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the Socialist

Issue 1179

12-19 May 2022

formerly **Militant**

WE CAN'T GO ON LIKE THIS



JOIN THE FIGHTBACK AGAINST COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS

NICK AUVACHE
CAMDEN AND HARINGEY SOCIALIST PARTY

The number of households where at least one person is missing meals to save money has increased by 50% in the last three months. It now accounts for an incredible one-in-seven UK families.

The rise in food insecurity is “rapidly turning from an economic crisis, to a health crisis”, according to the boss of the Institute of Health Equity. Food banks can no longer cope.

Not only are working-class families facing the massive burden of rising food prices, fuel costs are estimated to rise as much as £30 a week by October. Many now also face increasing rents and rising mortgage payments - outstripping meagre wage rises.

The Bank of England has warned of an economic recession, and predicts that inflation could be at nearly 10% by the autumn. It forecasts that 76% of socially rented property could soon be out of reach for anyone on

benefits.

Social landlords are entitled by the government to increase rent by inflation plus 1%. This could see social rents rise by a whopping 10.5%. Average private rents are now 15% higher than in the same period two years ago. Meanwhile, the cap restricting the housing element of Universal Credit, which millions of low-paid workers rely on, remains in place. Thousands will be unable to pay the rent.

It is vital that we fight back and build a movement to stop these attacks on our living standards.

We need a political voice, which not only condemns price rises and pay cuts, but offers

an alternative. That means: fighting for millions of good-quality, affordable council homes and rent control; increasing benefits to a level we can survive on, rising with the cost of living; and backing up strikes for inflation-busting pay rises.

The Trades Union Congress (TUC), which brings together over six million workers in the trade unions, has called a national demonstration in London for 18 June. If effectively built for, this could be used to give working-class people a glimpse of our strength in numbers. A mass demonstration should then be used as a launch pad for coordinating strikes for pay rises, and against the cost-of-living crisis.

TUSC STAND PIONEERING THE FIGHT FOR A NEW MASS WORKERS' PARTY ►► p4-5 + 10

ANGER, DISENCHANTMENT AND VOTER SHIFTS ►► p8-9

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

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

CONTACT US

editors@socialistparty.org.uk
020 8988 8777 - ask for the editors

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

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

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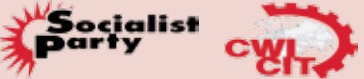
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The Socialist is the weekly newspaper of the Socialist Party, the England and Wales section of the Committee for a Workers' International
socialistparty.org.uk
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ISSN 1366-9621
Published by Socialist Publications,
PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT
Registered as a newspaper
at the Post Office
Printed by trade union labour
at Reach Printing Services

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

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



Campaign to make 18 June TUC demo a big success

On every picket line where workers fight the bosses' attacks on pay and working conditions, it's clear that a national lead is needed to fight for a pay rise and for government action to stem the cost-of-living crisis.

A big national campaign of workers organised in trade unions could raise the sights and galvanise people in every workplace and in every home where working-class people are struggling with rising bills and falling pay.

That is why we must do all we can to make a success of the 18 June national demonstration, called by the Trades Union Congress (TUC), that

brings together the leaders of all the trade unions. A demonstration of tens of thousands of trade unionists and their families could be a stepping stone to national strike action.

But that will only happen if we fight for it! Below is a resolution you can move in your union branch. Alternatively, you can use it as a guide to what to ask for and organise in your area.

- This union branch notes that the TUC has called a national demonstration on 18 June in London.

- We believe that a massive show of strength on that day can be an important step in building the action we need to fight for an inflation-busting pay rise and measures to end the cost-of-living crisis.

We therefore resolve to:

- Request leaflets and posters from our national union, enough to leaflet every workplace our branch is organised in
- Organise a meeting/series of meetings in every workplace our union branch is organised to promote the demonstration and involve as many members

as possible in building for the demonstration

- Put on / request our region (as appropriate) to put on free/subsidised transport for all members and their families to the demonstration
- Further, we call on our national union leadership to make it clear to our members and to the TUC that this demonstration should not be a one-off event but a stepping stone to build the action. The trade unions should produce material for that demonstration that explains the need for the next step: national coordinated strike action



We Say

Pay, benefits, pensions

- An immediate above-inflation pay rise for workers to restore wages after over a decade of pay freezes and below-inflation rises
- Regular pay increases for all, linked to trade-union agreed measures of inflation
- Raise the minimum wage to £15 an hour, without exemptions
- Restore the pension triple lock
- Restore the additional £20-a-week Universal Credit payment. End the benefit cap
- Living benefits and pensions for all who need them, rising with the cost of living

Housing

- Freeze council and social housing rents
- Rent controls to cap rents – decided by elected bodies of tenants, housing workers and trade union representatives
- Make the rich pay, not the workers
- No rise in national insurance or council tax, scrap student debt

- No worker should be made to pay more tax, raise tax thresholds in line with inflation
- Take the wealth off the super-rich, nationalise the top 150 companies and banks to be run under democratic working-class control and management, with compensation only on the basis of proven need

Price rises

- Reverse the rise in the energy price cap. Nationalise energy and other utilities under democratic workers' control and management to reduce bills by removing the profit motive
- No increase in public transport fares. Return transport into public hands, to guarantee a fully funded, free, environmentally friendly, sustainable transport system
- Stop price rises, end bosses' profiteering. Open the books of big retailers to inspection by trade unions. Nationalise the big retailers under democratic workers' control to be run to meet need, not for profit

Trade union struggle

- For a trade union-led struggle against the cost-of-living crisis.
- The TUC-organised demonstration on 18 June must be used as a stepping stone towards coordinated strike action, uniting workers' struggles for pay rises.
- For fighting, democratic leaderships of the trade unions

New workers' party

- No trust in Starmer's Labour to fight in our interests. For a new mass workers' party based on trade union and workers' struggle

Socialism

- End the chaos of the capitalist market. For a socialist plan of production, based on the needs of the overwhelming majority, not for profit

Do you agree?

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS
socialistparty.org.uk/join



Queen's Speech: Nothing for workers

Build the fightback against high-price, low-pay hell



JOSH ASKER

SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

This Tory government of the rich is preparing for the next parliamentary session, as a member of the royal family will make a speech, and the government will outline its planned legislation for the next term.

What will be missing is any real measures to address the cost-of-living crisis, and the biggest hit to living standards since the 1950s. Instead, Boris Johnson will serve up regurgitated guff about 'levelling up' and so-called Brexit freedoms, attempting to divert our attention.

One way Johnson is responding to the cost-of-living crisis is by preparing for some of its consequences – youth and working-class resistance. That's why the government will try again to get more anti-protest legislation past the House of Lords.

During the 2019 general election, in an attempt to paint themselves as a 'party for workers,' the Tories promised an 'employment bill' to tackle inequality in the workplace. The

Queen's Speech in 2019 declared: "An Employment Bill will enhance workers' rights, supporting flexible working, extending unpaid carers' entitlement to leave and ensure workers keep their hard-earned tips", and promised £1 billion to fund more high-quality childcare.

The fact that none of this is close to coming into being proves that any promises made in this Queen's Speech should also be taken with a mountain of salt.

Government-commissioned research in 2016 found that three-quarters of pregnant women and new mothers face discrimination at work. The government was urged to take urgent action then; it still hasn't.

Broken promises

Low-paid hospitality workers were promised five years ago that legislation would be introduced to stop employers stealing their tips. Things still haven't changed in that time waiting staff have lost an estimated £10,000 each, according to Unite the union.

Employers will not be obliged to report the ethnicity pay gap, or give

flexible working to those with caring responsibilities.

The fact is, the Tory government's number one priority is to make Britain a profitable place for big business to invest. Protecting workers' rights is at odds with this, and that is why it will not introduce any meaningful legislation.

TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady responded: "Tinkering around the edges with feeble statutory codes is not going to rein in unscrupulous employers. We need proper legislation for that."

What she doesn't mention is the role that trade union organisation in the workplace plays in challenging the bosses, and the need for working-class political representation.

The TUC has called a national demonstration in London on 18 June, to demand an end to the cost-of-living crisis. This is a good start, but it must be prepared for by mobilising workers in every workplace and by organising subsidised transport.

To truly show workers' strength, a mass demonstration in June must be used as a stepping stone towards co-ordinated strike action for a pay rise.



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.

- 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!

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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

Help fund the fightback!

DONATE TODAY

socialistparty.org.uk/donate



Donate so our no-cuts socialist message is heard everywhere every week

ISAI PRIYA AND CHRIS NEWBY
SOCIALIST PARTY FINANCE DEPARTMENT

Socialist Party members were busy over the last few weeks getting our socialist message out in the council elections. Our key demand: oppose all cuts and closures to services, jobs, pay and conditions.

We reject the idea that some cuts are essential and that cuts are unavoidable. Councillors have the power to implement a no-cuts needs budget to save jobs, increase pay and invest in our futures.

The Socialist Party has been supporting many workers on strike, including those employed by Labour councils. Labour councillors are behaving no different to Tories and big business bosses by going on the offensive against their workers. At a protest outside the Local Government Association, the loudest chant by the Coventry, Rugby and Hackney striking bin workers was to Labour: "Shame on you for turning blue".

Hackney Socialist Party members started election day visiting the bin workers picket line from 5am, then the picket lines for drivers and passenger assistants for special education needs (Send) pupils, and housing maintenance workers. Throughout election day in Hackney, 47 striking workers and others bought a copy of the Socialist, and 20 people said they were interested

in finding out more about the Socialist Party.

The support for socialist ideas and the Socialist Party was reflected in sales of the Socialist and the donations we received. Carlisle branch raised £80 on two campaign stalls to nationalise energy companies. In Sheffield, we collected £140 during the election campaign.

At our Socialist Party national congress, 14-16 May, we will be discussing the perspectives for a fightback, and preparing the party for the mass struggles to come. As part of the congress, there will be a fighting fund appeal. If you are a Socialist Party member, your donation will be allocated to your branch fighting fund target.

So we can continue to get our socialist message out as widely as possible, we urgently need to smash through our fighting fund target.

**Fund the fightback
DONATE
TODAY**

- Visit socialistparty.org.uk/donate
- or call **020 8988 8777**
- or make cheques payable to Socialist Party, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT

Ealing: Giving a voice to those fighting the cutting Labour council

BILL REED

WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY.

On the doorsteps in Ealing, people had no good words for Labour. When we explained TUSC's policies of fighting cuts, using reserves and building a campaign to restore government funding, most people were enthusiastic. One person told us that the council had left her for years without hot water. Another showed

us the way the council had left her flat between repairs.

In the campaign, we made contact with campaigners trying to save a youth centre, more trying to prevent green spaces being built on, others fighting polluted air in Southall, and a host of campaigners against tall buildings.

Eight TUSC candidates in Ealing amassed over 1,000 votes between them. In North Hanwell Ward, Tony Gill more than quadrupled the vote he had secured in a by-election in September.

The Socialist printing schedule

The Socialist will hold its national congress between 14-16 May 2022. Editors and our writers - Socialist Party members - will be participating in this important meeting. Therefore, production of the paper will be delayed by one day, to be published on 20 May, and arrive a day later than usual.

SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party
May issue includes...

- Ukraine: A new era of world relations has begun
- socialismtoday.org/subscribe
- **020 8988 8777**
- Paper sub £3 a month, e-sub £2.50



Waltham Forest: 'A taste of a future working-class political challenge'

NANCY TAAFFE

WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

Waltham Forest's May 2022 elections gave a little taste of what an independent working-class political challenge would look like. Tube strikers, hospital strikers, Socialist Party members, community campaigners and anti-austerity activists of all descriptions stood under the banner of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

The working class in our area, like everywhere, was furious at the cost-of-living crisis. But it was hard to enthuse people about elections. There was a feeling like elections are for other classes, that all the parties are the same.

But those who did stop to engage with us found out we really are different. Our policies for building council homes, rent controls, nationalising energy to slash the bills - these struck a chord. And our candidate line-up was different too.

Waltham Forest Socialist Party was heavily involved in supporting the Unite union strike at our local hospital, and the RMT union's tube strikes.

Four hospital strikers stood in wards round the hospital, and three striking tube drivers stood too. We had housing campaigners, community campaigners Save Our Square, and other trade unionists - 24 candidates in 20 wards.

Building the Socialist Party

We distributed thousands of leaflets at transport hubs, workplaces, schools and doorsteps. We sold over 380 copies of the Socialist newspaper, convinced new people to join the Socialist Party, and raised over £1,300 in street donations and pledges at our Socialist Party public meeting.

We organised candidates into teams based on local areas. Many candidates and supporters were inspired by our campaign. They just grabbed bunches of leaflets and set off, sometimes by themselves, to spread the word.

We campaigned at labour movement meetings. We pushed for hustings to open up the debate when no one else would. At Waltham Forest Trades Council's hustings, all the main parties felt compelled to attend alongside TUSC.

Labour even felt pushed to produce a leaflet claiming their latest austerity measures constitute a 'no-cuts budget'. But only TUSC argued for a real end to austerity and a mass working-class campaign to win the funding for our borough.

Around 3,500 people voted for us. We believe our constituency was like many working-class people around the country: feeling let down and despondent after Corbyn, they simply don't believe that voting alone will change their lives.

We agree with them. That's why we were out on the streets the very next Saturday inviting people to get active in the fight against the cost-of-living hikes.

We actually got an even better response. There was a sense during the elections that politicians campaign because they want something but never fight for the working class in return.

Elections are important, and if you don't stand you don't have a voice in them. But they are just one way to fight - and the Socialist Party offers working-class and young people a way to fight all year round.

Sheffield: Building support in the trade unions for a new mass workers' party

GARY DRABBLE

SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

Sheffield is currently run by an alliance of Labour and Green councillors, and with Labour losing two more seats to the Greens, this looks likely to continue next year.

Throughout the election, Labour campaigned by saying: 'Vote for us because we're not Tories'. Hardly a word was said by them about tackling the cost-of-living crisis.

In fact, in their desperation to keep politics out of politics, the Labour Party expelled one candidate and then deselected another for being opposed to cuts and council tax rises! In contrast, TUSC supporters actively campaigned for the nationalisation

of the energy companies, for an integrated transport system and for a mass council house building programme to tackle the 39,000 people on the council waiting list.

Union support

TUSC campaigners spoke at RMT and Unite trade union branch meetings, with the RMT branch donating £100 to our campaign.

We distributed over 15,000 leaflets including outside workplaces where we have supported recent strikes, and where we are campaigning for socialist candidates in elections in PCS and UNISON unions. In addition, we leafleted parents at schools and held campaign stalls.

One of the big successes of the

campaign was bringing new campaigners forward, including former Labour Party members, and the involvement of a current councillor who has recently resigned the Labour Party whip and left the party in opposition to the cuts.

Finally, we held two successful public meetings that were addressed by TUSC candidates and by trade unionists in struggle, including Gaz Jackson (RMT Regional Organiser) who was involved in the P&O dispute, Sarah Woolley, General Secretary of the Bakers Union (BEAUFU), and a striking Just Eat courier.

Following the elections we will continue to campaign and sink roots deeper into the labour movement and local communities.

TUSC STAND PIONEERING THE FIGHT FOR A NEW MASS WORKERS' PARTY

Nearly 30,000 voters put an 'X' next to the name of a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate on 5 May. With working-class people facing impending recession and plummeting living standards, there was no other widespread group of candidates offering a socialist alternative to further local austerity and cuts. Socialist Party members were among the over 200 TUSC candidates fighting for an alternative to the bosses' establishment parties.

The Socialist Party participates in TUSC alongside the RMT trade union, Resist, and others.

By standing candidates and putting forward a fighting socialist programme, we are able to build an important platform for socialist ideas, and also help the process of developing a new mass workers' party.

We publish reports of Socialist Party election campaigns around the country, and an overview of TUSC results nationwide.



Coventry: Raising TUSC's profile against a hostile Labour council

ADAM HARMSWORTH

COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

TUSC's council election campaign in Coventry was very busy and dominated by the bin strike caused by a traitorous Labour council. Before we even began our campaign, striking bin workers were pledging their support. During the last bin workers' protest many began chanting "Vote TUSC!" and during Coventry's May Day rally, trade union speakers including those not part of the coalition, called on the rally to vote for us.

Where we met residents during the campaign, the main issue that came up was the cost-of-living crisis. People recognise that everything is getting more expensive, life is getting

more difficult, and things have got to change.

Cost-of-living pain

On our campaign stalls we met people who have begun rationing their heating to save money. Others are visiting relatives in hospital less to save on parking charges - charges that we have been campaigning to get rid of. Nobody had a good word to say about Labour, because they aren't doing anything to help workers fight the cost-of-living crisis.

Our election public meeting brought in trade unionists and young workers from across the city. Unite convenor for Coventry bin drivers, Haydn Jones, spoke in support of TUSC and outlined how the strike

had politically developed himself and other bin workers. Haydn proudly told the meeting that he wanted his Unite branch to build a campaign in the union to disaffiliate from Labour.

On election day itself there were nearly ten thousand fewer votes compared to last year. The Tories lost nearly 5000 votes, and Labour over 700. The result here reflected the utter apathy and disillusionment in establishment politics.

TUSC took over 1,000 votes, including nearly 10% in St Michaels ward. In Sherbourne, we made an effort to punish Labour for betraying the bin workers, we doubled our previous vote and the Labour candidate's majority was cut from 501 in 2018 to just 35.

TUSC election results

TUSC stood 227 candidates in 222 wards in the English council elections across 53 local authorities, plus three mayoral candidates. There were 16 Scottish TUSC candidates in nine councils in Scotland; and 25 candidates across five authorities in Wales.

The last time these seats in the English councils were contested was in 2018. The previous local elections in Scotland and Wales were in 2017. In both those years,

with Jeremy Corbyn the leader of the Labour Party, TUSC was not contesting general elections and only stood in council elections against right-wing Labour candidates who were openly acting in opposition to Jeremy as they carried out austerity policies in the council chamber.

This time, with Tony Blair-style New Labour politics fully restored within the Labour Party, there was a potentially far wider field. The TUSC core policy platform for the May 2022 elections, can be found at tusc.org.uk

Summary points from the results include:

- The total vote for all TUSC candidates on 5 May was 29,169, comprised of 23,991 votes for the council candidates, and 5,178 votes for the three mayoral candidates.
- While the results were still modest, in all three of the directly-elected mayoral polls it contested TUSC increased both its absolute vote and percentage share compared to when it had previously stood.
- Leading the 'league table' of all the TUSC results of five percent or more was the 18.3% polled in the Seven Kings ward in the London Borough of Redbridge - which secured a second place finish - followed by the 18.2% won in Knowsley council's Northwood ward.
- In 40 wards the TUSC candidate polled over five percent, including in eight of the twenty wards

contested by TUSC in the North East London borough of Waltham Forest.

● In Waltham Forest, the TUSC candidates polled a combined total of 3,490 votes. The other councils where the TUSC candidates polled over a thousand votes were Coventry, Cardiff, Ealing, Lewisham, Newham, Sheffield and Tower Hamlets.

Once again TUSC played its role in providing a banner for trade unionists to take on the austerity politicians at the ballot box. Those standing as TUSC candidates included national executive members from trade unions Unison, the National Education Union and NAPO; section executive members from the PCS and Unison; and over 30 branch officers from the RMT, Unite, NEU, PCS, Unison, GMB and CWU.

TUSC also provided an inclusive space for the widest spectrum of socialists, from different socialist organisations or none, to stand under a common banner. This included over a dozen candidates who were previously Labour councillors or Labour Party council candidates from the time of Jeremy Corbyn's Labour leadership, who decided to carry on the fight for anti-austerity, socialist policies by standing, this time, under the TUSC umbrella.

Overall, the scale and impact of the TUSC election challenge this May was modest compared to what could have been achieved, with the potential for thousands of anti-austerity fighters standing, if the unions had organised a national drive for candidates or if Jeremy Corbyn himself had taken the initiative to organise an electoral challenge to new New Labour. But it will have added to the pressure on them to do so for next year's council elections and the general election to come.

● **A comprehensive report of TUSC's 2022 local election results will be published on tusc.org.uk**



Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

JUDY BEISHON

SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

On local elections day, 5 May, none of the main parties offered any escape from the escalating, unrelenting cost-of-living crisis. No surprise then that the turnout was low. Those who did vote gave a snapshot of the general mood, with a central feature being anger at the Tory government's hypocrisy, shambles, and driving down of living standards.

Two days before polling day, prime minister Boris Johnson was the first head of state to address the Ukrainian parliament, no doubt hoping he would appear to voters in Britain as a strong leader and lynchpin of support for the Ukrainians. But that didn't protect him and his party from voters' fury - the Tories lost over 400 council seats and control of a net eleven councils.

Tory losses

Attempts by local Conservative associations to distance themselves from their national party - including by using the name 'Local Conservative' - were also not enough to prevent those losses. The Tories suffered the historic affront of losing two of their three central London councils to Labour: Wandsworth, after 44 years of Tory rule, and Westminster after 58 years.

Very alarming for them too was a significant fracturing of their support base across their usual strongholds elsewhere in the south of England. For many traditionally Tory voters the 'partygate' revelations came as a last straw, on top of the long catalogue of other scandals.

The Tories also had less support in Scotland and lost their only council in Wales - Monmouthshire (see also page 10).

They can comfort themselves with the lack of general interest in the local elections: Socialist Party campaigners out on the streets, even on election day, found that many people hadn't registered they were even taking place. But the results can only add to the turmoil within the Tory party and the plotting among Tory MPs against Johnson's leadership.

The jury is still out, however, on

whether concrete moves to remove him will come soon or whether there will be more of a time delay. Tory MPs will be observing how events go over the coming weeks, including likely further partygate fines by the Metropolitan Police of top Tories; the 'Queen's Speech' legislation plans; the Sue Gray partygate investigation report; the by-election in Tiverton and Honiton following Tory MP Neil Parish viewing porn in parliament; and a by-election in Wakefield after the Tory MP there had to resign over a conviction for sexual assault.

One major issue staying their hands is their lack of good options regarding an alternative leader, especially one who would be seen as suitable for retaining electoral support, both by Tory MPs representing the previous 'red-wall' constituencies in the north and those who represent the 'blue-wall' heartlands. They can feel the ground slipping from under their feet everywhere - and this is a party with a history of being the longest-serving, successful and stable political representatives of big business on the planet.



For many, the partygate revelations were a last straw. The Tories can feel the ground slipping from under their feet everywhere. Their ideas to respond to the cost-of-living crisis are derisory.

Labour's vote

Considering the nightmare financial situation now facing ordinary people, and the fact that the Tories preside over it and are ridden with sleaze, the Labour Party should have been able to pick up all the seats lost by the Tories and many more. Yet the anti-Tory protest votes went in many directions - to the Lib Dems, Greens, SNP, Plaid Cymru, as well as Labour and others. Labour gained over 200 seats and had a net gain of six councils, a weak success which didn't indicate the party held any real attraction.

How could it, when under Starmer's shifting of the party to the right it promises nothing but a similar diet of austerity as the Tories? Its vote

actually fell overall in the north of England, and its better performance in London and a number of other cities was less due to a working-class vote, and more to that of anti-Tory middle-class people, especially in gentrified areas. A large section of the working class simply abstained, not seeing anything worth voting for.

'Blame Corbyn'

Following the elections, political journalist Laura Kuenssberg quoted a shadow cabinet minister as blaming "long Corbyn" for Labour's mediocre results - a common refrain in one form or another in the pro-capitalist press. In the Observer (8.5.22) Andrew Rawnsley wrote: "Labour made gains that put the electoral catastrophe of the Corbyn years behind them."

Using any possible distortion as propaganda to denigrate Jeremy Corbyn is still an ongoing theme by the Labour right and mainstream media. They still fear the attraction his left policies held and whether he could be elected as an independent MP in the next general election, now that he's banned from sitting as a Labour MP in parliament.

In fact, the last time the same council seats were contested was in 2018 when Corbyn was Labour leader,



Labour's weak success didn't indicate the party held any real attraction. How could it, when under Starmer's shifting of the party to the right it promises nothing but a similar diet of austerity as the Tories? Its vote actually fell overall in the north of England.



Socialist Party members campaigning for TUSC in Swansea



Hackney workers on strike against Labour council JAMES IVENS

May results were not good enough to suggest that the party is on course for a majority in the next general election.

Starmer, however, rather than arming Labour with a programme that could begin to respond to the needs of workers in Britain, is still more intent on doing the bidding of the capitalist class. The Times newspaper elaborated on this in its 3 May editorial, when it said: "Though Sir Keir Starmer has made some progress in restoring the party's credibility, he should move faster and further against his internal critics" - ie expel the few left-wing MPs remaining in Labour as the editorial went on to urge, for the crime of not supporting the Nato military alliance.

It also advised on political programme: "Having won the leadership by persuading party members that he was an authentic upholder of left-wing verities, Sir Keir should make a virtue of boldness in jettisoning these, just as Sir Tony did on becoming leader in 1994". This is a prominent pro-capitalist paper openly advocating that Starmer - a party leader in parliament - should dismiss the democratic basis on which he was elected and act in the opposite class interests.

Voting against the incumbent was one of the features on 5 May. Among

the recipients were the Lib Dems, who were boosted by protest votes against the Tories, and gained nearly 200 extra council seats and control of several councils. The Greens also benefited from the voting fragmentation, increasing their seats by over 80.

Unlike the Lib Dems, the Greens are 'left-leaning,' although that might not have been noticed from many of their election leaflets. However, they picked up votes due to simply being seen as not one of the main parties - who have delivered nothing in power - and due to hopes that they might at least implement some measures against environmental degradation.

Unfortunately, though, whenever the Greens have achieved positions of power or influence in elected bodies, in Britain or internationally, they have bowed down to capitalist restraints and failed to protect workers' interests. In Sheffield in March 2022, for example, their councillors aided the passing of a budget which contained cuts in services.

Regarding the environment, when in power they have only carried out woefully inadequate measures and don't have a socialist programme that will be essential to stop and reverse climate change.

While mentioning the smaller



Workers and trade unionists have already had to emerge from the Covid pandemic with struggles against their bosses in the private and public sector.

parties, it's worth noting that there were no reports of the far right - or populists to the right of the Tories - winning any seats. As well as being welcome news in itself, this also means that the Tories did badly despite a lack of competition for votes on the right.

Struggles to come

This article has been written before the government outlines its legislation plans in the Queen's Speech on 10 May. Johnson is expected to try to bolster support for his leadership by making some policy pledges on that day. But the ideas that have been coming from cabinet ministers on how to respond to the cost-of-living crisis have been derisory.

There is unease about that within the Tories and fears about the consequences; former Tory leader Iain Duncan Smith has called for an emergency budget to cut taxes and boost Universal Credit. But the government has no intention of taking the degree of measures that would be necessary to protect low-paid workers and people on benefits from all the hits from spiralling energy bills, mortgages, rents and food prices.

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TUSC candidates were the largest left-wing stand against Labour and the other pro-capitalist parties

Party, which is now stepping up its insistence that the Tory government change the post-Brexit protocol of having border checks in the Irish sea (see also page 12-13).

The price of the worsening economic situation will be paid by more attacks on the living standards of working-class and middle-class people if the government thinks it can get away with them. Many workers and trade unionists have already had to emerge from the Covid pandemic with struggles against their bosses, or preparations for them, in the private and public sector. Now is the time to apply pressure on the trade union leaders for these actions to be coordinated for maximum impact and expanded into a movement that the government won't be able to ride out.

The national trade union demonstration called by the Trades Union Congress for 18 June, 'We demand better', can play an important part in building that movement - with its focus on the need for pay rises higher than inflation.

In addition, the large vacuum on the left in the local elections once again brings home the urgent need for workers to have their own political representation.

In Tower Hamlets in London, the 'Aspire' group, mainly former Labour members, won control of the council from Labour with a programme of seizing long-term empty homes to turn into social housing, creating thousands of new jobs, expanding breakfast clubs for primary school children, and bringing outsourced public services back into public hands, among other pledges.

TUSC stand

A number of other left groups stood candidates against Labour and the other pro-capitalist parties. The largest stand among them - over 270 candidates - was presented by the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), which includes the Socialist Party (see page 5).

These are initial steps towards building a political challenge to the establishment parties on a mass national basis - which will require the building of a new mass workers' party. The support of hundreds of thousands of workers and youth for Corbyn's policies during his period as Labour leader showed how a new party could rapidly take on flesh.

With the trade unions playing a key role as part of a democratic party structure, and equipped with a programme for socialist change, workers would be able to lead the way forward to an entirely different society.



Labour leader Keir Starmer PHOTO CREDIT: JEREMY CORBYN



Tory PM Boris Johnson SIMON DAWSON/NO10 DOWNING STREET

Coventry bin workers bring the fight to London



HELEN PATTISON
LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Last week striking Coventry bin workers brought their fight for decent pay to the doors of the Local Government Association, in central London.

They were joined by striking Hackney bin workers. They are also fighting a Labour council. The protest heard speeches about the growing strike of Rugby bin workers, who are fighting a Tory administration, also over pay.

Pete Randall, Coventry Unite bin

rep and Socialist Party member, raised the need for a new party for the working class. In fact, all the speakers agreed these strikes are about class. It's the working class that is being made to pay for the Covid crisis. Whether Tory or Labour councils, they are pushing the cost on to us!

The chants rang out, to Labour: "Shame on you for turning blue". When the employer is the Labour council, forcing workers to live off poverty wages, it makes it very clear why our movement needs a political voice as well as an industrial one.

Hackney strikers shocked by management tactics

HACKNEY SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

Hackney Council Unite members are continuing their action on pay. On the fifth day of their strike against the Labour council, management called in police to a peaceful low-key picket of the SEND (special educational needs and disability) passenger transport garage.

Striking workers looked on in amazement as a number of police vehicles with flashing blue lights rushed through the narrow streets at 5.30am.

They had been called because a car had been approached by pickets about supporting the action. A manager instructed the driver to get out, which left his vehicle blocking the road. It wasn't lost on the workers that the police appeared in moments.

These two police officers were intent on getting this vehicle into the depot, but only succeeded in blocking part of the exit for a queue of SEND buses waiting to get out of the depot. The pickets and their supporters wanted to speak to the drivers about the dispute. Suddenly, one of

the drivers accelerated, looking like he wanted to burst through and over the picket line.

This embarrassed the police, who had claimed that they were protecting the peace, presumably from the pickets! It seemed that the driver was stepped down and a manager took over the bus. We understand that the head of HR has subsequently apologised to people who complained of being hit.

A few hours later, at the end of the picket, strikers were in good spirits, knowing that the morning's action had sent another strong signal that they are determined to win the pay rise they deserve.

After reviewing the six days of strike action, and in the face of management intransigence, Unite is looking to expand the dispute. It will be balloting parking enforcement officers who were brought back into the council from a private company in April this year, but have not been placed on council terms and conditions. The fight continues.



Udaw conference: Campaigning for a fighting union



AMY MURPHY
FORMER USDAW PRESIDENT AND CONFERENCE DELEGATE (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Following the first two days of shop workers' union Udaw conference, reported in last week's Socialist, Socialist Party members continued to take to the rostrum to argue for the

union to take a fighting stance on the key issues facing members. That met with opposition from the leadership.

Most propositions that were opposed by the leadership were withdrawn, in all probability under pressure from the standing orders committee. This meant that key issues were not debated. Although this

was the first time the Annual Delegate Meeting had taken place face to face for two years, and involved a number of new delegates, the conference was therefore pretty sterile.

Some important issues affecting the lives of low-paid, overworked members were discussed including mental health, the lack of social

housing, the costs of childcare and many more.

There were some fantastic contributions on the continued attacks by the Tories on low-paid workers. The rise in the cost of living, the huge profits raked in by energy companies, and the need to have these companies brought into public ownership were all raised.

The executive was called upon to campaign for the £20 uplift of Universal Credit to be restored, followed by a fundamental overhaul of Universal Credit, and a reversal in the recent National Insurance increase.

But when the conference was addressed by Labour's Dr Rosena Alin-Khan, shadow cabinet minister for mental health, she said very little about what Labour would do for low-paid workers. Despite that, she encouraged delegates to get involved with the Labour Party.

Kieron Murphy moved a proposition for Udaw to affiliate to the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) which was previously brought to the conference in 2018.

Both times it was opposed by the leadership, this time citing it as 'inappropriate' and 'not a suitable organisation', as it was run by the Socialist Party. The wheels were out in motion by the right-wing leadership, and despite several speakers in support, it was lost.

The last, but by no means least controversial, proposition to be debated was moved by Ryan Aldred. He asked conference to affiliate Udaw to Youth Fight for Jobs, because of its campaigning against all job losses.

Once again, this was opposed by the leadership, with another attack on the Socialist Party, and it was unfortunately lost. Ryan defiantly refused to withdraw the proposition from the agenda paper and there were some great contributions.

The anger of members and the huge pressures on low-paid workers mean the leadership will struggle to keep a lid on all these issues, and Socialist Party members will continue to lead the campaign for a fighting union.

PCS - DWP group election: Vote for a change from the leadership's record of failure

KATRINE WILLIAMS
PCSMEMBER

The ballot for the leadership of the PCS Department of Work and Pensions Group (DWP) closes midday Tuesday 17 May. Members must check their emails as the ballot is online. If the union does not have a member's valid email address, a postal vote will be provided.

The current Left Unity leadership of the DWP Group has a record of failure. It failed to organise a collective response to the threat of Covid. It failed to mobilise to demand permanent contracts for all the thousands of fixed-term

appointments (FTAs) employed by the department.

Faced now with the closure of over 40 workplaces, no strategy for preventing these closures is forthcoming from the current leadership. It's time for a change.

Socialist Party members are standing in the DWP group election as part of the Broad Left Network (BLN) - a socialist rank and file group.

The BLN platform includes:

- Group-wide opposition to office closures and keep services local
- Defence of every job - permanent posts for all FTAs
- End micromanagement,

compulsory late working and compulsory Saturday working

- For an agreement on home/hybrid working, that secures the benefits for all and keeps people safe. Covid has not gone away. Members' and claimants' safety are paramount
- A strong DWP integrated campaign around all these issues
- A minimum 10% pay rise
- Find more information at pcsbln.wordpress.com.

The BLN slate includes Socialist Party member Dave Semple for president. The BLN increased its branch nominations this year - the only group to do so.

A change of leadership is needed. These are the candidates who will fight for members, in action not just words.

PRESIDENT

- Semple, Dave

VICE-PRESIDENTS

- Suter, Paul
- Williams, Katrine

ASSISTANT SECRETARIES

- Brown, Ian
- Burke, Dave
- Fearn, Jill

● Rees, Dave

● Tweedale,

Saorsa-Amatheia

● Worswick, Craig

EDITOR

- Johnston, Sam

TREASURER

- Scott, Emma

GEC MEMBERS

- Brown, Ian
- Evison, Chris
- Fearn, Jill
- Hamer, Peter
- Heemskerk, Rachel

● Ilesanmi, Yemisi

● Johnston, Sam

● McGuckian, Stephen

- Rees, Dave
- Scott, Emma
- Semple, Dave
- Suter, Paul
- Toomer, Catherine
- Tweedale,

Saorsa-Amatheia

- Williams, Katrine
- Worswick, Craig

NEU executive discusses pay campaign We have to be the strongest fighters

SHEILA CAFFEY
NEU EXECUTIVE MEMBER (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

How do you build a fighting, membership-led union? What are the biggest issues currently facing education staff? And how do you tie both together to win?

These are questions that the five Socialist Party members on the National Education Union (NEU) National Executive ask before putting any strategy forward. This allows us to think carefully about what to win, as well as how.

We have consistently been the only ones who submit strategies to win on workload, pay and fighting for a national contract for all educators.

It sometimes feels like we don't win much during meetings, but then a month or so later we discover that what we've said has become the position of the union.

However, this week's meeting was a little different: our motion on pay, building on the conference decision to hold an indicative ballot in October, actually just got reworded and submitted by others further up the same agenda!

Why? Well, they know that we have the ear of our membership, that we know what to fight for, and that we

can design a plan to win. Also, with elections for general secretary looming, perhaps some want to look like they're organising a fightback. Just as long as it doesn't have our names on it!

So, what did we win at this meeting? We won wording that made it clear that the campaign on pay must be linked to workload and winning a national contract.

We were also widely supported with our call to inspire members, echoing our wording from the last NEU election, when we called for a deputy general secretary who would 'lead from the front, and build from below'. Members need to feel that they can win, and this is felt when there's a leadership which not only believes this, but vocally rallies members.

Bold campaign

We also had it agreed to produce material for public street stalls, ensuring campaigns are built across workplaces and with community support. A pay rise for any group of workers cuts across a race to the bottom on wages and conditions.

Other points we added in were having specific material directed at supply teachers to ensure that the pay campaign isn't only about those

with permanent contracts. Also holding national, mass meetings for all members, and one specifically for support staff. All members need to feel that they're part of a national campaign, run by a national union, fighting for a pay rise for all NEU members.

All education workers

Unfortunately, we couldn't get movement on having simultaneous indicative ballots for teachers and support staff. We were told that 'shoe-horning all in so no-one is upset isn't the answer', that we were 'tagging support staff on as an afterthought', and that we should 'come back after having done some work in our districts'.

This, of course, isn't true! Not only have we been raising the need for a unified campaign all year, but in fact, got elected to the executive after standing on a platform calling for proper organising for all sections of the union!

Furthermore, our motion was based on what support staff had brought to our national conference, and we shared with support staff members in the Education Solidarity Network (the broader left grouping we work within) for feedback.

This is solely the leadership showing their lack of confidence, and their lack of seriousness in building a campaign to win on pay for those who are lowest paid in our union.

We will keep fighting for the inclusion of support staff, as well as fighting for a bold campaign to win on pay, workload and all issues facing all education workers.

If we want a strong, fighting union, then we will be the strongest fighters.

If you are a teacher, member of support staff or work in a school, college or nursery, get in touch with us!

We want to bring all the most active, socialist campaigners together so we can help direct the union to achieve the education system and workplaces we need and deserve!

2022 National Shop Stewards Network Conference

Saturday 2nd July

11am-4.30pm Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL

Workers fight the cost of living squeeze

Trade union lead never more needed!

speakers include: **Sharon Graham,**

Unite general secretary

www.shopstewards.net

CWU needs independent political strategy alongside industrial fightback

JUDY GRIFFITHS
CWU MEMBER

Following the sector conferences reported in last week's Socialist, CWU conference met physically for the first time in three years. Issues discussed included equality, the environment, recruitment, and training for reps.

Five motions not admitted to the agenda raised the key issue of the union's relationship with the Labour Party. Attempts to have these standing orders committee decisions overturned were lost, denying the conference an opportunity to discuss these vital issues in detail.

This debate came just before the local elections, when, following years of Labour councils implementing Tory cuts, there was a huge sense of 'all politicians are the same' amongst working-class people.

Discussion has taken place in several unions about what to do since Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity stance was ditched from Keir Starmer's Labour Party.

The bakers union, BFAWU, has voted to disaffiliate from the Labour Party. Unite, under Sharon Graham's leadership, has adopted the policy of calling for no-cuts needs budgets.

The experience of the brutal bin strike in Coventry has led Unite to withdraw support from councillors who attack their members.

It is clearly vital that the CWU also tackles this issue of working-class political representation.

One motion to conference called for the withdrawal of all funding until the Labour Party has a leadership that the CWU can fully support. Others called for the union to support members who wish to stand as anti-cuts candidates inside and outside of the Labour Party.

Motions not admitted

Motion 83 also pointed out that Labour Party members, including CWU members, who have supported CWU policies, have been suspended and kicked out of the Labour Party.

This includes Jeremy Corbyn, who supports nationalisation of BT and Royal Mail, which Starmer's leadership does not have in its manifesto.

A motion from Coventry branch was not admitted to the agenda, and the challenge to that almost won the vote to be heard. The standing orders decision was based on the 'fact' that it encouraged

Labour councillors to break the law.

The branch pointed out the actual words of the motion, which clearly stated "to call on Labour Councils to set legal, balanced, no-cuts needs-based budgets" and to withdraw funding from CWU-backed councillors who continue to implement cuts.

Labour councils have millions in their reserves that could be used to stop cuts and restore lost services to the community, such as youth centres and libraries, while mobilising a campaign and linking with other councils to challenge the government to restore the funding cuts they've made.

Many delegates were angry that the debate couldn't even take place, giving branches an opportunity to fully discuss the issue.

The CWU has a record as a fighting union industrially, but for that fight to be as strong as it can be, it needs to re-evaluate its political stance.

After the challenge to the standing orders committee, a CWU member who is a Labour councillor approached me and said: 'I agree with you but if I said it I'd be expelled'. I thought that said everything about Starmer's Labour.



On 3 May, Post Office workers, members of CWU, held a day of strike action. The walkout was against the pay freeze in 2021 and meagre 2% pay offer for this year. Socialist Party members showed their support for the campaign for an inflation-busting pay rise.

BIRMINGHAM SP

Wales: Establishment parties fail to take advantage of anger at the Tories

Biggest TUSC council election stand offers alternative

SOCIALIST PARTY WALES

Liar Boris Johnson and his Tories were given a bloody nose in the 2022 council elections in Wales, but none of the other parties of the Welsh capitalist establishment were able to fully take advantage of the developing anger at Tory rule. Labour now controls eight councils, Plaid Cymru four, and ten will be under no overall control.

Not a single group of Tory councillors in Wales increased in size during these elections, and in some areas they were wiped out. The Tories lost control of Monmouthshire - until this year their only Welsh council. In total there are 86 fewer Welsh Tory councillors.

Some of the rage against the Tories was expressed by voting Labour, but the enthusiasm for Welsh Labour has been exaggerated in the press.

It's true that the extra distance from capitalist Keir Starmer helped Welsh Labour get a better result than in England - the 66 extra Labour councillors in Wales represents almost half of the total increase across the whole of Britain.

But this was no landslide. Labour lost councillors in heartland areas like Swansea, Wrexham and Caerphilly (where Council-leader Philippa Marsden was toppled by an independent) and losing control of Neath Port Talbot Council.

Now that Corbynism has been decisively defeated in the Labour Party and Starmer continues his war against socialism, Labour is

incapable of reflecting and directing the class anger that is developing out of the cost-of-living crisis, but no other working-class alternative exists.

Plaid Cymru has lost ground in the South Wales valleys as a result of its turn to the right under Adam Price. Its small gains in the west and north were enough to edge it into control of three more councils, despite a slight reduction in its total number of councillors.

The absence of a mass workers' party allowed the Greens to pick up eight councillors in seven councils, many for the first time. Elsewhere, workers' anger was channelled into electing independents - the second biggest group of councillors in Wales after Labour.

What is necessary is the building of a new party for the Welsh working class, armed with a socialist programme to defend living standards, jobs, pay and services. That's what supporters of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition were fighting for in this election.

TUSC stood more widely than ever before in council elections in Wales, fielding 26 candidates. We gained 5.6% of voters in Llanrumney, Cardiff and 4.9% in Castle ward, Swansea, among others.

We tapped into the overwhelming contempt for all of the failed mainstream parties and the genuine enthusiasm for the idea of the trade unions launching a new mass workers' party.



TUSC campaigning in Cardiff during the election SOCIALIST PARTY WALES

US: Build a movement to defend and expand abortion rights



INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST GROUP (ISG), CWI US

On 2 May, a draft opinion from the Supreme Court case Dobbs v Jackson was leaked, suggesting that the ruling in this case will overturn the precedent set by Roe v. Wade. If this happens, it will result in millions of women in the United States losing access to abortion.

At the moment, 13 states have 'trigger laws' which would automatically ban abortion if Roe v Wade is overturned, and many more states would likely use it as an opportunity to pass similar bans. The leak has already led to a number of protests around the country.

While all women will be hurt by a return to pre-Roe days, working-class women will be hit the hardest. Many working-class women are already prevented from accessing abortion due to the cost of the procedure, the amount of time necessary to schedule and attend medically unnecessary but legally mandated appointments before their abortion, and the inability to travel to the nearest abortion clinic.

Women in many states, especially in rural areas, are hundreds of miles away from the nearest abortion clinic. 27 states currently require women seeking an abortion to attend a mandatory counselling session 24 hours before their abortion takes place. This means that women who have to travel long distances to get an abortion are forced to stay overnight wherever the abortion clinic is located.

This latest attack comes on the back of a host of oppressive laws aimed at women and the LGBTQ+ community pushed by the Republican Party in state legislatures across the country. While condemning it in words, the Democrats, who present themselves as the pro-choice party, have consistently refused to mobilise any mass protests or movements that could have offered a real opposition to this assault.

Biden has failed to deliver on his promise to make Roe v. Wade the "law of the land", despite the

Democratic Party currently controlling the legislative and executive branches. Biden himself supported a constitutional amendment in 1981 that would have allowed states to overturn Roe v Wade.

Nancy Pelosi, one of the most prominent Democrats and the speaker of the House of Representatives, said as recently as 2017 that "of course" people could be anti-abortion and a Democrat. Even earlier in 2009, when the Democratic Party had a supermajority in Congress and Barack Obama in the White House, it still failed to make access to abortion a legal right, despite Obama's campaign promises.

The Democratic Party cannot be counted on to defend any of our civil rights, least of all access to abortion, which is already effectively banned for millions of women in the US. An independent working-class party, accountable to and controlled by workers, is needed to effectively lead the charge against these attacks on our rights.

Almost 60% of people in the US believe that abortion should be legal. That five unelected judges can make a decision which flies in the face of public opinion has rightly shaken many people's faith in the Supreme Court.

Access to abortion under capitalism is not just an issue for women, but for the entire working class. Many LGBTQ+ workers who are not women rely on and utilise other reproductive health services, including abortion. As well, the ability of female workers to plan their families helps the entire working class, including working-class men. It is in the interest of all workers to come out and struggle against these restrictions on women's reproductive rights, and to fight against women's oppression in general.

Roe v Wade wasn't handed to workers out of the kindness of the Supreme Court. It was a concession given during the conservative Nixon regime, at a time when the combined pressure of the women's movement, the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement, the LGBTQ+ rights

movement, and others put the capitalists on the defensive.

Now we need a similar movement. It's not enough to just defend Roe v. Wade. Even if Roe v Wade isn't overturned, the current right-wing attack on women, LGBTQ+ people, and workers in general will continue. We must unite the movement for women's rights with the environmental, anti-racist, immigrant, LGBTQ+, and labour movements to win affordable and easily accessible healthcare, including reproductive healthcare and abortion.

The time to build a fightback against all of these attacks against women and reproductive rights is not after Roe v Wade is overturned, but right now!

ISG says:

- Build a movement independent of the Democratic Party to fight to defend Roe v Wade, and expand access to abortion. This must draw in sections of the labour movement, and utilise union power to win its demands.
- Replace the broken for-profit health care system with free and universal health care that protects women's and LGBTQ+ people's access to non-discriminatory healthcare.
- Create good union jobs building and staffing new reproductive health clinics all around the country. Ensure that those who need the clinics are able to reach them by greatly expanding public transportation, especially to rural or isolated areas.
- Build a new party based in the working class that will actually fight for the interests of the working class, including defending and expanding abortion rights, universal healthcare, universal childcare, fully funded and staffed schools, and a future free from harmful climate change.
- Replace the Supreme Court with a judicial body that is directly elected by workers in the U.S., with judges being directly accountable to the people.

Sri Lanka: Biggest mass movement and strike forces prime minister's resignation

Sri Lanka's prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa has resigned following the recent mass strike movement in protest at soaring prices, power cuts and economic crisis. This was the culmination of over a month of protests. Written before the resignation, we carry below an article by Prasad Welikumbura of the United Socialist Party (CWI in Sri Lanka) about the protests and strikes that have gripped the country, and forced the resignation of Mahinda.

On 6 May the sun rose on the island nation Sri Lanka just as on any other day. But it was not an ordinary day. Hundreds of thousands of people, together with all the trade unions, shop owners, small traders and businesses were ready to carry out a nationwide 'hartal' - a day of strikes and protests.

Life has become unbearable without food, electricity and gas. There is no foreign currency to import vital medicines, foodstuffs, fertiliser and fuel. Prices have rocketed beyond imaginable levels.

In every town, from east to west and north to south, most businesses were closed and black flags were raised. Tens of thousands of people belonging to every social class, race and religion all together eagerly gathered in town squares, most of them wearing black clothes and some carrying black flags, joined the call demanding that the current president, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, resign.

This was the first hartal event in Sri Lanka since 1953, when people rose against the then prime minister, Dudley Senanayake, for raising the price of rice from 25 cents to 70 cents. But instead of just the northern and coastal areas that joined the hartal in 1953, the entire island has joined this time.

None of the conventional political parties in the opposition, Samagi Jana Balawegaya and the Tamil National Alliance, participated in the hartal as political parties, but the communalist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) participated and organised rallies and protests in support of the hartal.

Everywhere

Every town and industry was well organised. Both private and government sector banks were closed and all the workers came onto the streets to protest. No trains were running on the day. All the schools and universities, including the private sector, were closed. The central bus stand of Colombo was empty and youths were playing cricket there. At several junctions, people cooked a Mala Batha (funeral rice), a traditional meal some Sri Lankans cook after a funeral, declaring this action was the funeral of the current government.

Major protests were organised at Katunayake, Biyagama and Koggala export processing zones by the factory workers. Some cities like Anuradhapura had distributed maps among the people notifying them where the protests were held. Jaffna town was closed entirely. Batticaloa, a coastal town in the east with a majority Muslim population, had a massive demonstration. Passara town in the Uwa province also had a significant demonstration. In Matara town, the JVP organised a colossal protest and a rally.



Anti-government protest in Sri Lanka on 13 April in front of the Presidential Secretariat

ANTANO/CC

A large crowd gathered in the capital city of the central province, Kandy and marched around the city, chanting slogans while carrying black flags. The occupation site in Kurunegala - 'Gota Go Gama (Home)' - held another demonstration with massive public support. Gampaha, Kiribathgoda, Rathnapura and Galle also had large rallies. A considerable number of parents brought their children to the protesting sites - a new development in Sri Lanka. On top of all this, small-scale demonstrations were held at many road junctions around the country.

Road to parliament

The most potent and significant demonstration was held at the main entry road to the parliament. It was organised by the youth of Galleface Gota Go Gama in collaboration with the Inter-University Student Federation (IUSF) and Inter-University Bhikku

Federation (Buddhist Clergy) - the university students and Bhikkhus union linked with the Frontline Socialist Party.

On the previous day, the IUSF and IUBF came to the parliament entry road demanding the current government and president Gotabaya Rajapaksa resign. The government was ready for them with newly built permanent barriers using iron pipes, barricades and water cannons. When they were protesting peacefully, police and the paramilitary units used water cannons and tear gas on them. They used N-500 gas grenades that are only used in hostage-rescue operations.

Social media was very active, giving updates on everything happening in the area and thousands of

people gathered to give the students support. These included some of the same people who, less than a year ago, criticised the student movement for fighting for their rights and protesting. There has been a shift, and now a majority of the people accept them as heroes and consider them as flagbearers of the people's struggle.

A large number of youths came from the Galleface Gota Go Gama protest site with supplies. IUSF, IUBF, and youth from Gota Go Gama declared they would occupy the area. They were prepared, and brought wrenches to dismantle the permanent barricades police had built. They used those pipes to create a stage and shelters for them to get protected from the rain.

Activists notified people, using their social media accounts, that they required water, food and electricity. Within two hours, people came there with water bottles, food, tents and a generator. Six music bands also came to entertain the people who gathered there. They established a formidable protest site to demonstrate on the day of the hartal.

Next day

On the following day, students and youths, together with people who gathered at that site, continued the protest. In the evening, police launched another wave of teargas and water cannon attacks, destroying all the food and water that people had donated to the protesters. In the evening, the speaker of the parliament decided to adjourn the sitting of parliament until 17 May.

With this decision, youths and the IUSF decided to abandon the occupation. At the same time, they received news that there was a plan to remove the Gota Go Gama occupation at the main protest site near the presidential secretariat that night.

Considering all the information, the organisers declared they would leave and come back on the 17 May. But a large number of people gathered there were against the decision. They continued to protest. Police launched another massive tear gas and water cannon attack on the protesters, including children, and brutally assaulted some of the protesters.

At 10pm, President Gotabaya declared a nationwide state of emergency. Everyone at Gota Go Gama suspected that the government might try to remove the occupation under the emergency regulations and a large number of protesters spent the night there.

The mighty struggle in Sri Lanka goes on. The United Socialist Party is bringing out a new issue of its newspaper urging workers and youth to organise the struggle through democratically elected workplace and area committees, and for a Democratic Assembly to work out how to replace the ruling family elite with their own government.

For an end to poverty, dictatorship and private ownership of land, industry and banks! For a government of the workers and poor that stands for a confederation of socialist states in Asia and worldwide!

● See socialistworld.net for updates



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the Socialist

Issue 1179

12-19 May 2022

formerly **Militant**

SEIZE THE OIL GIANTS' CASH MOUNTAIN NATIONALISE ENERGY



TO END PRICE RISES

SARE O'NEILL

SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

£40 billion.

That's the eye-watering sum oil giants BP and Shell are set to make this year alone. A year which has seen a dire cost-of-living crisis hit the working class so significantly that over 1.3 million people are predicted to fall into absolute poverty.

But with a government stuffed to the brim with private school pals, ex-bankers, and millionaires, empathy is non-existent. The people in power are more closely aligned to the oil company shareholders than the average worker.

BP and Shell have avoided paying tax on North Sea gas and oil for three years. And what's Boris Johnson's reasoning behind avoiding imposing a windfall tax on energy firms? Well, the companies 'don't want one', of course.

The prime minister said: "[Energy firms] don't want a windfall tax and there's a good reason for that, and that is because it would stop investment in new technology and in new green power that we need".

We can't rely on the goodwill of energy companies to make the decision to divert even a crumb of their profits to helping the planet. We also can't rely on these companies to not hike prices up year after year.

With wages remaining stagnant, but fuel, food, and basic necessities going through the roof, workers have become the sacrificial lamb for decades of austerity, mismanagement and greed.

If the government was as protective of the working class as it is of the gas and oil companies, then maybe some of the £400 billion spent propping up big businesses during the pandemic could've shortened food bank queues, extended the £20 increase to Universal Credit, heated houses for pensioners, or provided suitable housing for working-class families.

So, we're calling for BP, Shell, and other major energy companies to be nationalised under democratic working-class control and management. The billions they pocket could be used for socially useful, sustainable development, and to help end the profit-driven cost-of-living crisis.

Join the fightback

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- Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join
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to find out more today!



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



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ISSN 1366-9621