

## Putting food on the table or keeping warm. That's the stark choice facing millions more households as gas and electricity bills reach new unpayable heights.

In April, the typical household's energy bill will rise by about £700 a year, or 54%, taking it to nearly £2,000. That hike is likely to be followed in October by another £400 rise, with further rises expected.

Fuel poverty, ie households that spend 10% or more on energy bills, is set to triple overnight to 6.3 million households on 1 April.

10% of the £700 rise is to cover the cost of those firms which entered the consumer

energy supply market hoping to make a fast buck, but instead went bust when wholesale gas and electricity prices soared.

Meanwhile, the giant energy corporations - Shell, BP, ExxonMobil and Chevron - have reported multi-billion pound profits. Over the last decade, big oil and gas companies have dished out over £200 billion in dividends to shareholders.

The latest energy price shock is on top of a stinging hike by the Tory government in National Insurance contributions from April, a £20 a week cut in Universal Credit, alongside council tax rises, and with inflation at over 7.5% and rising.

### Government response

The response to soaring fuel poverty from Tory Chancellor Rishi Sunak - the richest MP whose family wealth runs into hundreds of millions, in addition to his undisclosed

investment trust - was to blithely chirp that we 'have to adjust to higher energy prices'!

Boris Johnson's government - which has handed over billions in dodgy PPE and other Covid-related contracts to its chums and to fraudsters - is to give households a paltry £200 in a 'buy now, pay later' scheme.

The £200 loan, in October, is simply to pay our energy bills, thereby keeping company executives and rich shareholders wealthy.

Sunak also trumpeted a council tax rebate for households in bands A-D. But the £150 barely compensates many people for this year's council tax rise as councils - Labour and Tory - pass on yet more Westminster spending cuts. Moreover, many tenants, whose landlords incorporate council tax into the rent, could lose out on the rebate.

Starmer's Tory-lite Labour Party's response is to call for a one-off 'windfall tax' on energy company profits. But why just take a slice of

bumper profits for one year when analysts predict the spike in energy costs is likely to continue for many years?

Instead of Labour's timid response, the trade unions should mobilise workers and the wider community to demand nationalisation of 'big energy', with compensation paid only to those with proven need, not the 'fat cats'.

Linked to a political campaign to build a new mass workers' party, a future workers' government could utilise the financial resources of the oil and gas giants to invest in renewable energy supplies, along with a massive scheme for insulating homes and installing domestic solar panels, and so on.

Such a programme would shrink our utility bills, reduce energy consumption, and create millions of skilled, high-paid jobs.

• See editorial 'Catastrophic energy bill hike - a crisis made by capitalism' - pages 4-5



# No one in Westminster backs a pay rise for us ... it's time to build a workers' political voice

SARAH SACHS-ELDRIDGE  
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL ORGANISER

£13,000! That's the difference between where our wages will be by the mid-2020s, and where they should be if wages had risen at pre-2008 financial crisis rates. It's definitely time for a pay rise!

On top of that you've got national insurance and food price hikes, soaring gas and electric bills, and rising rents hammering our living standards. Surely a wage rise is a no-brainer.

Not if you're the Governor of the Bank of England. Andrew Bailey told the BBC: "We do need to see restraint in pay bargaining, otherwise inflation will get out of control."

What's out of control is the cost of living crisis! What's out of control is the obscene wealth of Britain's billionaires. The banks' post-2008 measures actually helped boost their wealth by 310%.

Nothing short of a massive wealth-transfusion process has taken place via wage cuts - but also cuts to jobs, public services, privatisation, and rising charges and fees. It goes well beyond the austerity decade.

From 1980 to 2020 there has been an annual transfer of wealth from workers to the big business bosses, now worth £250 billion. So any wage rises workers win are not only necessary, but long overdue.

But there is no party in Westminster defending workers. Labour was founded by workers, but David Lammy, a member of Keir Starmer's front bench, appearing on the BBC, couldn't even say that workers deserve a pay rise.

Across the country, Labour councils are attacking workers' pay and conditions. In Birmingham, it was a Labour council who threatened homeworkers with pay cuts of up to £11,000. Today, Coventry Labour council is employing private HGV drivers on up to twice the current drivers' rates to try and break their strike.

When it comes to elections, workers who are fighting for a pay rise have no one to vote for who even agrees we need a pay rise - let alone being prepared to fight for it. That makes no sense. It means workers are fighting to defend living standards with one hand tied behind their back.

Fighting for a new mass workers' party is therefore part of the fight to defend our living standards. And that starts with showing what's possible and necessary by mounting a challenge in the local elections on 5 May - but also when opportunities arise.

A former Labour MP for Coventry South East for nine years, Socialist Party member Dave Nellist is standing as a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate in the Erdington by-election on 3 March.

Dave, a trade union member for 48 years, has a record of fighting for

Dave on the Youth Fight for Jobs 330-mile march from Jarrow to London



"Labour should refuse to implement Tory cuts"



TUSC 2015 election launch



Bob Crow (left), militant general secretary of transport union RMT until his death in 2014, with Dave (right) at the launch of No2EU - anti-cuts election alliance

pay. As an MP, he was a fighter for collective working-class action and organisation.

He was one of the first MPs to introduce a Private Members Bill for a national minimum wage. Today Dave, as a member of the Socialist Party, fights for a £15-an-hour minimum wage.

Trust in politicians is at the lowest level on record. Not surprising. Almost two-in-three people now see politicians as 'merely out for themselves'.

When Dave was an MP, he only took a worker's wage, calculated from trade union figures across ten Coventry factories, rather than the inflated salary designed to separate

MPs from those they are supposed to represent.

As a fighter for the working class in Westminster - where he was a socialist MP for nine years from his election in 1983 - Dave was a parliamentary spokesperson of the All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation.

He was expelled from Labour in 1992 for promising to follow fellow Militant MP - Militant was the Socialist Party's predecessor - Terry Fields to jail by refusing to pay the Poll Tax. Militant led the 18-million-strong mass movement that defeated the tax and also brought down Thatcher - with rich lessons for fighting the Tories today.

But Dave didn't stop using elected

positions to give a voice to working-class people. He was a socialist Coventry City councillor for 14 years. While Labour started privatising and cutting services, Dave refused to vote for cuts and supported workers struggling to defend their jobs and services, which he has also done out of office.

Until his retirement in 2017, Dave worked for 20 years for Citizens Advice in Coventry, defending workers in the courts and tribunals.

Contrast this approach with that of Keir Starmer's Blairite Labour - opposed to taxing the rich and to public ownership, even of the big energy companies as prices go through the roof.

As a Socialist Party member, Dave is part of an organisation that does

Labour's Erdington candidate, Paulette Harrison, was a council cabinet member during the Birmingham bin and care worker strikes. Dave was giving support and solidarity on the picket lines, along with Socialist Party members, while Paulette was in the council passing cuts of up to £11,000 a year for homeworkers.

Over the last ten years, Birmingham Council has lost the equivalent of £1.8 billion in spending power. Dave will fight to build a mass movement to win back the money the Tories have stolen off the city - as socialists did when Militant led Liverpool city council, 1983-1987.

As a Socialist Party member, Dave is part of an organisation that does



Dave at the Coventry bin strike - 'betrayed by a Labour council'



Dave - a workers' MP in a capitalist parliament

not accept the limits of the framework of existing capitalism - that workers must content ourselves with crumbs from the bosses' table at best.

Given the yawning inequality that exists, taxing the rich is increasingly popular. But in order to be able to start to really transform things, we need to nationalise the biggest 150 banks and corporations that dominate the economy. This would give workers the levers for the first steps towards a socialist planned economy, democratically run to meet the needs of all.

The pandemic revealed the potential power of workers many times, but significantly by the teachers who mobilised their collective strength and stopped Boris Johnson's unsafe

rushed return to schools. What could the six and a half million members of the trade unions do if we acted together? Combine that with those not yet in a union, linked up with young people, and communities!

Key to bringing that potential power to bear on the situation is the mass organisation of workers, including building a workers' political voice. It also means strengthening the trade unions, the main workers' organisations in the workplaces, where workers confront the bosses in the struggles over safety, pay, and conditions.

But it also means building a party like the Socialist Party, which stands firm for socialism come what may - standing up against the bosses, the

Tories, and the Blairites, and charting a way forward to build the maximum unity of the working class in struggle for socialist change.

This isn't only a question of struggle within Britain. Dave also has a record of international solidarity with workers fighting injustice - from the oppressed Tamil minority in Sri Lanka, to those fighting apartheid in South Africa, and much more.

Capitalism is an international system. That is why the Socialist Party is part of a worldwide struggle for socialism. We are affiliated to the Communist Party for a Workers' International (CWI), linking up with socialist fighters across the world, learning from each other, and fighting for Marxist ideas.

## Five ways you can be part of this fight for a voice for the working class

### 1. Join us on the streets in Erdington

Join our team doing leafleting, door-knocking and campaign stalls every day up to and including 3 March. The Labour Party is having to compel members to do this - given the pathetic offering they can put to workers. Can you help offer a socialist alternative to voters? Sign up here: nellistforerdington.com/join.

### 2. Donate to help fund the campaign

Big business funds the establishment parties, but unsurprisingly, not the attempts to build a workers' voice to fight them! Therefore this campaign relies on support from the working class and trade unions. If you are able, please donate to the campaign here: nellistforerdington.com/donate. You can also sign the trade union support petition here: nellistforerdington.com/tu.

### 3. Stand as a no-cuts candidate on 5 May

We can spread the idea of building a new mass workers' party by using the platform of elections to offer an alternative - but that requires candidates to stand. Imagine a council made up of people like Dave, with a record of standing up to the bosses, and of campaigning for their community! Local community groups, trade unionists and anti-cuts candidates can put up candidates who speak for workers - and you could be one of them! The only provision is that candidates are expected to endorse the TUSC core policy platforms - the basis of which is simple: vote against cuts and stand on the side of working-class people fighting back - and build the biggest fightback we can! See tusc.org.uk.

### 4. Fight for trade union participation in building a new mass workers' party

Trade unionists should discuss standing as no-cuts candidates. To help this process, there is a model motion that you can move in your branch or union on how the branch can "encourage our members to consider standing as anti-cuts candidates in the council elections scheduled for May 2022, noting that there is nothing that prevents them standing as candidates, in a personal capacity, for any party which truly supports trade unionist and socialist principles." Contact info@socialistparty.org.uk.

### 5. Join the Socialist Party

Visit [socialistparty.org.uk/join](http://socialistparty.org.uk/join), call 020 8988 8777, or text 'join' and your name and postcode to 07761 818 206 to find out more about joining us today.

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Dave with another Militant-supporting Labour MP, Terry Fields



Dave and Tamil refugee activists



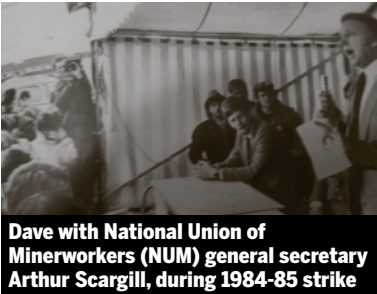
Dave supporting women victims of police spies outside court



Dave at the Remploy strike - the factories employing disabled workers were closed by the Tories



Protesting against the Bedroom Tax



Dave with National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) general secretary Arthur Scargill, during 1984-85 strike



Anti-Poll Tax activists. Dave was expelled from Labour for supporting mass non-payment



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

# Catastrophic energy bill hike - a crisis made by capitalism



Working-class families face a perfect storm. After two lost decades of living standards, stagnating wages, privatisation and cuts, and benefits slashed, now inflation is heading for 7%.

The situation will be made much worse by national insurance hikes and last autumn's Universal Credit cut - and now topped by a 54% rise in energy bills.

All of this, especially the bill rises, will hit those on the lowest incomes hardest. Regulator Ofgem has said that the annual cap will now be set at £1,971, an increase of £693.

For customers with prepayment meters the price cap will go up by £708 to £2,017. The number of families in fuel poverty, forced to under-heat or undereat or both, will rise to six million!

Fear that the resulting anger will find expression in a challenge to their right to rule has forced the Tories to come up with some measures.

To say they are inadequate is inadequate! They are a £200 grant - to be paid back, including by future customers who didn't receive it, via our energy bills over the next five years - and a £150 rebate for those paying council tax in the lowest bands.

**Beyond control?**  
The Tories combine these crumbs with claims that the situation is beyond their control.

Is it? What is causing the catastrophic rise in energy bills? In a new poll by the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit think tank, the second highest number of respondents thought that the price hike was down to measures by the Putin regime in Russia. The third most popular reason cited was increasing global demand.

Tory politicians are happy to promote these misleading arguments - that forces beyond our shores are to blame and therefore there is nothing they can do to mitigate the energy price rises. But like almost everything Tory MPs say, it is a lie.

About half of Britain's gas supply is domestic and about a third comes from Norway, with the rest mostly imported as Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) from other countries.

Russian exports account for about 3% of British gas usage - and, while no doubt Putin and the Gazprom bosses are flexing their muscles, there is no evidence of gas orders being withheld.

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**Energy production and distribution are not based on the needs of the overwhelming majority of the population and the environment, but on the profits of the extraction corporations and energy providers**

However, the way gas use is organised in Britain, on a 'just-in-time model,' does mean that price fluctuations in the wholesale market can have a drastic impact. Oil production was slowed during lockdown and inevitably the reopening of society has created pressures on reduced supplies.

For sure the fluctuations have been dramatic: gas prices increased ninefold in the year up to Christmas and are now five times higher than they were in January 2020. In the first lockdown the price of oil was \$40 a barrel and now it's threatening to go over \$100.

But what causes the price fluctuations? Is it a naturally occurring phenomenon beyond the reach of government measures?

The top response given in the poll on what people think lies behind rising bills points to the heart of the matter - energy company profiteering.

**Capitalist profit system**  
As with all the problems working-class people face, the energy price hikes derive from the us-and-them capitalist system in which we live.

For 'us' that means plummeting living standards: What does it mean for 'them'?

The surge in global gas markets through the final months of 2021, combined with an oil price rally to seven-year highs, mean BP and Shell are expected to make £40 billion in profit this year. It's reported that Shell will buy back \$8.5 billion of stock by the end of June, showing the money sloshing around.

In fact, Shell and BP have funnelled £147 billion to shareholders via dividends and share buybacks over the last decade. The BP chief executive, Bernard Looney, said in December that the energy crisis had transformed the company into a "cash machine"!

The bosses of the Big Six energy providers are some of the highest earners in Britain. The biggest energy companies made over £3billion in profit in 2020. The most recent Companies House accounts available for E.ON UK, SSE, EDF Energy, Scottish Power, and Centrica show their profits totalled nearly £100 per second.

Energy production and distribution are not based on the needs of the overwhelming majority of the population and the environment, but on the profits of the extraction corporations and energy providers.

That is expressed most sharply in the way the working-class and poor people who live in the major energy producing nations cannot afford oil and gas - in Africa, the Middle East, and beyond. This is the result of the energy 'market' - energy for profit and not for need. The market system does not work for any of 'us' - workers in any part of the world - just for 'them'.

One factor in the gas and oil price rise is speculation. Expectations that the price of oil will be higher in the future motivate investment funds, and as demand for futures contracts increases, so does their price, which also moves the current oil price. The EU and its component individual capitalist governments have spent decades opening up the gas market to greater competition and fewer price controls.

European regulators deregulated the gas sector and encouraged expanded investments in natural gas pipelines and LNG import facilities. Speculation is basically the act of purchasing something today with the anticipation of selling it at a higher price at a later date - more profiteering. Natural gas contracts for 2023, 2024 and 2025 are currently trading between 50% and 100% higher than their average over the past decade.

It isn't even that the oil producers don't ever intervene in the market. For example, the OPEC-plus oil producing governments and 'allies' agreed during the pandemic to slow oil production - not for the environment but to stop the price falling to zero in a period of low demand. What this shows is that we do need planning - but in the hands of the working class, for the needs of humanity and the environment not the phenomenally rich, fossil-owning few.

Another factor is historically low levels of investment in energy production, storage and distribution. The energy firms argue that their future isn't clear, given moves to renewables, and therefore investment isn't profitable. What is abundantly clear is that the privately owned and controlled energy market cannot be trusted with the necessary investment in green alternatives.

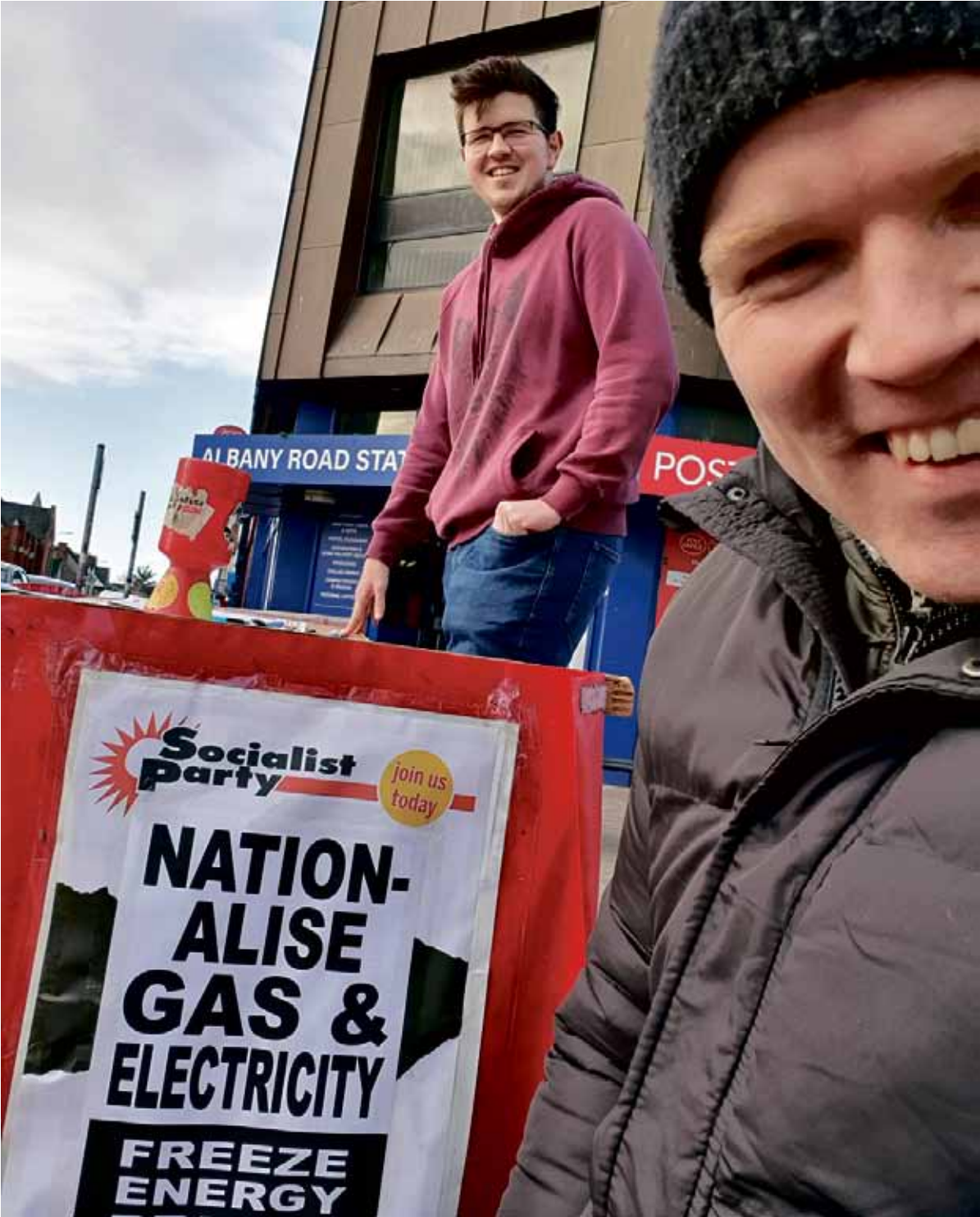
To take the urgent measures needed requires nationalisation. Calls for a windfall tax on these profits are increasing. However, that would still leave the ownership and running of energy in the hands of the energy companies - and for living standards and the environment that means only continued disaster. No wonder a majority support nationalisation of the energy companies.

**Spurious arguments**  
As the support for this demand grows, the defenders of capitalism will bring forward all sorts of arguments against it.

For example, they will claim that nationalisation would not actually be in workers' interests, given workers' pensions are invested in energy companies.

But that can be answered by the workers' movement bringing forward a programme that reflects both the interests of those who need the end of private ownership of energy and those who need decent pensions - compensation can be paid

“”  
**The fight against the energy rip-off and environmental catastrophe is part and parcel of the struggle to build a new mass workers' party**



A clear majority of the public support nationalisation of the energy companies

to investors on the basis of proven need. Democratic, accountable and representative committees of workers could oversee this.

This is part of the necessary development by the working class of a programme based on the maximum unity of the working class in struggle around a programme for socialism. This would include a programme of nationalisation of the major planks of the economy, under

democratic working-class control and management.

But even public ownership of large sections of the British economy, in the hostile climate of a capitalist world economy, would only be a first step towards breaking the power of the multinational corporations. International solidarity and international planning are also necessary.

However, if there was a general election tomorrow we would end up

with a government opposed to nationalisation. That's because none of the establishment parties - the Tories or Starmer's Labour - support this necessary policy. We need a party that does.

The fight against the energy rip-off and environmental catastrophe is part and parcel of the struggle to build a new mass workers' party that represents our interests with a socialist programme.

## 'I'm dreading trying to live on a nurse's salary'

### STUDENT NURSE

As a student nurse in London, I'm living in an expensive city on a paltry student loan during my three years of training.

Necessities like food and even haircuts are all extortionately priced. These are combined with the cost of travelling to and from my work placement - which is facing a rise.

All this has forced me take on extra work during my studies to help bridge the funding gap with my loan, which I'll have to pay back when I'm earning.

I'm dreading trying to live in London

on a nursing salary once I qualify at the end of this year. Rents are at an all-time high, and indeed continue to rise across the whole country, while nursing wages have fallen way short of price rises.

### Only option

My only housing option available is 'staff accommodation', which offers minimal privacy and is only temporary. Even if I get this, I will have to try and save enough to help cover the high rents once I must leave.

The rising costs of necessities, whether living in the capital or

elsewhere, means that more and more people are living from pay cheque to pay cheque.

It's frightening to see this exploitation of working people deepen with the removal of the energy price cap and the rise in national insurance. Meanwhile, the super-rich have profited during the years of the Covid pandemic.

Nurses, like many other workers, have been left behind and exploited over and over again by this Tory government of the rich.

It's high time that workers stand up and fight.



## 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 £12 an hour without exemptions as a step towards a real living wage of at least £15. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings. Scrap zero-hour contracts.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension.

- Scrap Universal Credit. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.
- A 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

### ENVIRONMENT

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

### RIGHTS

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

### MASS WORKERS' PARTY

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

### SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations.
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the bosses' neoliberal European Union and single market. For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!

**Do you agree? Join the fightback!**  
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# Cuts created NHS waiting list crisis



Barts NHS strike PAUL MATTSSON

## Tories' 'levelling up' falls well short

USEMU MAKAYA  
BIRMINGHAM NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

The Conservative Party has wheeled out its 'levelling up' announcements, promised during the 2019 general election, targeting 12 'missions of development' to be reached by the decade's end. This agenda falls short of addressing the needs of the most deprived areas, especially in response to the pandemic's economic impact.

The new policy doesn't actually provide any new money, just rehashing previous announcements. The Tories have cut £15 billion from the annual central government grants for councils. Council budgets have been cut by 60% since the 2008 financial crash.

In the report, old measures of deprivation are gone. Instead, the Conservatives introduce a new set of criteria, which omits crucial factors such as crime, health and income! The report fails to even specifically mention rural areas.

Some of the most prosperous areas – most notoriously Tory chancellor Rishi Sunak's Richmondshire – are included in the highest priority rank, while many of the most deprived areas are stuck in limbo.

The finer print fares little better. There is a £28-per-capita gap between the money for Conservative-run authorities and their Labour counterparts.

One of the only real announcements is powers for more regional mayors. The Tories claim that this

could better allocate local spending. But it would only make it easier for one person to take unpopular decisions to cut and privatise services, and favour business interests.

West Bromwich, my hometown, ranked among the 30% most deprived areas in England before the pandemic. A major local issue is the risk to the borough's young people of violence and exploitation – in part, this has been traced to recent unemployment spikes aggravated by the inaccessibility of training, and a lack of services for young people's emotional and mental health needs. The current levelling-up policy does not address this.

## Labour is no alternative

ROSS SAUNDERS  
SOCIALIST PARTY WALES SECRETARY

Labour's response to the Tory 'levelling-up' plans must be the most uninspiring thing I've ever read. Fighting bullshit with bullshit – contentless platitudes about 'city centre regeneration' and 'anti-social behaviour'.

A real socialist would explain we could wipe out unemployment, end insecurity at work and reindustrialise on a green basis only if we nationalise big companies and direct them to carry out a job creation programme.

HOLLY DONOVAN  
NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

In desperate need of urgent spinal surgery, I am forced to be a patient patient. Due to the long waiting list, I am left bedbound whilst in immense pain.

As I write, broken metalwork is slowly but surely ripping through my back. The creeping horror of knowing that my fate is set, that I will become more paralysed with each passing day, is palpable. Though my case may be unique, sadly it is not singular.

Recently a friend with a painful hernia was advised by a doctor at A&E to "go to the gym, lift something heavy and make it worse". With the waiting list at my friend's local hospital so long, the only way prompt treatment could be given was if he hurt himself enough to need emergency surgery.

In October, the waiting list for 'non-urgent' hospital treatment, such as hip replacement surgery, rose to 5,975,216. Nearly six million people suffering, stuck in limbo.

All those people in pain, powerless, forced to wait. Even the Tories' plan to deal with the backlog expects waiting lists to rise for another two years.

Capitalist politicians argue that Covid is to blame. But this is not the case.

Despite the immense legitimate pressures that the pandemic has brought, this crisis has been decades in the making, caused by the purposeful failure to fully finance the NHS by successive Tory and Labour governments.

Decades of constant underinvestment have created ideal conditions to push those who are desperate enough to turn to private treatment to skip the queue. If I were able to pay, I could have my surgery at the same hospital, with the same consultant, within the week.

This needless suffering of the population is a choice. It is a choice to debase the beautiful ideals that created the NHS, to betray the working class, and place profit before people.

I am trapped more in this disgusting system, than I am in my bed. I continue to be a not-so-patient patient, hoping that one day people will be considered more important than profit.

### The Socialist Party says:

- An immediate 15% pay rise for all health and care staff including those in privatised sectors. Minimum wage of £15 an

hour. Scrap zero-hour contracts immediately

- Reverse all privatisations. Scrap the Health and Social Care Bill and Private Finance Initiative. Bring all outsourced workers and services in-house on permanent contracts

- A fully publicly funded NHS and care system, free at the point of use. Scrap prescription charges in England, dental and all health charges

- Nationalise the private healthcare sector, care homes, the medical supply industry and the pharmaceutical companies - integrate them into the NHS

- Reinstate student bursaries and scrap tuition fees

- We can't trust pro-privatisation, pro-austerity, anti-working-class politicians. Fight for the building of a new mass workers' party

- A socialist NHS - democratically run by elected and accountable committees, including service workers and users

- A socialist planned economy to end oppression, poverty and inequality

WHAT'S  
YOUR VIEW?

editors@socialistparty.org.uk



## Tories' 'partygate' crisis continues – kick them out

KATIE SIMPSON  
NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Five Tory aides have quit. The Boris Johnson government faces growing anger for partying in 10 Downing Street, as people were forced to stay at home or pay hefty fines for breaking lockdown rules.

The Tory party is riven by splits. And the row over 'partygate' is revealing this even more openly.

The public have not been satiated by pitiful apologies from Boris. He's only 'sorry' because he got caught.

Tory MPs have angered constituents by defending Johnson. Peter

Bone, Tory MP for Wellingborough, said that his constituents had "moved on", and described Boris's party as "accepting cake and eating it".

In reality, Boris and his cabinet broke numerous rules during the height of the lockdown. From Dominic Cummings "testing his eyesight" by driving to Barnard Castle, to Matt Hancock's inability to socially distance himself from a Tory aide. All this while people missed birthdays, weddings, funerals and the chance to be by their loved ones side as they passed.

It is unlikely that a new Tory prime minister will be able to put a lid on

the growing frustration among the public. But with pro-austerity Sir Keir Starmer leading the Labour 'opposition', people are looking for another political alternative.

The working class deserves an electoral choice which represents their interests. That's why the Socialist Party is backing and standing candidates under the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) banner. We're ordinary working-class activists, who stand against cuts and privatisation, and if elected as MPs, like Dave Nellist in Birmingham Erdington, we would only take an average worker's wage.



SIMON DAWSON/NO 10 DOWNING STREET/CC



# Force back Serco and Barts management!

● Fight outsourcing and privatisation ● 15% pay rise for all

## LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The Barts hospital workers' picket lines in east London have been big, bold and angry. Strikers have made themselves heard, a clear message has been sent to management and Serco.

The strike has had other affects too. The action has already encouraged more workers across the hospitals to get organised and new reps have come forward.

Socialist Party members have been down to support the pickets. We have encouraged other trade unionists and campaigners to come, and spread news of the strike across the trade union movement, with hundreds of pounds raised in solidarity.

Other staff, patients and passers-by have all given enthusiastic support to the fight. Most people are appalled to learn of the bullying behaviour, workloads and low pay outsourced staff at Barts Trust experience.

Serco has given the NHS Trust 18 months' notice that it will be ending its contract in April 2023. They have made huge profits over the years by driving down the conditions of outsourced staff and keeping pay low.

We say: bring services back in-house now! The Barts' bosses should be held accountable for the disaster which privatisation has meant for the staff.

Outsourcing is just an excuse for more companies to make a profit from our NHS. But these companies can be beaten. A number of strikes



The strike has encouraged more workers to get organised and become reps

have been effective in getting workers brought back in-house. This can happen at Barts too!

If this strike wins a guarantee of being brought back in-house, especially with an early end to Serco's contract, it can have an electrifying impact on the confidence of all staff.

All workers in the health service deserve a pay rise. As inflation rises and the cost of living increases, more NHS workers will struggle to pay the bills. Consultative ballots on pay at the end of last year got overwhelming majorities in two of the health unions.

Now a concerted effort to co-ordinate industrial ballots and strike action across all the health unions is needed. This is the only way to smash low pay in the NHS.



Unite Barts secretary and Socialist Party member Len Hockey speaking at the Whipps Cross strike rally on 4 February ISAI PRIYA

## "Low pay, no way!" Strikers rally at Whipps Cross

### ISAI PRIYA

WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

"Low pay, no way" and "Serco Serco, get out!" These were the messages given by the striking Barts health workers at the rally outside Whipps Cross hospital on 4 February. They also certainly know how to picket and rally - energetic, enjoyable and bold.

No one in the neighbouring area could have missed the loud chants of these determined workers fighting against low pay and privatisation - one of the key demands is for their services to be brought back in-house.

The Whipps Cross rally was joined by workers in the Royal London and Barts hospitals also on strike, and had a great line-up of speakers. Len Hockey, the secretary of Unite Barts and Socialist Party member, started the rally by congratulating the marvellous action taken by the workers so far. He was then joined by the Unite London and Eastern regional secretary Peter Kavanagh, who reaffirmed that Unite the Union will continue to support Barts workers,

and one of the striking Unite reps at Whipps Cross.

Linda Taaffe, Waltham Forest Socialist Party member and the secretary of Waltham Forest Trades Council, started her speech by pointing out the hypocrisy of the governor of the Bank of England who said workers should not demand a pay rise, and yet he gets paid £575,538! She gave solidarity from the trades council and reported that at its annual general meeting this month, they agreed to organise a public meeting to bring together the four industrial disputes taking place in the borough.

Rob Williams, the national chair of the National Shop Stewards Network, said: "This dispute could be settled today if Barts bosses committed to bring the outsourced workers back in-house on NHS contracts from day one."

Other speakers included an RMT member and tube striker from Hainault depot.

The strikers and supporters then marched in one of the biggest demos by workers seen in Waltham Forest. It

shows that workers are fighting back locally.

There were more speeches at the end, and Len Hockey, concluding the rally, outlined the plan for strike action the following week. The Barts workers are out until 13 February and then will start a further fortnight of action on 28 February. Socialist Party members in East London will continue to stand with them on the picket lines.



## Tesco slashes jobs and customer service

### Urgent fightback needed against profiteer bosses

### IAIN DALTON

CHAIR, USDAW BROAD LEFT AND SOCIALIST PARTY

Job losses in the region of 1,600 jobs could go at Tesco. After two years of being praised as front-line key workers during the Covid-19 pandemic, this is how Tesco is repaying the workers, who have earned shareholders bumper profits over that period.

Tesco boss, John Allan, warned of a hike in food prices and outrageously claimed that "we don't make an awful lot of profit in relation to our sales." Yet the supermarket made a whopping £2.6 billion in operating

profit this financial year.

The job cuts are the result of a number of proposed measures including ending overnight restocking at 85 stores, closing fish, meat and deli counters in 317 stores, and bringing in 'pay-at-pump only' overnight in petrol stations at 36 stores.

Tesco will also be shuttering its Jack's range of discount stores, set up as a competitor to Aldi and Lidl. With Tesco copying their model across all their stores anyway, Jack's is now deemed unnecessary, with seven closing altogether and six being converted to large Tesco stores.

This is being spun as responding to 'customer demand' by putting more people to help customers on the shop floor, but these workers will have to do this alongside their actual job of refilling their shelves. But clearly, such changes are not being driven by the best interest of the customers - closing counters clearly means less choice! Not to mention having to navigate aisles clogged with cages as shelves are refilled during the busier daytime, rather than quieter periods at night.

Allan also seemed to disagree with the Bank of England governor after he

told workers not to ask for pay rises. Allan said: "We think our colleagues deserve pay rises." Yet Tesco basic pay is still less than £10 an hour, and even the promise of a 5% pay rise for shop floor staff, pledged by Allan, is less than constantly rising inflation.

The approach in retail union Usdaw's press release to "support members throughout the process" is simply not enough. Such weakness in the face of Tesco and other companies' profit-driven attacks will simply engender more such aggression.

Workers in Tesco distribution demonstrated how, when a lead is

given, Usdaw members will respond, with votes for strike action in 13 depots leading to increased pay offers.

We need to mobilise union members in retail (and the wider trade union movement) to defend and improve their pay, terms and conditions. Workers should fight for control over the workplaces and conditions, linked to bringing the major supermarket chains into democratic public ownership, given their pivotal nature to the supply and distribution of food as the pandemic showed.

● See more at [usdawactivist.wordpress.com](https://usdawactivist.wordpress.com)





# TUSC LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE REPORT

## Preparing our ‘troops’ for the council battleground elections on 5 May and the Erdington byelection



Dave Nellist (above centre), TUSC candidate in the forthcoming Erdington byelection, chaired the successful TUSC local elections conference PHOTO TU SENAN

**“T**he working class across England and Wales is facing the biggest cost of living crisis in 30 years, and the last 30 years have not been milk, honey and plenty,” said chair Dave Nellist opening the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) 2022 local government conference.

In the midst of this crisis there is, in the main, a ‘choice’ between voting for the ‘red Tories’, the ‘blue Tories’ or the ‘yellow Tories’. Instead, workers urgently need a mass party which will act in the interests of our class.

The conference, attended online by over 250 people, was an important meeting to discuss the next steps in the fight for working-class political representation.

Hannah Sell, general secretary of the Socialist Party, pointed out that much of the capitalist media defends Keir Starmer, whereas they led the charge against Jeremy Corbyn. The media is acting in the interests of the bosses, and they know that the Labour Party under Starmer will represent their interests in power. He has made it clear that the Labour Party won’t back the nationalisation of the energy companies, support workers fighting for pay rises, or challenge austerity.

Naomi Byron, a member of Unison’s national executive council, spoke in a personal capacity about how the election of a Labour government would

continue NHS privatisation.

Amy Murphy, former president of Usdaw, the shop workers’ union and member of the TUSC steering committee, spoke about the anger of working-class people at being forced to pay for the Covid crisis. The supermarket where she works “announced massive profits and within two weeks was announcing job losses.”

Workers are angry at the system but don’t have a party of their own that can channel that anger and fight for a real alternative.

### Labour history

Jared Wood, National Executive Committee member of the RMT rail union, one of the constituent parts of TUSC, drew parallels between today and the situation over 100 years ago which led to the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS), one of the predecessors of the RMT, to take the steps which led to the creation of the Labour Party.

Workers then were faced with a choice between the Tories and the Liberals, two out-and-out capitalist parties. The capitalists then were attacking the unions’ ability to organise and using laws to prosecute workers who were fighting back.

The ARS concluded that there would be “no permanent settlement on behalf of workers without a change in the political system and without the representation of workers in that political system.”

For workers to have political representation independent of the two capitalist parties they then needed a party of their own. It’s the same choice today, as shown by the recent defection of the former Tory MP Christian Wakeford to join Starmer’s Labour Party.

As the late RMT general secretary Bob Crow, one of the founding members of TUSC, put it, the programme put forward by the main parties amounts to the “same pie with different gravy.” Workers across England and Wales are drawing conclusions following the defeat of Corbynism within the Labour Party, and Starmer’s successful campaign to make the party safe for the capitalists.

Ian Hodson, the bakers’ union (BFAWU) national president, gave the union’s greetings and wished Dave Nellist success in the Erdington byelection. Ian made clear that his members didn’t “decide to leave the Labour party because I was expelled” but because under Starmer’s leadership “the Labour Party no longer represented the communities that we live in.”

And the reason that the capitalist establishment was so intent on smashing the last traces of Corbynism in the Labour Party was because it represented an alternative and an inspiration for workers to fight back.

The bakers’ union is continuing to fight for these policies ie, for a £15 an hour minimum wage, an end to zero-hour contracts and an end to lower youth rates of pay. BFAWU will be

backing political candidates that do so.

An important front in the ‘class war’ is the local councils. Chris Williamson of Resist, another constituent part of TUSC, made the point that councillors can resist austerity and build council houses, but lack the political will to do so.

### Council battleground

Councils across England and Wales are setting their budgets for the coming year, but instead of fighting back, Labour-run councils are continuing to do the Tories’ dirty work by implementing the cuts at local level. Cuts to bus services, children’s services, disabled services, and cuts to unpaid carers, are being put forward. As Chris said: “You can’t manage the cuts in a compassionate way.”

Andy Walker, representing individual members in TUSC, spoke about the close links between councillors and property developers, which come at the expense of the working class.

In Bristol, the council is cutting union facility time by 75%. Tom Baldwin, a TUSC candidate in an upcoming by-election in the city, pointed out that it’s a very small amount of money in the budget, but is an attack on unions’ ability to organise.

Those same unions that affiliate and fund the Labour Party are under attack because the Labour council want to hamper their ability to fight for council workers’ interests against the cuts!

Hugo Pierre, a member of Unison’s NEC and a local government worker, speaking in a personal capacity, brought up the example of his local council, Tower Hamlets.

Instead of aiming at the bankers in Canary Wharf in Tower Hamlets, the Labour-run council made their workforce pay for austerity. It was one of the first employers to use ‘fire and rehire’ tactics; sacking workers and taking them back on with worse pay and conditions.

Over the last ten years there have been over 500,000 redundancies in local government and closer to one million jobs lost. Unison research found that councils in England and Wales alone have a combined £10 billion deficit.

Dave Warren, TUSC Wales committee, said the situation facing Welsh workers is much the same, despite having had a Labour government in the Wales Senedd since its inception in 1999.

The Welsh government’s budget is, in effect, ‘missing’ £3 billion, if it had grown at the same rate as the economy. But Welsh Labour in the Senedd and in the local councils isn’t launching a fight to demand that £3 billion from the Westminster government.

There is an alternative to sadly, or not so sadly, implementing Tory austerity. Onay Kasab, Unite the Union’s lead officer for local government, spoke officially on behalf the union and reported that it is their policy to call “on all local authorities to pass needs-based, no cuts legal budgets, using reserves and borrowing powers to fill gaps. While also campaigning with communities and trade unions to win the funds that are needed.”

What’s required is for councils to take the ‘Liverpool road,’ following the example of the Militant-led socialist council in 1983-87 which refused to pass on Thatcher’s cuts.

Those councillors mobilised the working class of Liverpool to demand the resources the city needed, and won. They were then able to create thousands of jobs and build over 5,000 council houses, parks, schools and sports centres.

Unite has 75 active industrial disputes at the moment. These struggles can inspire other groups of workers to take action themselves. But as Onay said, those workers deserve to be given a chance to vote for candidates who will inspire them in turn. It is also Unite policy to only support candidates who support the union’s policies.

Jared Wood made the point that the RMT’s members are facing the dismantling of the rail network as it is now, and huge cuts to London Underground.

To convince workers of the need to fight and strike against this scale of attacks there needs to also be a political alternative. Otherwise workers are faced with permanent battles to defend themselves with no victory in sight.

Workers need their own political party to put forward and fight for a programme to end these constant attacks, which can then in turn give confidence to fight industrial battles.

### Federal structure

TUSC is organised with a federal structure. It is a ‘coalition of equals,’ similar to the early Labour Party. This enables all those who agree with the core policies of TUSC - which includes an opposition to all cuts, support for workers in struggle, and an opposition to all forms of oppression - to stand under its umbrella.

Individual candidates, campaigns, groups and parties can put forward their own programme and material that builds on this core policy in the elections and out of them. This is an important factor to build trust and the forces necessary for a new mass workers’ party.

TUSC also gives the right to the constituent parts of TUSC which includes the RMT trade union, the Socialist

Party, Resist, and others, a veto over candidates or decisions. As Jared put it, out of all the organisations to the left of Labour, “TUSC has by far the most coherent link with the organised trade union movement.”

Dave Nellist, national chair of TUSC, made an appeal for candidates to stand in May’s elections. Socialist Party members will be standing candidates but we are also fighting for trade unionists, community campaigners, students and all those who want to fight back, to stand alongside us under the TUSC umbrella.

### Erdington byelection

But coming before the council elections, Dave Nellist is the TUSC candidate in the Birmingham Erdington by-election on 3 March. Canvassing sessions are taking place every weekend. For TUSC to be able to have as much of an impact as possible, the more help the byelection campaign can get, the better.

In Erdington, as Hannah Sell put it: “There is huge class anger; a feeling that none of these parties stand up for us, that working class people have been ‘shoved under the bus.’ That kind of fury is palpable.”

Corinthia, a Unite steward and Erdington resident, spoke about the disgust of workers when they found out the Labour candidate in the upcoming by-election, Paulette Hamilton, is



**There is huge class anger; a feeling that none of these parties stand up for us, that working class people have been ‘shoved under the bus’, said Hannah Sell, Socialist Party general secretary**

the councillor responsible for the attacks on the homecare workers. She also was a council cabinet member while attacks to the bin workers’ employment terms were voted through.

Both these assaults on pay and conditions resulted in strike action across the city and wins for the workers involved.

Hannah emphasised that the byelection is a big opportunity for socialists. We can “convince some of these workers that instead of staying at home and not bothering to vote, they can instead vote for a socialist candidate who

would be a workers’ MP”

This task isn’t separate from the council elections. Young people and workers across the country who have been enthused by the TUSC campaign in Erdington, who have donated money or signed the petition in support, can’t leave it there.

The next step is standing themselves, to fight the cuts in the local elections, and to start the discussions in their unions, community groups or campaigns about the need for a new mass workers’ party armed with a socialist programme.



## TUSC LOCAL ELECTIONS

Visit [tusc.org.uk](https://tusc.org.uk) to see TUSC’s draft platform, core policies and how to stand as a candidate in 5 May elections.

### Erdington byelection

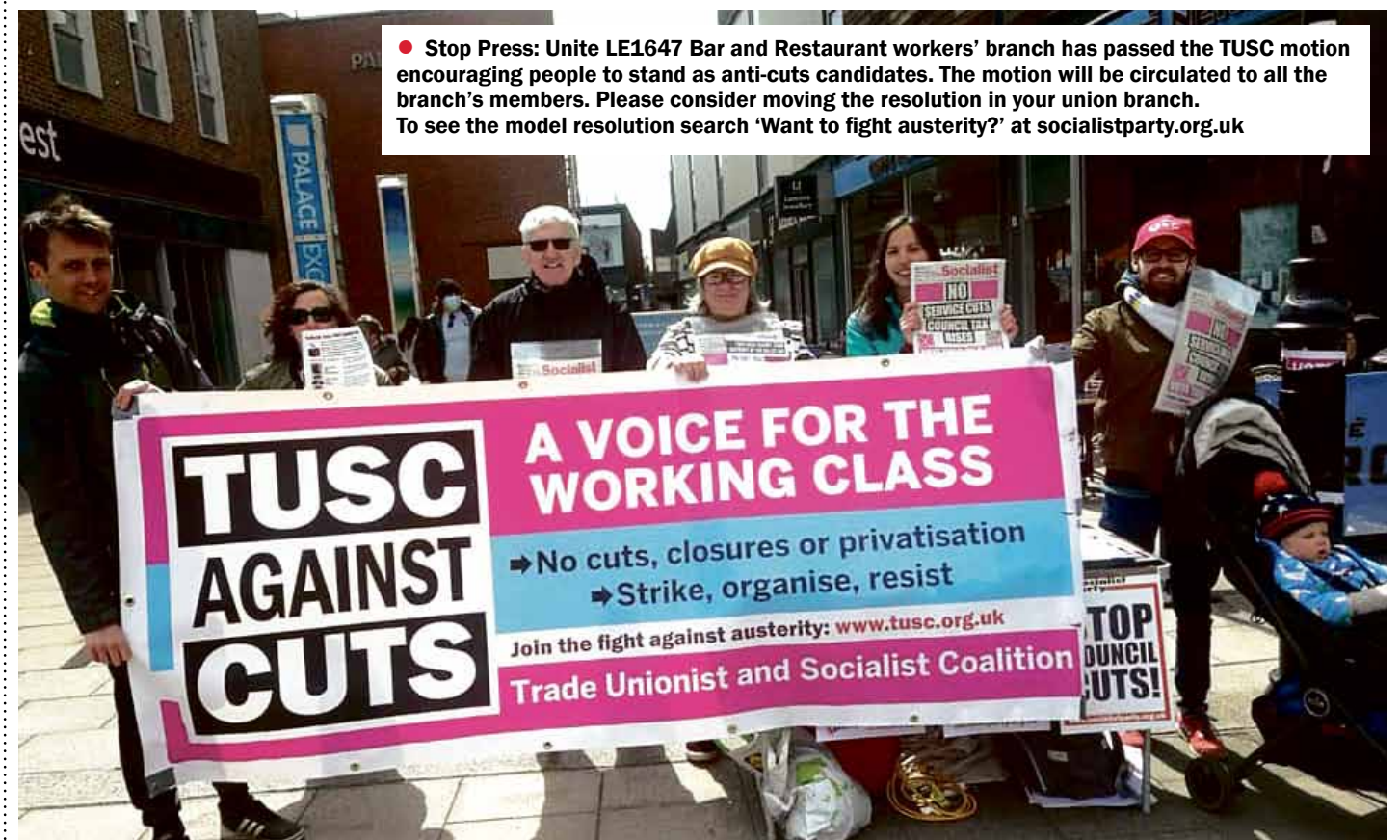
There will be campaigning taking place every day from now to polling day.

To volunteer, fill in the form at [bit.ly/TUSCErdingtonVolunteer](https://bit.ly/TUSCErdingtonVolunteer) and this way we can link you up with others who are coming to lend a hand.

You can also make a donation towards the campaign here - [nellistforerdington.com/donate.html](https://nellistforerdington.com/donate.html)

For more info, phone/text 07530429441 or email [tuscbirmingham@gmail.com](mailto:tuscbirmingham@gmail.com)

● Promoted by Joe Foster, 11 Kerby Rd, Birmingham B23 7EX on behalf of Dave Nellist



Reestablishing TUSC in local and national elections can play an important part in the future development of a new mass workers’ party



# A socialist voice in Stanwell North

## Vote TUSC in the by-election on 23 February



PAUL COUCHMAN  
TRADE UNIONIST AND SOCIALIST COALITION (TUSC)  
CANDIDATE FOR STANWELL NORTH

The Surrey Advertiser carried an article on 4 February, titled 'County's plan to tackle growth in levels of poverty'. It rightly exposed the massive divide that exists between the very wealthy and the rest of us in Surrey.

The headline is a little misleading, as it infers that the council intends to do something about this. But the Tories have been in power across most of Surrey for decades, and things have only gotten worse.

Inequality has grown exponentially during the pandemic. The number of people in Surrey claiming Universal Credit leapt 235% from March 2020 to August 2021, according to a council report.

Foodbank use has gone through the roof. The Trussell Trust has added six foodbank distribution centres to the 25 already active in Surrey before the pandemic.

Even before Covid, poverty - and child poverty in particular - was growing. In 2019, nearly 11% of Surrey households, including 20,000 children, were in relative poverty.

Life expectancy in Stanwell North is just 63.7 years, 13 years lower than wealthy nearby areas. Almost one fifth of children in Stanwell North claim free school meals.

Spelthorne has over 2,500 families

on its housing waiting list - often desperately waiting for years. Many of these families are living in poor, cramped and unfit conditions. A recent report showed that a family would need combined earnings of well over £100,000 a year to get a mortgage on the average house in the borough.

Spelthorne Council has the power and the resources to build hundreds of good quality, environmentally sustainable, carbon neutral, family homes. The work should be done in-house with quality controls, taking on local builders and apprentices on trade union terms and rates of pay. There are masses of brownfield sites, ex-office blocks, etc, which could be turned over to council housing.

The Socialist Party says the council should also use their powers to cap rents charged by private landlords, pay a £15-an-hour minimum wage to its workforce, and campaign, alongside the trade unions, to get local businesses to do the same.

But no-one on the council is talking about what is really needed. Where are the councillors refusing to make any more cuts in services?

I am standing in the by-election in Stanwell North on 23 February to offer a socialist, working-class alternative to residents. No more Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum between the Tories and Labour, but a real anti-austerity, anti-cuts, pro-public services alternative.



# King's student union refuses to back staff strike and NUS walkout

SANKU HASAN ARUN  
KING'S COLLEGE SOCIALIST STUDENTS

I went to the annual general meeting of the university student union at King's College London (KCL) to raise two things. Firstly, to enquire about the election promises by student union officers to reduce rents. And secondly, to support strike action by the University and College Union (UCU) and National Union of Students (NUS) walkout.

On rent reduction, student union representatives said gains had been made, but refused to disclose any concrete details. They quoted confidentiality agreements with student accommodation, which will only be revealed next academic year. What is the possible rationale behind keeping this secret?

Students and university workers have common interests in going on strike. Uni workers face pension cuts, a fall in real wages, longer hours and casualised contracts.

Graduate teaching assistants are double exploited - underpaid for

their work, while paying higher tuition fees and rent. These wretched conditions are affecting their ability to teach productively, and their mental health.

Similarly, students face higher tuition and accommodation fees. Many KCL students have bank loans to cover their costs.

These dire conditions are the consequence of increasing penetration of the capitalist free market into education. Commercialisation has reduced the student-teacher relationship to service provider and consumer.

In informal conversations, many students talk about the salability of their thesis in order to obtain fellowships and scholarships. The free market has arrested creativity in education.

But it's also created common suffering for the students and university staff. And brought us to student and staff strike action.

Mistakenly, KCL student union president Zahara Syed said that strike action by UCU and NUS "is not

in the interest of the students, as they have suffered enough from Covid lockdown".

We don't want to strike. But it's the most effective tool we have to stop genuine suffering - underpayment of uni staff, job insecurity through casualisation, gender and disability pay gap, exorbitant tuition and accommodation fees.

Scandalously, to discuss all these complex issues, I was only granted one minute to speak at the student union meeting. From the beginning of the academic year, only Socialist Students has been opposing the commodification of education, campaigning for scrapping tuition fees, and calling for democratic student control over determining accommodation rent.

● Socialist Students annual conference is on Saturday 26 February in Birmingham to discuss how to rebuild the student movement, and what next after 2 March - visit [socialiststudents.org.uk](http://socialiststudents.org.uk) to sign up for updates about the conference



# Just Eat couriers drive chief exec out of town as strike spreads

ALISTAIR TICE  
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

Striking Just Eat/Stuart couriers and supporters scared off a McDonald's big cheese from visiting the Sheffield Hillsborough restaurant recently. This chief executive was due at midday, but despite suits and police present he didn't show, so the surprise welcome went ahead anyway.

Insiders reported afterwards that the CEO had been advised by his security not to visit due to flares (only one was lit up one hour after he was due!) and that he demanded that his store manager meet him in Doncaster 20 miles away. Staff were told that

they weren't allowed to talk about what happened!

The delivery drivers, some organised in the independent union the IWGB, are fighting against a pay cut imposed by Stuart, the delivery contractor for Just Eat takeaways, part of the DPD logistics group, which in turn is owned by the French state-owned La Poste.

As well as continuing targeted strike action against Just Eats' biggest clients like McDonald's and now Greggs, the Sheffield drivers and the union are improvising new tactics to increase pressure on Stuart and clients. After the successful car blockade of Archer Road McDonald's on 30 January, a KFC and then another McDonald's were blocked on 6

February. And in London, 20 IWGB activists invaded a DPD warehouse for half an hour, much to the consternation of the managers.

These high profile actions have helped publicise the strike which is spreading beyond Sheffield again, with 30 drivers in Middlesbrough joining the strike. The IWGB has been contacted by drivers in Dewsbury, Leicester and Manchester as well. There are now plans to call on the trade union movement, especially trades councils, to support a national day of action against JustEat/Stuart by organising protests and pickets in as many towns and cities as possible, which can help spread the strike further and put Stuart under more pressure to reverse the pay cut.

# Scunthorpe scaffs mark 100 days of strike action with protests



Scotland solidarity protest for the Scunthorpe scaffolders PHILIP STOTT

SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

100 days! By the time you read this, that's how long the scaffolders will have been on strike against their contractor Actavo working at British Steel Scunthorpe. In a dispute going back three years, they are fighting for the national industry rate for the job which is 10-15% higher than they get paid now.

These scaffs have shown tremendous solidarity, determination and fortitude. With their union Unite, they are employing ever more dynamic and effective strike action and leverage tactics, not just on the picket line but around the country and beyond.

Pickets have protested at the Buxton HQ of High Peak Scaffolding, one of the scabbing firms, who have now agreed to stop crossing the picket line and pulled off site. This follows on from a similar agreement made by Altrad after a flying 'visit'. Who's next?

The offices of Lia Nici, Tory MP for Grimsby, was visited due to her refusal to support her constituents. Despite not turning up, she accused the Unite protesters of being "unhelpful and aggressive". So much for the Conservatives' 'levelling up' agenda and wanting a 'high wage economy'!

Further direct action is planned against Actavo bosses and scabbing firms. In particular, a national day of action has been called by Unite for Tuesday 22 February, with a big demonstration planned at Gate 10, Brigg Road, Scunthorpe Steel Works, DN16 1DL.

All of this is piling pressure on Actavo, and their client British Steel (now owned by the Chinese multinational Jingye Group) who pay hundreds of other workers on site less than the industry rate - the reason why they have refused to pay up so far.

# Tamil Solidarity protest against repressive Sri Lankan regime

LAWANYA RAMAJEYAM  
TAMIL SOLIDARITY

On Sri Lankan independence day, 4 February, Tamil Solidarity organised a protest at the Sri Lankan high commission in London to oppose the repressive Sri Lankan regime. The working class, Tamil speakers and Sinhala people, suffer from poverty.

People have nothing to lose. They are ready to fight in any situation.

Everywhere protests are taking place in Sri Lanka - farmers, electricity workers, plantation workers and students. Almost all sectors of workers are on the road to fight against the corrupt government.

More than 600 people attended the

protests. Other Tamil organisations also organised the protest at different times. Most of the people who joined the protest were young.

The protest was organised with the slogan "Independence of Sri Lanka, not for us". Protesters also chanted: "13A, not a solution".

The 13th amendment to the Sri Lankan constitution created provinces - including a northern and an eastern province, where the majority of Tamils live. But Tamil Solidarity stands for the full right to self-determination, including separation.

Socialist Party speakers also put forward demands to win our rights, including linking our struggle with the working class and trade unions.

- Tamil Solidarity says:**
- **Reject a unitary Sri Lankan state**
  - **'13A: not a solution' - we stand for the right to self-determination, including separation**
  - **Scrap draconian Prevention of Terrorist Act**
  - **Defend the right to protest - immediately end the persecution of activists**
  - **End the land grab - free all land immediately**
  - **Stop paying debt. Invest in services**
  - **No to privatisation of health and education**
  - **Pay increase for all, including hill country workers**



# Socialist Party youth organisers meet

## Mood is changing – socialist ideas growing

ALI COOK  
BOURNEMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

I kicked off the 'youth weekend', 29 and 30 January, by attending the commission introduced by Socialist Party national youth organiser Theo Sharieff. We talked about the mass movements of Black Lives Matter, and the protests after the murder of Sarah Everard, that have followed the defeat of Corbynism. We outlined the importance of union work, building Youth Fight for Jobs, and developing a Socialist Students presence on campuses.

We then met together for a rallying speech by Socialist Party general secretary Hannah Sell. Hannah reflected on how Marxism allows us to see beneath the surface of events - including the crucial need for a new mass workers' party.

The discussion that followed was on the changing mood within society. There's more receptiveness to our ideas, along with an increase in

financial donations to the Socialist Party.

Building our party among young people was the focus of the next discussion, introduced by Socialist Party national youth organiser Theo Sharieff. We talked about the mass movements of Black Lives Matter, and the protests after the murder of Sarah Everard, that have followed the defeat of Corbynism. We outlined the importance of union work, building Youth Fight for Jobs, and developing a Socialist Students presence on campuses.

The next day we had Bob from the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), the international socialist organisation the Socialist Party is part of. He reported on the revolutionary upheavals in Sudan. Bob

warned against imperialist intervention - the Sudanese people must decide their own future.

Young members talked about the determination of Sudanese people to keep the military from holding power, the potential for sections of the army to go over to the side of the protestors, and how this has happened in the past.

The necessity of raising finances was covered by Socialist Party national treasurer Isai Priya. Lockdown inevitably impacted our ability to raise finance and sell our Socialist newspaper.

But it's encouraging that during the pandemic, we've consistently reached and often exceeded our fighting fund target. And we have been able to overcome the challenges

SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND					
AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q1: JANUARY-MARCH 2022	DEADLINE: 31 MARCH 2022	
Yorkshire	995	2,550	39%		
South West	613	1,800	34%		
Wales	652	2,300	28%		
East Midlands	487	1,850	26%		
Northern	100	750	13%		
West Midlands	261	2,600	10%		
Southern & SE	202	2,350	9%		
London	380	4,600	8%		
Eastern	77	1,200	6%		
North West	20	3,850	3%		
Other	125	1,150	2%		
TOTAL	3,910	25,000	16%		

of distributing a workers' paper, and get it to workers and youth in struggle.

Mark Best, Socialist Party national committee, wrapped up the weekend. His passionate introduction provoked an interesting discussion on how we can build the Socialist Party.

And, as is the tradition, we ended by singing the Internationale - the socialist song of the international working class.

The weekend's atmosphere was of profound optimism and excitement for what's next. Russian revolutionary socialist Leon Trotsky said: "We don't create revolutions, we prepare for them" - so we must be ready for the struggles to come.

Help fund the fightback

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# Perfect storm brewing in education

AN NATIONAL EDUCATION UNION (NEU) REP  
TEACHING IN NORTH LONDON

**T**here is a perfect storm brewing in education. Frustration over the issues of workload and pay will come to a head.

The pandemic has given an excuse to managers to up productivity and intensify labour, and in schools that means an increased workload for all staff. When school students are self-isolating, or are off school because they have tested positive for Covid, they are expected to keep up with their school work. For teachers this means either making sure students have access to online learning resources for their lessons, or live-streaming their lesson to the absent students, while teaching the rest of the class face-to-face.

In my college, and hundreds of schools across England, we have the additional burden of being graded as 'requires improvement' by schools inspectorate Ofsted. Schools in the most deprived areas of the country are far more likely to be rated this (27%) than those schools in the least deprived areas (11%).

This Ofsted grade affects possible

future government funding. So senior managers have decided that they can use this as an excuse to implement what they want, when they want. Specifically, this means classroom visits every half-term; weekly one-size-fits-all online training; fortnightly recording of student progress, which have usually already been recorded separately in your mark book and on a spreadsheet; half-termly target setting; constant checking and rechecking by middle-managers that you have done something they have asked you to do. All of this because senior managers are trying to second-guess what Ofsted inspectors are 'looking for' when they finally get round to visiting your school.

And performance-related pay is still going strong in schools. So, as well as having to spend time doing additional administrative tasks, I have to write a statement citing everything that I do in my job against a 12-point checklist, and justifying why I 'deserve' a pay rise. Neither of which help me to actually raise the understanding of the students I teach, which is what I actually want to do and why I joined the profession in the first place.

At the same time, there is growing resentment and anger at the pay freeze: "We work all the hours of the day and night and we're not even getting recognition through a pay rise."

The Tories claim they are trying to help students who have lost out on education because of the pandemic through their 'catch-up' programme. But this is the same government whose spending plans will reduce education funding in 2024 to the same level it was in 2010. There will be a generation of students who have known nothing but education poverty in their lifetime. We need full funding for education now.

We have to find a way to get rid of Ofsted - there is zero trust in the professional judgement of teachers, by either the government or senior managers. We need to get rid of performance-related pay - it is divisive and soul-destroying. And we need to build the NEU's campaign for an 8% pay rise for all education workers. The fight on pay is immediate: it is one where a collective national fight can be won. A victory over pay would lift confidence to turn back the tide on workload, performance pay and Ofsted.

NewVic NEU workers on strike JAMES IVENS



## Swansea Trades Council pledges to fight local government cuts

DAVE WARREN

TREASURER, SWANSEA TRADES COUNCIL AND  
SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

Swansea Trades Council held an open conference on 26 January to discuss Swansea council's budget proposals for 2022-23 and the medium-term plan for the next three years.

As well as the trade union delegates, the meeting was attended by young people from Swansea Young Socialists and Swansea Youth Strike 4 Climate.

Guest speaker Mark Evans, secretary of Carmarthen County Unison, described how his branch had consistently fought for "no-cuts, needed budgets", whether the council was led by Labour or Plaid Cymru. Swansea Trades Council also has a proud history of campaigning against cuts to jobs and services implemented by the Labour-led Swansea council.

Swansea council is to be allocated an additional sum of £33.9 million from the Welsh Government but despite this is still planning to cut millions from the schools and social services budgets for this year, and £21 million over the next three years.

The council's budget proposals admit that the council has made 'savings' of £70 million under the 'Sustainable Swansea' strategy since 2013, and presents this as a success. They also admit that if the funding uplift for this year was repeated in

future years, the need for cuts could be reduced or even eliminated.

Swansea council currently has £10 million of unallocated general fund reserves and £134 million of earmarked general fund reserves.

The meeting called on Swansea council to:

- Use reserves and prudential borrowing powers to avoid making any further cuts to jobs and services this year. Reject the advice that current reserves cannot be touched
- Meet the pay claims of local authority trade unions
- Reject any privatisation of council services and bring all services back in-house
- Demand that the Welsh Government provides adequate funding for this and future years. Campaign for sufficient funding to restore services, cut by £70 million since 2013, as a minimum

The meeting also resolved that the Trades Council would organise a lobby of the full council meeting which will vote on the budget proposals on 3 March.

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shopstewards.net

## PCS consultative pay and conditions ballot - vote 'Yes'

DAVE SEMPLE

PCS AND SOCIALIST PARTY

The PCS union which organises civil service and public sector workers is holding a consultative ballot of its members on pay and conditions. The ballot, which takes place between 14 February and 21 March, will test support for the union's 2022 claim, and the readiness of members to take action. The ballot will be by both post and electronically.

The union's claim includes a number of elements besides pay such as:

- 10% cost of living increase
- 'London Weighting' minimum of £5,000 a year
- Living wage of £15 an hour
- 35-days annual leave on entry
- Reduced working hours
- Reduction of 2% in pension contributions

The inclusion of demands beyond pay is something Socialist Party members proposed in previous ballots. We argued this would help win.

This union leadership derisively dismissed our arguments as "shopping list bargaining". We welcome the change of approach, although we believe that the demands should include other issues of membership concern such as staffing and safety.

Socialist Party members in the union will be working hard for a massive 'Yes' vote, and for a national campaign which is overdue following two years of inaction, with the union leadership offering no resistance to the government pay restrictions.

We will argue for a massive 'Yes' vote to demonstrate membership anger over pay, and these other issues, especially in the face of huge increases in living costs. Prices generally are expected to go up by over 7% - a thirty-year high. Devastating fuel bills and the National Insurance increase will add to this bleak outlook.

We will be pushing for a massive turnout to show the 50% statutory threshold - required by

the Tory anti-union laws - can be achieved. Previous statutory ballots have come close to the 50% threshold but failed to clear it. A national disaggregated statutory ballot would give those groups of members who clear the threshold a legal mandate for action. This is what we will put forward and argue for.

The union's current Left Unity leadership parked the union's 2020 pay claim as a national unity gesture, and then embraced concession bargaining (trading conditions for pay), to avoid taking on the government pay freeze.

For these reasons it goes into this ballot with a question mark over how serious it is about challenging the government. It needs to spell out what sort of action will be taken and demonstrate it is actively seeking to join up with other public sector unions to form a coalition of the willing to take on this weak, scandal-riddled Tory government.

Vote 'Yes' to the 2022 claim, vote 'Yes' for a national campaign and vote 'Yes' for action.

● *Nominate Broad Left Network rank-and-file socialist candidates in the PCS elections. See full slate, search 'PCS 2022 elections' at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk), including Andi Bridges (HMRC) who was left off the slate in the last issue of the Socialist*



PAUL MATTISON



# Oxfam 'Inequality Kills' report

## Capitalism means inequality - socialism can end it

JOE FATHALLAH  
CARDIFF EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

The 'Inequality Kills' report by Oxfam shines a light into the horrific poverty conditions experienced by billions around the world. It has been further exacerbated during the Covid pandemic - 99% of the world's population is now worse off than they were. The report points out that at the same time, the ten richest men in the world have doubled their wealth.

It's hard to really imagine the levels of inequality laid out in these pages. These richest men now have more wealth than the 'bottom' 3.1 billion people. If they spent their combined wealth at a rate of a million dollars a day, it would take over 400 years to get through it all.

5.6 million people a year die in the neocolonial world due to lack of access to healthcare. At least 2.1 million people die each year from hunger and malnutrition. Millions of people have died due to lack of access to a Covid vaccine, as supply and distribution are restricted by the pharmaceutical companies' need for profit.

Oxfam uses the phrase 'economic violence', saying: "Economic policies and political and social culture are perpetuating the wealth and power of a privileged few by directly harming the majority of humanity and the planet, with people living in poverty, women and girls, and racialised and oppressed groups hit the hardest".

It is undoubtedly true that capitalist governments serve the interests of the wealthiest at the expense of everyone else. While Oxfam sees this as needing a mere correction, in reality this situation is deeply engrained in the capitalist system.

Oxfam concludes that "we can radically redesign our economies to be centred on equality". What would this



mean in practical terms, and how could it be achieved?

The report proposes to "claw back extreme wealth through progressive taxation", and "invest in powerful, proven inequality-busting public measures". Socialists support attempts to tax the super-rich, and public works programmes aimed at providing jobs and services.

However, billionaires find ways to avoid and evade even the tax they are currently supposed to pay. For example Amazon, owned by the world's second richest man, Jeff Bezos, paid

no UK corporation tax whatsoever in 2020, despite a sales income of over €44 billion in Europe.

This was achieved by processing UK sales through a front company based in Luxembourg. Even if corporation tax for large multinationals was doubled or tripled, the net result is still zero if there's nothing to tax.

Both the post-1945 UK Labour government, and the Roosevelt regime in the US in the 1930s and 1940s, put measures in place to create public sector jobs on a large scale. And, in the short term, it increased living

standards for a section of the working class.

This was at a time when the capitalist system was in dire straits economically, and after 1945 because of the huge destruction of the war. The super-rich of the day understood the need to rebuild economies, even at the expense of some of their profits, to prevent revolutionary uprisings of the working class.

Today, in advanced capitalist countries like Britain and the US, governments have striven to privatise every bit of the economy. This

is to provide more profitable investment outlets to the capitalists, replacing the industry that has been lost over the same period.

Many of the super-rich are now speculators rather than direct investors, playing no role in the real economy. Instead, they gamble on the money markets with bonds and 'futures'.

To expect the super-rich to roll over and surrender their wealth is a utopian dream. Even mild reforms, such as proposed by Jeremy Corbyn in his 2017 general election manifesto, are met with outrage and hysteria by those in control of the economy and their mouthpieces. To create an economy 'centred on equality' means creating a socialist economy, owned and controlled by working-class people, instead of a tiny super-rich elite.

Economics professor Jayati Ghosh, in her foreword to the report, states: "Over the past two years, people have died when they contracted an infectious disease because they did not get vaccines in time. Even though those vaccines could have been more widely produced and distributed if the technology had been shared." This would require nationalisation of the pharmaceutical industry, pooling available resources, and the abolition of vaccine patents.

Socialist measures like this require mass mobilisations of working-class and poor people, both in rich capitalist countries and the neocolonial world, to sweep aside the capitalists, speculators and their henchmen in governments and state forces.

Mass movements in Sudan, Lebanon, and Kazakhstan show the potential power of the working class. Oxfam does recognise the power of social movements, citing the likes of Black Lives Matter, #NiUnoMenos against violence against women, and the Indian farmers' protests, as winning gains against structural inequalities.

But to achieve their objectives, movements will need to be armed with a socialist programme, and a party of the working class capable of implementing it, to remove the cancer of capitalism, and begin the process of building a socialist world without poverty and inequality.

## May Day Greetings

## The Socialist: 25 years of assisting workers' struggles and fighting for socialism

This month, the Socialist celebrates 25 years of being to the fore in fighting for a democratic socialist society, to end the nightmare conditions of inequality, poverty, wars, and environmental catastrophe arising from the capitalist profit system.

To that end, our reports, analysis, and programmatic articles have assisted the independent struggles of working people and the poor internationally, in order to build trade unions and left parties that can challenge the rule of capital.

The Socialist was launched at a time of 'triumphal capitalism' when US imperialism policed the



Striking workers read the Socialist and Issue 1 (top)



globe and dominated the world economy unchallenged.

Politically, the direction of this capitalist tide during the 1990s had blunted the organisations of the workers' movement and given rise to 'Blairism' - an unashamed embrace of the capitalist market.

This 'counterrevolution' culminated in Gordon Brown's infamous boast that the New Labour governments of the early 20th century had eliminated capitalist 'boom and bust'.

The Socialist was virtually alone in predicting that this capitalist boom rested on 'fictitious capital' ie the accumulation of vast quantities of debt. The inevitable meltdown of the banks, etc, followed; and with it a new capitalist paradigm of austerity, which has been deepened by the Covid pandemic of today.

The Socialist also opposed and mobilised to stop the disastrous wars in the Middle East and elsewhere by, initially, Bush and Blair, as working and poor people in those countries, and domestically, paid a bloody price for western imperialism's geopolitical adventures.

Today, the Socialist continues to provide an unrivalled socialist alternative to capitalist misery and in assisting the working class in its day-to-day battles over the cost of living and for independent political representation.

We ask trade union branches, groups of workers, and community campaigners to join us in celebrating 25 years of the Socialist by placing a May Day greeting in our pages. This act of solidarity will also assist us in securing the resources necessary to maintain and expand the Socialist in the future.

• Send greetings, see prices and make payments: [socialistparty.org.uk/mayday](http://socialistparty.org.uk/mayday)

• Resources and enquiries: [scottjones@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:scottjones@socialistparty.org.uk)



# Does the fight for Trans rights conflict with women’s rights?

Michael Johnson’s article, ‘Stonewall attacked by the establishment’ (the Socialist, 15 December 2021), refers to “some in the women’s and labour movement”, he asserts, are jointly campaigning with right-wing journalists and politicians “to present trans and non-binary people’s rights as conflicting with women’s rights”.

For those who follow this discussion, that will be understood as a reference to Woman’s Place UK (WPUK). Anyone familiar with our organisation knows that all our main activists are longstanding feminists. Many are actively involved in their unions; others work with women and girls affected by male violence and sexual abuse and several of us are proud of the solidarity work we’ve done with the people of Palestine. This may be why MI5 have never bragged about us naming them as employer of the year, an honour awarded to them by Stonewall.

We are a grassroots activist organisation which relies entirely on the voluntary, unpaid labour of women who hold down full-time jobs on top of our family and caring commitments. We don’t get money from big business and the HR departments of major employers.

As comrade Johnson could have found out by looking at our Mythbusters, WPUK opposes all unlawful discrimination against trans people, and we believe that the right to gender non-conformity including in dress codes and behavioural expectations should be upheld in law, for men and for women. We work closely with trans people who share our views, and we have provided a platform for transsexual people who also believe that a woman’s biological sex is something that she is born with.

Our principal concern is that women have a say in the decisions that affect our lives. What we find shocking is how little support women who speak out get from the left. Our meetings are routinely harassed by aggressive protestors, and women like Dr Kathleen Stock are forced out of their jobs. This harassment appears to have the tacit support of a left which appears to be more troubled by women asking legitimate questions about a major, well-funded, corporate NGO, than it is by the harassment of women.

We look forward to the left engaging properly with the concerns being raised by many women, and request that you publish this letter as response to the article.

Yours faithfully,  
**KIRI TUNKS and JUDITH GREEN**  
CO-FOUNDERS, WPUK



## United struggle for LGBTQ+ and women’s rights is integral to the wider struggle to change society

MICHAEL JOHNSON REPLIES

We welcome the opportunity to further address these important issues - with the view of sharpening our understanding and the programme for which we fight. As this and our previous exchanges illustrate, the anti-democratic approach that Women’s Place UK (WPUK) accuses ‘the left’ of cannot be levelled at the Socialist Party.

Obviously, the Socialist Party agrees that women should have a say in decisions that affect their lives - but for us that starts with a fight against the austerity that denies women and all working-class people the opportunity to genuinely make decisions.

The 2020 Women’s Aid report on services for people escaping domestic abuse showed that 64% of those seeking access were turned away due to lack of funding. Across the country domestic violence and rape crisis services have been slashed by the government and local councils, including Labour councils, who have dutifully passed on the cuts.

Attacks on benefits, lack of council housing, closures of sexual health services, and other cuts also make it harder to escape violence and abuse, and make life ‘decisions’. Cuts to street-lighting and bus routes contribute to women workers’ vulnerability to violence.

### Proud record

The Socialist Party has a proud record of fighting austerity attacks on services women need. We are currently doing this by fighting for the biggest possible no-cuts challenge in the local government elections on 5 May. We appeal to trade unionists of all genders to stand in order to give a voice to the working class by putting forward an alternative to all these attacks.

We also have a proud record of fighting for LGBTQ+ rights, including opposing the corporatisation of the campaign for LGBTQ+ equality.

It is, however, not enough to limit ourselves to opposing the discrimination that the capitalist class, the main authors of the laws, consider ‘unlawful’.

If that was the case we would not have been able to oppose rape within marriage until 1991! Trade unionism

has never limited itself to working within laws set by the boss class.

These struggles against sexism and LGBTQ+phobia, and the struggles of the wider working class, are intrinsically linked to the fight for a change in society.

Our approach, fighting for the maximum unity of the working class in struggle around a programme for the liberation of all from the oppression and exploitation of capitalism, makes us effective.

It meant we could defeat Thatcher both in Liverpool city council and the poll tax, win rights for women in the Campaign Against Domestic Violence, stop evictions, and more. This is why the Socialist Party not only doesn’t have MI5 bragging about us, but was infiltrated by ‘spy cops’.

Unfortunately, WPUK has taken a different tactic. While in our initial article we didn’t specifically reference WPUK, it is correct that we oppose divisive politics that threaten the working class’s ability to fight back.

WPUK present the idea that sections of the working class, in this case trans people, are a threat to women’s services. This is the lie the bosses would love us to swallow: blame each other, not their class society - with the sexism inherent to it, and their cuts.

The argument that there are limited resources and rights in society can lead to the idea that if one group benefits, another will lose out. This means that the working class must fight over crumbs.

Unfortunately, WPUK is not alone in this approach. Where workers have been pitted against each other or struggle quashed because “some cuts have to be made”, too often right-wing trade union leaders have gone along with this.

The Socialist Party completely rejects this strategy for the blind alley it is. Democratically planning the running of society would allow us to meet everyone’s needs instead of lining the pockets of the rich.

And if we are going to get those resources to where they need to be, it will take more than women, trans people or other sections of the working class fighting, but us all coming together as a class with a banner of fighting for rights and resources for all.



The Socialist Party has a proud record of fighting austerity attacks on services women need

# Pro-market Socialist Party wins Portugal’s election - Left Bloc and Communist Party lose ground

ROSS SAUNDERS  
SOCIALIST PARTY WALES  
AND NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Portugal’s snap general election was won by the ruling Socialist Party (PS) headed by current Prime Minister António Costa. 117 PS members were elected to parliament, giving it a small majority in the 230-seat chamber for only the second time since the dictatorship fell in the country’s 1974 revolution.

Costa’s vote rose by a third of a million - up 5% to 42% of the total, as he successfully exploited what is likely to be the last election in which anxiety caused by the pandemic benefits the political incumbents. 10% of Portuguese people are currently isolated due to Covid-19 and Costa focused relentlessly during the campaign on the need for “stability” in order to endure the virus.

The unexpected victory of the PS, with an increase in the turnout, was partly driven by a fear of the coming to power of the right, including the new far-right Chega party, which is now the third-largest party in parliament.

### Left parties punished

An important secondary factor was the weakening of the left parties as a pole of attraction for those looking to break with the status quo and the capitalist establishment. This is a result of the support the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) and the Left Bloc (BE) has given the government over the last six years.

As expected, the PCP and the Left Bloc were badly punished for this mistaken strategy. The PCP lost another third of its vote and half its MPs, leaving it with 4.6% and six MPs. The Left Bloc suffered most, losing half its vote and almost three-quarters of its MPs to leave it with just 5 MPs on 4.5% of the vote.

The Left Bloc came third in both

the 2015 and 2019 general elections but was beaten back to sixth-place this year, behind Chega, which took 7% of the vote and surged to 11 MPs. Also, a new right-wing libertarian party, Liberal Initiative (IL), gained 5% and eight MPs.

Since their peak in 2015, the Left Bloc and the PCP have lost half a million votes and 25 of their 36 parliamentary seats.

The Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI), the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated) has consistently warned that unless the mistaken approach of the leadership of the left parties was corrected, socialists would fail to advance. This, despite the enormous anger that exists at the capitalist status quo and, moreover, opportunities would be created for the rise of right-populist and far-right forces.

We appeal now to supporters of the Left Bloc and the Communist Party to contact us and discuss how the left can find its way forward in the new situation after the elections (socialistworld.net/sign-up-to-become-a-supporter/).

Opinion polls, days before the election, suggested an advance for right-wing parties across the board. But the memory of the brutal austerity carried out by the last government of the main right-wing party of the establishment, the PSD, before 2015, is still fresh in the mind of Portugal’s working class.

In the end, the PSD gained only 1.5% and actually lost three MPs. Portugal’s second right-wing party, the CDS, was booted out of parliament entirely.

A superficial look at voting figures would note that total votes for right-wing parties in this election are about the same as in 2015, but Marxists should examine the real processes that are unfolding in and between the classes more carefully.

It is not the case that right-wing

votes are merely being re-divided between different right-wing parties. For example, as well as attracting votes from the left parties, whose supporters reasoned that they might as well back Costa directly if the left was only going to prop him up anyway, Costa has become the main hope of the middle classes for achieving relative stability on a capitalist basis.

The rise in support for Chega and the IL comes partly from traditional right-wing voters, especially those frustrated at PSD leader Rui Rio’s attempts to face in all directions at the same time.

### Danger from right

During the election campaign, Rui swung between courting Costa and echoing the racist rhetoric of far-right Chega. But support for new right-wing parties in this confusing period is also coming from layers of the population that backed the left parties in the past when they raised hopes of breaking with the current system, as well as from previous non-voters, which the left should be attempting to win over.

We must sound the alarm over these results. Because the left has tied itself to support for a capitalist government, the populist right is succeeding in posing as an anti-establishment alternative, scapegoating the Roma population and those who receive welfare payments.

As the CWI explained previously, it was not wrong for the left parties to have helped Costa to bring down the right-wing PSD government in 2015. But it was a fatal error to sign a pact that guaranteed Costa stability without winning commitments that there would be no attacks on the living standards of the working class.

Costa has used his position to protect the profits of big business and oversee a further real-term fall in wages, and yet more insecurity and cuts to services, maintaining the



Incumbent PM António Costa campaigned on bringing ‘stability’ post-pandemic - an unlikely outcome PHOTO PES COMMUNICATIONS/CC

anti-union laws of his conservative predecessor (see socialistworld.net/Portugal - right-wing government brought down).

We argued that as soon as Costa was in position, the left should have immediately gone on the offensive, including with street protests and trade union action, to demand bold socialist policies which could solve the problems facing working-class people.

This would have begun the process of clearing the immense political confusion which exists and demonstrated whose side the different political forces in Portugal are on. Either concessions would be forced from the PSP, or workers’ illusions in it would be dispelled and, at a time favourable to the left, new elections could be forced (see socialistworld.net/Portugal’s-government-falls - left must adopt a new course).

Costa and the PS have until now outmanoeuvred the left, but that does not mean that the period ahead will be one of stability. He has pledged to continue his futile and destructive attempts to shrink Portugal’s debt in order to placate the EU and the other institutions of capitalism.

### Austerity attacks

Portugal is in line to receive €45 billion euros in post-pandemic aid from the EU. But the conditions attached will mean more pressure to keep wages low, cut services, sustain and extend privatisation, and restrict workers’ rights.

Capitalism has failed in Portugal. It is Western Europe’s poorest country and the gap between nations is widening. GDP (total productive wealth) per person in Portugal has fallen from 72% of the European average to 65% in the last 20 years.

Growth over the last decade has been fuelled by an unsustainable bubble in property that has priced housing out of reach of many. A tourism boom (tourism now accounts for

15% of the economy) has been built on a ‘race to the bottom’ in wages, in order to attract European tourists away from North Africa and other destinations.

Average wages are a third lower than neighbouring Spain and in Italy. Two million people live on less than €450 a month. 20% of the population has emigrated in search of a better life, including 20,000 nurses in the last decade. The pandemic has only widened the inequalities in, and between, states.

Only socialism offers an end to the agony. We call for an increase in the minimum wage, stable and universal employment contracts, above-inflation pay rises, a mass programme of public housing, the rebuilding of public health and education systems, and the nationalisation of the banks and the big companies to pay for it all.

Expect social and political explosions ahead in Portugal. Portuguese workers will rediscover their proud revolutionary history and new forces will step onto the battlefield to fight for socialism.

They will succeed if a Marxist force is built which learns the lessons of the victories and defeats of our class and charts a course forward. Join the CWI and help complete that historic task!



### Go to socialistparty.org.uk to find more on this debate

You can find the article by Socialist Party LGBTQ+ group convener Michael Johnson - ‘Stonewall attacked by the establishment - The fight for LGBTQ+ equality must be part of the struggle to liberate society from capitalism’, and ‘Women’s rights, trans rights and the Labour movement’ - a previous debate between the Socialist Party and Women’s Place UK in the pages of the Socialist



# SUPPORT THE UNIVERSITY STRIKES!



# End bosses' attacks on pay, pensions and conditions

## Why we're striking

**A UCU MEMBER**

**C**an love bloom on the picket line? We are about to find out. Starting on Valentine's Day, the University and College Union (UCU) has called an almost three-week-long strike.

Two strikes are rolled into one: the strike over the cuts to the USS pension scheme will take place 14-18 and 21-22 of February, while the strike on casualisation, low pay, the gender pay gap and overworking (collectively known as the 'Four Fights') will take place

between the 21-22 of February and the 28-2 of March. This means that branches striking on both issues will be out for a combined ten days. Unison members at ten unis are also taking action on pay and pensions.

This strike, the second already in this academic year, shows that university bosses' strategy of weathering the storm until the summer break comes will not work. The result of their strategy is only going to mean more strikes from a workforce that finds itself at breaking point.

On the issue of pensions, UCU submitted a proposal for the future of the USS pension plan to the 'Joint Negotiating Committee' on 26 January ahead of the negotiating meeting on 11

February. That very same day it was rejected. Employers and bosses are fiercely refusing to take on board any proposal of the union, at any cost, whatever those proposals are.

Managements at universities have already coordinated a punitive and harsh response to the threat of upcoming strikes. Although obviously anxious about the strike itself, they are also worried about the 'action short of striking' when workers work according to what is stipulated in their contract, and no more. This means staff will not volunteer for duties that are beyond their contract or normal hours.

Management fears that this will expose how they over exploit their lecturers, and how staff cannot discharge the brunt of the work assigned

to them in their assigned hours. Instead of addressing the issues, they are threatening staff with forced rescheduling and deductions of between half and full wages. It is more important now than ever to prove to them that no number of threats can stop the fight for good pensions and good working conditions.

● **Students are also walking out during the strike on 2 March. Come along to hear about how students and workers can unite at Socialist Students annual conference, on Saturday 26 February in Birmingham, to discuss how to rebuild the student movement, and what next after 2 March - visit [socialiststudents.org.uk](http://socialiststudents.org.uk) to sign up for updates about the conference**