

NHS CRITICAL



Unions must lead fight for:

- **15% pay rise now**
- **End to privatisation**
- **Fully funded NHS and social care**

The NHS is in the cold grip of another winter crisis.

Ambulances are already lining up outside of A&E, unable to discharge patients, even before the potential effects of the new Omicron Covid variant. Those with existing health concerns or vulnerabilities dread the prospect of needing emergency treatment.

For NHS staff, every day brings the prospect of plunging into a new day of crisis. Nearly 14,000 nurses left the professional register between April and September, many unable to cope. Over 30% of those who start training do not finish.

The NHS staff shortage is a major factor leading to increased excess deaths, including the 4,519 patients that have died as a result of overcrowding and 12-hour stays in A&E last year.

Health workers in the Royal College of Nursing, Unison and GMB unions are all balloting for strike action in England after rejecting the government's pitiful 3% pay 'rise' in the summer - a pay cut. Since then, inflation has risen further. Those low-paid workers who have already been forced to visit food banks are being asked to pay even more for rent, goods and services.

And NHS workers are not alone. Teachers have been offered a pay freeze, and local government workers are also balloting to strike after rejecting a 1.75% pay offer. In fact, no section of the working class can escape rising costs. The only way out is to get organised and fight back. A series of trade union victories for a pay rise, such as the bus drivers in south Wales and care workers in north London, give a glimpse of what could be achieved if union leaders were to give a lead.

A pay rise in the NHS would be an important step towards solving its perpetual crisis; so would the reintroduction of fully funded training programmes, with no fees and adequate bursaries. These steps, and proper investment in buildings and resources, require a huge increase in funding.

This should come not from the pockets of workers through national insurance increases or other means, but from the bank accounts of the super-rich who have used the pandemic to get even richer - some of them by rinsing the NHS itself through lucrative PPE contracts.

The privatised health services and the big drugs companies should be nationalised, with no compensation to their billionaire owners, to form part of a publicly owned, fully funded NHS under the democratic control of workers, patients and our communities.

the Socialist

formerly **Militant**

Issue 1158
2-8 December 2021

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

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

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



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ISSN 1366-9621

Published by Socialist Publications, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT
Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office
Printed by trade union labour at Reach Printing Services

Militant issue 1: October 1964
The Socialist issue 1: 7 February 1997

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

27 dead in channel migrant tragedy

ISAI PRIYA
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

When the Channel tragedy news broke, there was widespread disbelief and sadness. 27 people have lost their lives in search of a better life. It has been recorded as the worst migrant tragedy in the Channel. Among the deceased were three children and a pregnant woman.

Only one victim so far, a 24-year-old Kurdish woman, has been identified. She was on her way to being reunited with her fiancé. The other 26 remain unidentified. A father in Iraq is waiting to hear news of his missing wife and two children.

Many of the people that died are from countries that have been torn apart by war, repressive regimes and poverty. These were people who were desperately trying to find somewhere safe to live in the hope that they could have a decent future.

Protests have been taking place in Calais demanding protection for migrants and refugees. Myself and other Socialist Party members have taken part in protests demanding safe and legal routes for refugees, as well as for a fairer immigration process.

We reject the crocodile tears from the capitalist media and those that they represent. The European Parliament held a minute's silence, and French and British authorities have conducted a rescue operation



MSTYSLAV CHERNOV/CC

by air and sea to see if they can find anyone.

Yet these same people have demolished migrant camps and cut funding to rescue operations in the Channel. They have also been blaming migrants and refugees for crossing the channel rather than addressing the issue of why people are risking their lives to make the journey.

And what treatment awaits asylum seekers when they arrive? French and British governments deny asylum seekers the right to work, and force them into unliveable housing conditions. We fight for the right to work in trade union-organised workplaces, and for decent homes. Access to these rights and services for all would cut across right-wing attempts to stir up anti-migrant division.

Under international pressure from the working class and young people demanding safe and legal routes for those claiming asylum in the UK, the Home Office is insisting it is on track to "fix the broken asylum system." While at the same time, there is pressure on Parliament to pass the Nationality and Borders Bill, which would make it harder for anyone arriving by boat to claim asylum successfully.

The Socialist Party says it's the capitalist system and its political representatives that are causing the refugee and migrant crisis, and they cannot be trusted to solve it. We need a mass movement for democratic control of the asylum system to establish safe and legal routes for migrants and refugees, and to fight for the resources to ensure a decent standard of living for all.

Bulb bailed out, nationalise energy to solve price crisis

JAMES COLLETT
GLOUCESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Britain's seventh-largest energy supplier, Bulb, has gone bust. It has been put into special administration amid the continuing disaster of the privatised energy sector. Bailed out by a government loan of £1.7 billion, Bulb will now be run by administrator Teneo until a buyer can be found, or until its customers are moved to another supplier.

The government says this is to "support customers". But the reality is that, yet again, taxpayers' money is bailing out the private sector while working-class people continue to face extortionate energy costs.

There is no guarantee that the loan will ever be paid back, and certainly no guarantee that Bulb's customers will be 'supported'. Bulb is the 23rd energy company to fail since the summer, and it's clear to many that the private energy industry itself is a failure. After keeping society running throughout the pandemic, the working class is now rewarded with countless attacks on living standards - the sharp rise in energy bills being just one of them.

Government regulator Ofgem's raising of the cap on energy prices affects 3.7 million people, and this includes those who use a prepayment key, often among the poorest, many living in criminally overpriced privately rented accommodation. With the cost of living rising across the board, more and more people will



be experiencing the terrible sinking feeling of having their lights go out and knowing there is no more money to put in the meter.

If it's taxpayer's money being used to bail out Bulb, why don't we own it? If Bulb along with the rest of the energy sector was taken into public ownership under democratic workers' control, energy prices could be set by committees of workers and services users - in the interests of workers and service users, not the bosses.

The Socialist Party calls for socialist nationalisation, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need. The big shareholders and CEOs have already made more than enough money ripping off their customers and should not be paid a penny. For people to be cold and hungry in their own homes in the fifth richest country in the world is a searing indictment of the capitalist system. Enough bail-outs for the rich, it's time to fight for socialism.

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Covid-19: New variant emerges but same old capitalist disease

JON DALE
UNITE NOTTINGHAMSHIRE HEALTH BRANCH
SECRETARY (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

New Covid-19 variants are inevitable but the threat to world health comes from profit-driven capitalism. Early reports indicate the Omicron variant is more infectious than Delta. It is not yet known whether Omicron infection is more severe, or whether vaccination is as protective, but action can't wait to find out.

More infectious variants are likely where Covid is spreading quickly because most people aren't immune. The longer the delay for people in poorer countries to be vaccinated, the more likely resistant and more

infectious variants will emerge, quickly spreading round the world.

Rich countries are sitting on almost one billion unused doses, while some poorer countries have not yet received vaccines they have paid for. Shareholders in 'Big Pharma' are banking huge profits from these life-saving vaccines, developed at unprecedented speed with massive subsidies from public funds.

The World Trade Organisation's 1994 'Trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights agreement' (TRIPS) lets big business keep control over knowledge that should benefit everyone on the planet.

Albert Bourla, Pfizer's CEO, described the call to share vaccine recipes as 'dangerous nonsense'. EU and UK governments have blocked a

temporary TRIPS suspension during the pandemic.

Pfizer expects to sell \$33 billion of its vaccine this year, at a profit rate in 'the high 20 percent range'. Pfizer and BioNTech have delivered less than 1% of their total vaccine supplies to low-income countries. Moderna has delivered just 0.2%. These three companies received over \$8 billion from taxpayers. They're making over \$93 million profit every day.

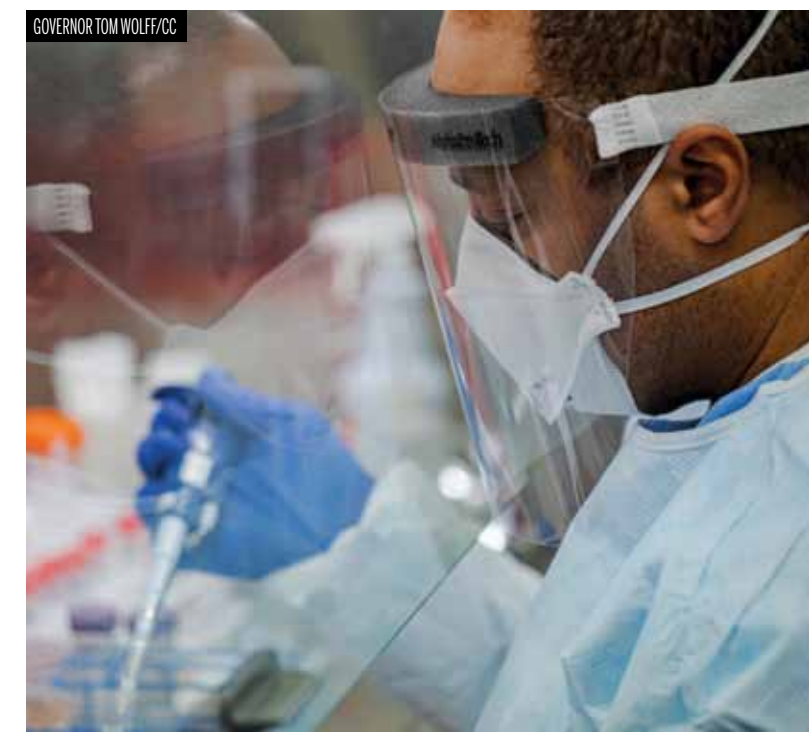
The pharmaceutical industry must be taken out of profiteers' hands and democratically planned as a global public service. Scientists, engineers and health workers could then be rapidly mobilised to ensure vaccine production and delivery is speeded up where it is desperately needed.

Johnson protects big business

Boris Johnson announced masks will become mandatory again in shops and on public transport - a necessary public health measure. But, as throughout this pandemic, employers have been let off the hook. Responsibility to stop the virus spreading is left with workers themselves.

Trade union health and safety committees should demand all workplaces, schools, hospitals and public venues are adequately ventilated, with carbon dioxide monitoring. Air filtration units can remove viral particles and should be installed. 'FFP2' masks, protecting the wearer as well as cutting the risk to others, should be issued.

Employers and councils must pay. If companies claim they can't afford it, open their financial books to see why. Nationalise the big companies, subsidise small businesses and reverse council cuts.



GOVERNOR TOM WOLFF/CC

£93m

The vaccine companies are making £93 million in profit every day

Chronically low vaccination rates

Omicron was found first in Southern Africa. 11% have been fully vaccinated in Mozambique and Namibia, 20% in Botswana, and 24% in South Africa. In Malawi it's only 3%, Uganda 1.94%, Yemen 1.16%, DR of Congo 0.06% and Burundi 0.00%.



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!

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NHS workers - vote yes for action to win a decent pay rise

PAUL TOVEY
UNISON UNION REP IN NHS (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

In reality, NHS workers have had a 20% pay cut over a decade of Tory governments. Our goodwill has been taken for granted, and many staff will stay over their time without pay to look after sick patients. This has only been exacerbated by the Covid-19 crisis.

NHS workers are angry at the crisis made worse by years of cuts and at the government's imposed 3% NHS pay rise - a real-terms pay cut. The government is always saying how it values us as healthcare workers, but they are not willing to give us a proper pay rise. They would rather see healthcare workers working a second

job and even using foodbanks just to survive.

Unison, the biggest union in the NHS, held a consultative ballot over pay in the summer. 80% of those who voted rejected the pay offer. Socialist Party activists in Unison, including those on the national executive council, argued that the union should move to a strike ballot.

Unfortunately, the union's leadership chose to move to a second consultative ballot, running the risk of diluting the mood of many health workers. The leadership of the Royal College of Nursing has also moved to a second consultative ballot.

Since the summer, the situation for health workers has got worse. The 3% offer is now worth less, with

inflation rising towards 5%. The winter crisis, coupled with Covid, has only increased the pressure at work. With a decisive lead from the union tops, a strike ballot can be won.

Activists are working hard doing stalls and talking to members to get a majority in favour of strike action in this consultative ballot. We hope this will pressure Unison's leaders to go forward into a full industrial ballot.

As health workers we need to unite across the NHS unions. To build a movement, not just for industrial action within the NHS, but of all public sector and social care workers for a decent pay rise and fully funded public services.

East London mass non-payment wins housing victory



Following a fire in 2019, residents in Barking have fought for safety PHOTO: PETE MASON

PETE MASON
EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY AND CHAIR OF BARKING REACH RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

The combative residents and residents' association on the Barking Riverside estate in East London have won another victory. A residents' service charge strike has forced home builders Bellway to pay in full for the remediation of flammable balconies, cladding, and missing and deformed cavity barriers on another 314 dwellings in the Caspian Quarter of the estate, something they previously refused to do.

The balconies alone will cost over £1 million to fix. That bill had been passed on to residents, causing untold distress and hardship. Residents were facing huge costs - service charge bills of up to £6,000 for two years.

Backed up by a campaigning residents' association, a majority of residents refused to pay the remediation part of the newly issued service charge bills. The multifaceted, well-organised campaign has brought together protests and other actions, building the confidence of residents. Once the bills were overdue, it

became apparent to the landlord, tax-haven based Adriatic Land, that they faced a determined, well-organised force. Within a few days, their partners in crime Bellway crumbled - suddenly announcing their about-turn.

To accompany the service charge strike, the residents' association has worked hard to apply political and legal pressure, raising hundreds of pounds for a legal challenge to Bellway, and lobbying councillors and MPs. Under pressure from the campaign, the council was forced to engage with Bellway, threatening to consider blocking them from any further developments in the borough.

Residents are planning well-earned celebrations for a hard-fought victory.

But residents should never have been put through the distress caused. The tax haven-based landlords have forfeited their right to ownership. The unsafe, profit-hungry top-ten homebuilders have forfeited their right to build. The democratic public ownership of land and the building industry, as part of a socialist plan, remain a necessity to solve the housing crisis.

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Khan threatens further London transport cuts

ANDY BEADLE
SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY AND RETIRED UNITE REP ON LONDON BUSES

“With time running out before TfL's [Transport for London] temporary emergency funding deal comes to an end on December 11, it is my duty as London mayor to sound the alarm.” An alarm in the pages of the Financial Times, unfortunately, won't reach the ears of many Londoners. Sadiq Khan, London's Labour mayor and Chair of TfL, threatens: “Schemes such as Crossrail 2 and the Bakerloo Line extension, though worthwhile, are now completely out of reach.”

It is a familiar story. Since becoming mayor in 2016, and especially since the pandemic, Khan has been in continual retreat. Pleading with the government has failed. Instead of repeating Tory rhetoric, he could be leading a mass revolt alongside the organised trade union movement and vulnerable service users.

During his first election campaign, Khan addressed our Unite union bus shop stewards meeting, appealing for the union's support. He promised that without us needing to take strike action, he could improve our lives. Disgracefully, even before the pandemic, he'd dutifully carried through £700-million-a-year Tory cuts to TfL's budget.

Since the pandemic, passengers and revenue have dropped sharply.



In return for a TfL government bailout last June, Khan made a series of increasingly untenable concessions that promise to attack transport workers' pensions, terms and conditions, and cut services. The mayor looks set to repeat these crimes again. The tube workers' union RMT is

preparing to ballot all grades to resist TfL cuts and attacks on staff pensions. 98.8% of Aslef-organised tube drivers have already voted to strike. At my old bus garage in Battersea, Unite is currently balloting members for action to stop detrimental rotas being imposed. Drivers in the RMT

are already taking strike action to resist changes in night working agreements (see page 6), and Khan has taken to Twitter to attack them. Passenger transport unions throughout London should coordinate action to defend jobs, terms and conditions from attacks stemming

from Khan's failure to stand up to the Tories.

Cuts in TfL's services affect all Londoners. 'Every journey matters' was a promotional slogan that TfL seems to have quietly dropped. That is why we need not just a trade union and workplace fight but also a political and community fight for necessary funding.

Like local authorities and other public bodies, TfL holds financial reserves and has the ability to borrow money. We say these powers must be used to defend workers' pensions, terms and conditions, and to invest in the services London needs.

Rather than attacking the unions, cutting passenger services, and threatening cuts in the Financial Times, Khan should be mobilising the support of workers and the public to demand the funding needed from central government.

Socialist Party members stood as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), of which the RMT union is a constituent part, in May's London elections to argue for such an approach. This May, when elections are held to London's council boroughs, we are preparing to stand again.

We'd like all those prepared to fight to defend local services, including public transport, to stand alongside us. If your local councillors won't organise a serious campaign to demand more government funding, get involved.

Education unions lead campaign against Leicester academisation



STEVE SCORE
PARENT AND LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Staff at West Gate special school in Leicester, along with their supporters, turned out for a lobby of Leicester City Council on 25 November in protest at planned academisation. The lobby, organised by the National Education Union, Unison and GMB unions, attempted to get clear support from the almost 100% Labour council for their campaign. While we got support from many councillors, some were incredibly reluctant to give their backing.

After an Ofsted inspection in 2018, the school was given an Academy Order, meaning that it would leave local authority control and be run by a less-accountable academy trust. In the meantime, the proposed sponsor withdrew and the school has since been given a 'good' Ofsted grade. Even in the eyes of the inspectors the staff had turned the school around. However, at the time of writing, the Department for Education is still insisting on forcing academisation on the school.

My son Ben attends this school and has made tremendous progress since

he got there. But all the hard work of staff is threatened by this attack.

I have proposed that as part of the campaign the unions should involve the families. A start would be to call a meeting to explain what academisation would mean and build a broader campaign.

The experience of the Socialist Party in previous campaigns, both in schools and in saving the Glenfield Children's Heart Centre, for example, proves that, while legal action such as a Judicial Review can be important, a mass campaign is key.

Tories strengthen repressive laws in anticipation of discontent

MADDY STEEDS
MANCHESTER AND SALFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

The Tories have added further amendments to the controversial Police, Crime Sentencing and Courts Bill in an attempt to restrict people's ability to protest. Clearly the government and the bosses can sense working-class anger at their policies and declining living standards.

The original proposal to increase sentences for protestors was met with a wave of protests across the UK. Despite this, the bill was passed by MPs, and new changes to make the bill even more restrictive have been proposed. The new proposals will give the police the power to stop and search anyone at a protest, without requiring any suspicion of a crime. Furthermore, in response to the actions of Insulate Britain, harsher penalties for those blocking motorways have been suggested. Finally, those accused of causing serious disruption, regardless of whether they have ever been sentenced, may be banned from attending further protests.

It is important to struggle against the introduction of further repressive legislation. But in the face of mass movements that win public support, the government will find these new laws hard to enforce. During the Covid-19 lockdowns we saw small protests being penalised under the guise of 'endangering public health', but no such penalties were enforced on larger demonstrations.

The attempt of the state to increase their power through this bill simply underlines the importance of solidarity across movements. The working class is the strongest force in society, and the new bill will not be able to crush a protest when workers are out en masse. Socialist change can be achieved in society regardless of the road blocks placed by the state, but to overcome those obstacles we must get organised to unite and fight.

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Kickstart scheme 'insufficient and flawed'



AMY SAGE
BRISTOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

The National Audit Office has released its report into the government's 'Kickstart Scheme'. When it was first announced, the scheme aimed to create hundreds of thousands of high-quality six-month work placements aimed at those aged 16-24 who are on Universal Credit and are deemed to be at risk of long-term unemployment.

In reality, however, the scheme, labelled "insufficient and flawed" in the report, has created only 96,700 job placements. There has been little-to-no monitoring to check that these placements are of good quality, that young workers are being offered training or support, and nothing to

check that these jobs are being offered to the right people.

When Rishi Sunak announced the plans for the scheme last year, the Socialist Party said it would simply give big business a source of cheap labour and not do enough to tackle the looming youth unemployment crisis. The NAO report appears to support this, stating that there is no clear evidence that the jobs 'created' would not have existed without the scheme.

Workers on the scheme are paid poverty wages - minimum wage for just 25 hours a week. And the bosses don't even pay that, the government foots the bill!

Youth unemployment has now reached 11.7%, one in five 18-year olds are not in employment education or training. Youth Fight for

Jobs, a campaign fighting to secure a decent future for young people, launched by the Socialist Party, says no to bogus apprenticeships or training schemes, and yes to a decent job guaranteed for all at the end of training.

We fight for a mass programme of socially useful job creation. And, unlike Frances O'Grady, head of the Trades Union Congress, who politely calls for the government to 'work with unions on the next phase of the scheme', Youth Fight for Jobs demands trade union oversight and democratic workers' control of any public works, job creation programmes and youth training schemes to guarantee decent pay and conditions for all; no trust in the Tories!

Nottingham and Mansfield trade unions rally against cuts and for better pay



Socialist Party campaign stall at the rally SOCIALIST PARTY

NOTTINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Nottingham and Mansfield Trades Union Council called a demonstration in Nottingham on 27 November on funding of services and public sector pay.

Union branches from Unison local government and health, Fire Brigades Union (FBU), National Education Union, University and College Union, teachers' NASUWT, civil service union PCS and general unions Unite and GMB supported the demonstration.

Snow, the cold and public transport disruption reduced the attendance, but nevertheless, over 50 people turned out.

A speaker from the Royal College of Nurses talked about the dire situation faced by health workers. She hoped we would understand why they had not come in numbers, but nurses were on their knees and worn out from conditions in the hospitals and maintaining patient care. They also needed to keep themselves safe from Covid in order to keep patients safe. She said that the ballots for industrial action for a 15% pay rise were ongoing, and that health workers would need public support to take action and counter the media barrage against them when they did.

A Royal College of Midwives rep spoke about the marvellous 'March with Midwives' events on 21 November. The turnout had been more than she expected, but could have been so much bigger if the union had asked people to support them.

An FBU rep said that the working class was fighting back in the workplaces, their unions, over climate change, over 'fire and rehire', on jobs and pay, and over cladding, evictions and for decent housing. FBU would support these and other fightbacks.

Jean Thorpe, chair of the trades council, said that the latest round of proposed council cuts threatened even more Nottingham City Council services and jobs. The 'improvement board' had been set up as a result of a government report that said, despite savage cuts made since 2010, the council had not cut hard enough or deeply enough.

She called on Labour councillors, who have 50 of the 55 seats on the city council, to come out against the cuts and propose an alternative budget. Labour had managed, rather than fought the cuts, and management of cuts was totally untenable. The improvement board is undemocratic and unelected. Jean called for it to include trade union and community representation.

RMT strikes against abolition of night tube train operators

Imposed arrangements means more fatigue, more weekend working and threatens jobs

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN RMT

London Underground workers in the RMT union walked out across London on several tube lines on 26-27 November. Socialist Party members joined them on picket lines in a solid weekend of strike action against the abolition of the night tube train operator grade.

In 2015, the RMT took industrial action to defend the right to a work-life balance and stop the

implementation of night tube on existing rosters. RMT succeeded and a separate grade was introduced of night tube drivers to cover these weekend rosters.

Move on six years and, under the auspices of a world pandemic, coupled with Tory austerity, London Underground has fired the first shots in what will be a protracted battle to save jobs and pensions by consolidating night tube duties into normal rosters.

Working these compulsory night shifts will mean sleeping the next day to recover. That means less time with family, less time to be productive, never mind the detrimental effect on health that these mixed shifts will have. This is simply an exercise to save money at the cost of a grade and nearly 200 jobs.

The first round of strike action took place on the Central, Victoria, Northern, Piccadilly and Jubilee lines, and are set to continue with all train operator and instructor operators working on the Central and Victoria Lines instructed not to book on any duty commencing between 8.30pm and 4.29am on the following dates: 3-4 December, 4-5 December, 10-11 December, 11-12 December and 17-18 December.

Furthermore, all train operators and instructor operators working on night tube lines are also instructed not to book on for any duty commencing from 4.30am on 18 December to 4.29am on 19 December.



Brixton LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY



Northfields, including RMT general secretary Mick Lynch (second from left) PHOTO MARK BEST



Wembley Park, including RMT executive member Jared Wood (second from right) PHOTO NSSN

Oaks Park school strike ends following forced concessions



Oaks Park school strikers in east London were applauded back into work on 26 November by supporters, having concluded what is apparently the longest strike in the National Education Union's history. 30 days of action over two terms has wrested important concessions from a bullying management.

But there is still more to fight for. Victimised rep Keiran Mahon is still battling for justice, supported by the union.

The school's culture of bullying and fear needs to be addressed - with national strike action key to tackling the high workload that drives it. And the disgraceful anti-union attitude of the local Labour council and MP demands a political alternative from the unions.

But the courageous, determined struggle of the Oaks Park workers has shown the way. JAMES IVENS EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

UCU higher education disputes

• Build the action • Stand united to win



SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN UCU

University and College Union (UCU) members have said 'enough is enough'. The impressive UK-wide turnouts in both the USS and 'Four Fights' ballots are a strong indicator of our anger. They show a mood to push back against exploitative working conditions, casualisation, relentless attacks on our pension, and the pay insult of 1.5%, which is effectively a massive pay cut when real inflation is now 6%.

It was no small feat to achieve these ballot results on two UK-wide disputes, run side by side, with a short ballot window of just under three weeks.

Breaking the 50% threshold nationally for the first time in Four Fights is also a significant step for UCU. If the ballot had been aggregated together, every member would now be able to take strike action.

The 58 branches taking strike action from 1-3 December are launching the dispute on behalf of the whole union, signalling to the bosses and government that we are serious about the fight we face.

Escalating the action - both in terms of the action taken and the number of participating branches - will be an important part of the strategy moving forward, starting with more branches joining industrial action next term, pending the outcome of the reballots.

There is also potential for other campus unions to join us. EIS, representing lecturers in Scotland, and Unison are both balloting their members. A cross-union university strike would be a huge step forward, maximising the pressure on employers to negotiate meaningful improvements

to the pay and conditions offer, and withdraw USS pension proposals.

That includes resisting management attempts to divide and bully us back to work. Some employers are threatening punitive, strike-breaking measures, including threats to dock pay in the Christmas payroll, and deducting 100% of pay for action short of strike. This shows how threatened they are by our action.

But also, that the very issues at stake - low pay, insecure work and excessive working conditions - can make sustaining action difficult.

Therefore, linking up with local trades union councils and appealing for solidarity from other unions will be critical for building solidarity.

Branches should also appeal for trade union donations to the local strike pay fund.

UCU must call for a meeting of all public sector unions, so that we can join with local government and NHS workers also fighting back against the Tory government on pay. Such a united front will strengthen our disputes.

Regional protests of striking and non-striking branches must be built to help sustain the action, maintain members' confidence, and draw in students to support the campaign.

Staff and student solidarity is critical. Management is yet again shamelessly attempting to divide us: outrageously using the student mental health crisis - a crisis of management's own making - to attack the strike.

But students are not blind to the attacks. We have already received wide support from students who are also affected by poor pay and working conditions. Socialist Students is building support for our strike among students.

The official backing of the National Union of Students (NUS) is a welcome development and has given a boost to many members. Further work is now needed to put this support into action, as well as building staff-student solidarity at branch level.

We know that the marketisation of higher education has eroded our conditions at the cost of quality research and learning. A victory will be a huge step forward for the union. However, as long as higher education is led by pro-market senior managers, under the regulatory scrutiny of a hostile Tory government, any achievements will need to be defended.

Many members are drawing the conclusion that to solve the constant attacks we face, we need to go much further, and turn the tide on marketisation. To achieve that, we need a political as well as industrial strategy.

UCU is not affiliated to any political party, yet our union leadership continues to appeal to a Labour Party that, under Keir Starmer, cannot be trusted to deliver the policies staff and students need. Starmer is clearly set on showing big business that he is as safe for them as Tony Blair was.

The Socialist Party appeals to UCU members to stand as candidates in next year's local elections, along with other trade unionists and local campaigners, on a platform of no cuts and for free education. This will be an important step in developing a new left political vehicle for workers, including those who work in colleges and universities. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), with support from transport union RMT, is ready as a platform for standing anti-cuts candidates.

South Yorkshire Stagecoach drivers strike against measly 1% pay offer

ALISTAIR TICE YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Stagecoach bosses in South Yorkshire have always tried to play off one depot against another, with different settlement dates and pay rates across Barnsley, Rotherham and the two Sheffield garages. So Unite the union submitted an RPI-plus 1% pay claim for all South Yorkshire depots back in May, but the company offered a derisory 1%. Since then prices have rocketed, so now RPI-plus 1% is going to cost the company a lot more.

On 28 November, around 600 Stagecoach bus workers started a week-long strike across the four

depots. Barnsley strikers were joined by Unite Community members and the 'Better Buses campaign' with their 'solidarity bus'. Pickets at Rawmarsh in Rotherham spread across both sides of the main road and there were 15-20 at the Ecclesfield depot in Sheffield.

Knowing that Stagecoach can't keep drivers due to low pay, and encouraged by other bus strike victories, Unite members are determined and confident of winning a decent pay rise.

This strike follows 17 days of strike action at Stagecoach in South Wales where Unite members won a pay rise.



PHOTOS ALISTAIR TICE

SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

November issue includes...

- How to save the planet
- Talking hot air - COP summits have not led to action
- Len McCluskey - The life of the recently retired Unite leader

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AFTER COP26: WHERE NEXT FOR THE CLIMATE MOVEMENT?

MATT DOBSON
SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND

After tens of thousands marched and walked out in Glasgow and across the world in response to the failure of the UN COP26 summit, many are discussing what next for the climate strike movement.

The situation is critical. Major capitalist powers, despite all their rhetoric around the Glasgow Climate pact, are stepping up oil production and using reserves to combat an energy price hike. How is mass pressure going to be built to fight for the aspirations of the climate movement when the capitalists meet again in Egypt for COP27? Millions of radicalised youth and workers globally see straight through the empty pledges of the capitalist politicians and have absolutely no trust in them.

This is reflected in the slogans pointing towards the need for systemic change such as 'uproot the system' raised by the majority of the youth mobilised for the strikes. It shows a rejection of capitalism, as a rotten failed system, that exists in the consciousness of many young people.

The capitalists internationally are bound by the need to make short-term profits. A rapid, organised transition away from fossil fuels is not possible in a system based on ruthless economic competition, not only between industries and companies, but also nation states.

As we saw with the Glasgow Climate Pact, bigger richer capitalist powers want to protect their access to markets and are not willing to bail out weaker capitalist nations.

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), including Socialist

Party Scotland in Glasgow, got an electrifying response for our unique poster slogans of "let's build a working-class mass movement for socialist change to end climate change" and "you can't have capitalism without climate destruction, fight for socialism".

These were among the most popular placards seen throughout the Glasgow demonstration. Most importantly, many young people wanted to find out about what socialism actually means and signed up for more information.

Many young people agreed with our speakers at the COP26 mobilisations when we explained "you cannot control what you do not own". Real systemic change is only possible on a socialist basis where the economic means of producing commodities, resources and wealth are owned and democratically managed by the working-class majority.

Strike action

The strike of bin workers had a major impact on the COP26 summit, forcing the SNP council to make concessions. The Scottish government also had to intervene in the Scotrail dispute to avoid a strike by the RMT union that would have shut down major transport links to the summit.

This shows the potential power of the working class when mobilised. By taking strike action, organised workers can stop the source of bosses' profits, and therefore represent the force that can challenge the profit-driven capitalist system. It's vital that the climate strikers link up with the workers' movement, as this is the only way a victory in terms of real socialist change to end climate destruction can be won.

We also found an extremely positive



Many young people agreed with our speakers at the COP26 mobilisations when we explained "you cannot control what you do not own"



response among youth, even if not among all layers on the demonstrations, to the idea of concretely linking up with trade union struggles. Our petition in support of the Glasgow GMB bin workers' strike, which was underway against the SNP council over low pay, was popular.

In a step forward, Greta Thurnberg invited striking workers to address the youth strike for climate rally, although she herself did not visit picket lines.

Greta made pertinent points in Glasgow about the incapacity of capitalist world leaders to solve climate change. But her public petition calling on the UN to declare a "system-wide climate emergency" can really only have the same limited effect as individual governments, such as the Scottish SNP government, declaring climate emergencies and taking no real coordinated action with no real accountability.

We would say to Greta Thurnberg, we can have no faith in the UN and capitalist institutions, only in the power of workers and youth mobilised in fighting to change society globally.

Extinction Rebellion (XR), who proudly describe themselves as being "beyond politics", in response to the COP26 failure have called for "mass civil disobedience" across the UK in the spring of 2022.

Socialists are in favour of mass civil

disobedience that mobilises the collective power of the working class. Our predecessor Militant led the mass non-payment campaign against the poll tax that brought down Thatcher, from which many lessons can be learned. In that struggle, mass collective power of working-class communities was mobilised to disrupt the court and judicial system in towns and cities across Britain, with mass meetings, court representation, picketing and demonstrations.

Tactics

Unfortunately, some mobilisations of groups like XR and Insulate Britain rely on small numbers of activists blocking roads or transport where commuters are indiscriminately targeted. Often these actions have been counterproductive in alienating workers trying to travel to and from work.

The blocking of roads and the causing of maximum disruption can be justified when targeted at the enemy - the bosses, as it was when the rank-and-file electricians used this tactic along with mass picketing to defeat the imposition of the Besna contract in 2012 and recent attempts by bosses to deskill the industry.

Such actions, and of course mass picketing and blocking of scabs during the miners' strike and other major working-class battles, won mass support. But the indiscriminate nature of

the XR and Insulate Britain actions, not targeting for example fossil fuel bosses, and their lack of a programme to win over workers, makes them ineffective and undermines the building of a mass movement.

Socialists oppose the police and legal repression, including the recent lengthy jail sentence, and restrictive court orders imposed on XR, Insulate Britain and other climate activists. We raise the need for full democratic discussion in the movement about what mass actions are the most effective in targeting the big business polluters. Also, that the movement organises democratic stewarding against attacks by the state on the right to protest.

The climate school strike movement that began in 2019, after a lull during the height of the pandemic, has the potential to escalate in size and strength if the correct clear slogans are put forward. A democratic fighting union, that struggles on the climate and all the issues young people face, is needed in every school and college. It is necessary for the movement to adopt clear socialist policies and link up with the trade unions and workers' movement.

There is a danger that if this approach is not taken, if the movement does not develop beyond vague calls for system change, and if effective tactics to escalate the strikes and protests



A democratic fighting union, that struggles on the climate and all the issues young people face, is needed in every school and college

are not adopted, then the movement can again begin to wane.

Currently, the most common slogan at climate strikes and protests is "system change to end climate change". This limited slogan was even put forward by NGOs and religious organisations at COP26. But it was also echoed by some on the left. Rather than explaining the need for a socialist alternative and what socialism is to the thousands of young people thirsty for ideas at these mobilisations, they adapted to the broad nature of the climate demonstrations. This approach does not point the way forward for the movement.

Union leaders

A number of national UK trade union leaders circulated a public letter during COP26, demanding the world leaders at the summit listen to and meet workers and trade unions before agreeing a deal. While, of course, it's important to raise that the workers' movement must have a voice, there cannot be any illusions that the capitalist politicians at COP26 will listen.

A more effective approach would have seen the union leaders coordinate a public statement exposing the greenwashing by the politicians and corporations at the summit. The example of workers at the GKN plant in Birmingham who have had their alternative green production plan

rejected by bosses, could have been cited. There is a need for the trade union leaders to coordinate workers in strike action over pay, jobs and terms and conditions. Such mass action could pull mass support from the youth climate strike movement and be a reference point for young people fighting for their future.

Political alternative

COP26 also exposed that a political alternative is needed. None of the SNP, Starmer's Labour or the Greens are willing to meet the demands of youth and workers on the climate, tied as they are to capitalism and implementing Tory attacks.

A key arena to build the climate movement could be in local council elections in 2022. Young climate strikers should stand as anti-cuts candidates alongside trade unionists and working-class community campaigners. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), which the Socialist Party and Socialist Party Scotland participate in, is preparing to stand, putting forward socialist policies that councils could implement to combat

climate change, such as public ownership of transport and no-cuts budgets to fight the Tories for more funding for services. This is a step towards building a new mass workers' party to fight for socialist policies.

A mass party of the working class, in Scotland, Britain or elsewhere, prepared to fight for a programme of nationalisation, investment in public transport and a socialist transition away from fossil fuels, would be a huge boost for the climate movement. It would apply massive pressure on pro-establishment politicians at future COP events, and help to develop the understanding of millions of youth about what kind of 'system change' is needed.

The CWI fights to assist in building such mass parties internationally, and for them to adopt a rounded-out socialist programme based on the public ownership and democratic control of the banks and major industries. With this, the working class, together with young people, could begin to plan production in the interests of people and the planet, not profit.

We disagree with those in the environmental movement, and even on the left, who write off workers in the fossil fuel, nuclear and defence industries. It is possible to oppose new fossil fuel extraction, nuclear power and Trident and actively support workers fighting back in those industries.

Hundreds of thousands of jobs in Scotland and the UK as a whole are currently dependent on North Sea oil and gas. The Scottish Tories are using SNP Nicola Sturgeon's recent U-turn in now opposing the new

Cambo oil field to whip up fears in working-class communities about the climate movement. Only outlining a worker-controlled socialist transition can answer this, combining the call for nationalisation of these industries with a guarantee that jobs in publicly owned renewable energy would have better pay, safety and terms and conditions. The National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) put forward such a program at its workers' forum during COP26 with trade union reps from the North Sea industries.

PHOTO: PAUL MATTISSON



PHOTO: PAUL MATTISSON

Building a political alternative to Tory and Labour cuts

Newham resists cuts

Newham Resists has agreed to campaign for a no-cuts, needs budget to show there is an alternative to the Labour council passing on Tory austerity. Newham Resists is a new coalition.

40 people came to the 27 November meeting from campaigns all over the borough, including Friends of Queens Market, Stop the Silvertown Tunnel, and Save Durning Hall. There were campaigners against the Sphere in Stratford, campaigners opposed to the parking fees, and disability rights activists.

Newham Socialist Labour - suspended members of the Labour Party in East Ham and West Ham - and the Green Party were also present.

27,000 people are on the housing waiting list in Newham. The borough has the highest number of people in temporary accommodation in London - 7,000 are children. The council's only 'solution' is 1,000 new council homes by 2022.

Poverty

Newham child poverty levels are over 50%, yet youth services have been cut, including the closure of a vital arts centre, Stratford Circus. The council voted for £24.9 million more cuts, and a 4.99% council tax rise in its 2021-22 budget.

Newham has had a huge funding shortfall, so this budget would only be a start. We need to build the campaign to win the funding needed from central government.

At the Newham Resists meeting, Socialist Party members raised the need for a no-cuts electoral challenge in May. Steve Hedley, assistant general secretary of transport union RMT, said: "We've been defeated time and time again in this borough because we haven't put up a challenge... we've got to think about putting people up against these people". Newham Resists agreed to continue



Protesting outside Newham town hall against another round of draconian cuts by the Labour council

discussing whether to support this strategy.

FERDY LYONS

Save our services in Surrey

Save Our Services in Surrey has put out the call for anti-cuts candidates. On 22 November, we had our first in-person meeting for around two years.

We received a solidarity message from the Fire Brigades Union (FBU). Particularly pleasing was the good turnout of activists from public sector union Unison. A journalist from the local newspaper was also present.

We endorsed the decision for a 'People's Assembly' to be held in Surrey in the summer next year with the aim of developing a local People's Budget.

This would be a needs budget, based on input from trade unions and community groups. It will be an

anti-austerity, anti-cuts, and anti-privatisation budget.

We will use the People's Budget as a manifesto to encourage trade unionists and community campaigners to consider standing as candidates in local elections.

Surrey County Unison has already passed a motion agreeing to circulate all its 5,000 members asking for volunteers to stand. As a first step, Save Our Services will hold a planning meeting in January to start the ball rolling.

PAUL COUCHMAN

Stop the cuts to Uni arts funding

NICHOLAS CLARE
BRISTOL SOCIALIST STUDENTS

On 24 November, 60 people protested at the University of Bristol against government cuts to university arts funding. I spoke at the demonstration, representing Socialist Students.

I highlighted the intersection between the struggles of university workers, and their upcoming University and College Union (UCU) strike action (see back page and page 7), and their students. All share the receiving end of the marketisation of education.

Socialist Party member Tom Baldwin explained how the fight against marketisation and profit-driven universities can only be won by solidarity with workers, and fighting for a socialist plan for democratic workers' ownership and control of the economy.

The Students Against Cuts campaign then led the demonstration on a march through the city centre.

The public were in support of our march. However every lane of traffic was unnecessarily blocked which meant some public support was lessened, and a number of students left before the end of the march.

This is not the end of the campaign however. Socialist Students will continue to work to oppose cuts, fees and marketisation. This includes giving our full support to UCU strikers at Bristol on 1-3 December.

Join the student fightback: join...



- Visit socialiststudents.org.uk/join
- or call 020 8988 8761
- or text your name and school, college or uni to 07749 379 010

Marching to stop violence against women

Southampton

The Socialist Party decided to mark international day for the elimination of violence against women on 25 November by organising a protest in the city centre. We wanted to be loud and we wanted to be visible.

20 people turned up to our protest, and some passers-by were eager to take our leaflets and stopped to share their own experiences.

Unfortunately, we were dwarfed by the noisy Christmas market, so speeches and taking a moment of silence was out of the question.

Thankfully, we'd organised a public meeting close by, so people had the chance to discuss what we could do to combat sexism and violence against women. It was a real education.



We discussed the many tough choices women have to make under this rotten system

University students described just how widespread drink spiking had become. They were keen to organise and demand change.

The experiences of trans women were raised in the discussion, and how likely they are to be attacked in the street or in clubs as they are seen as 'fair game' by misogynist perpetrators.

It was an emotional discussion. Clubs and the police are not taking incidents seriously enough - echoing outdated ideas of women 'asking for it' by how we dress and how we behave.

We discussed the many tough choices women have to make under this rotten system; how some women are forced into sex work out of poverty, or stay with a violent partner because there's nowhere else to go due to cuts to refuge provision and a dire lack of decent truly affordable housing.

We fight for every improvement to women's lives. Capitalism is rotten



On the Southampton protest over violence against women PHOTO NICK CHAFFEY

to the core and needs to be swept away by uniting our class for socialist change.

MAGGIE FRICKER

Bristol

The Socialist Party joined a very noisy and lively Reclaim the Night March in Bristol to mark the international day for the elimination of violence against women.

Around 200 people marched through the centre of town, passing many bars and pubs to draw attention to the recent rise in cases of spiking against women. The Socialist

Party was very noticeably the only political organisation to attend, and a few women enthusiastically held up our posters as we marched.

AMY SAGE

Nottingham

Over 250 mainly young women marched on 27 November with Reclaim the Night. They were noisy, enthusiastic and got a lot of support from passers-by and car drivers sounding their car horns.

Nottingham and the university have recently had a number of spiking incidents. In a society where only

7.4% of reported rapes get to court, and only 1.4% get convictions.

Rape and sexual assaults are severely underreported. There is a lot to do to make women safer.

We handed out our Socialist Party 'End sexism and violence against women' leaflets and carried our posters. Women snapped up the leaflets and asked for them when they read the poster.

There is clearly a thirst for a programme to end violence, sexism, inequality and abuse, and to do this once and for all. To do that, we need to get rid of capitalism and fight for socialist change.

CLARE WILKINS

Plymouth: Hundreds attend angry vigil for Bobbi-Anne McLeod

RYAN ALDRED

500 people gathered on 26 November - one day after the international day for the elimination of violence against women - for a vigil for Bobbi-Anne McLeod.

18 year old Bobbi-Anne was meant to meet friends in town, and was last seen waiting to catch a bus in the Leigham area of the city, but never arrived.

Tragically, her body was discovered a few days later, and two men were subsequently arrested. One of those men, who reportedly had no known connection to Bobbi-Anne, has since been charged with her murder.

Such a terrible turn of events comes merely months after a mass shooting by a self-described 'incel' which rocked Plymouth. The city is once again in a state of shock.

Growing anger

While the mood since Bobbi-Anne's murder has generally been one of sadness, there has also been anger. This came through at the vigil. One of the speakers raised the need to challenge systemic violence against women that has worsened during the pandemic.

The Conservative leader of the council, Nick Kelly, has stoked anger by 'victim blaming', saying: "I think that everybody has a responsibility to try to not put themselves in a compromising position".

However, it is not enough simply to call out bad attitudes, we need to fight for conditions which can ensure women feel safe. This means fighting for better street lighting, for a fully funded, safe and affordable public transport system, for more spending on support services for victims of abuse and rape, and for an overhaul of the criminal justice system which currently means only 1% of reported rapes ends in conviction.

A number of women at the vigil keenly took the Socialist Party's fighting programme for women's rights and socialism. If we are to see an end to sexism and systemic violence against women, we need to build a mass movement to challenge the current system - capitalism - which propagates discrimination, gender inequality and exploitation.

By fighting for a socialist society based on cooperation, equality and solidarity we can eradicate the conditions that allow sexism and abuse to thrive, and prevent tragic events such as this from being repeated.

Socialism 2021: How we reached our fighting fund appeal target

ROGER BUTLER
SWANSEA SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND ORGANISER

The Roman orator and statesman Cicero described finance and resources as 'the sinews of war' - and of course the same applies to the struggle for socialism.

So, with a month to go, and an unofficial Swansea and West Wales Socialism 2021 fighting fund appeal target of £1,000 to meet, a coordinated and sustained campaign was the order of the day.

A bit daunting for a newly elected fighting fund organiser who was promptly reminded that Swansea branch and Wales as a whole haven't missed a target in 30 years. No pressure then!

Building on a long Swansea tradition of taking the fighting fund

seriously, the first step was to send out an email to all members giving details of the appeal and emphasising the importance of Socialism 2021 as our main public event of the year.

Step two was to contact members by email, text, phone or in person to ask them to pledge what they could afford. There was a ready response with many members pledging what they could barely afford.

High benchmark

Currently we have £1,080 in pledges and we are spending the next week or so contacting the few members who have not yet made a pledge. The benchmark was set high with a number of longstanding members pledging £100.

One fairly new member immediately pledged £75. She described how impressed she was with the

Socialist Party and its determination to make a difference.

"The political and economic situation in this country is in such a state. With the Labour Party back to being part of the establishment and offering no solution it is easy to despair.

"Since joining the Socialist Party it has been heartening to campaign with people who are principled socialists and who are determined to play their part in defending our communities and fighting for socialism.

"It is so important to have the resources to build our party. I am optimistic about our future."

New recruits and younger members, many of them low-paid, unwaged or on student loans, and at the sharp end of the capitalist crisis, also made generous pledges.

One said: "We just cannot go on like this. No-one else is going to save

us, it's up to us to build the Socialist Party."

We look set to smash our fighting fund target once again. Phew!

- To redeem a fighting fund pledge from Socialism 2021, or if readers would now like to make a donation, go to socialistparty.org.uk/donate

AREA	\$ RECEIVED	\$ TARGET	Q4: OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2021	DEADLINE: 3 JANUARY 2022
Northern	1,430	750		191%
East Midlands	3,125	1,850		169%
South West	2,898	1,800		161%
Eastern	1,595	1,200		133%
London	5,952	4,600		129%
Wales	2,766	2,300		120%
North West	1,227	1,150		107%
West Midlands	2,240	2,600		86%
Yorkshire	2,187	2,550		86%
Southern & SE	1,550	2,350	66%	
Other	17,798	3,850		462%
TOTAL	42,768	25,000		171%

Pensioners and trade unionists protested against winter fuel poverty outside parliament on Friday 26 November. There are 32,000 excess deaths between December and March each year in the UK - 9,700 of them due to living in cold homes, according to National Energy Action and E3G.

The National Pensioners Convention, leading the protest, called for the government to ban further energy price hikes. It also demanded an increased winter fuel allowance and home insulation programme.

The Socialist Party participated in support of these demands. We say: nationalise the energy companies, under democratic working-class control, to ensure affordable warm homes for all!



Join the fightback JOIN THE SOCIALISTS
• Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join
to find out more today!

Behind the rural idyll - the problems of everyday life

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN DEVON

Few would argue that Devon is a slice of heaven. A haven for tourists and retirees who flock here to enjoy the exquisite landscape. But popularity comes at a cost:



Health and social care

In the gorgeous town of Dartmouth we have lost all semblance of our once public services. Our bus services have been cut dramatically, our banks are gone, our police station in town is gone, our local recycling and waste tip was also closed. Then came the killer blow - we lost our 120-year-old hospital and all the NHS services within it, and our paramedics too.

Our nearest main hospital takes approximately three hours each way by public transport, because there is a river to cross or drive around. Our nearest minor injuries unit is even further away. It takes two buses and a ferry to get there, and none link up (despite the bus company's claim).

It has only taken a few short years for things to spiral downwards in the residents' mindset; our older residents no longer call for, nor ask for assistance. They have seen their

friends and loved ones shipped out of town never to return. In echoes of Victorian England, they now die at home alone, without care or comfort, yards away from our empty hospital building.

All the while the capitalist vultures are circling the prime riverside plot and building, to satisfy their insatiable greed for profit, despite it being gifted to our community and a live charge remaining via the deeds of covenant.

I have friends who are carers and have seen them cry in despair at the hopelessness of accessing any form of public service for their very sick or disabled loved ones. For them it is a nightmare, not just because of the hospital closure, but also the continuing cuts to community services such as respite, recovery and care in the home. Some of our residents are unable to walk far so have to pay £45 each way for taxis out of meagre pensions, it's so unfair. If it costs £90 to access NHS services, it's not free!

Public transport

With only eight buses a day, the chances of lining up travel times and appointments are rare. It also means a whole day traveling around the county. There is no public transport out of town after 7pm, nor all day Sunday (apart from one single mid-day bus), the ferries close at 10.45pm until 6am and we are miles away from healthcare provision.

If you have a late afternoon hospital appointment there is real anxiety about missing the last bus and getting home at all. We can't get out of town on weekends or evenings for family or social events. It's so restrictive; we're completely abandoned.

We have spent nightmare hours in sun, wind and rain waiting for a bus

that didn't come, or is late, only to get back from a day being shuttled around the South West, to achieve a distance of 20 miles in seven to nine hours.

Buses in and out of Newton Abbot, mainly those smaller ones which go to the more rural villages outside, seem to be the ones which are getting left out when Stagecoach has driver shortages. It prioritises the bigger (probably more profitable) routes which leaves people stranded, unable to shop in town.

Some of these routes are ones which only have a handful of services each day anyway, so when one does not arrive at all it could be two to three hours before another is due. This is expected to get worse thanks to Stagecoach's low pay, resulting in drivers leaving.



The Socialist Party calls for:

- A massive building programme of council-owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents as part of a democratically controlled housing plan for our communities
- Reversal of all NHS privatisation and nationalisation of the private health care sector and care homes - integrate them into the NHS
- A fully funded socialist NHS and care system free at the point of use - democratically run by elected and accountable committees including service workers and users
- Bring bus services under public ownership - services to be run in the interest of workers and local communities, not for profit, as part of an integrated environmentally sustainable transport system
- A democratic socialist planned economy to end rural isolation, poverty and inequality

£90

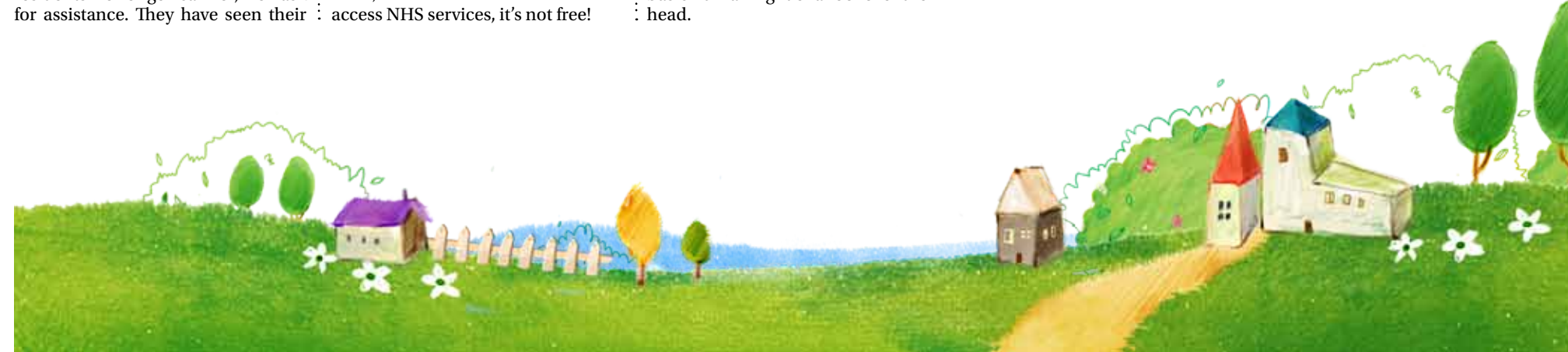
The cost of a round-trip in taxi fares to access NHS services in some parts of Devon

Housing

Property prices have long been artificially inflated by cash buyers. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, this situation has escalated to crisis point, creating a housing market in which locals can no longer compete.

Rentals are now both rare and exorbitant, pushing rural people into poverty and homelessness. Our young people are leaving.

The wealthy have been frenziedly buying second homes in the countryside. A 'safe place' to escape to. This behaviour is aided and abetted by our government through financial subsidies, grants, and stamp duty exemption. It is time for councils and government to put an end to the erosion of rural economies, delivering instead policies for sustainable living. It is time to create an economy in which everybody can access the basic human right of a roof over their head.



Wales

The Labour-Plaid Cymru agreement - jam tomorrow, maybe

DAVE REID
SOCIALIST PARTY WALES

Welsh Labour and Plaid Cymru have reached an agreement that will give the Welsh Labour government, led by Mark Drakeford, a working majority. Labour won 30 out of the 60 Senedd seats in the election earlier this year, not enough for a controlling majority, and so has had to reach an agreement with Plaid Cymru which has 13 seats.

The agreement has been lauded in the media, and by some on the left, as offering significant reforms. Any improvement on the current state of some services is to be welcomed, and some of the promises offer genuine steps forward. However, a closer

examination reveals that most of the headline reforms promise jam tomorrow - maybe.

And hanging over this agreement is the overarching fact that a decade of austerity implemented by the Welsh Labour government has decimated many public services, and this agreement will do nothing to even patch them up. £3 billion in real terms will have been cut from the Welsh government budget by 2024 compared to 2010.

Glaringly absent from the agreement is any direct mention of the NHS. Previous Labour governments have closed hospitals and removed thousands of beds, so the NHS was hanging by a thread when the pandemic hit. Now, the NHS in Wales is in a permanent state of crisis with patients waiting for twelve hours for

ambulances or in A&E. Hundreds of frontline NHS workers are leaving, driven out by stress, overwork and low pay. The Labour-Plaid Cymru agreement does nothing to address this crisis in the flagship public service, nor the pressing need for a decent pay rise for NHS workers.

Many council services barely survive too, and this is not addressed in the agreement. The Welsh Labour government, now supported by Plaid Cymru, is likely to pass Tory cuts to funding down to local councils again next year. Labour and Plaid councils should fight those cuts and refuse to carry them out, drawing on reserves and beginning a mass campaign for more funds. The Socialist Party, part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, will challenge those cuts at the council elections next year.



Plaid Cymru leader Adam Price (left) and Labour's First Minister Mark Drakeford



Hanging over this agreement is the overarching fact that a decade of austerity implemented by the Welsh Labour government has decimated public services

The agreement

Free school meals

The headline reform is for free school meals for primary schoolchildren. But this will be delivered by 2025 and is far too limited. One in three Welsh children live in poverty and free school meal provision in Wales is the most miserly of anywhere in the UK. Even under the Tories in England there is greater universal provision of free school meals in primary schools.

Ensuring every child gets at least one decent meal a day is a proven way to reduce poverty, and to help educational attainment, but this scandal will still continue for high school students in Wales for many years to come according to this agreement.

Schools

There is an ominous threat to "reform school term dates to bring them more in line with patterns of family life and employment." In practice, what is being looked at is cutting the

summer school holidays and having more holidays in the winter and autumn to save school heating bills. And education workers will be concerned that the promise to "explore options to reform the rhythm of the school day" without extra funding will mean even longer hours for an already exhausted workforce.

Care

The agreement headlines a 'National Care Service' to provide social care, implying NHS-style universal provision. But actually all that is promised is an expert group to examine an implementation plan in 2023.

Rent control and housing

Similarly, the headline promise of rent control is phrased very cautiously in the text of the agreement - to look at "the role a system of fair rents (rent control) could have in making the private rental market affordable for local people on local

incomes'. Already landlords' organisations have started to put pressure on the government to water down any proposals.

The danger is that by the time firm proposals see the light of day they will be watered down so much that they will be ineffective. All sorts of threats will be made by the landlords and a timid approach from the start will not deliver for tenants. Socialist Party Wales calls for fair rent tribunals to be run by representatives of tenants' groups, housing workers and trade unions that can set rents at truly affordable levels.

The Welsh government has form on its failure to defend tenants in the face of opposition from landlords and developers. The Renting Wales Act was passed in 2016 but, incredibly, five years later hasn't been implemented. The Act puts some limited restrictions on landlords who intend to evict tenants, but even these timid reforms have been ferociously fought by landlords, and in response the Welsh Labour government has kicked them into the long grass.

The document promises: "New approaches to making homes affordable" but nowhere is there any

mention of the old, tried and tested approach - building council houses. Council house building ground to a halt in the 1990s and the current building rate is not even keeping pace with the growth in the population, let alone addressing the huge shortage of truly affordable homes in Wales.

It also promises reform of council tax, which is one of the most regressive taxes of all. But again, it will report on firm proposals a long time from now.

Energy

There are promises to set up publicly owned energy and construction companies - Ynni Cymru and Unnos - but they promise to be puny, ineffective minnows compared to the energy and construction giants. We call for the construction companies to be nationalised and development to be centred on a crash programme of building council homes.

Ynni Cymru will be limited to community-owned renewable energy generation rather than tackling the carbon-emitting energy giants. Why not expand the idea to take over the energy companies and, as we call for, start a truly ambitious nationalised

energy company that would construct tidal lagoons in North and South Wales which, according to experts, could provide enough electricity to power Wales twice over? It could also provide thousands of jobs insulating every house in Wales that needs insulation.

Flood defences

Similarly, there are vague references to "invest more in flood management and mitigation" which, given the threat to dozens of communities in Wales and the destruction already inflicted in Rhondda Cynon Taf and Neath Port Talbot, is completely insufficient.

Senedd changes

The agreement also promises a more proportional voting system in an enlarged Senedd. This would make it easier for a new party for working people to elect representatives.

And that is what working people in Wales desperately need - a real socialist alternative that can address the developing social crisis in our communities drawing on the fighting militant traditions of the Welsh working class.

2025

The year all primary school children will get free meals



£3billion

The real-terms amount that will have been cut by 2024



0

The number of mentions of building council housing

TV review: Valley of the Tears

Effective, but flawed, depiction of war and class divisions

AMNON COHEN

NORTH LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Valley of the Tears is an Israeli TV series which is set in the first days of the war between the Israeli state and a coalition of Arab states, principally Egypt and Syria, in October 1973.

It follows Avinoam, a geeky intelligence analyst, Meni, an improbable TV star trying to rescue his son, and Melachi, an activist in the Israeli Black Panthers who breaks out of prison in order to join his unit in the Golan Heights (the border area separating Israel and Syria, mostly occupied by the Israeli Defence Force since the 1967 war).

The Israeli Black Panthers was a protest movement of North African Jewish Israelis, inspired by the American Black Panthers, who described themselves as socialists and fought against the racist discrimination suffered by Mizrahim (immigrants of North African origin) and against their status as second-class citizens.

Arrogant elite

The opening episode of the series describes the arrogance of the military and political commanders who ignored all the evidence of Syrian war preparations, leaving the Israeli army unprepared.

This initially led to military humiliation for the supposedly invincible Israeli army before a counter-offensive resulted in a military stalemate. The 1973 war caused a profound crisis in Israeli society, discrediting the Israeli Labour Party which had, up to then, been the 'party of permanent government'.

The class divide between the working-class Mizrahim foot soldiers and the middle-class Ashkenazi Kibbutz members - who formed the elite in Israeli society and the commanders in the army - is a recurring theme, as is the continual discrimination against Mizrahim from the Israeli state.



When the foot soldiers are isolated and outnumbered, the HQ commanders, who claim they could not help them, suddenly find a way to send a rescue party when they are told that a downed Israeli pilot is with them.

The series does portray some Israeli military atrocities, the racism (against Mizrahim) of the Israeli state, and the bureaucratic incompetence of the elites. But it does not escape the genre of Israeli wartime propaganda. Every single shell fired

by the Israeli soldiers destroys an enemy tank. In every skirmish, an outnumbered Israeli unit defeats its enemies.

At one point, an Israeli general walks into a field hospital full of mortally wounded soldiers screaming with pain. The general gives a rousing speech, after which the soldiers somehow pull themselves out of their stretchers, climb into tanks and drive off to heroically vanquish their foes!

The Syrians are a hidden enemy.

There are only Syrian characters with brief speaking parts, and no real attempt at character development.

The series does show the degree to which the Israeli state was at war with Mizrahim working-class Jews, who were fighting for their rights. But it ends with nationalist clichés about the army being a melting pot where all elements of society are brought together, and tells Israeli viewers that despite their differences, at the end of the day their national unity is what matters.

Unlike previous Israeli TV series such as Fauda, there is no real questioning of the aims of the Israeli war machine, and no real attempt to paint the Arab 'enemy' as real human beings, to identify them or to explain what motivates them.

But despite these faults, the series is entertaining. It does effectively depict the horror of war, and provides a window into the ethnic and class divisions of Israeli society.

● Valley of Tears is currently being shown on Channel4

Housing campaigners protest CEO champagners

NICK AUVACHE

UNITE HOUSING WORKERS, BRANCH ORGANISER (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

On 25 November, bloated CEOs, senior managers and their hangers-on in the social housing industry attended their annual shindig. They were promised an evening of top-class entertainment, gourmet food, champagne and even branded chocolate.

They paid as much as £4,495 for a table at the UK Housing Awards. For those on a budget, there were seats available for as little as £395!

The Social Housing Awards Campaign (Shac) organised a parallel 'awards' ceremony. This was a genuine forum, where real tenants could speak and receive the trophies on behalf of their landlord to highlight their incompetence and profiteering.

Normally these landlords are shielded from the anger of their tenants and workers. But before these 'social landlords' could get to their champagne, they had to run the gauntlet of an impromptu picket set up by Shac and other housing campaigners.

Dressed in their dinner jackets and expensive evening gowns, they were forced to listen to the angry chants of the housing campaigners. We reminded them of the squalid conditions that many are forced to live in, broken promises, endless waiting to fix repairs, dangerous buildings, and exorbitant rents and service charges.

As the guests rolled in, many clearly felt very uncomfortable, others less so. When challenged about the costs of the event, one guest boasted about how she looked forward to drinking

champagne paid for by her tenants.

The CEOs of UK's top 25 housing associations are paid a total of £7.82 million a year. No wonder they are totally divorced from the reality faced by their tenants.

The CEOs did not hear the speeches from their tenants outside. They did not hear Kwajo, a young Clarion tenant.

Kwajo has led a campaign against the appalling conditions on his south London estate. One Clarion worker admitted to him that "not even animals would live in these conditions".

The housing bosses may not have heard these words, but they certainly felt the anger. Many of the CEOs and senior management present were, disgracefully, accompanied by representatives from local authorities.

There were justifiable calls for the



Socialists and trade unionists join the Shac protest

tops of these housing associations to go. But by itself, this will not be enough.

The 60-foot banner which headed the protest said: "Public housing not private profits." This is what Shac fights for.

We fight for this at protests, in strikes, and at the ballot box. That is why housing campaigners that share our view should join Shac and stand as Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates in the local elections next year.

Argentine elections see deepening polarisation

CELSO CALFULLAN
SOCIALISMO REVOLUCIONARIO (CWI CHILE)

On 14 November, elections took place in Argentina in which the Peronist government led by President Alberto Fernández was the main loser. This was despite the big demonstrations the Peronists called, mobilising the trade union federations that they still control.

It was a big defeat for the government, under its banner, Frente de Todos. It barely won two of the eight provinces and lost in the main regions.

Almost half of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies were up for grabs in the elections, as well as a third of the seats in the Senate.

Against a background of deep economic crisis, sections of the population gave a victory to the Macrista right (supporters of the former right-wing president Mauricio Macri). The next two years will, in all likelihood, be very unstable for the government and for society as a whole.

The right-wing opposition emerged victorious in the three most important provinces of Argentina, under the parliamentary list of the Together for Change coalition, to which Macri belongs.



New battles lie ahead. There will be a fight over an enormous and unpayable debt with the International Monetary Fund

This has weakened Peronism, especially in the Senate, where it lost the majority it has held for 30 years.

Another novelty of these elections was the entry into Congress of the extreme-right Trans-Andean Congress. Far-right representation has



President Alberto Fernández and Vice-President Fernández de Kirchner. Government candidates suffered big electoral losses

not been seen since 1983 (when the military dictatorship fell). In Buenos Aires, a member of the party, 'Liberdad Avanza' - Javier Milei a libertarian right-winger - won 17% of the first preferences.

Another important milestone in these parliamentary elections in Argentina was the leap forward by a coalition of the 'Trotskyist' left, FIT-Unidad, which managed to get four national deputies elected.

The left coalition won 1.3 million votes - a not inconsiderable vote for a radical left front.

Left Front

This left front, which despite trailing the coalitions that came first and second, has become the third force at national level. It is challenged for this position by Milei's ultra-right, which shows how Argentine society is politically polarising.

The left now has four seats at the national level, two legislators for the

city of Buenos Aires, two deputies for the third electoral district of the province of Buenos Aires, and several councillors in this same district.

In the province of Buenos Aires, it gained almost 600,000 votes (6.82%) for Nicolas Del Caño and Romina del Plá, as well as winning two provincial deputies (Guillermo Kane of the Workers' Party - PO, and Graciela Calderón of the Socialist Left - IS). Several councillors were picked up in urban municipalities, La Matanza, Merlo, Moreno and José Paz. This means that it made inroads into working-class districts.

For the first time in 20 years, the left has deputies from these districts to the National Congress. Myriam Bregman (PTS - Socialist Workers Party), obtained 7.76%, a little more than 141,000 votes, and Gabriel Solano (PO) and Alejandrina Barry also entered as deputies for the PTS. For his part, Luis Zamora of Self-Determination and Freedom also stood

and won 3.07%. This means that the left, as a whole, won almost 11% of the votes in the capital.

To the above, we must add a triumph in Jujuy, where Alejandro Vilca, a garbage collector worker, an indigenous representative of the Col-la people, and a militant of the PTS, was elected with 25% of the votes (more than 100,000 votes).

The FIT-Unidad has made important gains in the midst of a deep crisis in Argentina. It now is established as a significant political force, although quite far behind the larger coalitions.

If it turns towards the labour movement, participating in the different social struggles and with the prospect of strikes by workers, it can grow, and become a big factor in Argentina's politics.

New battles lie ahead. There will be a fight over an enormous and unpayable debt with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The struggle will be to ensure that workers are not

made to pay for the debt rather than those capitalists and speculators who have taken the money.

A reduction of pensions and wages of workers, attacks on the health budget, education and other basic rights of the working class are taking place.

Yet finance capital, landowners, and large economic groups continue to gain and accumulate millions. The result of this is already too evident - currently, 40% of the population are living below the poverty line.

New attacks

This situation could be deepened with an agreement between the Argentine government and IMF, which points to new attacks against the working class.

The ruling class is already calling for 'realism' and the government blames former President Macri for the current situation. Yet it is still attempting to get an agreement with the right wing on how to implement the cuts, seeking the much-desired 'governability' to try to sustain attacks against the poor. This will increase the anger and popular discontent to an even greater level.

The Left Front Unity campaign focused on two central points: rejecting adjustment and submission to the IMF, along with fighting for a 30-hour working week (a six hour-day, five-day week), maintaining a salary equal to the family basket, along with gender rights and defence of the environment.

These policies gained support among sections of the population that are looking for an alternative to the current unjust system.

It remains to be seen how this struggle can be continued, how to organise employed and unemployed workers, and how to coordinate the struggles.

New struggles will take place and the FIT-Unidad will need to be able to reach out and win workers away from Peronism and offer a real alternative. This is the test it faces. It must take steps to initiate the building of a mass working-class party with a full socialist programme.

What is Peronism?



Juan Perón and his second wife, Eva

Peronism is a populist, nationalist political movement peculiar to Argentina. It draws inspiration from the presidencies of the late Juan Perón.

Perón was an army general who headed the labour ministry in the country's fascist-sympathising military dictatorship between 1943-46, where he embroiled the trade union tops into the state machine.

He was elected president in 1946, against the declared interests of US imperialism, and moulded his vision of a corporatist state with 'new deal' social reforms.

These included popular measures such as nationalisation of transport and public utilities, promoting trade unions, raising wages, and implementing progressive social programmes - set against a very favourable economic background.

His nationalisations further antagonised US imperialism, although he later offered generous terms to

US companies, and others, to attract inward investment. He also struck blows against Argentina's big bourgeoisie and landowners, and the conservative Catholic church hierarchy (the Pope excommunicated him).

This pro-worker and anti-imperialist stance bolstered his political reputation among sections of the working class.

Perón's radical reputation was further enhanced following his overthrow in 1955 by military chiefs, backed by the capitalist ruling class. In exile, he courted the revolutionary left - the Peronist youth movement, mistakenly and fatally, linked up with the urban guerrillaist Monteneros. However, he also maintained links with far-right and fascist groups.

To underscore the irreconcilable political movement Perón headed, on his return from exile in 1973, 3.5 million supporters greeted him. However, right-wing Peronists

opened fire on left-wingers in the crowd killing at least 13 and injuring hundreds.

Perón went on to briefly become president again during a period of massive political instability in Argentina. During the internecine struggle between the left and right wings of Peronism, he led a brutal clampdown on the Monteneros and the left wing.

Perón died in 1974 and was succeeded by his third wife Isabel Perón, whose presidency was overthrown in 1976 by a brutal US-backed military coup d'état.

Peronism, at its height, was a form of 'bourgeois bonapartism'; a regime where the machinery

of the capitalist state temporarily elevates itself above the contending social classes in society, striking blows against one another, while ultimately representing the overall interests of capitalism.



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Issue 1158

2-8 December 2021

formerly **Militant**

STAFF AND STUDENTS UNITE AGAINST UNIVERSITY BOSSES' ATTACKS



PHOTO: ANDY BENTLEY

Why I'm striking

DECLAN KENNY

UCU STRIKER AT UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

The decision to go on strike is never an easy one. Every University and Colleges Union member that voted 'yes' to industrial action knows full well the impact our strike will have on students' education after what has been a difficult period.

This round of industrial action is about pensions, low pay,

casualisation, unmanageable workload, and inequality in pay based on race, gender, and disability.

But it's also much more than that. It's about agitating to displace the business model that renders students consumers and staff expendable cogs in the machine.

We are taking action to fight against a marketised higher education system that does not serve the needs of students and staff alike. At the peak of the pandemic we saw the lack of regard universities across the country had for students, ushering them into halls of residence where

they were forced to stay indoors in small living quarters. The reason was simple: to ensure the next year of rental income.

Common struggle

The crisis in many students' mental health and Covid-19 transmission that followed illustrates the complete lack of duty of care. Despite this, the very same university bosses insist on attempting to drive a wedge between staff and students. What they forget is that our struggle is the other side of the same coin.

The idea that students and staff are not on the same page is undermined by the fact that many of us are both staff and students. For PhD students in the humanities, our scholarships are not enough to cover our basic needs.

As a result, we are forced to find low-paid and precarious employment within the department. As a member of staff who also teaches, we are paid by the hour; the time allotted to prepping, teaching, and mentoring students is not sufficient to ensure we meet the expected standards.

I was also part of the first cohort of students who were made to pay £9,000-a-year tuition fees and have seen first hand how students went from learners to customers almost overnight.

Unless the bosses move, this is likely to be the start of many rounds of industrial action. But we are determined to win. What other choice do we have in the fight to build a higher education system that is fit for purpose and run in the interests of both students and staff?

• See more page 7

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



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ISSN 1366-9621