will benefit the top earners, but will make low-paid workers even more insecure.
- Brexit: The Johnson government's Brexit settlement will impose higher costs of doing business with the EU, its main trading partner.
- Net zero: Decarbonisation requires urgent action that capitalism is unlikely to satisfy.
- Demography: The ratio of people under the age of 20 or over 65 to those aged 20-64 is likely to increase even faster than in any other decade in the first half of the 21st century.
- Technology: The OECD estimates that 14% of jobs could disappear as a result of automation in the next 15-20 years.

The concern about automation affecting employment, however, coexists with the reality that, for the UK, the more pressing recent problem has been too little technological investment.

Under capitalism in crisis there is no way that new technology can be introduced while at the same time protecting the jobs and living standards of the working class.

All these challenges could be met by the adoption of socialist policies. But on the basis of the continuation of capitalism, they pose a stark warning to the working class and the trade union movement as the bosses try and make us pay for the crises in their system.



PHOTO: GARRY KNIGHT/CC

Although the authors of the report do not spell it out, it is absolutely clear from its data that the responsibility for the uncompetitiveness of the British economy lies squarely at the doorstep of its owners - the fetid and short-sighted capitalist class. Productivity is growing at its lowest rate since 1900, mainly because investment is low.

Low investment

Low investment has been the central problem of British capitalism for a century. The capitalist press try and pin the blame for the decline of British manufacturing on 'greedy unions', but decades of underinvestment have meant that British manufacturing companies have not been able to compete with their rivals. In 1978, the Financial Times reported that the average British worker had just £7,500 worth of machinery at their elbow, the German worker £22,000, and the Japanese £30,000. Small wonder, therefore, that in the cold wind of Thatcherism, 39% of manufacturing jobs were blown away between 1979 and 1993.

British capitalists turned instead to making a quick buck in the finance and service sectors, but low investment means that productivity is declining in these sectors too.

And what is left of British manufacturing capitalism today is following on the tradition of its predecessors. As the Foundation reports: "In 2017, the UK had only 71 robots installed per 10,000 manufacturing employees, compared to 309 in Germany and 631 in Korea."

The British ruling class is slowly

waking up to the threat to humanity posed by climate change, but its system is incapable of transforming to a zero carbon economy. At the end of June, Tory ex-minister John Gummer said: "Almost all things that should have happened have either been delayed or... haven't hit the mark." The Resolution report authors plead: "We need to move... from installing almost zero heat pumps each year, to installing 3,000 every single day by 2030... 60 per cent of fuel supply (oil and gas industries) and half of surface transport decarbonisation needs to happen during the 2020s - to achieve net zero by 2050."

But currently, the steps in that direction are minuscule and on the basis of capitalism, net zero will never be achieved, let alone by 2050. Annual UK low-carbon investment needs to reach around £50 billion by 2030 but currently stands at £7 billion.

Green new deal

A socialist green new deal could achieve those results before 2050. It would need to renationalise the energy industry under democratic workers' control and management, to use the resources currently extracted as super-profits for the utilities companies and gear production to invest in heat pumps, home insulation, tidal power, electrification and free public transport to lower car use.

As part of a socialist plan, the financial burden of low-carbon transition would not fall on working-class families. The transition under capitalism, where bosses look to increase prices to maintain or boost their profits, will

add to energy bills - which eat up 2.5 times as much disposable income of the bottom fifth of households when compared to the top fifth.

Trade unions, with their 6.7 million members and growing in Britain, are the force in society best placed to fight for an economy run in the interests of the workers, not the bosses. But many trade union leaders are tied to the capitalist establishment - declaring a social truce during the first phase of the Covid crisis as many workers' living standards were being shredded.

Frances O'Grady, the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), is one of the inquiry members who famously joined with the bosses' union, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), to endorse the furlough plan of Tory chancellor Rishi Sunak on the steps of Downing Street. Rubbing shoulders with the CBI, Tories and Blairites in this inquiry to try and square the contradictions of capitalism will get us nowhere.

Instead, the trade union leaders should be preparing for the battles to defend workers as the bosses attempt to make us pay for their endemic crises. And the trade unions should be drawing up plans for a new mass workers' party that can fight to avert the irreversible slide into capitalist decay outlined in this report.



YOUTH FIGHT FOR JOBS - WHY WE'RE MARCHING ON 9 OCTOBER



Final leg of 2011 Jarrow March for Jobs PAUL MATSSON

Ten years since our 330-mile Jarrow March for Jobs

In 1936, 200 unemployed workers marched from their homes in Jarrow in north-east England to London against mass unemployment, demanding the government re-establish the shipbuilding industry in their town. In 2011, youth unemployment was rising. On the 75th anniversary of the Jarrow Crusade, Youth Fight for Jobs marched a 330-mile route from Jarrow to London, following in the footsteps of the original Jarrow marchers. Ben Robinson, 2011 Jarrow marcher and former Youth Fight for Jobs chair, writes about that experience.

You often hear a lot of statistics. 64% support rail renationalisation. Just 10% support the Universal Credit cut. 60% support a bigger NHS pay rise than the government is offering.

The reality behind these stats may be glimpsed by many, but participating in the 330-mile 2011 march from Jarrow to London immersed us in the solidarity and fighting spirit that exists throughout the country.

Over the course of six weeks, the marchers were fed, clothed and housed almost entirely by the workers' movement and supporters, willingly giving support for the protest. Local sports clubs made us fry-ups; passing motorists stopped to donate cash; leisure centres let us use showers; brewers even made celebratory beers!

Even in tiny villages, someone would come out of their homes to offer a round of tea, explaining that their relatives had made tea for the famous 1936 Jarrow Crusade, and it was a source of family pride.

Early on in the march, we visited

a picket line of workers striking over pensions. One of our Jarrow marchers gave a speech supporting the strike and offering a donation. At that point they were cut off by the workers, who argued that the cause of the march needed the money more.

This article could be filled many times over by similar examples. How did we manage to become the focus for this wave of solidarity?

Youth Fight for Jobs was launched in 2009 as the capitalist class attempted to force workers and young people to pay the price for the financial crisis. While the rich got bailouts, nearly one million young people in Britain found themselves unemployed.

Internationally, a fightback developed. From Wisconsin in the US, to the mass movements of the Arab Spring, with Occupy spreading

during the Jarrow March. In Britain, the 2010 student movement had damaged the Tory-Lib Dem government, and the public sector strikes were ongoing.

Building for the Jarrow March was a major part of the campaigning of the Socialist Party and Youth Fight for Jobs members throughout 2011. We won the backing of eight trade unions - Bectu, CWU, FBU, PCS, RMT, TSSA, UCU and Unite - along-side figures such as Ken Loach and Jeremy Corbyn.

As Socialist Party political secretary, Peter Taaffe, wrote in The Struggle for World Socialism: "The march fulfilled its aims: to wake up the labour movement to the shame of unemployment, particularly its effects on young people, and to explain how it could be solved through a real programme of job creation. It also

provided a platform for the marchers themselves, on radio and TV, to explain their case."

The success of the march could also be seen in the rattled reaction from Tory MPs, including then-minister Iain Duncan Smith. But the shame of capitalism - of being unable to make use of the talents and potential of young people and all those unemployed - continues, and will continue while capitalism does. That's why the Youth Fight for Jobs protests on 9 October are essential, to refuse to put up with the Tories' meagre morsels, and fight for a better future for all.



On 9 October, Youth Fight for Jobs is organising protests and marches in 14 towns and cities. This is just after the Tories remove the safety net of furlough, which will disrupt the lives of up to one million workers. Four young workers explain why they're protesting.



'Low pay worsened staffing crisis'

JAMES LEACH
YORK SOCIALIST PARTY

I've just started a post-graduate degree. From April until September I was working on a government-funded Kickstart scheme. None of the companies on the scheme have to pay any of the wages for the workers they hire. All the contracts are 25 hours at the national minimum wage - £8.91 an hour if you're over 22, and a lot less if you're younger.

I was working for Jhoots pharmacy, a national chain. In my branch, all the other employees, other than the pharmacist himself, were apprentices. The only people I was ever aware of in other branches were apprentices. They were paid the apprentice minimum wage of £4.30 an hour.

Other than low pay, a major issue was the lack of cover for staff. During Covid, with lots of sickness absence and self-isolating, there was never enough staff to cover. This meant having to cover shifts at the drop of a hat, and going through the rigmarole

of sending off forms to prove that you have done overtime.

The only alternative was to risk the pharmacy being understaffed, which in a healthcare situation is dangerous, as it means people don't get their medication. This is explicitly because the company was unwilling to pay for adequate staffing.

Being on the minimum wage meant I have not been able to save ahead of studying to help with rent and tuition fees. I'm planning to try to get a part-time job as well as completing full-time studies. Two-thirds of students work around their studies, because most students can't afford to pay rent and fees with just a student loan and maintenance grant.

Raising the minimum wage to a living wage of £15 an hour would make a fundamental difference. It would go a long way towards giving young people security.

As well, there needs to be an end to 'fire and rehire' and the institutionalisation of insecure work. This is essential to secure a decent future for young people.

- Against all job cuts - open the books and nationalise firms to save jobs
- For real training and apprenticeship schemes for young people - for a decent job at the end of training
- For the right to a job for all - end low pay, for a £15-an-hour minimum wage, and fight for government investment in socially useful job creation. Share out the work with no loss of pay
- Make the 1% pay - take the monopolies and banks into democratic public ownership in order to provide every young and working class person with a future which includes access to decent and well-paying jobs for all

"One month I didn't have any money at all"

JOSH BOYLE
BRIGHTON SOCIALIST PARTY

I'm a third-year humanities student at Brighton University. Until three months ago, I had been working in retail for four or five years. After the second lockdown, I thought: "I can't do this anymore".

Housing in Brighton is horrendously expensive - 1.3 times more than anywhere outside London. I chewed through whatever little savings I had during my first year at uni.

My retail job was 'zero-hours', I didn't have guaranteed hours. There was one month where I didn't work at all. I had no money.

I was relying on what little student finance I had after paying rent, and

my savings. I started with a couple of grand in savings. And I've only just started saving again.

My car had an MOT, and that killed what was left of my savings. I needed to find another job that paid more.

It was a shame. I enjoyed the team I was working with. But I couldn't do this anymore. I needed a serious contract.

I now work 14.5 hours a week driving a big green van for Asda, dropping people's food at their houses. It's a lot more stressful, down to a lack of drivers, because of the poor conditions.

I regularly miss my schedule breaks because of delays on the road, and getting extra loads dumped on me at the depot. The conditions and pay are not great.

A £15-an-hour minimum wage would be amazing, not only for young people, but everyone. That uplift would give people stability.

Because of the hour limits, there's only so much pay you can build up. I finish one to two hours later than I should.

Some drivers say, I only have enough petrol to drive my kids to schools, not to work as well. It's snowballing.

Being on your own can be quite rewarding. But if this crisis continues, some drivers say they're going to go to the union to complain and say something needs to change. Our managers don't know what they're doing, but that's standard in every job.

A £15-an-hour minimum wage would be amazing, not only for young people, but everyone. That uplift would give people stability.



- School: Lack of support
- Work: Low pay and stress

DANA KING
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

I am studying at college. I quit my job as a kitchen porter in January because of low pay and stress.

I was doing the same job as people that were older than me. They were being paid minimum wage, and I was being paid less because I was younger.

At college, sexual assault and a

lack of support for student's mental health are big issues. I spent a long time on a waiting list for counselling,

and many friends have waited longer. There needs to be proper government guidelines for how to organise effective mental health counselling in colleges and schools.

If I decided to go to university, I am worried about debt. I have heard that the government is planning to reduce the threshold that graduates

need to start paying back their debt (see 'Sunak's student special' at socialistparty.org.uk).

A lot of young people don't see any way of being able to do anything about what they believe in. Young people should be educated about trade unions in their workplaces, to join and be active. This is the same in schools and colleges, where students and young people can set up student unions.

Black youth unemployment - class and racism

JAY COWARD
EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Between October and December 2020, 41.6% of black people aged 16-24 in the UK were unemployed - the highest rate since the last financial crisis. Unemployment among white

workers of the same age stood at 12.4%.

As socialists, we see class as the prime factor in the wealth disparity in our country. As a black socialist, these figures are undeniably telling of the brazen oppression and unliveable conditions black people

are pushed into by biased employment, a profit-based economy and nowhere near the desired amount of rights or pay in the workplace.

• See 'Black history month and its relevance today' and 'Black Workers' Charter' at socialistparty.org.uk

North West socialists join march against Tory conference

The Socialist Party was part of the march to show disdain for the Tory party at their annual conference in Manchester and demand change. 2,500 attended from the trade unions, Black Lives Matter and Kill the Bill.

The Socialist Party had campaign stalls along the route. We distributed material and sold the Socialist.

Our leaflets called for an end to capitalism, spearheaded by the Tories, and called out Keir Starmer's Labour for failing to oppose Tory austerity. Hundreds of our leaflets were given out to marchers and passers-by, getting out our message to end this

rotten capitalist system, and showing support for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

ZAKK BROWN
MANCHESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

London protest for Texas abortion rights

The Socialist Party leaflet on the protest about Texas abortion rights in central London on 2 October read: "Defend the right to choose, when or whether to have children".

It was a noisy demonstration of 150, in solidarity with thousands of women who will struggle to get the health services they need now the ban has come into effect (see 'US Supreme Court refuses to challenge Texas abortion ban' at socialistparty.org.uk).

But missing from the demo was

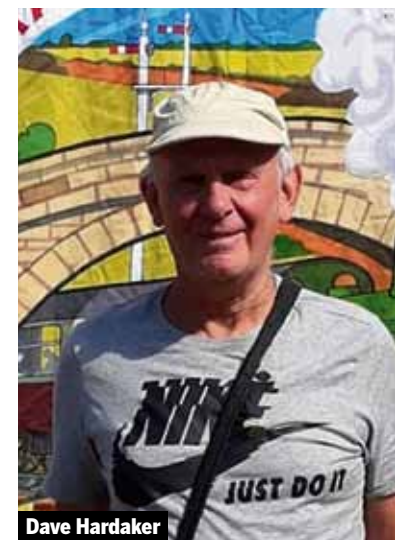
any way forward. A Labour Party speaker didn't mention what they would do to make women safer and, as we know, Labour councils are responsible for cutting services for women where they are in power in local government. The Women's Equality Party also failed to say what was needed.

Many people who took our Socialist Party leaflets and spoke to us were critical of Keir Starmer, and agreed we could have no trust in pro-capitalist parties like the Democrats in the US to win real abortion rights. Many also agreed that the fight for the right to choose was linked to fighting austerity, ending the housing crisis and more.

HELEN PATTISON
LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY



Obituary - Dave Hardaker, 1952-2021



Dave Hardaker

ALAN DOCHERTY
TEESSIDE SOCIALIST PARTY

Comrades in the Northern Region were shocked to learn of Dave Hardaker's sudden death on Wednesday 29 September.

Dave was a long-time active Socialist Party member and supporter, joining with Militant (forerunner of the Socialist Party) in 1981. He was an active member, and was the secretary of Militant supporters in the South Durham area in the 80s and 90s.

Dave was well known as an active socialist in his home town of Newton Aycliffe, to the extent that he was targeted by members of the British National Party, attacked, badly beaten, and hospitalised in 1994. The attackers were eventually jailed. The attack did not deter Dave, but made him more determined to fight fascism and for socialism.

An active trade unionist, Dave was a branch secretary in a CPSA, and later PCS, DWP branch. Dave took early retirement from the Job Centre after a vicious campaign of victimisation against him, because he failed to meet his 'target' of suspending

claimants' benefits: a battle Dave won.

Dave remained active as secretary of Spennymoor and Newton Aycliffe Trades Council; a member of the PCS ARMs regional branch, and volunteering for the North Yorkshire Moors Railway, where he also joined the RMT union.

Dave had an active life with many interests: chairperson of Darlington Ramblers Association; committee member of Friends of the Stockton and Darlington Railway; CAMRA member; volunteering for Citizens Advice. He remained a Labour Party member and was a long-standing local councillor on Great Aycliffe Town Council. Dave was also a prolific traveller and was always out and about.

On top of this, Dave remained an active socialist campaigner, still selling an average of six copies of the Socialist each week. He was always out on the streets supporting Darlington Trades Council's activities. Just days before his death, Dave delivered Martin4DGS leaflets to most schools in Newton Aycliffe, including the primary school he attended as a child.

Dave will be sadly missed by all his comrades.

UAL Socialist Students

For Socialist Students at the University of the Arts London (UAL), the year has got off to a good start. We set up campaign stalls both in and outside campus, and met over 100 interested new people on the first day. Student awareness is shifting. People agreed with our demands around ending exploitative student accommodation and tuition fees, the housing and job crisis among young people, and cuts to arts funding. Students want to join up and get stuck in from the get-go.

We have had good turnouts for meetings and socials, and been able to involve new members in attending demonstrations in central London and standing in solidarity at strike picket lines across UAL by outsourced cleaning workers employed by the university. The willingness to rally behind Socialist Students support for workers' struggles show our demands are gaining more and more weight among young people.

STANLEY HARRIS
UAL SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Cardiff Socialist Students



Socialist Students is building across England, Wales and Scotland. Over 50 came to our meeting here in Cardiff

Join the student fightback
JOIN socialist students
socialiststudents.org.uk/join



Barking NHS: "Sorry, please try again later"



PIPPA FOWLES/DOWNING STREET/CC

On 29 September, East London Socialist Party member Pete Mason proposed a motion, based on the following, to Barking Reach Residents Association, which he chairs. It was passed unanimously.

Our NHS is no longer free when there are no GPs available to deal with urgent health concerns. Barking Reach residents are told urgent appointments are only available at 8am. But when calling then, the automated phone system usually says: "Sorry, your call cannot be completed at present, please try again later". Local residents feel there is no access to a doctor.

If they get through, they are told they are number 14 or 15 in the queue, which means that there will be no appointments by the time their call is taken. No one knows how many residents call and fail to get an appointment.

The result is late presentation of illness at the health centre, some of which have become life-threatening. It's a vicious cycle of untreated minor illnesses turning into major health emergencies, devouring more health service resources, at a much greater cost.

Cost-cutting in health makes no

economic sense. The Barking Riverside estate will soon comprise 10,800 homes, but has yet to have its own health centre.

Extra funding must be made available for our local health services, in particular, the Aurora Medicare GP practice in Barking. The Thames View Health Centre serves a vastly expanded population.

Despite all their efforts, Aurora Medicare staff cannot overcome a desperately underfunded NHS. NHS staff everywhere are underpaid, and by 80% have just rejected the government's 3% pay offer.

From March 2020 to June 2021, the government awarded £37.9 billion worth of coronavirus-related contracts to private companies. The National Audit Office showed that companies with political connections were ten times more likely to be awarded a contract.

Privatisation is draining resources. We demand the end of privatisation, more resources for GP services, and for a 15% pay rise for heroic health workers.



NICK HUMPHRIES/CC

We have the right to breathe fresh air

NICK AUVACHE
NORTH LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Around 300 demonstrators gathered in Edmonton on Saturday to demand that the plans to build a new incinerator in the local area should be stopped. The incinerator will not solve the problem of waste management; it will make it much worse by spilling out its noxious fumes into the atmosphere of what is already a very polluted area.

The plume will not just affect the immediate area but spread its harmful effects across a number of north London's boroughs. Speaker after speaker condemned the project. Many of the activists pointed out that they had tried to engage in dialogue with local Labour councillors in Enfield but they were not interested. None were present at the protest.

Socialist Party members took part in the demonstration, which brought

together trade unionists, youth, local environmental campaigners and Black Lives Matter activists. Some speakers advocated withholding council tax as a means of protest. Others vowed to continue to "disrupt the streets" so long as the politicians continue to ignore us. Others preferred to direct their anger towards the Tories, and one Lib Dem councillor claimed that the matter was above politics!

The North London Waste Authority, the body responsible for approving plans for the incinerator, is controlled by Labour and has the power to halt this project. The fact that it is ignoring local opinion as well as scientific evidence is a disgrace. This shows why we need protests but it also why we need a socialist pro-clean air alternative to Labour.

Particular scorn was reserved for Sadiq Khan, London's mayor who has confirmed his opposition to the

incinerator plans in private but refuses to act publicly. The demonstration was very clear on that issue: quiet opposition is not enough, and the main speaker reminded everyone present to remember the silence of especially Labour councillors at the next election.

Voters should be reminded of Labour's silence but more than anything they need an alternative to vote for. The Socialist Party is part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition which will be standing in the local elections in May next year, and is fighting for a real clean-air political alternative to the dirty, polluted system of capitalism and its political representatives.



Fighting Fund target smashed - £31,703 raised

CHRIS NEWBY
SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND ORGANISER

Congratulations to all our members and supporters who helped us smash our fighting fund target for the July-September quarter, raising a brilliant £31,703, 127% of the target. The highlight of the quarter was the tremendous collection at the Socialist Party

Help fund the fightback
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national council meeting (see socialistparty.org.uk) raising £8,655.

Socialist Party branches have also been doing excellent campaigning work. From Newcastle to Truro, from Swansea to Hull, Socialist Party members have raised thousands of pounds on their campaign stalls on many different issues - particularly calling for a 15% NHS and care worker pay rise and an increase in funding by taking the wealth off the rich.

And our members have taken every opportunity to raise fighting fund by organising picnics, donating their trade union expenses, selling badges

and organising raffles. Donations that we have received this week include £90.38 from Sheffield Socialist Party from students at freshers stalls and meetings, and a donation of £55 from Harry Medeiros in Salisbury saying: "Keep up the good work!"

But we need to keep the fundraising efforts going, to make sure we can exceed the target this quarter. It's important that all our branches draw up plans now.

Can you plan an extra campaign stall each week? Is there a workplace you can sell the Socialist at? Are there transport hubs where you can

Nottingham: Punish Labour for cruel cuts

Vote TUSC in Sherwood and St Ann's on 7 October



PAUL MATTISON

CLARE WILKINS
NOTTINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is standing in two council by-elections in Nottingham. Socialist Party members Geraint Thomas and Florence Chadwick are TUSC candidates in Sherwood and St Ann's, respectively.

At the last council election, Labour had 50 out of 55 council seats. They have carried out cuts year on year - over £300 million since 2010.

In March, the council threatened to cut the Missing Children's Team, despite admitting this would cost more money in the long run. After a campaign by the community this cut was withdrawn.

Another £60 million in cuts are proposed over the next three years. When we're campaigning against cuts, people tell us: "Councils cut, that's what they do."

Alongside cuts, the council entered into a disastrous commercial strategy, including setting up an energy provider company, rather than fighting for renationalisation of utilities.

If elected, our Socialist Party TUSC candidates will refuse to make cuts. We demand an emergency People's Budget - use the millions of pounds the council has in reserves and legal borrowing powers in order to provide time to build a mass campaign involving the council workforce and the community, to force what we need from the Tories (see 'Save our services: preparing for no-cuts People's Budgets' at socialistparty.org.uk).

People are desperate for an alternative to the establishment parties and 'politics as usual'. One man said: "Councils are there to provide services, and represent and be accountable to local people". TUSC can help us get to that.

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SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q3: JULY-SEPTEMBER 2021	FINAL CHART
Eastern	2,075	1,200		173%
East Midlands	3,117	1,850		169%
South West	3,019	1,800		168%
Yorkshire	3,944	2,550		155%
Southern & SE	3,582	2,350		152%
Wales	3,433	2,300		149%
Northern	1,106	750		148%
London	6,290	4,600		137%
West Midlands	2,917	2,600		112%
North West	1,179	1,150		103%
Other	1,039	3,850	27%	
TOTAL	31,703	25,000		127%

organise a campaign stall? What other fundraising events can you plan, like parties and raffles? If you need any help in planning

how you can reach your fighting fund target, please contact the finance department at the Socialist Party offices.

Caffeine and capitalism - a symbiotic relationship

'This is your mind on plants' by Michael Pollan - published by Allen Lane

REVIEWED BY DAVE CARR

Is the molecule $C_8H_{10}N_4O_2$ - that's caffeine to you and me - responsible for the slave trade, colonial wars, imperialism, increased labour productivity, and even the development of capitalism?

Posed like that, the suggestion that the consumption of tea and coffee is responsible for modern society seems like reductionist nonsense - after all, as the Communist Manifesto proclaims: "The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle". Marx and Engels didn't add the sentence "... and a nice cuppa!"

Rest easy; Michael Pollan's book - 'This is your mind on plants' - doesn't refute Marxism. In fact, it's an informative take on the ubiquitous caffeine drug, which over 80% of humans regularly consume as tea and coffee. And it is a drug; you try giving it up for a week!

Pollan's book explains how caffeine complemented the development of capitalism, principally by expanding global trade. He points out that although tea had long been consumed in China, as had coffee in north Africa and the Middle East, when these products (and chocolate which contains caffeine) hit Europe in the 17th Century, when capitalism was in its infancy, the world was transformed.

London's coffee houses - one for every 200 Londoners at their peak - became a hub of the rising bourgeoisie and middle classes (who could afford to drink it; the masses had to wait for tea), which led to the expansion of commerce, trade, science, literature, and free speech. With an explosion of debate came dissent, and Pollan relates the futile attempt of Charles II to ban coffee houses in 1675 - which lasted eleven days as everyone simply ignored the royal proclamation!

However, the popularity of Europe's coffee houses caused a problem for the nouveau riche; namely, that Arab traders enjoyed a highly profitable monopoly trade of the product. Of course, it didn't take long for a Dutch trader and a French naval officer to steal coffee plants and relocate them in their respective colonies and then import the beans into Europe.

But for fuelling the working class to make the industrial revolution in Britain, it was "tea from the East Indies - heavily sweetened with sugar from the West Indies".

Soon after the British East India Company began trading with China, cheap tea flooded into Britain and displaced coffee.

The empire-building East India Company quickly realised the profitable potential of turning India into a tea producer rather than buying it from China. This involved stealing the plants and then seizing land from peasants in Assam to grow it.

But the tea imported into Britain was bitter to drink as a hot beverage, and so to sweeten it, sugar was used. That in turn drove a huge growth



of sugar plantations in the Caribbean and hence a big increase in slavery. 70% of the slave trade supported sugar. Slave labour was also extensively used in Brazil's coffee plantations.

"The introduction of tea to the West was all about exploitation - the extraction of surplus value from labour, not only in its production but in its consumption in England as well."

Caffeine, by overcoming the circadian rhythms of our biology, allows us to keep awake and alert - perfect for the late shift and the night shift.

"Caffeine in tea helped create a new kind of worker, one better adapted to the rule of the machine - demanding, dangerous and incessant. It's difficult to imagine an industrial revolution without it."

The role of caffeine in modern capitalist production became subject to 'time and motion' studies. But how could caffeine increase work capacity without conveying calories to the worker? Bosses didn't wait around for a scientific explanation. In early 20th century USA a couple of companies introduced a coffee break or free coffee at the workstation.

But the 'coffee break' in the US - free coffee plus paid time - only became a legal entitlement in the 1950s. Its establishment centred around the Los Wigwam Weavers company, whose bosses realised that productivity shot up by giving workers a coffee break. But they deducted the break time from workers' pay. Eventually, the issue ended up in court and the workers won. However, like the 'tea break' in the UK, I suspect that such a concession to the worker (even though the employer benefits) is being rapidly eroded today from the workplace.

Coffee and tea production remains labour intensive. But needless to say the growers - many are small farmers - despite their many attempts to combine and buck the market by limiting supply, have been broken by a small number of powerful multinational corporate buyers. Coffee prices since the rise of neoliberalism in the 1980s have been set by futures markets in London and New York.

"A free market in any commodity crop that is grown by millions of small producers and bought only by a tiny handful of large buyers will inevitably enrich the latter while tending to impoverish the former."

Lastly, I should point out that 'This is your mind on plants' is divided into three sections - opium, caffeine and mescaline. The central section on caffeine is the most absorbing (no pun intended), but the other sections do touch on important issues like the 'war on drugs' and on the survival of native Americans.

Without trying to sound like the blurb on the dust jacket, the book is an entertaining and informative take on the everyday beverages of tea and coffee.

Pollan's mischievous parting question is, who has benefited the most through the interaction of tea and coffee with civilisation - caffeine or humans?

Railway bosses cook the books in another capitalist market failure

TOM WOODCOCK
RMT HEALTH AND SAFETY REP

In an episode of the classic Channel 4 sitcom, *Father Ted* claimed the money was “just ‘resting’ in my account” when desperately trying to explain away some financial irregularities.

It seems top bosses at one of Britain’s private rail operators are trotting out the same excuse in the latest snouts-in-the-trough scandal to engulf our industry. Tory transport secretary Grant Shapps was compelled to say: “There is clear, compelling and serious evidence that for years, London and South Eastern Railway Services have breached the trust that is absolutely fundamental to the success of our railways”.

Murky accounting practices have resulted in the sum of £25 million ‘resting’ in the accounts of Southeastern Railway instead of being paid back to the government. So bad is the stink, that the chief finance officer has resigned and the government has been forced to strip parent company Govia of its licence to run the network.

From 17 October, the company will be taken over by the government’s own ‘operator of last resort’, in effect nationalisation - for now.

When the priority is to deliver a

profit to shareholders, the temptation will always be there to cook the books at the expense of the travelling public and community as a whole. We say that the company should remain in public hands permanently, along with the rest of the rail network, run under democratic workers’ control and management as part of a serious effort to change travel habits and avert environmental catastrophe.

The state comes down very hard on a worker who takes a relatively small amount of cash-in-hand work to top up their meagre benefits, or a small business person who makes a minor, honest error in their account books. The maximum prison sentence for conspiracy to defraud is 10 years.

However, it’s a different story for the millionaire ‘captains of industry’ who are caught siphoning off millions of pounds of public money - they are allowed to simply say sorry and promise to pay the money back, as has happened to Southeastern bosses.

This is yet another example of the rotten Tory government’s contempt towards the working class and its blatant inability to run our vital public transport and logistics systems. The chronic lorry driver shortage continues to threaten vital supplies following decades of underfunding, neglect and an international race

to the bottom in recruitment and wages; railway bosses are preparing to mount the biggest attack in living memory on our hard-won terms and conditions; and bus drivers are having their bravery and dedication during the pandemic repaid with insulting below-inflation pay offers.

Workers fighting back

But transport workers are fighting back. While transport bosses gear up to make the working class pay for the Covid pandemic, RMT members at East Midlands Railway are striking against their employer’s attempts to drive down pay and conditions along with other disputes. Unite members at Stagecoach and Arriva bus companies are balloting for strike action to demand decent pay rises.

There’s an old saying: ‘You can’t control what you don’t own.’ Therefore, socialists say that the only way that our transport system can be properly planned, and workers’ jobs, pay and conditions improved and protected in the long term, is for the whole system to be nationalised under democratic workers’ control and management. That way, every penny invested in our transport system will deliver a real improvement to society, instead of simply ending up ‘resting’ in someone’s bank account.



PHOTO: SAVAGEKIERAN/CC

Glasgow’s equal pay battle set to re-erupt

MATT DOBSON
SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND

Three years ago this month saw an heroic 48-hour mass strike for equal pay. 8,000 Glasgow council workers, organised by Unison and the GMB, took the action. The majority female workforce had been underpaid for decades by successive Labour and SNP administrations.

Following the strike, a famous victory and £500 million in

compensation for years of unequal pay was secured.

As Brian Smith, branch secretary of Glasgow City Unison - the union branch that helped lead the equal pay struggle - said in February 2019: “The deal that has been agreed represents a huge transfer of wealth to working-class families in the city, and as such represents a seminal victory for the workforce. A victory that would not have been achieved without the marvellous 48-hour strike last October.”

The action by Unison and the GMB unions received international coverage and was seen as a massive victory. It brought a new layer of activists into the local authority trade unions, many of whom become reps and stewards.

Walkouts by mainly male bin workers who took ‘illegal’ solidarity action were also a feature of the history-making action.

The militant strike brought the Glasgow SNP-run council administration to the table to agree a deal, in early 2019, when faced with the threat of another strike.

However, the third anniversary of the equal pay uprising has been marked by a betrayal from the ruling council administration.

SNP failure

Despite using many public opportunities to say she has settled the historic dispute, the SNP council leader Susan Aitken’s administration still has substantial outstanding equal pay claims it has not settled, running into thousands of individual claims.

The council is now also attempting to renege on the 2019 deal by excluding substantial sections of the workforce from compensation for unequal pay pre and post-2018. Moreover, the council says it cannot implement the

promised new pay and grading system until 2024.

Glasgow City Unison made a public statement on 1 October, stating its intention to organise members to ballot for strike action.

Socialist Party Scotland, whose members play a leading role in Glasgow City Unison, gives its full solidarity to council workers and their trade unions.

This equal pay betrayal makes a mockery of leading SNP politicians’ claims of standing for ‘fair work’ and against gender discrimination. The overwhelming majority of the staff involved also worked throughout the pandemic maintaining the delivery of essential services

It is yet another example of the SNP’s anti-trade union and anti-worker approach. Recent examples include the disputes with the RMT trade union on the railways, and the paltry disputed pay offer - effectively a pay cut - this year for local government workers.

It’s quite clear the SNP administration is trying to cut the cost of its equal pay bill by making low-paid, primarily working-class women pay the price.

We are also likely to see the council try to implement yet another cuts

budget in the next few months rather than fighting for more resources for the city from Holyrood and Westminster.

It’s way beyond time we elected councillors prepared to stand on the side of workers and refuse to carry out cuts.

- The Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition is inviting trade unionists and community campaigners in Glasgow, and across Scotland, to attend our upcoming meetings to discuss a socialist, anti-cuts challenge for the May 2022 council elections.



PUBLIC SERVICES INTERNATIONAL/CC



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the Socialist

Issue 1150

7-13 October 2021

formerly **Militant**

FIGHTING FOR OUR FUTURE



£15-an-hour minimum wage

End zero-hour contracts

Trade union rights

DAMIAN COSGROVE
YOUTH FIGHT FOR JOBS EAST MIDLANDS

During the pandemic, nearly two-thirds of job losses hit young workers. While some misleadingly claim the 'post-Covid recovery' is reversing this, the sad truth is that, with the end of furlough and the decline in seasonal work, the job market is looking increasingly grim for young workers.

Contrary to the propaganda of the right-wing press, my generation is not one of 'work-shyness'. In my experience the opposite

is true; there have been times when I have spent hours applying endlessly for work, only to end up in another insecure job with little scope for permanent employment, let alone progression.

We are a generation hit with huge levels of student debt, the highest rent costs in history, a tragically low minimum wage, a borderline-criminal apprentice wage, and a work pattern that is so chaotic that it is no surprise that a recent study found nearly half of all workers are close to burnout.

My experience of insecure service jobs has motivated me to get involved in the relaunch

of the Youth Fight for Jobs campaign. Often the conversations around job creation consist of some establishment figures discussing which of our few workers' rights can be thrown out of the window to encourage some corporation to give out a few zero-hour contract jobs. We think it's about time job creation became something to empower people rather than exploit people. To put it simply, the Youth Fight for Jobs campaign is about the right to dignified work.

Dignified work means an end to poverty wages and dodgy contracts, the creation of real apprenticeships with guaranteed work for

anyone who wants it, and the opportunity to have a meaningful voice in the workplace.

In many workplaces, workers' rights are treated as optional and are constantly undermined. That is why we need to get organised in the trade unions to fight back and stand up to the bosses. This is why Youth Fight for Jobs links young workers with the existing trade unions - to fight for decent jobs for a new generation of workers.

- **Join Youth Fight for Jobs protests 9 October**
- **Read more pages 10 - 11**

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on p3

