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formerly **Militant**

FIGHT FOR THE PAY RISE WE DESERVE



PHOTOS: PAUL MATSSON

SHEILA CAFFREY
NEU NATIONAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Saviour Boris is at it again! At the Tory party conference, he criticised bosses for shortages due to failure to invest in people and pay. A sentiment that, if it stood alone, we could agree with. But how short is his memory?

The government is the boss of public sector workers, and here workers are seeing a real-terms pay cut. I'm a teacher and I've just received my first pay packet with a 0% increase, while having monthly emails from my energy supplier about soaring prices, inflation rocketing towards 4% and

a National Insurance increase due to kick-in at the start of next year!

The public sector real-terms pay cut just leads to a race to the bottom for all jobs and sectors. The government opens the doors for all bosses to say the 'money isn't there', and to force workers to accept lower and lower wages, often as workloads are increased and redundancies loom.

If they succeed with this, what will they attack next? Longer hours, cuts to services, redundancies - all things that hit workers and the working class.

The working class aren't stupid. We can see these lies and posturing for what they are - an encouraged race to the bottom for pay and conditions, while profits are kept high for the Tories' big-business chums.

We have a heartless, devious government, that did all it could to bail out its friends during the pandemic, and now wants us to foot the bill. We can't take this lying down.

The Tories and big business are not simply misguided, and

will not change their minds by any amount of pleading or lobbying. We need to hit them where it hurts, by taking coordinated strike action.

The pay cut for the public sector was floated last November. Ministers waited to see what response they would get from the union leaders. And the answer was... not much! A few words here and there, but no threat of a fight or industrial action. Under pressure from members, unions across the public sector have now balloted, and workers have overwhelmingly voted to reject pay offers. Now the fight is on to organise the action needed.

Unions across the public and private sector need to unite and fight for a pay rise that allows people to be able to live comfortably and ensure no-one is left living in poverty.

We need the trade union leaders and the Trades Union Congress, to get off their knees begging for crumbs from gold-plated tables and instead fight for what we deserve.

• Read more pages 4 and 5

**BUILD A MASS CLIMATE MOVEMENT
WITH SOCIALIST POLICIES >>> p8-9**

**HUNDREDS MARCH WITH YOUTH FIGHT FOR JOBS
>>> p10-11**

**THE 'WINTER OF DISCONTENT'
>>> p14-15**

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

Cynical Johnson government no friend of workers



In September, the Tories briefly dipped below Labour in opinion polls as workers faced a winter of Tory rule featuring pay restraint, soaring prices, tax hikes and shortages. Boris Johnson's Tory Party conference speech was the inevitable response - a cynical attempt to try to win back electoral support by claiming, without any evidence, to be fighting for higher wages for workers.

Tell that to the millions of public sector workers who, after a decade of pay restraint imposed by Tory governments, have now been told that they are to suffer a post-pandemic real-terms pay cut at the hands of Johnson's government, with the national insurance hike on top. Nor will the 40% of Universal Credit claimants who work, but don't earn enough to make ends meet, believe the Tories' ludicrous claims that taking £20 a week in benefits from their pockets will encourage their bosses to increase wages. Joining a trade union and organising collective action is the only effective means to achieve that.

Pandora papers

Johnson's government is no friend of workers - its first queen's speech announced plans to "break the stranglehold of the trade unions", in other words to introduce new laws to try to prevent workers taking strike action to fight for better pay and conditions. The Tories' real friends were shown in the Pandora papers revelations, which include numerous examples of tax avoidance and corruption by many of the oligarchs and property tycoons who regularly donate to the Tory coffers.

Nonetheless, Johnson's right-wing populist speech, which blithely ignored the numerous crises facing the government, added to the growing disquiet of much of big business, and fuelled their conviction that the current Tory leadership is incapable of reliably representing their interests.

It also deepened the divisions in the parliamentary Tory party, with anonymous ministers briefing the press that Britain "faces a nightmare by Christmas". As that nightmare develops the splits in this weak government are likely to widen dramatically.

The potential will also exist for a millions-strong, trade-union led movement against the nightmare of post-Covid Tory austerity. If the trade union leaders build such a movement neither the Tories' current majority in parliament, nor Johnson's warm words about workers' wages, could protect them from being forced out of office.



PHOTO: EU2017/EEA/ESTONIAN PRESIDENCY/CC



Britain 'faces a nightmare by Christmas'. As that nightmare develops the splits in this weak government are likely to widen dramatically

In reality, it is not Johnson's populist posturing that is the main force which has so far prevented the Tories sliding further in the polls, but the uselessness of the Labour opposition. At Labour Party conference the leadership refused to support the call for a £15 an-hour minimum wage, which would be a real way to 'level up' workers. Instead Keir Starmer focused on jettisoning the remnants of Corbyn's manifesto and driving through anti-democratic measures, with the aim of blocking off the possibility of the left again gaining any influence within Labour.

Starmer's response to Tory party

conference was to see the disquiet of the capitalist class at Johnson's populism, and to put in yet another job application for Labour to replace the Tories as the main party of big business in Britain. Labour aides told the Financial Times that, post both party conferences, business donors 'old and new' were now returning to give money to what has become a revived Tony Blair-style New Labour Party.

As the Tories and Starmer's Labour via for donations from the capitalist elite, the need for working-class people to start to build their own party is urgently posed. This is particularly the case after the BFAWU bakers' union disaffiliated from Labour during Labour's conference and as Unite meets in its conference, the first since the election of Sharon Graham as general secretary.

That is why the Socialist Party takes part in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, alongside the transport workers' union, the RMT, and other socialists and trade unionists, in order to provide a banner under which workers can contest elections as a first step towards building a mass party that really does stand in the interests of the working class.



Working-class communities showed support for frontline workers during the pandemic

MPs list Covid failings: Workers' inquiry needed

A slow move into lockdown restrictions at the start of the pandemic, a decision to halt testing in March 2020, the disastrous privatised test-and-trace, and sending thousands of Covid-positive patients into care homes - all among the government's "big mistakes" in handling the Covid pandemic in England identified in an official report by MPs. The consequences leave more than 20,000 'excess' deaths.

The report takes evidence from 50

witnesses, including former health secretary Matt Hancock. But there are hundreds of thousands of witnesses to the government's failures better placed to give evidence than the likes of Matt Hancock - the health and care workers, and other key workers on the frontline. We need a democratic workers' inquiry into Covid, and one that is prepared to point the finger at the root of the failures - the government's prioritisation of bosses' profits over our health, and years of underfunding

and privatisation in the NHS preceding the pandemic.

A workers' Covid inquiry could further expose not just useless politicians, but the inability of capitalism to keep us healthy and safe. This would need to be linked to the fight for a fully funded, publicly run NHS, and for society run in the interests of the vast majority not the profits of a few.

- See 'Covid inquiry? Workers must decide' at socialistparty.org.uk

SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party
October issue

- includes...
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 - Behind Preston Council's model
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● Private healthcare rip-off

£400 million a month is how much the Treasury paid for the use of nearly 8,000 beds in private hospitals during the pandemic. But for the year from March 2020, private hospitals provided just 0.08% of the total number of Covid beds, just eight patients per day.

The Tories like to talk about privatisation giving value for money. This is more proof that the opposite is true, private NHS bosses have been taking our money, delivering peanuts and making an unhealthy profit. We say, bring the whole health service back in house as part of a fully funded, publicly owned, Socialist NHS.

● Make the super-rich pay

The government's excuse for raising National Insurance (NI), hitting low-paid workers hardest, was that it is needed to raise £12 billion for health and social care.

Now the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) says that is enough just to fix the immediate shortfalls in the health service. The IFS also suggests that the increase in NI would have to more than double to meet what's needed.

We have another suggestion: make the super-rich pay! Britain's billionaires increased their wealth by £106.5 billion in the last year.



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.

WORK AND INCOME

- Trade union struggle for an immediate increase in the minimum wage to £15 an hour without exemptions. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings. Scrap zero-hour contracts.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension.
- Scrap Universal Credit. For the right

to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.

- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.
- A 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

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 dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- 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!

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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Doncaster care workers on strike in 2014 PAUL MATTSSON

Social care funding needed now

ROSA GATESHEAD

The news media are keen to talk about shortages of petrol, HGV drivers, fruit pickers, etc, but they are not talking about the social care crisis caused by the shortage of carers.

The government tells us it is going to solve the hospital crisis, yet unbelievably doesn't seem to recognise the impact that the social care crisis has on hospitals. It shows no understanding at all of the NHS reliance on social care.

Patients can't be discharged from hospital without care in place. Patients are waiting weeks to be discharged, putting pressure on beds and preventing new admissions for people in need of hospital care.

Privatisation

Many are reluctantly leaving to work in supermarkets, where they can get a higher hourly rate and fixed hours, because they have families to support.

Carers are often viewed as low-skilled workers providing a bit of

shopping and cleaning, when in fact they often deal with people with complex care needs.

They administer medication, monitor oxygen and assess when to give seizure medication. They manage intravenous feeding and administer medication via a PEG feeding tube. They have regular training to keep up to date with the competencies required for the job. They also need to recognise and report safeguarding situations.

They do all of this on minimum wage with little or no appreciation of the skilled job that they do. Most are not unionised leaving them open to exploitation by private companies, who rely on their commitment and loyalty to the vulnerable people that they care for.

Why would anyone choose this as a career? They are certainly not in it for the money, or the status. Could it be that they are doing it because they care and want to support and enable vulnerable people?

When will the government realise that it can't support the NHS without giving equal support to social care? It is time the government recognised carers are a skilled workforce who deserve recognition in both pay and conditions. That is the only way that we are going to retain and recruit staff in the care sector. It is also a major part of any hope for the NHS to run smoothly or to survive.

WORKERS NEED A PAY RISE

Prepare for coordinated trade union action



Workers during the 2011 public sector pension strike PAUL MATTSSON

Probation

ADAM HARMSWORTH
NAP0 NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER (PERSONAL CAPACITY), COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

The probation unions have decisively rejected the government's pay freeze. In indicative ballots Napo, Unison, and GMB members voted to reject by an outstanding 99%, 98%, and 86% respectively. Napo indicated the ballot had a high turnout in an email to members, which isn't surprising. Probation workers have endured working through the pandemic while facing a myriad of issues with the reunification of probation. That's after five years of the government and private companies ransacking the probation service to save money and boost profits, leaving staff overworked and service users at risk. Probation workers are drawing a line.

The unions' leaders must use this result to its full advantage, and begin building for co-ordinated industrial action. The Tories won't budge without it. No business case for a pay rise will stop them, neither will emotional pleas, or

lame threats to 'expose them' in the media, as Trades Union Congress leader Frances O'Grady called for last year. The most effective weapon workers have is to strike, and right now workers need the political leadership to use that weapon.

Probation workers have fantastic ideas for the future of probation; they shine through in Napo AGM motions. Replacing the bureaucratic National Probation Service with a properly funded probation service with democratic community control, as part of a socialist system and not a chaotic capitalist one, could give real life-changing help to offenders and give probation workers a decent working life.

Probation workers have made their views clear. Now, the union leaders must build a serious campaign. Take the campaign into branches, build morale, hold rallies and protests, make a victory over the Tories the utmost priority. A sincere cross-union campaign can smash the pay freeze and have the unions set the agenda in the period ahead!

WHAT WE THINK

After a decade of austerity, followed by a devastating pandemic and with prices rising - workers are ready to struggle for a pay rise. Health unions Unison, RCN, Unite and GMB ran ballots on the 3% NHS pay offer over the summer, and all came back with a resounding rejection and a willingness to fight. While Unite and the GMB have signalled their intention to move to industrial action ballots, Unison and the RCN, which organise the most health workers, have both announced they will hold indicative ballots first.

Meanwhile, in local government there has been another overwhelming rejection. In this case, Unison has agreed to move straight to an industrial action ballot. In the National Education Union, the leadership

has come under pressure to agree to launch a campaign on pay, including potential strike action.

Every union must fight its own battle, but coordination makes the fight so much stronger. We call on the Trades Union Congress (TUC) via its Public Sector Liaison Group, and the public sector unions, to come together to plan a campaign, including a national demonstration and coordinated ballots for national strike action. With a recently elected left national executive of Unison and Sharon Graham as the new general secretary of Unite, there is the basis for a militant fightback.

A fight in the public sector will be a big boost to private sector workers. Worker shortages in some sectors may mean pay rises - and workers should organise in their unions to

press their advantage. But across much of the private sector workers are struggling on low pay and many have been forced to organise strikes against 'fire and rehire'. In fact, October has seen a step change in industrial action, with a number of strikes winning demands or at least forcing concessions out of the employers. Many of these workers joined Youth Fight for Jobs protests on 9 October, campaigning for a minimum wage of £15 an hour (see page 10).

The TUC agreed a resolution at its recent conference to organise a national demonstration in the spring with a campaign of rallies around the country in the build-up. Let's make sure that happens, and to put fighting together for a pay rise at the heart of it.

Local Government

JOHN DOLAN
CARE SUPPORT WORKER, NORTH LONDON
SOCIALIST PARTY

Official figures state that the cost of buying the average London home is now eleven times the average London salary. London rents also eat up the majority of an average London wage. London itself has some of the local authority areas with the highest poverty rates in Britain.

This is a warning to those outside of London and the South East of England of what the Tories'

'levelling-up' project will mean - there will be a tiny minority of very rich people in an area, but widespread poverty and unaffordable housing for most.

In my work for a local authority, I sometimes work alongside care workers from private companies. These workers, usually migrant women workers, are often paid minimum wage and have to work multiple jobs to make ends meet. One well-paid job should be enough to live on in any civilised society!

Wherever we live, we need to be

paid enough or receive enough in benefits to fully participate in our local communities - under capitalism this is impossible for working-class people anywhere.

Members of my trade union, Unison, have just voted to reject an insulting 1.75% pay 'rise' for local government workers and we are going to ballot soon over industrial action. Let's vote for this and strike with other trade unions to collectively turn the tide on decades of declining pay for working-class people.

Further Education

LIAM OLDFIELD
NON-TEACHING FE WORKER, LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

1% for any frontline key worker is an insult. A 1% pay rise is a pay cut in real terms and comes after years of decreasing pay. But 1% is what further education (FE) workers have been offered.

We are hearing lots of bluster about 'levelling up' and the need for a skilled workforce. FE staff, teaching and non-teaching, are part of what makes that skilled workforce!

The side of FE that is not widely known is that we help support

students that are homeless, living in poverty, experiencing domestic abuse and in crisis. The ruthless cuts to services, and now the cut to Universal Credit, have left educators picking up the pieces yet again. Teachers and support staff in FE, like many schools during the pandemic, are among those delivering food parcels.

No FE professional should be on a sub-standard, term-time only contract, but this is all too common. The pay for all should reflect level of responsibility and permanent contracts offered to ensure workers' stability.

The money is there for this, and

for a pay rise for all workers. The government shamelessly takes more and more, like they have with the increase in National Insurance, while we're expected to settle for less and less.

FE colleges are underfunded by government, but otherwise run like businesses in a marketised system. Bosses squeeze wages to balance the books. Workers in some college groups have already taken strike action for a pay rise this term (see page 6 or 7). We need a pay rise across the whole sector. If it takes nationwide strike action to achieve that, we have no choice.



UCU college workers on strike PAUL MATTSSON

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NHS

NHS PHYSICIAN ASSOCIATE
BRIGHTON SOCIALIST PARTY

I think there is an expectation that when you go to work in healthcare, you are taking on a sacrifice for the greater good. We do it because we do want to support our community. But management exploit this goodwill - we are staying late, doing unpaid overtime, expected to take up shifts at short notice, to never be sick, and to accept whatever we are paid.

Unless you are a doctor in a private practice, the pay we get is minimal, even as a doctor, let alone porters, carers, kitchen staff - all the people that make the health service run.

During Covid, the level of sacrifice increased. I had to move out of my house and live in a hotel for six weeks because my partner is high risk. Initially the government clapped us, but that was the only real support, and now the 3% pay offer. We are made to feel like: "How dare you ask for more!"

But the evidence is there in the statistics about how little workers get paid, how long the shifts are, and the rate of burnout. The average nurse

only stays in the job for about seven years. There is a nurse shortage and a doctor shortage. I see it every day, working on wards with skeleton staff, it almost seems normal. Actually, we should not accept running at these staffing levels.

A pay increase in itself is really important. But it is just the beginning of what is needed. We need a good healthcare system - to get that we need well-paid, well-respected staff to run it. I feel like the government is taking advantage of me and my colleagues' good values. They cut budgets and we have put up with it because of how important the healthcare system is.

Striking feels hard because it potentially puts patients at risk, but our current system is putting patients at risk with chronic understaffing. If enough health workers vote for action, with support from the wider public, we can win a decent pay rise.



Unite policy conference 2021

Place Unite at the head of the anti-Tory movement with militant policies and action



KEVIN PARLOW
UNITE CONFERENCE DELEGATE (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

It is 40 months since Unite's last policy conference in July 2018 and, in that time, the world has been shaken about. Gone are the hopes of a left Labour government led by Jeremy Corbyn, who was backed by Unite. We still have the Tories in office, now led by Boris Johnson, who have left the European Union but failed to solve the problems of working people. For much of this period, and the reason for the delay of this conference from the summer of 2020, society has been gripped by the Covid pandemic.

Unfortunately, the pandemic saw many trade union leaders fall into the trap of backing a false 'national unity'. This has led to the Tories feeling confident to attack the working class, through pay freezes, rises in tax and national insurance, and the ending of schemes, to make us pay for the pandemic. However, this confidence is misplaced given the anger in the ranks of the trade unions.

The election of Sharon Graham as Unite general secretary has had an electrifying effect. Now Unite will take bosses head on over 'fire and re-hire', and has received overwhelming support for action against the effective pay freeze in the NHS and local government, as shown by the results of the recent consultative ballots.

The resolutions before conference were originally drafted in early 2020, pre-pandemic. Proposing bodies had the chance to update them and submit amendments. But some give the impression, before it was clear the direction of the Labour leadership following Corbyn, that a future Labour government could carry out Unite's programme.

However, September's Labour Party conference has closed the door on the opportunities created by Jeremy Corbyn's leadership for achieving working-class political representation within the Labour framework. The measures pushed through conference consolidated Keir Starmer's ruthless driving out of Jeremy and many of his supporters - including

the suspension of former Unite union representative on Labour's NEC, Howard Beckett, and auto-expulsion of BFAWU bakers' union president Ian Hodson. This cemented the aim of the Blairite right wing to remove the anti-austerity, pro-working class programme Jeremy stood for. Such resolutions therefore raise the question of how Unite policies will be fought for and implemented. This is fundamentally what the idea of 'workers' politics' should be confronting.

Fortunately, a number of resolutions and composites in the 'social action' section clearly pose the question of taking on any council, including Labour ones, that carries out cuts and attacks the jobs of Unite members. A fighting campaign on this, alongside other unions and the local communities, could force councils to backtrack. Linked to this should be Sharon Graham's recent proposal that Unite back anti-cuts candidates in local elections. This could be broadened out to fight across society for socialist policies.

The policy conference must also be used as a means of getting together all those who wish to fight for the manifesto Sharon Graham was elected on and take Unite forward. A new left organisation is necessary to fight for those policies to be implemented. Recent meetings in regions and online have shown the potential for such a new grouping, which could include supporters of other candidates who were prepared to back such a programme.

This conference should place Unite at the head of the anti-Tory movement, but with militant policies and action. It should build on the record of Len McCluskey, which took Unite forward, and develop the programme necessary to deal with the challenges of the post-pandemic capitalist world and fight for socialist change.

- Socialist Party fringe meeting: Building a fighting left in Unite
- Tuesday 19 October at 5.30pm, Suite 1 Jurys Inn, Keel Wharf (opposite the ACC Arena), Liverpool

Who runs Unison: lay members or the paid officials?

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN UNISON

The victory of the left in Unison's national executive council (NEC) elections in June was a major breakthrough that could transform the largest public sector union in Britain and re-energise the whole working-class movement.

Public sector workers have faced the brunt of austerity. Rather than mobilise the membership in campaigns to defend members' jobs, pay, terms and conditions, under the previous right-wing leadership Unison adopted a risk-averse strategy that attempted to dampen down the aspirations of members to fight through using legalese.

It is now vital that the new NEC gets to grips with starting the fight to democratise Unison so that members can debate the key workplace and political issues facing them, including national action to beat the pay freeze.

On 6 October, battle lines were drawn between the new NEC on the one hand and the Starmerite right wing and unelected officials on the other. The elected lay leadership of the union presented six resolutions to make decision-making more transparent, make the general secretary and Head of Legal Services more accountable to the NEC, and begin to address the democratic rights of members facing disciplinary action.

Before the meeting started, however, legal advice was issued to all members of the NEC, asserting that the resolutions could not be discussed and that individuals who did support them would be responsible

for any legal action taken, up to and including the High Court, against these new measures. However, this scare tactic to prevent the resolutions being debated failed, and they were subsequently all passed in the face of fierce opposition from the right-wing NEC members and the paid officials, including the general secretary.

The Socialist Party supported these measures to democratise the functioning of the NEC. However, this debate cannot be kept within the confines of the NEC and cannot be divorced from the key issues affecting members.

Blairite right-wing

When Jeremy Corbyn won the leadership of the Labour Party in 2015, the Blairite right wing, who had invested years into transforming Labour into a party safe for capitalism, embarked on a ferocious campaign to drive out Corbyn and the anti-austerity policies he stood for. The Blairite-Starmerite right wing at the top of Unison have made it clear that they will take the same approach to the new NEC.

Immediately following the meeting, an unsigned email was sent to some branches, stating that the NEC had adopted new rules which were unlawful. An emergency resolution condemning the NEC was presented to the Cymru/Wales Unison regional council the very next day (see article socialistparty.org.uk).

This is a battle about who runs the union and in whose interests: paid officials acting to keep the union on a right-wing, partnership track, leaning on the bosses and in alliance with the Starmerite leadership

of the Labour Party; or the members, with the ability to debate and enact a fighting approach. The battle must be fought by the left with as much determination as the right.

That means taking the argument into the membership. It means striving to establish an open, democratic broad left in the union that encompasses all the organised forces that want to fight the right wing - including the Socialist Party - and aims to draw in as many members as possible who want to campaign for a fighting, democratic union. That cannot mean confining the discussion only to those who currently ally themselves with the majority grouping on the NEC, the Time for Real Change group.

And crucially, it means the left on the NEC have to fight on the concrete issues that affect members, otherwise members won't see why the democratic changes matter.

At the October meeting the NEC were not able to make decisions that could have a real impact on members. This was mainly a result of the threats, intimidation and filibustering tactics the right wing used to prevent the resolutions being debated or passed.

However, it was left to Socialist Party members to even try to get these issues discussed. Socialist Party members called for a referral to the Health Service Group Executive to reconsider the decision to go to a second consultative NHS pay ballot, and instead to move to a full strike ballot alongside local government. Again, it was Socialist Party members who raised criticism of the support given by the Unison delegates at Labour Party conference to Starmer's definitive break with Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity leadership, calling for the NEC to publish a statement opposing the general secretary's claim that the Labour Party was now moving in the 'right direction'.

But in all these vital issues, which reveal to a broader audience what the real agenda of the right wing is, Socialist Party members were unfortunately not backed up by the rest of the left. Such an approach will not win the battle now under way for the future of the union.



Unison conference PAUL MATTESSON

College strikes continue into third week



Enfield college picket line NORTH LONDON SP

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN UCU

University and College Union (UCU) further education college strikes have continued into their third week at five colleges, in an ongoing dispute over pay and conditions.

The branches involved have already taken five days of action as part of the escalating action, and started a further five days on the week commencing 11 October.

Socialist Party members have again joined picket lines and rallies to offer solidarity with workers, as well as to discuss the strategy and way forward for the strikes.

The mood of the strikers we spoke to was determined, and the negotiating team at the Capital City College

Group have agreed to call further strike dates if management do not concede to their demands.

Though the strikes have been coordinated, negotiations are taking place on a college-by-college basis, with some deals already struck. Action has been suspended at four colleges which form part of the South Thames College group, as negotiations were deemed to have made sufficient progress.

Meanwhile, members at City of Bristol College, Weymouth College and New College Swindon have accepted an offer.

That leaves Croydon, Lambeth and the Capital City Colleges group (which includes City and Islington College, Westminster Kingsway

College and the College of North East London) still in the action. All colleges are taking action over pay, seeking at least a 5% pay rise. Members who are part of the Capital City Colleges Group are also in dispute over workload and a punitive teacher assessment policy.

Further dates could also coincide with university strikes, which would be an important step forward in developing a fighting strategy against marketisation, coordinated across the further education and higher education sectors.

Additionally, if further action is called, the strikes will be strengthened by co-ordinating with other public sector workers fighting on pay.

60 steelworks scaffs march in second week of all-out strike

ALISTAIR TICE
YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

The second week of the all-out strike by Unite the Union, involving around 60 scaffolders, got off to a flying start. An early morning march around the British Steel Scunthorpe site on 11 October went from one main gate and picket line to another, to the admin offices and into the town centre.

The scaffs have been in dispute since 2019, fighting to get the national industry (NAECI) rate for the job, which would mean a 10-15% pay rise. They took significant strike action earlier this year under previous contractor Brand, and now are striking against their new contractor Actavo, and behind them the Jingye Group, the Chinese multinational owners of British Steel since March 2020.

So far the bosses haven't shifted because they know that hundreds of other trades and contractors on site are paid less than the Blue Book rates, and a victory for the scaffs would breach the dam to a flood of claims.

But the strikers are determined and confident, as many of the health and safety 'tags' on their scaffolding are starting to expire, and most other firms' scaffs are not crossing the picket lines or won't do Actavo work.

The march has emboldened the strikers, who had already extended their picketing hours and will now organise further protests to win their dispute.



Striking scaffs rally 11 October ALISTAIR TICE

Oaks Park pickets vote for more strikes to defeat bullies



Oaks Park picket 12 October ROB WILLIAMS

JAMES IVENS
EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Strikers at Oaks Park secondary school in Redbridge, east London, have told bosses they'll fight bullying till the bitter end.

Pickets voted on extending action on the morning of 12 October, day 18 of the strike. The result: unanimous, to seek authorisation from the National Education Union (NEU) for a further nine days.

This escalation followed the employer's last-minute withdrawal from talks with no clear explanation. A potential settlement to the dispute had been in sight.

The strike's first victory was last term. It secured jobs for two workers victimised for protecting health and safety during the second wave. They had used 'Section 44' rights to stay away from the Covid-unsafe school, instead working from home.

The second issue, still at stake, is victimisation of NEU rep Keiran Mahon. Keiran also invoked Section 44. He was a local leader in the national movement to keep schools safe. A resolution appeared possible here until bosses shut down talks again.

The final issue, underlying health-and-safety victimisations, is a culture of bullying. The strike has forced a

truculent Labour council to appoint an 'independent' investigator here - but he needs agreement on terms from both the union and the bullying head.

Meanwhile, the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate is investigating Remedy Recruitment to see if it has committed a criminal act in supplying labour during an official strike. The NEU accuses Oaks Park school management of aiding and abetting this. Any teacher accused of such would immediately be suspended pending investigation.

The council told the union the school was appointing an independent investigator on this issue. Incredibly, however, the school has appointed one of its own governors!

School and council bosses will have been hoping for the strike to 'go away' by half term. A further nine days will take the action beyond the break. It's still going strong, with another worker joining for the first time on 12 October. Strikers plan another demonstration on 16 October.

Redbridge's 'Labour' council is still, in effect, colluding with a bullying and strike-breaking school management. This ongoing scandal shows the need for independent trade union and community candidates in the May 2022 elections.

National Education Union deputy general secretary election

'Why I'm voting for a fighting strategy to win on workload, pay and cuts'

Socialist Party member and teacher Martin Powell-Davies is running as a candidate for National Education Union (NEU) deputy general secretary. Supporters and teachers have been sharing why they are voting for Martin.

"We need a deputy general secretary who will help us change the bullying regime that has taken hold of education. Martin has shown himself to be a successful organiser and campaigner with over 20 years of defending members and building the union."
LOUISE, MARYAM AND MARCIA - DISTRICT AND ASSISTANT SECRETARIES, HARROW NEU

"Martin doesn't just talk about what's needed, he has a well-planned strategy on how we can achieve real change."
NEU NATIONAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER NICKY DOWNES

"We need someone who has a strong union track record, who is strategic in their planning, to lead us in the upcoming battles we face. I urge every member to use their vote and vote for Martin."
LOUISE LEWIS, NEU KIRKLEES VICE-PRESIDENT

"Martin understands that while we have to build the membership from below, we also need leadership from above. We have to stand up for ourselves, and Martin is the one to do it."
ALEX MOORE, MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY, PLYMOUTH NEU

"I'm supporting Martin as I know that he will lead from the front. As Martin only intends to take a teacher's salary for the role, we know that our conditions are his conditions."
STEVE SCOTT, JOINT SECRETARY, EAST RIDING NEU AND MEMBER OF THE NEU EXECUTIVE

• The postal ballot is open now. Vote for Martin and for a fighting strategy to win! See martin4dgs.co.uk for more

MATT DOBSON
SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND

The COP26 UN climate summit in Glasgow is now only weeks away.

30,000 official participants, including US president Joe Biden, UK prime minister Boris Johnson, president Emmanuel Macron of France and a legion of 'elite' politicians, lobbyists, big business, including fossil fuel industry representatives, charities and NGOs as well as the capitalist media will attend. No expense is being spared, including, ironically, an enormous amount of carbon emissions produced by private jets to fly in this elite.

Capitalist leaders are busy making speeches about their concern for the planet, Boris Johnson included. But they all defend the economic system of profit - capitalism - that is responsible for the climate destruction in the first place.

Meanwhile, working-class and young people in Glasgow, Scotland and internationally coming to protest at COP26 will face an exclusion zone around the conference venue by the Clyde. Protesters will be kept away by state forces, including armed police. This was agreed by not just the Tory UK government, but the Scottish National Party (SNP) government as well.

Letting polluters off hook

For the climate movement, the task should be to expose COP26 as an attempt at 'greenwashing' capitalism. Talk of a 'just transition' and a 'green new deal' means little in practice if the same big business polluters remain the private owners - and therefore in control - of production, distribution and energy.

An effective mass protest movement, including building for walkouts from schools and colleges and strike action by workers during the course of the summit, is essential. As is the movement as a whole putting forward a sustainable alternative to capitalist production methods - the root cause of global warming - which means fighting for socialism.

How can this be done? What are the most effective methods and slogans to raise to achieve a mass movement and force our demands onto the agenda?

It is not just Socialist Party Scotland and the Socialist Party in England and Wales - both affiliated to the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) - raising these questions. They will be in the minds of thousands of workers and youth looking to protest and force real change at the summit.

The recent international climate strike in September was called under the radical slogan 'uproot the system'. We completely agree that the capitalist system must be 'uprooted'.

And many have raised the slogan of 'system change'. But the concrete question is what system will replace capitalism?

The capitalists' short-term utter reliance on profit is not capable of implementing any 'just transition' to an economy that will not cause environmental destruction. The Socialist Party has raised the slogan 'socialist change to end climate change' at the climate strikes, and will do at COP26 as well.

Socialism means nationalising the major companies, industries and banks, including the fossil fuel polluters, under democratic working-class

BUILD A MASS WORKING-CLASS CLIMATE MOVEMENT WITH SOCIALIST POLICIES



Nowhere in the SNP-Green programme for government is there any mention of nationalising the energy sector, or even a wealth tax on the big polluters

control internationally. A socialist transition would see the skills of workers in the fossil fuel industries utilised in the renewable energy sector, as part of a socialist plan based on meeting the needs of the majority in society.

We believe this programme has the potential to reach wide numbers of people, including the vital task of mobilising the most powerful force in society - the organised working class - which is capable of halting production and thereby the bosses' profits.

Unfortunately, the recent climate strikes here attracted far smaller numbers than the tens of thousands of mainly school students who were mobilised in 2019. The COP26 coalition has appointed itself the main organiser of the protests in November. It has completely and wrongly changed its approach to mobilising for Glasgow.

In early summer, it was calling for a full turnout internationally to Glasgow. But now, citing the continued pandemic, and also the exclusionary nature of COP26, it is wrongly calling for "decentralised mass mobilisations".

Local protests are now being called,

and the numbers coming to Glasgow are being effectively demobilised. While the pandemic has had an understandable effect on the movement, this is not the main reason.

The size of the recent climate strike in Glasgow, of around 300, contrasts quite dramatically with the scale of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests that drew thousands in Glasgow in summer 2020. The BLM movement erupted despite lockdown and attempts of politicians, including the SNP and Greens, to actively discourage youth from protesting.

Mass turnout in Glasgow

If the organisational resources of the workers' movement, environmental groups and student unions were effectively mobilised, it would be perfectly possible to get a mass turnout for protests in Glasgow for COP26. The examples of environmental destruction over the summer can feed into a fighting mood.

The retreat from a full mobilisation for the Glasgow protests was done without any real democratic discussion. It clearly had a disorientating effect on the turnout for the strike on the 24 September.

A Socialist Party Scotland representative attended the COP26 coalition online Zoom meeting on 13 September, which attracted hundreds of activists. Unfortunately, the meeting was organised in a top-down manner, with selected speakers reporting on decisions that seemed to have already been made about the mobilisation being 'decentralised' away from Glasgow. Attendees could only comment using the chat function.

One reason given was that official summit participants and activists from the neocolonial world are being excluded from being able to travel to Glasgow - low vaccination rates in their countries are preventing them from obtaining visas.

It was even reported that a section of the coalition had argued for boycotting the summit completely without any protests. The UN has no intention of cancelling the summit, and such a boycott would have severely weakened the climate movement, allowing the capitalist governments to greenwash unchallenged.

The correct strategy is to go for the biggest mobilisation possible for Glasgow - with a programme that can unite all those angry and fearful about



COP26 leaders defend capitalism - the system responsible for climate destruction



An effective mass protest movement, including walkouts by students and strike action by workers, during the summit, is essential

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Can local councils play a part in fighting climate change?

What came out of COP 26? Food production in a socialist future SNP-Green coalition in Scotland: will they deliver on the climate, workers' rights and independence?

Tickets: Get tickets online, from Socialist Party members or by phoning 020 8988 8777. You can attend in person or on zoom. Prices are: weekend /unwaged/low-waged £16, waged £30, solidarity £50; one day: £10/£20/£40; Golden ticket (includes a bed at a nearby hostel): £30/£50/£70. Rally only: £5/£10/£20

the need to support and link up with the struggle of workers who may be on strike during the summit, including Scotrail workers and council workers.

Demands for the nationalisation of the energy sector would have mass appeal with the ongoing crisis in the supply of fuel, and with millions of working-class people worried about how they are going to pay rising bills.

In Glasgow, currently, the trade unions and local residents are in conflict with the SNP council - whose budgets are supported by the Greens - over a mounting waste crisis caused by decades of cuts to cleansing. Disgracefully, SNP council leader Susan Aitken has repeatedly blamed residents and workers. When questioned about graffiti near the summit venue, she attacked Glasgow young people as "wee needs".

This shows the need not just to expose the greenwashing of Biden, Boris, Macron and the other international capitalist politicians, but also that of Green parties and the Scottish government.

A mass movement around and beyond COP26 that mobilised youth strikes and walkouts could not just expose the climate wreckers, but could demand a massive publicly funded job-creation programme to solve the threat of unemployment.

Unfortunately, the actions of some environmental groups, such as Extinction Rebellion (XR) and Insulate Britain, who have disrupted transport networks, can have had the opposite effect. Similar actions are planned in Glasgow.

There is a real danger that workers can become alienated from the climate movement, unless they fight under a programme that puts working-class interests centre stage. Groups like XR and Insulate Britain

substitute activity of small groups for what is actually needed - mass working-class action, including demos, strikes, walkouts and occupations to confront capitalism.

It's important that the movement opposes Priti Patel using these mistaken methods as an excuse to further attack the right to protest. The capitalist class know they face growing anger given their inability to solve any of the multiple crises descending on the working class. Tory repression will not prevent action taking place, but every attempt will be made to frustrate and weaken it.

A new network

A fighting democratic network of school, college and university committees, with an elected leadership, mobilising the full potential power of the movement can be a more effective tool than the top-down approach of many of the COP26 coalitions. This would have to be linked to bringing to bear the power of the trade unions to halt capitalist production.

A mass movement around and beyond COP26 that mobilised youth strikes and walkouts could not just expose the climate wreckers, but could demand a massive publicly funded job-creation programme to solve the threat of unemployment.

Demands for a sustainable council house building programme, and a worker-controlled socialist transition that protects jobs and wages for workers in the energy sector, would be capable of galvanising much wider support from the working class.

Walkout

COP26 is still likely to mobilise tens of thousands to Glasgow to protest. As well as the mass demonstration on the 6 November in Glasgow, Socialist Party Scotland is calling for walkouts against the climate wreckers from every school and college on Friday 5 November.

We have distributed thousands of leaflets with these demands around universities, colleges and schools. We will ensure that the banner of 'socialist change to end climate change' is to the fore in Glasgow in November.

- Socialist Party Scotland supported the important Youth Fight for Jobs protest demanding jobs to solve the climate crisis at Skills Development Scotland in Glasgow on 9 October (see pages 10-11)

- We are helping to organise the National Shop Stewards Network forum during the COP26 summit to put the issue of a workers' transition based on public ownership and workers' control on the agenda

- We will also be putting centre stage the need to build new mass workers' parties to fight capitalist destruction, with the trade unions playing a key role in their formation
- The Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition conference on the 27 November is preparing to challenge pro-cuts politicians in the council elections in 2022

- Please email info@socialistparty.org.uk if you are interested in joining the Socialist Party squad travelling to Scotland

Youth Fight for Jobs organised protests in 15 towns and cities on 9 October. They were joined by trade unionists, including Socialist Party members, and other activists, demanding decent jobs for young people - a £15-an-hour minimum wage and an end to zero-hour contracts. Below are reports of some of those protests.

● London

The protest started outside the Department of Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (Beis), before marching to Downing Street. It was youthful, energetic, and hopeful.

Our protest covered a wide range of issues that are facing young people, but it also showed how young workers and students are not standing alone. We had a speaker from the Communication Workers Union (CWU) postal executive, plus a Unison member, speaking in a personal capacity.

London Socialist Party and Youth Fight for Jobs organiser, Berkay Kartav, said: "This campaign was initially launched about ten years ago, in response to rising youth unemployment caused by the 2008-09 financial crisis. We made it clear then, and we make it clear today, young people won't mortgage our future for the capitalist crisis.

"Two thirds of all job losses during the pandemic were accounted for by young people. And there is a multitude of other problems facing us.

"But the truth is we are optimistic, because we have confidence in the new generation of working-class fighters to improve their living conditions through struggle. We also put pressure on the leaders of the trade union movement - they represent potentially the most powerful force in the society, the organised working class.

"There have been important victories. Rent strikes, organised by university students, won concessions from both the Tory government and Welsh Labour government. Bexley and Thurrock bin workers show that if you fight, you can bring the bosses and their political representatives to their knees."

LILY DOUGLAS

● Cardiff

Cardiff University Socialist Students organised a feeder march, joining

HUNDREDS MARCH WITH YOUTH FIGHT FOR JOBS



Leeds



London PAUL MATTESSON

up with the main protest in the city centre. Socialist Students demanded a refund of tuition fees for online learning, and a cancellation of tuition fees entirely. Some young people have tragically taken their own lives, but mental health support at universities is non-existent.

At the Youth Fight for Jobs protest, Eugene Caparros, South Wales CWU secretary, said those in charge claim that with ambition and hard work, young people can achieve anything. In reality, this is categorically not the case.

Young people are now "£200 a month worse off than they were ten years ago". Young people face a

"lifetime of servitude", and the state pension is "continually being pushed out of reach". This generation is told: "You own nothing, but should be happy".

John Williams, a hospitality worker, spoke of "poverty wages and crap conditions". Workplaces are understaffed and employees are overworked.

Sanjay Cardiff University Socialist Students, spoke about his experience as a student with autism. Under capitalism, a person's worth is defined by their ability to provide labour. Autistic and other disabled people may experience more difficulties in the workplace.

Autistic people's ability to get a job is sometimes celebrated as the ultimate sign of independence and autonomy, yet nobody asks whether they are happy or fulfilled.

GEORGE PHILLIPS

● Bristol

There was a constant stream of people passing by our demo, and it was motivating to see many people stop to talk to us about their frustration with the situation and their desire to find a solution. We had a great turnout from the trade union councils from Gloucester and Bristol.

One 17-year-old worker we spoke to explained the struggles she has experienced while working in retail - not knowing her hours from one week to the next, being made to work while she was ill, and a manager who refused to give her a copy of her contract. When we said we were Socialist Party members, her face lit up, and she said: "This is exactly what I've been looking for".

Saturday's demo was just the beginning. Young people are becoming more and more disillusioned with capitalism. Now is our best opportunity to spread our message, and fight for socialism.

AMY SAGE AND STEPHEN BENNETT

● Hackney: Stop closure of Fernbank and Hillside children's centres

On 8 October, over 50 parents, children and members of public sector union Unison protested to demand that Fernbank and Hillside children's centres in Hackney, east London, be kept open. Hackney council is proposing to close them from August next year.

Staff only found out about the proposed closures after they had been announced in a local newspaper. 109 places for children will be cut - over half are from lower-income families.

The parents really value the work of the staff with their children, and have developed good links with the staff and their union. Parents and staff are determined to fight these cuts. Union membership has nearly doubled since the closure was announced.

More cuts coming

Parent Natalie Aguilera, spokesperson of the campaign, said: "If we allow these children's centres to be closed, I believe that more will follow, as Hackney Council continues to make cuts to vital services. Parents are... deeply anxious about the impact on their children, as well as the enormous difficulty of finding affordable childcare elsewhere.

"We call on Hackney Council to stop these closures, and we will continue to fight for the wonderful,

long-serving staff, the young children attending this incredible children's centre, families being supported by the centre, and for more, not less, quality, affordable childcare in Hackney."

The Socialist Party fully supports the parents and workers in their fight to keep the centres open, and will do what we can to support the campaign. We say there should be no cuts to any of the council services.

Instead, Hackney Council should use its reserves immediately to stop any cuts, and then launch a campaign involving the unions, community organisations and residents to demand the government give Hackney the funding for the services that it needs.

CHRIS NEWBY
HACKNEY SOCIALIST PARTY

● Durning Hall: Hands off our community space

Durning Hall in Forest Gate, east London, has been used by local groups to meet for six decades. But the charity that runs it, Aston-Mansfield, has submitted a planning application for redevelopment, including 78 homes. The vast majority of the homes will be unaffordable.

90% of the community space will be lost. The remaining 10% will only be available at Aston-Mansfield's discretion, ie not for public use.

On 2 October, 100 people protested to say: "Hands off our community space". Socialist Party member Lois

Austin helped to run the protest. Lois said tearing down Durning Hall was yet another shameful act of gentrification in Newham, to the disadvantage of working-class people.

Speakers from group after group lined up to oppose the regeneration. Socialist Party member Ferdy Lyons grew up using Durning Hall. He said its closure will see many activities cease for local youth.

NIALL MULHOLLAND
EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

● Tony Davison

We are very sad to announce the death of longstanding Socialist Party member Tony Davison. Tony's life was inspirational.

Liverpool ALEX SMITH



in order to provide a sound system, which allowed young people to speak freely about their experiences. Elliot Vaughan, a recent graduate, spoke about the pressure placed on young people to go to university in order to get a job.

A representative from the CWU said how excited he was by young people standing up for their rights and for a better future, and called for solidarity between young people and workers. A breakout meeting followed the protest, and the discussion continued.

CHARLIE WELLS

● Liverpool

The Youth Fight for Jobs rally joined a large town hall protest against an arms fair taking place in the city. We spoke from the rostrum and called for workers and youth to unite against capitalism and war.

Our youth marches show that a new generation is ready to begin our own fight against capitalism. By helping to organise young people within the trade unions, Youth Fight for Jobs can assist in this fight.

ALEX SMITH

● Mansfield

Young people, the youngest aged 12, were enthralled by Youth Fight for Jobs and the Socialist Party. They shared their frustrations and upset with inequality and discrimination.

We gathered with placards, trade union banners and flags, and a megaphone, which brought people over. And one person decided to join the Socialist Party on the day.

We certainly got people talking, and asking the important questions. Luckily, we had some solid socialist answers.

PHOEBE COX

● Brighton

Our plan was ambitious - a flying picket moving through the town to stop outside employers and businesses particularly notorious for their low wages, poor conditions and discriminatory practices against employees.

ROB SOMERTON-JONES

Help fund the fightback
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Southampton NICK CHAFFEY

● Leeds

One student said: "We're made to chase league tables, get the top grades, get a degree, and a masters, then end up in Pret on £8 an hour"

Another attendee said: "These jobs require emotional labour, as someone who struggles to even look people in the eye, what can I do?"

After marching through the city centre, general secretary of the bakers' union BFAWU, Sarah Woolley, ended the protest with a rousing call to take the fight to the Tories.

ANTHONY BRACUTI

● Southampton

Chloe, a college student, said: "I've been homeless for two weeks and just got a place in a hostel. Anything we can do to give young people a future is important. I'll join."

A former print worker also joined the march: "This is great what you're doing. We fought Thatcher at Wapping. We have to fight Johnson today."

● Glasgow

Glasgow hosted Scotland's first Youth Fight for Jobs protest of the



Cardiff

relaunched campaign. Our city will also soon host COP26 (see pages 8-9).

Fiona Brittle, a member of civil service union PCS, said: "It's so important for young workers and socialists to mobilise ahead of COP26, to demand significant and meaningful action from the Scottish government to tackle the climate emergency and create secure, well-paid green jobs for a just transition away from the fossil fuel economy."

"The ruling class have demonstrated for years that they not only don't care about how climate change, created by their capitalist machinations, threatens the working class, they

actively benefit from the opportunity to exploit and squeeze us as a result of climate hardship.

"We need a systemic overhaul to fight the ecological crisis, ensure decent jobs and fair wages for workers, and start to repair the massive harm caused by austerity. And that overhaul must come from workers in solidarity with each other, unionised and organised."

OISIN DUNCAN

● Swansea

Youth Fight for Jobs worked alongside the local trade union council

He fought all of his adult life for workers' rights and socialism. Whether on the building sites of Hull and East Yorkshire, in the poll-tax struggle against the Tories, or more recently firing up the delegates at the GMB union conference with brilliant speeches, Tony's sincerity and passion shone through.

● See next issue for a full obituary

● March to save Stratford arts jobs from Newham Labour attacks

The campaign to save arts jobs in Stratford, east London, has called a

second protest after the council reneged on promises yet again.

Newham Council evicted the former arts centre at Stratford Circus to satisfy a manifesto pledge of expanding youth services - which the same Labour council originally cut. This lost Newham local arts jobs and a £300,000-a-year Arts Council England grant.

Performing arts union Equity has been fighting to restore professional opportunities and funding alongside youth services. But the council has cut out the union and community at every turn.

The threat of protest got us talks in late June. The council then broke them off and dismissed our demands.

Equity's first protest on 28 August pushed the mayor to reopen

discussions. But the hostile attitude to the union was sadly evident again.

Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz unilaterally excluded one of Equity's delegation - a parent representing a learning-disabled Equity member whose theatre company was displaced by the eviction. There was little engagement with the union's core proposals.

But the council did commit to a schedule for further discussions - on issues including funding and rehoming displaced groups. It broke this promise.

The deadline for bids to run the new centre is 18 October. Equity had no choice but to call a second protest for Saturday 16 October.

In the context of our campaign, the council has put in writing more

explicit commitments to "attracting and facilitating professional performances and other cultural activity in the building." However, it is still offering unrealistic funding.

Far from replacing the national grant, Newham Council is only offering £270,000 - and really this is just for youth services. The council is asking bidders to supply a further £190,000.

Even this is a 'maximum' which could fall in future years. Never mind the council subsidising the arts - this could mean the arts subsidising the council!

Equity still maintains that a total budget of £1 million - including subsidy and sales revenue - is what the centre needs. But as a minimum, we demand the council commit to funding the full £460,000 value of the

current contract, and reviewing with a view to increase in future.

Newham Council has £616 million in usable reserves. It should draw on these to end austerity now, and lead a campaign to win more funding from central government.

And it must stop ignoring Equity's proposal for a democratic conference of the local arts organisations, unions and working-class community to set Newham's cultural agenda.

JAMES IVENS

SECRETARY, EQUITY NORTH AND EAST LONDON GENERAL BRANCH

- March: Save Stratford Circus!
- Saturday 16 October, assemble 1pm
- Outside Stratford Circus, Theatre Square, London E15 1BN

DVLA: Workers ballot on further strike action

DAVE WARREN
PCS MEMBER AND FORMER DVLA WORKER

PCS members at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) are balloting from 12 October to 10 November on whether to continue their campaign of industrial action over Covid safety.

The original ballot was held in March, with a prolonged campaign of targeted strikes in progress since April. With the legal mandate having expired after six months under the anti-union legislation, it is now necessary to reballoon.

Covid cases at DVLA continue to rise, with almost 900 reported since September 2020 at the last count. This amounts so far to almost one in six of the total workforce. This shows that the problem at DVLA is real and we can expect things to get worse as winter approaches.

The vaccination programme has reduced hospital admissions and deaths but not prevented them entirely. Admissions and deaths will

increase as the infection rate in society climbs.

This is not the time to bring more staff back into the workplace. Yet that is exactly what DVLA has been doing and intends to pursue in the weeks to come.

The advice from the Welsh Government is to work from home if possible, and it is obviously possible for staff who have previously been working from home to continue to do so. Yet they are being made to come back to the workplace. This is irresponsible and makes no sense.

This dispute can be won with a strong lead from the top.

DVLA members have shown great resilience and determination so far. They have already voted for industrial action in one statutory ballot and two consultative ballots. They have endorsed proposals for industrial action in every Zoom meeting when called on to do so. Most importantly, they have responded in large numbers to every call for industrial action.

But all these efforts must be made to count, and to do that a 'yes' vote is needed again.

The Broad Left Network, the socialist group in PCS to which Socialist Party members belong, has supported the action of members at DVLA throughout the dispute, and urged the leadership of PCS to escalate the action, to put maximum pressure on management and ministers.

Unfortunately, the Left Unity leadership of PCS has dragged its feet from the start, only balloting for action three months after the mass Covid outbreak last December, refusing to escalate the action to include all members, and refusing to collectively use Section 44 to prevent management forcing people back into the workplace.

There is a growing awareness among members that if the strike mandate is renewed, the full collective strength of the 3,500 members at DVLA must be mobilised to overcome management and government resistance and to win the dispute.

• *Messages of support should be sent to response@pcs.org.uk and donations to Fighting Fund Levy, account number 20331490, sort code 60-83-01, reference DVLA*
• *See the Broad Left Network leaflet at [pcsbln.wordpress.com/2021/10/08/vote-yes-yes-to-stop-spread-of-covid-in-dvla](https://www.pcsbln.wordpress.com/2021/10/08/vote-yes-yes-to-stop-spread-of-covid-in-dvla)*



Swansea DVLA workers on strike in July SWANSEA TRADES COUNCIL

Readers' comments

Tough for some

Life is tough for everybody. The government cut in Universal Credit is forcing tens of thousands into poverty at a time when prices are set to rise. People will have to choose between heating the house and eating, but pity the poor MPs.

MPs have to live on £82,000 in salary, though many double that amount by claiming expenses.

Nevertheless, Sir Peter Bottomley claimed it was "desperately difficult" for many of his colleagues. He compares his job with the critical life-saving work of doctors. I think we all know who we would rather trust with our lives.

Socialist Party member Dave Nelligan was a workers' MP on a workers' wage from 1983 to 1992. Sir Peter would like to be a toffs' MP with toffs' emoluments.

DEREK McMILLAN
BRIGHTON SOCIALIST PARTY



AD MESKENS/CC

Unplanned capitalist chaos

Bristol's bus service has never been great, but it's getting worse. I spoke to a bus driver who explained one of the reasons. First Bus has lost 47 drivers from just one depot in the last month alone. They've left to become HGV drivers, lured away by the rising pay and sign-on bonuses offered as hauliers try to plug the skills gap.

Who can blame them? Hopefully this will lead to rising pay for bus drivers too. But in the meantime life is made harder for passengers and the remaining staff.

This is yet another example of the madness of the unplanned capitalist market. Crises compounding one another. A democratic, socialist economic plan would direct people's efforts and energies far more effectively, ensuring that workers are employed where they're able to meet people's needs and wants - and everyone gets paid well in the process.

TOM BALDWIN

Pandora property speculators fuel housing crisis



ALASDAIR COOK
SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The Pandora papers have further revealed capitalism's parasitic nature. Britain's housing crisis is shown to serve as a lucrative venture for the super-rich. The investigation revealed that 1,500 UK properties have been bought by offshore firms, totalling an estimated value of £4 billion, mostly in London.

These owners include UK political donors, high profile foreign politicians, and individuals accused of corruption. These 'revelations' aren't exactly surprising, since the super-rich have been buying up high-end property in London at ever-increasing rates, as the wealth of billionaires has soared by 35% during the global pandemic.

Meanwhile, the UK housing crisis is severe and set to get worse. The number of households in the private rented sector has increased by 1.7 million from 2007 to 2017; with 25 to 34-year-olds representing the largest group - 35%, giving credence to the phrase 'generation rent'. Many, unable to afford to move out, stay living with family into their 30s.

Shifting focus towards London

paints an ever gloomier picture. Many workers can no longer afford to live in the capital, as seen by recent research by the Royal College of Nursing showing 57% of nurses had to move out of London. Furthermore, homelessness in London is rapidly rising, with the number of rough sleepers tripling from 2010 to 2018.

With the crisis deepening and the mainstream political parties offering no solutions, there are those who are resisting. This includes Lewisham bus driver Anthony Braithwaite who is standing his ground against eviction by a Labour council. Socialist Party members have been among those campaigning with him.

It is only a socialist programme that can defeat the housing crisis in London and elsewhere, including democratic rent controls, the mass building of decent council homes, and an end to evictions. Property speculation has driven the number of long-term empty homes in London over 30,000. We say, take this property out of the hands of the super rich and use it to house those who need it.

• *Read more: 'Pandora leaks put capitalism in the dock' at [socialistparty.org.uk](https://www.socialistparty.org.uk)*

even though I get it for free, and it's also disgusting. It's the worst food I've ever had. It's not healthy at all.

We need more funding in schools. We need democratic control of the schools by students, teachers, parents and the community as a whole.

ADAM GILLMAN
READING SOCIALIST PARTY



The problem with school

I'm a Year 11 secondary school student. A big issue I have is how it's privatised. Uniforms can be marked up. You can only buy uniforms in specific places, it's really expensive. It costs loads of money.

They put a lot of anxiety on you to get things done. You've got to make sure you have everything, otherwise you get detention. They put you in isolation for stupid things. If you don't have the right socks, you go into isolation.

The buildings are designed really cheaply. Nobody can fit through the corridors. It's not safe at all. There are barely any proper Covid guidelines.

The school canteen is expensive,

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

• editors@socialistparty.org.uk
or, if you're not online, write to the Socialist Inbox, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT

Ridley Road: An engaging story of fighting fascism



JULIA LEONARD
HILLINGDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The new BBC 1 drama 'Ridley Road' is based on true events: the struggle against fascism in the early 1960s. It opens with the shocking scene of three characters giving Nazi salutes.

The story is very inspiring. Idealistic individuals are prepared to make huge sacrifices for their beliefs and the wellbeing of the wider community. They show enormous bravery when infiltrating a violent fascist movement.

The story centres on the 62 Group. Its members were inspired by previous struggles against fascism - in Cable Street in the 1930s, and the 43 Group in the 40s. The 62 Group used coded messaging to tell supporters where to gather to storm meetings, protests and headquarters of the Nazi groups, as well as wiretapping and infiltration. However, their brand of direct action was not condoned by everyone in the Jewish community.

The programme shows a 1962 rally in Trafalgar Square with a banner saying 'Free Britain from Jewish Control', and swastika flags. The police protect the far right and arrest the counter-protesters when there is any trouble.

At the centre of the story the Epstein family, who seem unremarkable. Their daughter is about to be married, against her wishes, into a wealthy Jewish family. The shadowy figure of cousin Rosa suggests loss of family members in Germany.

The fight is against the National Socialist Movement (NSM), whose slogans are 'Keep Britain white' and 'Free Britain from Jewish Control'. The movement's leaders, including Colin Jordan and his wife Françoise Dior (a niece of the fashion designer) live a luxurious lifestyle. The comment is made that most of the subs paid by members go to pay expensive hotel bills.

One member of the NSM says that

he has been promised a nice house and garden for him and his family once they have 'won back control' - sound familiar? They are lent a huge country mansion by a member of the aristocracy for the purpose of training a paramilitary force. George Rockwell from the US Nazi Party is a source of overseas funding.

There is very little about other groups who were involved in the ongoing struggles against the far right, such as the Communist Party, the Labour Party and the trade union movement. There is one passing reference to getting help from the dockers.

There are interesting snapshots of post-war upheavals: slum and bomb clearance, the emergence of the 'swinging sixties' and a generation of young people with money to spend, and the contraceptive pill being available 'without having to wear a wedding ring'.

It shows how working-class communities can be divided into blaming other marginalised groups for their own poor circumstances rather than laying the blame on the bosses and the capitalist system, and how people can come together through shared experiences.

Mrs Epstein has no idea that her husband is involved with recruiting members and forging identity documents. Vivian Epstein says her father would have included her in his activities had she been a boy. Both become far more assertive.

There are shocking scenes of the mixed-race son of Vivian's employer being abused and attacked by the police.

Some of the dialogue and plot come across as a bit lazy, relying on stereotypes, clichés and snippets of old film to set the mood; and some of the plot does not bear detailed scrutiny. However, it's an engaging story with a lot of different currents to it.

• *Ridley Road is available on BBC iPlayer*

Newcastle United takeover No to billionaire Ashley or Saudi despots For working-class control of football

NORMAN HALL
SOUTH TYNE AND WEAR SOCIALIST PARTY

The vast majority of Newcastle United fans were overjoyed on 7 October at the news that the 14-year reign of Mike Ashley, of Sports Direct infamy, was finally over.

However, serious questions have correctly been raised about the new owners, in particular the Saudi Public Investment Fund which now owns 80% of the club.

There is no doubt the human rights abuses of the Saudi regime are horrendous. But let's be clear, the fans had no say and no real influence in this deal between millionaires, billionaires and a sovereign wealth fund. If there was a referendum on the deal, I certainly missed it!

Yet it is the fans, predominately working-class, who are being blamed by the press. Nobody, press or media, has cornered Ashley to demand why he sold to the Saudi-backed consortium. They already know: the answer is £305 million.

Nobody has raised to the same level of scrutiny the sale of other clubs to other exploitative capitalists. Even the Pandora papers - revealing billions upon billions of pounds worth of dodgy deals and tax avoidance by the world's elites - seem to have had less press coverage than this takeover of a football club. Why? Because in this case there is the handy scapegoat of working-class fans.

Just how were fans meant to stop the deal? Complain to the government - a government that is still allowing the sale of arms and munitions to Saudi Arabia?

i want my club to be owned and run by a consortium of the community and the fans

It shows how working-class communities can be divided into blaming others rather than laying the blame on the bosses and capitalism



STEVE DANIELS/CC

The Saudi Arabian regime has its hands covered in blood. But capitalism in general is 'red in tooth and claw'. Sometimes capitalism kills using weapons of terrible destruction, as in war. Sometimes it targets individuals - assassinations of reporters, trade unionists, socialists etc. But more often, and more effectively, capitalism kills by poverty and disease.

Some of the individuals taking a potshot at fans seem to think it is possible to have an ethical football club standing alone, or as part of an ethical capitalism. Therefore, the club should have been sold to a 'nice' capitalist.

Newcastle's Labour council backed the takeover. Not surprising as the Reuben Brothers (another part of the consortium) already own Newcastle Racecourse and other large new developments in the city!

There can be no faith in Ashley, the Consortium, or any other capitalist owners to run Newcastle United Football Club in the interests of fans and the local community. The Labour council could have posed an alternative in the form of municipal ownership, with fans taking part in the running of the club. But even this could only have been a temporary solution in a sea of other capitalist-owned clubs.

I want my club to be owned and run by a consortium of the community and the fans, and part of a federation of other clubs similarly owned and run. But football is so intertwined with capitalism this can only come about by kicking out the rotten capitalist system itself.

The 'winter of discontent' - When workers could take no more

A combination of the rising cost of living, low pay, tax increases, and fuel and food shortages has led some commentators in the establishment media to talk about the possibility of a new 'winter of discontent'. In an article first published in 2004, **Kevin Parslow** explains what really happened in the winter of 1978-79.

On 28 March 1979, the Labour government of Prime Minister James Callaghan was defeated by one vote in a House of Commons motion of no confidence. Already in a minority, all the opposition parties voted against it and the government's time was up. In the subsequent general election, the Tories led by Margaret Thatcher gained an overall majority of 44.

Some, mainly the right wing of the Labour Party and trade unions, joined capitalist commentators in blaming the 'winter of discontent' for Labour's defeat, believing voters took fright at trade union power. In reality, many workers sat at home, disgusted with the Labour government's policies and particularly those of wage restraint that benefited nobody except the bosses and the rich.

It could have been different. When Tory Prime Minister Edward Heath called a general election during the 1974 miners' strike and the three-day week on the theme of 'who rules Britain?' voters said, 'you don't!' Labour, then led by Harold Wilson, was elected as a minority, which was then extended to a small majority in October 1974.

There was enthusiasm for socialist policies in Labour's manifestoes, such as nationalisation of the aerospace and shipbuilding industries, an end to pay beds in the NHS and more.

But the government stayed within the confines of the capitalist system and the increasingly sickly British economy. Chancellor of the Exchequer Denis Healey, having promised to "make the pips squeak" of the rich with a wealth tax, was confronted with a big business investment strike, inflation of nearly 25%, and rising unemployment.

As the 1976 Labour Party conference approached, Healey went cap in hand to the International Monetary Fund for a loan. This was conditional on savage cuts in public expenditure and the chancellor was howled down at the conference. The government had put its fate firmly in the hands of international capitalism.

Labour's wage restraint

Workers had expected more from Labour's government, having struggled mightily against Heath's anti-working class policies. Workers hadn't fought hard to get capitalist policies from what they considered then as their government.

But some of the same leaders who had been forced to lead the mighty

struggles of the early 1970s, such as Hugh Scanlon of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers (AUEW) and Jack Jones of the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), [both predecessor unions of Unite today] helped prop up the Labour government by acquiescing to its pro-big business policies.

After all, wasn't the alternative worse? The Tories had booted out Heath and elected Thatcher as their leader. She was bent on revenge against the trade unions and proposed vicious anti-working class policies. Many union leaders believed the only way to prevent her ascent to power was to support the Labour government, led since May 1976 by Callaghan, in whatever it did.

The social contract, an agreement between the Labour government and the trade unions, was used as a cover for wage restraint. From September 1975, union leaders agreed to a voluntary £6 a week limit to wage rises; in 1976, things got tougher for workers, with 'Phase 2' a 4.5% norm, with a £4 a week maximum; and then 'Stage 3' in 1977 limited increases to 10%.

Workers were much more loyal to Labour than they are now. The government was far more susceptible to pressure through the trade unions and constituencies. The ranks of the Labour Party were fighting for socialist policies, and for party democracy to ensure MPs carried them out. But the union leaders' acceptance of the pay norms confused and demoralised workers.

Labour lost by-elections in what should have been safe seats, and made a pact with the Liberals to stay in power. This, of course, ensured no return to any form of socialist policies.

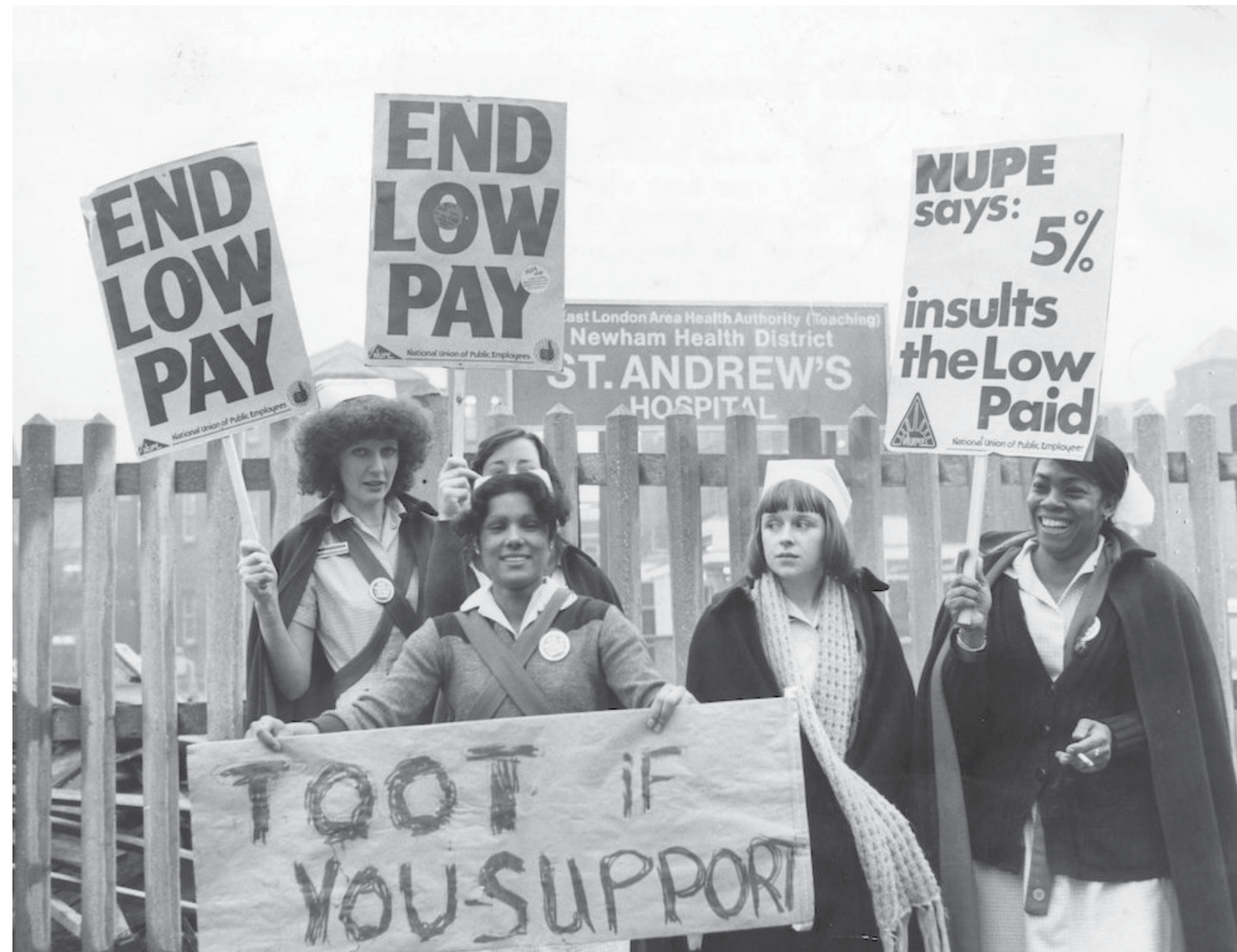
The government got a warning in the winter of 1977-78, when firefighters took strike action for a 30% wage increase. They were out for ten weeks, without strike pay or, scandalously, any official support from the Trades Union Congress (TUC). They settled for 10% but also a promise of cuts in hours and new shift systems, which would improve their conditions. They had not won decisively but had shown what strike action could achieve.

Incredibly, ignoring the anger developing from below, the government pressed on for a 'Stage 4'. Wage increases would be limited to 5% in 1978-79! [Inflation in 1978 was 8.3%] Even the Inland Revenue could not hide the truth about who prospered



The share of the nation's wealth owned by the richest 1% had risen from 22.5% to 24.9%. The poorest half of the population had seen their share fall from 7.1% to 5.6%!

» Nurses, members of NUPE, stand outside St Andrew's hospital in Bow, East London holding placards during a four-hour strike 7 February 1979 ALAN DENNEY/CC



« Stoke Newington Common, London, during the bin workers' strike February 1979 ALAN DENNEY/CC



The 'winter of discontent' showed that when workers can take no more, they will struggle, and struggle hard. Days like these will come again, and socialists have to be prepared to ensure a better outcome than in 1979

from wage restraint. The share of the nation's wealth owned by the richest 1% had risen from 22.5% in 1974 to 24.9% in 1976; the top half's share had gone up to 94.4% from 92.9% over the same period.

Meanwhile, the poorest half of the population had seen their share fall from 7.1% to 5.6%! So much for a "fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of wealth and power in favour of working people and their families", as promised in Labour's election manifesto of October 1974!

Workers show strength

Workers had had enough. Trade union leaders felt the ground shifting under their feet. Trade unionists felt their feet moving out of the workplaces. In September 1978, in response to their employer's 5% offer, 57,000 Ford workers spontaneously walked out of their factories!

They knew Ford had made £270 million profits the previous year and could afford a decent pay rise. They didn't go back for nine weeks, until accepting an offer amounting to 9.5% on basic pay, plus 2% on holidays and 5% on attendance allowances. The government's flagship pay policy had been hit below the water line!

Callaghan balked from calling a general election in the autumn, with Labour just ahead in the opinion polls. But the Ford victory opened the floodgates. A motion moved by Militant supporter Terry Duffy of Liverpool Wavertree Constituency Labour Party at party conference pulled the trade unions behind it, and was passed. Labour's conference opposed the Labour government's pay restraint!

Car workers were often portrayed by the bosses' press as being well-paid. Large sections weren't. But as the Ford workers settled in November, low-paid bakery workers began a strike against the big monopolies of the Bakers Federation that lasted for six weeks until the new year.

They achieved an increase of £6 a week (on basic wages of just £42), representing a 14.4% rise. However, the bosses wrung out concessions from the union on workplace organisation and conditions.

Train drivers in the Aslef union struck. Lorry drivers took strike action in the New Year. Tories and their press fulminated against the power of this section of the working class, who dared to decide what could be moved as 'emergency supplies' and what couldn't.

Thatcher screeched in parliament: "Now we find that the place is practically being run by strikers' committees... They are 'allowing' access to food. They are 'allowing' certain lorries to go through... They have no right to prevent [lorries] from going through."

The Daily Express ranted about "The Rule of Fear" and called for "excessive union power to be curbed". Scandalously, the TUC leaders buckled under the pressure and recommended that 'secondary picketing' of workplaces other than a striker's own, should be discouraged. This gave the green light to Tory anti-union laws. Lorry drivers eventually settled for £65 for a 40-hour week, amounting to a 21% increase.

Low-paid strike

Public sector workers then launched their campaign. Often called the 'dirty jobs strike', it comprised low-paid workers in local authorities, the

NHS, the water industry, ambulance workers and other public sector groups. Their claim was for a modest £60 a week for 35 hours. This was still only two-thirds of the average industrial wage.

Alan Fisher, then general secretary of the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE), wrote an article on the front page of Militant entitled: "Wipe out poverty wages now!"

Following a demonstration of 80,000 in London (on a Monday!), members of the TGWU, the General and Municipal Workers Union [now the GMB] NUPE, and the Confederation of Health Service Employees [COHSE - with NUPE two of the founders of Unison] took action across the country. It spread like wildfire as workers galvanised around demands that were worth fighting for.

The press spat out their venom: the London Evening Standard had a headline "Plagued by NUPE's rats"; the Birmingham Evening Mail, "A four-letter word, NUPE". But most people believed that low-paid workers deserved a decent wage.

Despite massive police intimidation and the vitriol of the Tories and their press hirelings, workers remained solid. Employers were forced to offer a 9% increase and the promise of a "comparability study". This still brought the basic wage for many workers to only £42.40 for 40 hours!

NUPE's negotiators and Alan Fisher accepted it but the national executive rejected it. This confused the membership: in subsequent ballots, local authority workers in NUPE accepted their offer by a 6 to 4 majority but NHS ancillary workers and ambulance workers rejected it by 4-1 and 7-1 respectively!

The confusion allowed the national committees to settle the dispute and the 'dirty jobs strike' was over. But the strike was a step forward for hundreds of thousands of low-paid workers who had taken action for the first time.

Civil servants then took action for their claim, which again broke the pay guidelines as it was settled just before the general election. But Labour could not be saved, roundly defeated by Thatcher's Tories. Unfortunately, the TUC leaders were found wanting in attempting to counter Thatcher's pro-big business policies and attacks on union rights.

In 1979, 12 million workers were organised into trade unions. If they had leaders prepared to fight for socialist policies, history would have been different. Instead, we have to learn the lessons of this battle, and the course of history since, in order to rebuild the trade unions as fighting organisations.

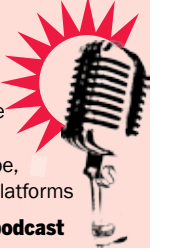
The 'winter of discontent' showed that when workers can take no more, they will struggle, and struggle hard. Days like these will come again, and socialists have to be prepared to ensure a better outcome than in 1979.

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