

RAIL STRIKES SHOW THE WAY

UNITE TO FIGHT FOR THE PAY RISES WE NEED



The fightback against the cost-of-living crisis has begun. On 18 June, tens of thousands of workers from all over the country marched in central London to say 'enough is enough' (see pages 4,5,6).

Three days later, railworkers, joined by London tube workers, took historic strike action that closed down the network (see pages 2 and 3).

Here we saw the real power of workers to fight back against the attacks on our living standards. We have lost £20,000 in wages since 2008!

Royal Mail and BT workers are balloting for strike action. Teachers and health-workers are also likely to be balloting over insulting offers that will really mean a massive pay cut because of soaring inflation. Local government and many other workers are moving in the same direction.

If the unions were to coordinate the ballots so that we all strike together we would be massively strengthened. Not only could we win the wage rises we need, we could bring down this rotten Tory government, and build up the campaign for a new mass workers' party that fights determinedly for our interests - which Starmer's Labour certainly doesn't do!

■ **Strike together for inflation-proof wage increases**

■ **A minimum wage of £15 an hour**

■ **Benefits we can live on**

“On the 18 June demo **Carlos Barros, RMT branch secretary of Piccadilly and West branch in London**, told the Socialist, in a personal capacity: “I’m here today to show the government and everyone else who wants to listen that the working class is getting organised and they need to be scared of that.”

“Because we’ll be starting to set the agenda from now on, as long as we stay together. So I’m here to not only demonstrate with my union but I want to show solidarity to all the other unions and the working class in general. There is a feeling that there is a movement starting and I hope to be part of that.”

“**Amy Murphy, former president of shop workers’ union Usdaw**, said: “I’m on this march to send a message to the government that enough is enough. We’re not going to stand for this any longer and my hope is that this is just the start.”

“A general strike is what we need and we need it now. We’ve waited long enough and the only way the government is going to listen is if the unions stand together and we become a force to be reckoned with. We can do it.”

On Tuesday 21 June rail workers in the RMT transport union, all across the country, in Network Rail and the Train Operating Companies, took their first day of national strike action.

They said no to job losses, attacks on pensions, on wages, on terms and conditions; and for the safety of the railways.

They are out again on Thursday 23 and Saturday 25 June. Drivers' union Aslef is also on strike in three train operating companies over the next week.

The impact of the national rail action was strengthened by all grades of London tube workers in the RMT also striking on 21 June.

This is an historic national strike – a lead being given by members of the RMT which other workers throughout the country will support and will need to follow the example of, as all are suffering attacks on living standards!



Cost cutting is not just about pounds and pence but about lives

Striking York rail worker

Socialist Party members were out supporting the picket lines, and are helping to build support for the strikes in workplaces and communities across the country. Here are some of their reports.

An RMT picket in **Leicester**, Peter Sawbridge, told Steve Score:

"It's the hypocrisy of the government. They are saying they bailed out the railways during Covid, but how come £500 million of that went to shareholders? How come the directors were getting massive bonuses?"

"The MPs gave themselves a 6% pay rise, but the government says we can only have 3% unless we accept attacks on our terms and conditions. They are the things that give us quality of life. Yes, let's modernise, but let's do it properly round the table with the trade unions' agreement."

"An example of what the management want to do is get rid of guards on the trains. We don't just check tickets. Our job is to make sure people can get on and off safely. If someone is in a wheelchair for example, we may phone on ahead to make sure someone is there ready to help them off the other end."

"If there is a train accident, maybe we hit something on the track. The guard can be vital to ensure things are safe, what if the driver is trapped in the cab, injured or worse?"

"They also want to tear up our pensions. This is all why I am here today."

Striking together

James Ellis visited strikers in **Hastings**. "One of the first things an RMT member said to me was that 'we need a general strike if we're really going to make a difference!' A lot of workers on the picket are talking about the need to coordinate action. All agreed that the best way to make a difference would be if teachers, NHS workers, etc all balloted too."

"The strike was solid and the picket

was cheerful and well attended. A few members were telling me that the public seemed to be particularly supportive in this dispute – more so than usual. This is probably due to recognition that we're all being affected at the moment by the cost-of-living crisis and the actions of the government."

From the **Leeds** picket line, Michael Johnson reports: "Someone clearly going to work stopped to pass on support for strikers, saying the workers 'had to do it' and hoped they'd win. A homeless man also walked past the picket encouraging people to keep fighting."

Iain Dalton adds that there were 20 pickets at Network Rail's depot in Leeds. "Lots of support from vans and lorries passing the site. One driver stopped to apologise for his horn not being loud enough!"

Won before and will again

At **Paddington**, reports Helen Pattison, "pickets were discussing how they were on strike nearly seven years ago to keep the guards on the train, and how they won. This is a whole new battle they are going to fight just as hard. It was clear the support they were getting from passers-by. Many were stopping to complain about the Tories. Strikers complained about the lack of support from Starmer's Labour and that no MPs would be supporting them."

The success of the strike in Essex meant it was "deathly quiet at **Wickford** on the Greater Anglia picket", Dave Murray says. "First train will be 7.52 as opposed to 5am-ish".

At **Eastleigh** in Hampshire, Nick Chaffey met signallers: "Many fought in 1994 and are carrying on the fight today."

"The government is provoking this dispute to take our minds off of all their fuck ups", said one of the 30 or so pickets that Clive Walder and Bill Murray met at Tyseley maintenance depot in east Birmingham.

In **Cardiff**, the trades council organised a picket rally, reports Dave Reid.



Thank God someone is standing up for us against the government

Someone supporting the strike in Hull

Alistair Tice reports that at the **Sheffield** station picket, RMT members were joined by other trade unionists and socialists, including eight Socialist Party members. "Plenty of cakes but 'no flim-flam', said Neil, the branch chair, meaning that they are up for the fight. Branch secretary Martin Cook, who is speaking at the Sheffield Socialist Party public meeting on Thursday, proudly displayed the branch's new RMT banner featuring a Bob Crow quote on the front and Solidarity with Orgreave on the back. A self-declared 'non-political' striker said he hoped the strike would bring down the Tory government!"

The **Doncaster** station picket was nearly all guards on Northern Trains, veterans of the Keep the Guards on the Train dispute of four years ago. Asked about public support, one picket said that on her last shift she'd

National and London rail strikes - RMT rises up



Striking Coventry bin workers march to the rail picket line LENNY SHAAL



Staines were up for prolonged action if needed PAUL COUCHMAN



Cardiff Trades Union Council organised a rally for the strikers DAVID REID

had lots of fist pumps from passengers in support, and most public passing the picket line were supportive as well.

Ellen Kenyon-Peers went to **Kings Cross**. "Owing to the location, we saw international solidarity. Workers arriving into London stopped to show support, making comparisons to their own countries and demonstrating the global effect of the capitalist crisis. RMT members were in high spirits and deflated press reporters failed to get the quotes they wanted for various right-wing outlets. There was great feedback for the Socialist

Party's Red Line leaflets, which were useful for strikers and the public."

A rail worker in **York** told Bernard Davies that the strike is not just about pay. "The last four major train accidents can be attributed to cost-cutting measures and cost cutting is not just about pounds and pence but about lives!"

Eric Segal reported from **Dover**: "The pickets from Network Rail made sure that they could be seen from the road as streams of cars carrying people to work or kids to school hooted support in support of the strike. The pickets from South Eastern railways,

some of whom had been on duty from 3.30am, were catching up with workmates with hot coffee and croissants. They were joined by workers from Unite, GMB and RMT Maritime sacked P&O workers. One of the younger workers, on his first picket, said: 'We need a general strike.' There was agreement that the strikes taking place need to be coordinated."

"A lively picket with huge public support from passing motorists and commuters on their way to work," reports Roger Thomas at **Bristol Temple Meads**. "Pickets reported that the rail network in the South West was virtually at a standstill. Delegations from other unions joined the pickets throughout the morning bringing cakes and biscuits and, most importantly, solidarity."

Mick Whale reports: "There was a confident mood at **Hull**. The station was closed effectively and, judging by the tooting horns of passing traffic, there is strong wider support for the strike. One passer-by, who had come into town via the bus station, summed up what a lot of people are saying: 'Thank God someone is standing up for us against the government'. Labour's position was shot to pieces by RMT members. One of them, who had loyally stayed with Labour beyond the Corbyn era, stated that he wanted to have a discussion about TUSC. What he said about Labour could not be printed!"

The power of workers

Ian Pattison reports from **Waltham Cross** in Hertfordshire, that "even though the drivers here in Aslef are only on strike on Thursday, the station is closed all three days - showing the power of all rail workers. The train company had promised that one train out of every five would run on strike days."

Paul Couchman found a "great mood amongst the pickets at **Staines** this morning. Always a good response from these guys. Rekindled some old friendships with a couple of them from last time on the guards picket. Very combative and up for prolonged action if needed. Solid support for TUSC as always and an invite to TUSC to speak at a future Feltham RMT branch meeting."

• TUSC, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, is the anti-cuts electoral umbrella in which both the RMT and the Socialist Party take part, alongside many other trade unionists and individual socialists, and former Labour MP Chris Williamson's Resist party.

• **Fight the cost-of-living crisis**
• **Organise to strike together**
• **Kick out the Tories**
• **Fight for a new mass workers' party**
• **For a fully funded, integrated, publicly owned, democratically controlled transport network**



Glasgow MATT DOBSON



Newcastle NORMAN HALL



2022 National Shop Stewards Network Conference

Saturday 2nd July
11am-4.30pm
Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square,
London WC1R 4RL

www.shopstewards.net



After marching together, organise to

STRIKE TOGETHER!

SOLIDARITY WITH THE RMT
DEFEND THE RIGHT TO STRIKE
KICK OUT THE TORIES

"I'm going to the NSSN conference because the whole of the labour movement needs to come together now more than ever. The RMT's huge mandates for industrial action, which have led to the first national rail strike in over 30 years, will hopefully give inspiration to other workers under attack by this Tory government to finally say 'enough is enough'. Rise up and stand together!"

Paul Reilly, Nuneaton RMT branch secretary, former NEC member

Speakers include:

Sharon Graham, Unite general secretary

Steve Gillan, POA general secretary

Sarah Woolley, BFAWU general secretary

Terry Pullinger, CWU deputy general secretary, postal

Unite Coventry bin striker

Annoesjka Valent, Napo national official

Rob Williams, NSSN national chair



"Keir Starmer banned shadow ministers from attending picket lines. It's time for a new workers' party!" - Gary Harbord (third right), RMT striker, Acton Town RMT

London tube strike

Coordinating with the national rail strike, London Underground workers were continuing their strike action against huge attacks by Transport for London (TfL), including potentially 600 job cuts and changes to pensions.

Socialist Party members and supporters in the rail unions produce a bulletin called the Red Line. Today, the Red Line was being given out by pickets at Hainault along with the RMT's leaflet!

A picket at **Morden** told Adam Powell-Davies: "Things are moving in the right direction. We need the rest of the working class to get out on strike."

Alex Forbes says: "I met strikers at both Morden tube ticket hall and Garth House car park. At the car park picket they were pleased with Saturday's TUC march, but were exasperated that the mainstream media had misrepresented it."

At **Earl's Court**, Mark Best says: "Workers on this picket mentioned Coventry bin strikes as an important example of how strikes are happening all over, and the Labour Party is standing on the side of the bosses, not workers."

Ben Goldstone visited the **Acton Works, Bollo Lane and Acton Town**. "There was a really positive energy at the picket lines, and the striking staff commented that they had support from the public whilst they'd been standing there. We saw a number of

workers beep or cheer in solidarity while we were there."

According to Theo Sharrief, "**Brixton** picket line was strong with a real confidence that by standing together, RMT members can force TfL management back on their proposed attacks. Aslef members also turned out to offer solidarity."

Brian Debus reports that "Such was the strength of the strike at **Highbury and Islington** and the **Angel tube** stations there was no picket just a solidarity protest of supporters at Highbury. An indication of the strike's impact was the fact that it took me an hour to get there from Hackney just three miles away. Many buses were full to overflowing. Two buses I was on also terminated mid-journey. Some major junctions had queues of cars and buses hundreds of yards long."

Effectively shut down

Jim Horton reports "At **East Finchley**, the majority of the workers are in Aslef, about one third in the RMT. Some Aslef members crossed the picket, allowing management to claim a partial service is running on the Northern line. The reality is that a few trains are running north from East Finchley, and none into the City – therefore it's an effective shutdown! There's a good mood on the picket line and great discussions. A visceral hatred of the Tories and Keir Starmer; and openness to the idea of a new workers' party."

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Gary Harbord - RMT striker, **Acton Town** - says: "This is a picket line of RMT members on London Underground. The forerunners of the RMT were instrumental in setting up the Labour Party. Without trade unions the Labour Party would not exist. Sir Keir Starmer has today banned all shadow ministers from attending any picket lines. It's time for a new workers' party that fights in the interest of our class."

"Solidarity with the RMT!"

18 June TUC demo

Looking for a lead – strike together!



WHAT WE THINK

The platform speakers included trade union leaders and grassroots fighters. There was a huge cheer for Sharon Graham, seen as a working-class leader and a fighter, and the biggest cheer was for RMT general secretary Mick Lynch.

As the marchers who spoke to the Socialist show, in their thousands workers are looking for a lead. We're here, we're together on the streets, what do we do now?

The scale of the crisis and the pressure from their members meant that even the right-wing leaders have no choice but to respond to that. Even right-wing general secretary of Unison, Christina McAnea, a representative of the leadership that oversaw a decade of austerity inflicted on public services without a serious fight, was forced to talk about strike action.

Outgoing TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady felt compelled to pledge that this was just the beginning. "We have a programme of action."

But she was taken up by Sharon Graham in a fighting speech, in which she said that "Now is the time for action. Once an employer chooses the path of confrontation, moral arguments and 'round tables' will not change a damn thing. The trade union movement needs to be reborn".

Lynn Marie O'Hara, from the huge Glasgow Unison pay strike that won women workers half a billion pounds in 2019, called for a general strike. But, unfortunately, although many trade union leaders talked about the need to come together, and several reported, to cheers, about the upcoming ballots in their unions, there was not a clear message from the platform about the most important next step: for trade union leaders to discuss how to co-ordinate ballots and action, to strike together.

In March 2011, as the Tory-Lib Dem coalition government prepared "savage austerity", 750,000 marched on the TUC's demonstration. On the platform of that demonstration, then Unite

general secretary Len McCluskey called for a general strike. This was followed in June that year with public sector strike action, and then in November effectively a public sector general strike.

Following a decade of terrible austerity, and then the Covid pandemic, even to workers now engaged in serious local action the idea of generalised action can seem to be a long way off. But already, following this demonstration, for a layer of workers that will feel very different.

And, unlike in 2011, this demonstration was just days before the start of national rail strikes, with more action in the pipeline. The capitalist press are in a fury, which stems from fear of the potential for mass action that can strike the capitalists where it hurts, in their profits.

Hot on the heels of the RMT, with other rail unions also taking and preparing for action, comes the CWU with ballots in Royal Mail and British Telecom. There is already an all-out strike on the buses in west Yorkshire, with the possibility of action brewing on the buses in other regions including London. Teaching unions, the PCS and higher education workers are all gearing up for ballots and action in the autumn. This all very concretely lays bare the necessity and power of action, and will underline the need for workers across different sectors to come together.

Where is our political voice?

In March 2011, then Labour Party leader Ed Miliband, despite being a proponent of 'austerity-lite', spoke from the platform of the TUC demo. In June 2022, there was no Labour speaker at all.

Sir Keir Starmer's leadership cannot even bring itself to support the RMT strikes or to clearly say that workers should have an inflation-proof pay rise.

PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka called for a 10% pay rise; Kevin Courtney from the NEU called for 12% for education workers. Nurses in the RCN are now

demanding 5% above inflation. Jo Grady from the University and College Union called for a £15-an-hour minimum wage, rent control, and nationalisation of rail, mail, energy and water. Dave Ward from the CWU called for a new deal for workers, including an end to zero-hour contracts and fire and rehire.

Not one of these demands is supported by Starmer's New Labour.

When Mick Lynch spoke, he said: "There are people over there in that parliament who are meant to be on our side, who have got to answer the question, what side are you on? Are you going to be with us, or are you going to sit on the sidelines while these Tories butcher the working class?" Dave Ward commented how this fight today is "not led by politicians". Sharon Graham said: "The politicians have failed. They do not represent the interests of workers. That is why we must now take action ourselves."

Those trade union leaders who recognise that Keir Starmer has driven out Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity, pro-working class position and entrenched the Labour Party as a Blairite New Labour Mark 2, need to draw the necessary conclusion and take steps towards building a new workers' party. The demands of the marchers must be fought for through industrial action but that will be massively strengthened with a political voice as well. The electoral success of Mélenchon's coalition in France is an indication of the potential (see page 13).



The demands of the marchers must be fought for through industrial action but that will be massively strengthened with a political voice as well



Today should inspire workers and unions to fight back

TERRY PULLINGER, CWU DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY (POSTAL), SPOKE TO GREG RANDALL ON THE MARCH:

"Postal workers are going into dispute. Post Office workers are already taking strike action. Our Telecom members are balloting as well. And this is without people like the RMT and other workers that are fighting back.

"It is disgusting the disgraceful way they are being treated. Most of the people here today are key workers. They were heroes and they've gone to zeros.

"As soon as we started coming out of the pandemic, all these boardrooms, all these CEOs - they must be inspired by the government I think, especially because it did nothing about P&O - they take all the money,

unbelievable bonuses, unbelievable wages, and yet they're saying there's no money for the ordinary workers. They're saying that to us in Royal Mail group, they're saying that in Telecoms, in the Post Office, they're saying it across the board.

"Working people have got to stand up. And hopefully today, it's going to inspire other workers but also other unions to take a much firmer line and fight back."

JOE SIMPSON, DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE POA:

"We're on the march for the simple reason, hopefully this is going to be the start of something within the trade union movement. We need to build on it like we haven't done in the past, we've come down, we've marched, but there's been no end product to it, we've just all gone home. We're a trade union without any trade union rights, but if the cause is good we'll rule nothing out."



Selling...



...and reading the Socialist

▶▶▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

18 June TUC demo

Working-class people on the march, beginning to feel their potential power

Thousands of NHS workers, social care workers, council workers, school support staff and more marched through central London streets behind Unison banners and balloons. Then came the Unite contingent, led by a brilliant delegation of Coventry bin strikers. Behind them were bus drivers - including those on indefinite strike action in Yorkshire - other bin workers, hospitality workers, construction workers and thousands more.

Hundreds of postal and telecoms workers in the Communication Workers Union, balloting for strike action. Education unions NEU in a big contingent, along with other teaching unions. Shop workers in Usdaw. PCS members in the civil service, GMB members from councils, hospitals and more. Cleaners, prison officers; firefighters in the FBU led by bagpipe players.

The biggest roar as they entered Parliament Square was for the RMT contingent, marching three days before they began historic national action on the railways and London Underground. The RMT contingent also included sacked P&O workers fighting for justice.

At last, working-class people on the march! Demanding a pay rise, demanding decent jobs and services.

A small glimpse of the potential power of working-class people organised into trade unions. For every one of the tens of thousands marching there are hundreds more at home, at work, who agree, who are

angry, and who want to fight back.

The Trades Union Congress (TUC) did produce leaflets and send out emails, but if they had really put the resources into building this demonstration - with national adverts in the press and on TV, and with a plan of meetings in every workplace, for example - it could have been massive. If the demo had been organised on clear demands, such as for inflation-proof pay rises, a £15-an-hour minimum wage and nationalisation of the energy companies, it could have mobilised even more.

But even so, as so many Socialist Party members and others commented: "What a day!" The demo was big, it was angry, it was bold.

For many marchers it was the first time they had come together. Thousands will have looked around at all the workers surrounding them, in all different sectors of work, and for the first time will have started to feel their potential power. It will have given confidence to those workers to go back to their workplaces and their unions to put pressure on their union leaders for action.

Socialist Party members were out in their hundreds: giving out leaflets and selling papers on the coaches and trains into London; running stalls at the start, along the route and at the end of the demo; taking part in nearly all the different contingents along with their fellow union members. In all our material and on our placards our message was clear: After marching together, we need to organise to strike together!

ALL PHOTOS BY TOMMY DOYLE, ELAINE BRUNSKILL AND OTHER SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

18 June TUC demo

Marchers spoke to the Socialist:

“We’re not going to stand for this any longer”

All marchers spoke to **Greg Randall** in a personal capacity

LAUREN, PCS MEMBER:

“I currently work with universal credit and day in, day out, I see people just absolutely on their knees. ‘Bones of your arse’ poverty. And I couldn’t live with myself if I didn’t come on the protest. It’s sickening to see.”

KEVIN REYNOLDS, CHAIR OF THE LONDON AND EASTERN SERVICE SECTOR FOR UNITE:

“We’re representing hospitality workers who had a terrible deal over the last few years, particularly during the pandemic when many of them were made redundant. Now they’re facing a huge cut in their living standards and we’re saying enough’s enough. I’m really hopeful that, certainly for hospitality workers, they’re becoming stronger and more militant. I think the future’s bright.”

JEN GAYLE, FROM GRIMSBY:

“I’ve got three jobs, two degrees and I still need universal credit to live. I’m disgusted with this government. We demand better.”

MARTIN, PCS MEMBER FROM HULL:

“The system needs uprooting. We have a system for the rich 1% not for the poor. The cost of living is getting out of control and the bosses hold their wealth. And there’s real suffering, with record numbers of food banks. The government don’t seem to want to do anything about it and we need an alternative.”

BRADLEY ATKINSON, UNITE UNION FROM EAST LONDON:

“I’m here to basically join others in the fight for a life with better pay and better living conditions.”

JO TANNER, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT AT THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF MIDWIVES:

“We’ve been fighting for our midwife and maternity support worker members for quite some time for the government to finally deliver a decent deal. We are seeing too many midwives coming to use food banks. We are seeing community midwives having to subsidise their work because the price of fuel is so expensive. It’s actually costing them money now to go to work. That can’t continue. That’s why we’re here.”

Socialist Party members in Udsaw



Striking Coventry bin workers

SUZANNE MUNA, SECRETARY SOCIAL HOUSING ACTION CAMPAIGN, MEMBER AND ACTIVIST IN UNITE:

“We’re here with the housing bloc. We believe that the demand for dignity and fair treatment at work can’t be separated from the demand for dignity and fair treatment in our homes. What we’d like to see is mass industrial action across all different sectors demanding a much fairer settlement and an end to the profiteering of the big companies. SHAC is supporting our members who are taking rent and service charge strike action as a way of taking control of their own homes and not having everything under the power of the landlords.”

MICHAEL MCCARTHY, PRISON OFFICERS ASSOCIATION NATIONAL EXECUTIVE:

“We’re here today to show solidarity with the rest of the trade unions and express our dismay at the cost-of-living crisis. Let’s hope we can achieve something today.”

STEVE RIGBY, UNITE CHAIR AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON HOSPITAL TRUST:

“I’m here to start trying to make the point that we’re fed up with all this rubbish that we get off the Tories and it’s about time people kicked them out.”

MARIA DOBINSON-VINES, PCS, HMRC LONDON:

“Prices are an absolute nightmare. My gas and electricity are going to be double my mortgage, which is ridiculous. Petrol prices are through the roof and the NHS is squeaking at the seams.”

ITALO SAVASTIO, RMT ACTIVIST:

“I work for TFL. We were not offered a pay rise this year or last year. A 0% pay rise. It’s unfortunate that our members did not reach the threshold in the ballot to join our brothers and sisters on national rail and London Underground, but hopefully this will give us encouragement, us workers at TFL, to start a fight-back as well.”

HANNAH ULLIOTT, UNITE MEMBER:

“I’m on the demo because 2.17 million people across the UK are using food banks and they should not be. I’m also on the demo because I was homeless at 16 and have known so many young people in the same situation. There should be no youth homelessness, there should be no homelessness altogether, this is just unfair for all young people.”

KATIE LOMAS, NATIONAL CHAIR FOR NAPO:

“Our members have had a pay freeze for 11 of the last 12 years. We deserve better. It shouldn’t be the case that working people in Britain today have to use food banks and decide whether to eat or heat their homes. We deserve better, and we demand better. We have to keep organising. We have to get more members in, more members active, more members standing up for their rights, so that when inevitably we end up taking industrial action because the cost of living is far outstripping increases in wages, we have more members out on the street, more members on picket lines.”

The RMT, who were cheered as they entered Parliament Square



VAL HAMPSHIRE, EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBER FOR THE SOUTHWEST REGION OF THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION:

“We’re here because we’re really suffering in the southwest. The cost of living for us is really, really high. Firefighters’ wages are going down and down and down and we are really struggling to actually make ends meet. And now we’re facing attacks from the government as well. This is the start of our campaign against the government to stop cutting firefighters. We’ll obviously be lobbying to stop the white paper or get the white paper changed, but they are definitely gunning for us. Us as a union but all other trade unions as well.”

MATT, UNITE:

“I’m here just to get people fighting back, get them standing up for themselves. I’m trying to organise the guys where I’m working into a union.”



Unite Hospitality contingent with general secretary Sharon Graham (right)

Food prices soar while supermarket bosses rake it in

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

Budget pasta prices have risen by 50% in a year, the biggest of sharp rises in the cost of basic foods. New data from the Office for National Statistics also shows crisps are up 17%, bread 16% and rice 15%. These rises will cause genuine worry among millions of workers in Britain already struggling to get by.

Over a decade of restrained wages and relentless Tory austerity has left millions in food insecurity. The pandemic made many workers' financial situations worse, and we remain in a period of exceptional uncertainty.

Recently, the excuse Tories and supermarket bosses have given for

soaring costs is the Russian invasion of Ukraine. So, impoverished workers are supposed to be satisfied with empty cupboards knowing there is a 'good' reason behind it?

Both Russia and Ukraine are massive exporters of some basic foods. Together they hold four fifths of global production of sunflower oil, and around 30% of wheat. The war has disrupted Ukraine's production of food as well as its routes to export.

Meanwhile, sanctions against Russia have led to price hikes on food, and other products used in food packaging that they usually supply like foil and wood pulp. Additionally, many companies are reported to be 'self-sanctioning' in not committing to future purchases from Russia in

case new sanctions disrupt their own supply chains.

Some blame can also be attributed to the 'just-in-time' delivery system global capitalism relies on to lower their costs. Both the Covid pandemic and the current war have exposed the gigantic flaws in the system, providing no safety net when production and transport are disrupted.

Rich get richer

But this is an era defined by a trend of gigantic transfer of wealth to the richest. The supermarket giants are still raking it in - Tesco just took pre-tax profits over £2 billion. Production costs rising in the short term do not have to mean that our prices rise. That is a decision made by food industry bosses.

With the public eye on soaring costs, we have had some temporary concessions out of the capitalists, like Sainsburys declaring a £500

million investment to lower prices. Asda brought back budget food it had stealthily removed after a 'call-out' by anti-poverty campaigner Jack Monroe.

But these are small measures that only slightly slow rising costs. Foodbanks are getting desperate as their supplies run low. Last month, The Guardian reported that 250,000 more households will "slide into destitution" next year. The poor and hungry need serious solutions.

A £15-an-hour minimum wage with decent jobs for all, and a welfare system paying enough to live on, would be an immediate start, funded by taking the wealth off the bosses who have hoarded it for so long. Then, if the main sources of food production were publicly owned and democratically run as part of a socialist plan of production, we could ensure good quality and decently priced food was available to everyone.



£2 a litre fuels working-class anger

RHYS DAVIES
CARDIFF EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

Workers are already choosing between eating and heating. And now, with petrol prices in Wales exceeding £2 a litre for the first time, we are seeing another necessity added to the list of sacrifices we need to make. For many, it's not even a choice. Workers and commuters, heavily reliant on driving, simply can't afford the fuel to get to work or do their jobs.

I have noticed my usual £30-a-week fuel budget more than double in recent weeks, even with working from home two days a week. The various school runs during peak traffic times also take their toll. This means around £400 a month going on essential car journeys. This is on top of the £900 per school year I pay for two school bus passes, another daughter starting high school in September will increase that by another £400 or so.

It's never been more pressing to demand the nationalisation of the oil companies making billions in profit, and a free-to-use publicly owned transport system, with a service for schools, under democratic workers' control.

Fuel protests

Tens of thousands marched as part of the TUC demonstration on 18 June, and strikes are spreading. Public anger has manifested itself in other ways too, like the 2,000 motorists that took part in a 'go slow' protest, organised on Facebook, which disrupted traffic on the A1 in the north east of England.

Further motorway protests for 4 July are being discussed on social media to draw attention to rising fuel prices and the impact on working-class people's lives.

In the year 2000, there were nationwide protests including

blockades at oil refineries, fuel depots and on major roads due to the prospect of petrol prices rising to 82p per litre. The disruption was so great that the Blair government was authorised by the Privy Council and the Queen to take emergency powers to ensure delivery of fuel to essential services by military tankers! (See 'Seven days that shook Blair' at socialistparty.org.uk)

With petrol now at £2 per litre in many places, inflation at its highest in 30 years, and real-terms wages no higher than they were in 2000, anger will continue to grow and will need to be channelled into effective organised action.

The TUC march was a start; RMT train strikes show how workers taking action can bring things to a standstill. Strikes spreading among other areas, demanding an end to the cost-of-living crisis, will further show our strength.



the Socialist

formerly **Militant**

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23-29 June 2022

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

PARENTING THROUGH CRISIS



March with Midwives in Hull PHOTO: TED PHILLIPS

Parents and children let down by underfunded health services

TANIS BELSHAM-WRAY
LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

The infant mortality rate in the UK has been increasing since 2014, according to the Office for National Statistics, growing more in the poorest areas. Pregnant women are twice as likely to die if they live in the most deprived areas, and black women are four times more likely to die.

The UK is short of over 2,000 midwives, and this number continues to grow as more midwives leave. In the year to February 2022, there was a net fall of 458 midwives according to the Royal College of Midwives.

If anyone has visited an early pregnancy unit over the past few years it wouldn't be surprising to see women crowded into waiting rooms, often waiting several hours, even days, before finding out if their foetus or baby is healthy or alive. During the pandemic, much of this will have been done without the support of family or friends not allowed to attend appointments.

The damning Ockenden review into maternity deaths in Shropshire exposes the consequences of underfunded services in an NHS, run in a top-down bureaucratic manner, employing stressed

and underpaid staff. Conditions that have led to grassroots 'March with Midwives' protests developing.

Post-pregnancy, health services aren't much better. Half of mothers with a child under six months during the first lockdown met the threshold for postnatal depression, double the usual rate. Much of the time this is mistakenly put down to 'baby blues' hormone changes, delaying treatment. Around one-in-ten fathers also suffer from postnatal depression.

Instances of postnatal depression are made worse by the lack of services made available to parents postpartum. The frequency of visits from health visitors and midwives has been reduced by cuts and privatisation, as has access to children's centres. Babies health conditions are left undiagnosed, and waiting lists for treatments for conditions such as tongue tie continue to grow.

Proper investment into the NHS across the board is needed to meet the needs of parents and children, not simply more targets. A decent pay rise for NHS staff, linked to a mass recruitment drive to fill the over 100,000 NHS vacancies, needs to be fought for.

32%
of parents
spend more
than a third
of wages on
childcare

Unions must fight for parental rights, and services too

BEA GARDNER
ENFIELD AND LEA VALLEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Parents are confronted with the seemingly impossible balancing act of trying to earn enough to support a family, while still having time to spend with our children.

Low pay and insecure work, extortionate rent and other living costs already put huge pressure on workers, and having children increases the strain.

Before the development of the present cost-of-living crisis, in-work poverty was already rising, driven in large part by increasing poverty among working parents, according to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Outrageously, more than half of people in poverty in the UK live in a family where at least one person is in paid work.

Extortionate childcare costs mean there is often no financial benefit in returning to work, especially if you add to that the cost of a commute. The absence of genuine living wages increases pressure to work long hours and multiple jobs.

Many new parents I know are confronting the reality that maternity leave is not long enough and they face extremely limited options when returning to work. Our own decision on when to become parents was based on an attempt to calculate when would leave us less impoverished. If our baby was born a month later

I would have had no entitlement to maternity pay as my fixed-term post would have ended.

Maternity pay and maternity allowances nowhere near cover monthly expenses. For example, the maternity allowance I receive doesn't even cover rent on our one-bedroom flat.

Statutory maternity and paternity pay is supposed to be a legal minimum that those taking leave on the birth of their baby are entitled to. In reality is often the maximum. The current rate is 90% of earnings, or £156.66 a week – whichever is lower. The right to a year's maternity leave means nothing if you can't afford to actually take it!

Insecurity

Meanwhile, high rates of insecure and 'gig economy' jobs mean many aren't even eligible for Statutory Maternity or Paternity Pay, instead relying on Universal Credit or maternity allowance paid for by the government, letting employers off the hook for any financial responsibility at all.

All workers have the right to apply for flexible working, something that is necessary for many parents balancing childcare responsibilities. But employers aren't obliged to actually grant it.

My baby group conversations are dominated by women calculating whether it is financially worthwhile to return to work and on what basis. Many are opting to work reduced hours while relying on unpaid childcare from friends and relatives.



However, they are told they can only reduce hours if they can demonstrate that there will be no impact on their work. In other words, guaranteeing they will do the same work in fewer hours for less pay!

45% of working mums (and 10% of Dads) have quit a job after having requests for flexible working turned down.

Parents, especially women, do face discrimination from employers who fear it might be harder to force extra hours onto, or squeeze unpaid work from, workers with children. It is

necessary for trade unions in workplaces to stand up to any individual instances of discrimination.

But the measures needed to transform parents' lives are ones which will benefit all workers. These include a £15-an-hour minimum wage, pay rises that keep up with or outstrip the rising cost of living, access to genuine flexible working and a four-day week without loss of pay, and an extension and increase in parental leave and pay. These are demands that the trade unions must struggle for.

£7,212

The average annual nursery bill for a family with a child under two has reached £7,212, according to the TUC



PHOTO: SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Childcare: privatised, unaffordable and unfit for purpose

RYAN ALDRED
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Our system, if you can even call it that, is completely broken and unfit for purpose.

When my partner's maternity leave ran out and she had to go back to work, we were thrust into a dilemma: how the hell are we going to pay for childcare? For a few months we just about muddled by, organising separate days off from work, barely seeing each other and relying on the grandparents to cover.

That just about worked for us, but not everybody is in this position. It's a problem that nobody should have to deal with in the first place. When it was clear that it was exhausting the grandparents, we sought childcare. With very little in the way of support available from the government, we had to self-fund. We managed to organise for two days at a private nursery (there are no local authority facilities) with a further day with a child-minder.

This cost us around £500 a month, which meant we lost around one-third of our household income just to be available to work. We were just about better off with both of us working. We've had to wait until our daughter turned

three before getting proper support for childcare as we weren't eligible for the support when our daughter turned two. What the government thinks happens until a child turns two with two working parents is beyond baffling! At three, you're entitled to 30 hours childcare, but only if you're both expecting to earn over £1,976 in three months - 16 hours a week at the national living wage for over 23s.

What are you supposed to do if you're in a low-income job or if you're on insecure and inconsistent hours? If you don't earn over this threshold then you're left with only 15 hours a week. Also, you still have to pay for nappies and meals which most private childcare providers will offer but at extra cost.

We need a fundamental overhaul of the system because it doesn't work. We need free, public, quality childcare provided from birth all the way up to school age. Not just to free us up to work, but also to give us the opportunity for a breather from what is an infinitely rewarding but nevertheless exhausting job of parenting.

Unless the next generation collectively plans to have no children, this is going to remain a burning issue which requires a properly planned solution.

Build a movement to end capitalist-fuelled crisis

The financial cost of raising a child to the age of 18 has risen to £152,747 for a couple, £185,413 for a lone parent, according to the Child Poverty Action Group. The cost-of-living crisis bites hard for parents and children.

Already facing increasing childcare costs, and with services devastated by cuts and closures, the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated financial insecurity, limited access to services and increased isolation. Parents of school-age children faced the prospect of home-schooling, and having to take time off work to look after children forced to isolate. Mothers gave birth, attended scans or were informed of miscarriage

alone, without co-parents or other support.

Instances of postnatal depression in new mothers doubled through the first Covid lockdown, and increased for fathers too. Social isolation of parents, largely women, who tend to take on the majority of childcare responsibilities, increased, as it did for many workers asked to work from home. The problems of everyday life – the challenges to feed, clothe and look after family members – fell even more to individual family units, particularly women, without the support of extended family or other networks.

For the capitalist class, the necessary task of raising future generations of

workers is preferably done in the home, at no cost to them, leaving profits intact.

In the post war boom some concessions were won to ease the domestic burden on women by establishing council-run nurseries, albeit on a limited basis, and extending maternity rights.

But in periods of economic crisis, these limited reforms have been clawed back by the capitalist class. Today, capitalism faces a new, deepening crisis, and with it worker shortages and childcare in crisis. Many parents are unable to access or afford a childcare place and so remain unable to return to work.

Individual families are increasingly

expected to take up the slack, forced into poverty by childcare costs, working extra hours or taking up second and third jobs, and performing domestic tasks late into the evening.

We must fight for the steps needed to ease the burden on families with children. The trade unions, with over six million members, represent the strongest organised force in society, and therefore are best placed to fight for and win gains for workers, including parents and families.

But to do so in the workplace alone leaves the political arena free for the bosses' politicians and their apologists. For the fight to be most effective, it's necessary to establish a new mass party

of the working class, with the trade unions taking a leading role, and armed with a fighting socialist programme.

A system based on generating profits for a few will continue to drive down living standards for parents, families and the working class as a whole. That's why we fight for a programme to transform society by taking the big banks and businesses into democratic public ownership, so resources can be planned to meet society's needs.



We fight for

Childcare & Education

- Free, public, quality and flexible childcare accessible to all, from birth
- Bring nurseries and other childcare facilities back into public ownership
- For parents', students' and workers' democratic control of childcare and education provision and curriculum
- Expand free school meals to all children in all education and childcare settings
- Re-open and extend fully staffed and resourced youth clubs,

- including with free access to leisure facilities
- No child should pay to get to school, for free public transport

Health and Homes

- Fully fund and staff expanded maternity, paediatric and mental health services as part of a fully funded NHS, staffed by well-paid, well-trained workers
- Reopen Surestart centres and expand provision of children's centres to offer parenting support including feeding support. Bring

- privatised services such as health visitors back in-house
- Full, free access to abortion and fertility services
- End overcrowding and unsafe housing. For mass building of council homes with gardens. Introduce rent controls, end landlord's discrimination against families with children and for those on housing benefit
- Fight for clean air for our children. For investment in green energy and a democratic control over road and industrial developments near our homes

At Work

- For fighting democratic trade unions, union recognition in the workplace, and an end to the anti-trade union laws
- An extension in maternity and paternity leave up to a year
- Full maternity and paternity pay throughout parental leave at a rate of 100% of weekly earnings or 32 hours at national living wage levels, whichever is higher
- For decent benefits that reflect the cost of raising children, rising with the cost of living

- £15-an-hour minimum wage for all with no exemptions
- Flexible working - on the workers' terms, with no loss of pay

Socialism

- End the cost-of-living nightmare and take the wealth off the super-rich. Nationalise the top 150 companies and the banks to be run under democratic working-class control and management.
- For a democratic socialist plan of production to meet the needs of the overwhelming majority, not for profit.

Unison conference

Right wing exploit left NEC mistakes to win votes

- but determined lead over pay and cuts can transform union

For the first time in three years, Unison reps and activists met together in the union's National Delegate Conference (NDC), which took place in Brighton from 14-17 June.

Much has happened since 2019. While the current general secretary, Christine McAnea, is from the same right-wing grouping as predecessor Dave Prentis, last year's national executive committee (NEC) elections saw the left win an historic majority on the leading lay body of the union.

This conference was an opportunity to consolidate this victory and use it as a platform to transform Unison into the fighting union that members need, as they face up to the biggest cost of living crisis in generations. However, unfortunately, it was the right wing that won some victories during the week.

This didn't reflect the mood of most delegates or of Unison members, who increasingly want action on pay and to stop further cuts to public services. Many delegates ended their stay in the south by staying an extra day so that they could march on the TUC demo in London on 18 June.

Ready for action

It was clear that where the new NEC could show it had taken steps to defend members and prepare for a fight, they were supported. The move to increase strike pay to £50 a day was cheered, as was putting more funds into branches. Most of the political motions on the need for a fight on pay and the cost-of-living crisis were passed, and even McAnea in her conference speeches had to put out the call for branches "to get strike ready".

However, as the Socialist Party, including our four members on the NEC have warned, the left NEC majority in the 'Time for Real Change' (TFRC) group, were not able to take advantage of this, as a result of mistakes they have made which the right were able to exploit.

Paul Holmes was elected as national president of the union last year by the new left-led NEC. This was despite TFRC knowing that complaints of bullying and harassment had been made against him in 2019, preceding both the 2020 general secretary and 2021 NEC elections. The complaints were made by 15 left-wing fighting reps, activists and staff in his Kirklees branch, yet the left chose to put Holmes forward as their candidate for general secretary, with many suspecting that this was to cut across Socialist Party member Hugo Pierre being seen as the leading left general secretary candidate. As we predicted, this, and then his election as president, backfired.

Initially, it was the old Dave Prentis



leadership which stalled on investigating the complaints of the 'Kirklees 15' against Paul Holmes, hiding behind the Labour council to deal with the charges. However, the current left-led NEC majority then dismissed the case in March 2022, despite having previously indicated that there was a case to answer.

Socialist Party members during conference, and at the big meeting of 300 called by the 'Kirklees 15' campaign, defended the right of members to make complaints and to have them taken seriously. We argued for an emergency resolution to be put to conference which called for "the NEC to re-open the investigation to give the opportunity both to the complainants to make their case and to the president to defend his position and for both sides to be given full access to the results". Despite the resolution being supported by the Kirklees 15, and the conference

voting for it to be heard, it was ruled out on legal grounds.

Playing into right's hand

Unfortunately, the method of TFRC was to continue to dismiss the complainants, producing a bulletin with an article titled 'The problem with whitewash' in relation to Kirklees. Undoubtedly, this approach played into the hands of the right wing, who were able to take advantage of genuine concerns that complaints would not be taken seriously by this NEC. Had the NEC proposed re-opening the investigation, as we proposed, it would have cut across this.

We also warned that the left NEC would only be able to consolidate its support by showing members it could lead a fight on jobs and pay. The six resolutions passed by the NEC last autumn to improve democracy and lay control of the union, which Socialist Party members

supported, wouldn't be understood unless democratic issues were linked to building a fighting union.

On Tuesday, the first day of the national conference, two motions were passed which falsely accused the current NEC of changing the rules of the union - which only conference has the right to do - and instructed the NEC to reverse the six resolutions. Actually, the NEC had only restated existing rules. The right wing, however, whipped up the idea that the NEC was breaking the rules by removing rights from the elected general secretary 'in order to protect Holmes.'

Socialist Party delegates spoke in these debates to expose the role of the right wing in failing to fight for Unison members' jobs, pay and conditions over decades, and also their record of witch-hunting left activists. Socialist Party members spoke against the right wing's proposed

rule changes. Key rules changes were denying the right of the NEC to use its discretion to keep an unemployed member in full membership and, as such, to enable them to continue to hold office. Rightly, this is to ensure that victimising employers don't get to choose who is a branch secretary, NEC member or president.

Three Socialist Party members spoke in these debates pointing out the risks to all reps if these rules were implemented. Undoubtedly, delegates voted for the rule changes because of their anger over the Paul Holmes case. However, the result is that all are in a worse position, at risk from victimising employers.

The one rule change that was passed with the required two-thirds majority gave the NEC the right to allow an unemployed member to hold office "providing they have not been dismissed from employment for any act of discrimination or harassment as defined in Rule I 2.3 (i) and (ii)." Clearly, the union should be able to prevent those guilty of discrimination or harassment from holding office, but this rule change leaves it to the employer to decide who is guilty, rather than it being a democratic decision of the union.

Complicated conference

In what was a complicated conference, Socialist Party members made a number of excellent interventions, demanding a fighting strategy, exposing the right wing and challenging the dangerous positions they were putting forward but, at the same time, demanding the Kirklees 15 had a right to a hearing and criticising TFRC for completely mishandling the situation.

There was an excellent Socialist Party fringe meeting with up to 50 attending, with a number of delegates interested in finding out more about the Socialist Party. We sold over 150 papers and raised over £2,000 for our fighting fund.

While the right will be celebrating its victories over the left, this will be short-lived. The bubble of conference will be soon burst as the battle over pay now looms. The size of the 18 June demo (see pages 4, 5, 6) will lift the confidence of thousands of activists.

The left in Unison and across the public sector must campaign for national strike ballots on pay, and to coordinate the strikes to build at least public sector general strike action alongside an increasing number of private sector battles. It will be in this climate that the next NEC elections, starting in January, will be fought. This is a battleground in which the left can make further gains, provided they show they are determined to lead a fight for Unison members' interests.



Arriva bus strikers outside negotiations PHOTO: WAKEFIELD AND DISTRICT SP

Yorkshire bus strike continues

Labour mayor attempts to undermine action

IAIN DALTON
YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Bus drivers, members of Unite the union, on strike in Yorkshire are continuing their action. Talks between Arriva management and the union failed to get a decent offer. The company offered just 15p-an-hour increase, and refused to backdate the offer to January when the pay claim should have been settled.

Union negotiators rejected the offer, a decision backed up by mass meetings on the picket lines. This democratic organisation of the strike, with negotiators reporting back to meetings of their members, is a clear answer to Arriva's nonsense about their 'offers' not being put to Unite members.

The strike remains solid across the five depots, with a huge mass mobilisation of strikers outside the talks in Wakefield. This unity of the workforce will become crucial if Arriva attempts to drag this dispute out.

A second front against Arriva could be opened up with the news of 1,800 Arriva North West workers being balloted by Unite for strike action. Like workers in Yorkshire, Arriva is offering below inflation rises of either 3% or 6%, with cuts to sick pay and Saturday premiums. As Unite General Secretary Sharon Graham said: "Arriva can fully afford to pay our members a fair rate of pay but it

is choosing not to do so to boost its profits."

It's time our elected politicians showed which side they are on: are they with the bosses or with the workers?

It wouldn't be surprising to see the Tory MPs for Dewsbury and Selby backing the bosses, but workers will have different expectations of Labour, a party Unite gives funding to.



A mayor that stood with workers would use all their powers of office to exert pressure on Arriva to meet Unite members' just claims

Unfortunately, West Yorkshire mayor Tracy Brabin seems to be one of those unprepared to give her full support. At the beginning of the strike she issued an equivocal statement which implied the dispute was as much the fault of Arriva workers as the intransigent stance of management.

And after being elected on a pledge of bringing buses under public control, it's been reported that this could not be until 2025 at the earliest, or as far away as 2027!

In the meantime, the mayor's office is in an enhanced partnership with the bus operators, which are supposed to be restoring bus services cut during the pandemic. Arriva has spent this year making further cuts to services!

But at a time when Arriva is trying to resume some services during the strike (Arriva report having restarted 14 school bus routes), it is shocking that Brabin introduced a free bus service between Wakefield bus station and Pinderfields hospital. This service, covering a journey that would have been made by an Arriva service, is effectively a scab service funded by the mayor's office.

We understand that this was introduced without consulting Unite, let alone being agreed by the union.

An elected representative that genuinely wished to represent the interests of workers should be consulting on any decision affecting their sector with the union representing those workers. A mayor that stood with workers would use all their powers of office to exert pressure on Arriva to meet Unite members' just claims.



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CWISocialistParty

'The gloves are off' as postal workers move towards strike vote

GARY CLARK
BRANCH SECRETARY SCOTLAND NO.2 BRANCH
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)

The Communication Workers Union (CWU) ballot for strike action across Royal Mail opens on 28 June. This could lead to the first national postal strike since 2009. The ballot will run until 19 July.

In advance of ballots opening, CWU deputy general secretary postal, Terry Pullinger, was invited to a 7am Café meeting with bosses - hopeful that a meaningful offer to hold off industrial action was to be tabled. Instead, Royal Mail's CEO and head of HR informed Terry of plans to impose a well-below-inflation 2% pay offer.

Within an hour, the CEO had released a video statement, sending shockwaves of anger through all levels of the union. In the words of Terry: "The gloves are off!"

In his video, the CEO had the cheek to say that he understands that members are facing a cost-of-living crisis, which is why he wants to pay members £200 upfront to help us through. He thinks £200 will buy us off! At the same time he received a 'short-term bonus' of £142,000, taking his package to £753,000. I'm sure he won't be worrying how he's going to pay his bills!

I have never known such a strong mood for action in my 26 years as a

CWU rep. Official gate meetings are taking place up and down the country and, if anything, the £200 has only made the mood more determined. I think there is no doubt we are going to see a massive 'yes' for strike action.

For the first time, the union has been made aware of management proposals for the future. They are determined to smash our hard-won terms and conditions. Proposals include imposing 'flexible hours' where extra time completing deliveries at the end of the day would go into a 'flexitime bank'. If workload is short, we would 'owe' the company time.

As things stand, Sunday working is done on voluntary overtime with enhanced pay. Bosses want to treat Sunday as any other working day. Under plans, new starters would be on a basic 40-hour week at a lower hourly rate than existing staff on a 35-hour week. Perhaps the biggest planned attacks are to sick pay.

These are only some of the changes the bosses want to force through. It's clear they are preparing for a fight with the CWU and we are heading for a major clash. We need to prepare for a battle with management and link in with other unions in the months ahead.

40,000 CWU members in BT group are also balloting for strike action over pay. The ballot, which opened on 15 June, could lead to the first BT-wide strike since 1987.



Royal Mail Workers at Chelmsford Delivery Office gate meeting on 17 June
PHOTO: COMMUNICATION WORKERS UNION

Is Brazil’s right-wing president, Bolsonaro, planning a coup?

TONY SAUNOIS
COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL
SECRETARY

The Donald Trump hearings into the storming of Congress have revealed devastating details of his attempt to cling on to power and carry through what amounted to a coup to overturn the US presidential elections in 2021. Jair Bolsonaro, Brazil’s president, questioned the result and was among the last to recognise Joe Biden’s election. Now, south of the Rio Grande, Brazil is threatened with the possibility of another coup attempt by the same Jair Bolsonaro. However, the threat in Brazil is even greater than the events in the US. Bolsonaro appears to have the backing of important sections of the military. Bolsonaro, a supporter and admirer of Trump, is reading from the same script.

In the run-up to elections in September this year, Bolsonaro has already claimed that the election system is open to fraud, and raised the spectre of military intervention to keep him in power.

Bolsonaro has seen his support erode as he has presided over a catastrophic health and economic crisis. Over 600,000 have died from Covid, largely as a result of his policies during the pandemic. He says something “wicked” happened to the journalist Dom Phillips and Bruno Pereira, both defenders of indigenous rights. Yet he has worked hand in glove with the forestry companies and other gangsters who have carried out brutal repression and killings against the indigenous peoples of the Amazon.

In recent polls, Bolsonaro’s support has fallen to 29%, as opposed to his main rival, former president Luis Inacio Lula of the PT (Workers’ Party), who is registering 47% support, although the polls are notoriously unreliable and abstention levels are high.

The military tops have partly been purged of opponents of Bolsonaro. Sections of the military have been drawn into the government, which has been militarised. Over 1,000 military officers currently hold civilian posts, more than at the time of the military coup in 1964.

Bolsonaro and his clique are preparing to cry foul if they lose the election.

The defence minister, General Paulo Sérgio Nogueira de Oliveira, has attacked the electronic voting system and included the proposal that the military conduct a parallel count in a ‘secret room’. Bolsonaro has called for an “audited” election process. Senior military officers have also made proposals to the election commission.

While the commission did not take up their proposals, the defence minister and Bolsonaro protested that “the armed forces do not feel properly honoured”. The armed forces, they thunder, have a role “to defend the Fatherland and guarantee constitutional power, law and order”. They have stated that they will not accept simply an electronic vote in the name of ‘national security’.

The military coup in 1964 was justified as a necessary act to ‘defend democracy’. The same rehearsed script



Bolsonaro (second from left) CREDIT: FORÇA/AGÊNCIA BRASILEIRA CC-BY-NC-SA 2.0

is being prepared by Bolsonaro’s supporters and conspirators in 2022.

Bolsonaro has made it easier to purchase guns in Brazil, and has urged his supporters to arm themselves. A major clash is being prepared for the elections and the aftermath.

These preparations by the far right around Bolsonaro are not backed by the main sections of the Brazilian ruling class. They did not back Bolsonaro when he was elected to power in 2019. His election was a measure of the collapse in confidence and support of all of the traditional parties in Brazil, including the PT.

The ruling class has partly lost control of sections of the state machine. Institutions like the Supreme Court have been in collision with Bolsonaro’s regime.

It is not excluded that all of Bolsonaro’s preparations and threats to remain in the presidency evaporate and collapse. However, it would be a mistake to count on this, and it is urgent that the working class and socialist left in Brazil prepare for a bitter struggle, and campaign for an independent socialist alternative, putting no trust in the anti-Bolsonaro sections of the capitalist class.

The ideas of ‘lesser evilism’ (anyone but Bolsonaro) are already an important feature of the campaign. The question is, however, if Bolsonaro is defeated, what policies and programme are to be implemented? Those who defend capitalism cannot be trusted to implement a programme and policies which favour

the working class. The need for an independent mass party of the working class with socialist policies is urgently posed.

When Bolsonaro asked for US President Joe Biden’s help against Lula, at the recent Summit of the Americas, Biden simply changed the subject. Lula and the PT have moved to the right and have defended a pro-capitalist policy. Lula, when president from 2003-10, was praised by former US President Obama: “This is my man. I love this guy,” he said in 2009 at the G20 summit in London.

Unpredictable and reactionary

The erratic, unpredictable, reactionary Bolsonaro regime is not in the interests of capitalism. The ruling class would prefer a third alternative, but would not be threatened by Lula returning to power. He has proved his reliability for capitalism in the past, and is demonstrating it again in this election campaign.

Lula’s running mate is Geraldo Alckmin, who was a former governor of São Paulo and founding member of the capitalist PSDB party, which he left after 33 years to prepare the way for this election. Alckmin was a bitter opponent of the PT in the past, running against Lula in the 2006 presidential election.

Should Bolsonaro lose the election and attempt some form of a coup, mobilising his supporters for a fight for power, it would trigger a massive clash and protest. What the ruling class does fear is the prospect of huge confrontations and Lula being swept

into power on a wave of mass mobilisations against Bolsonaro. Such a scenario, which is possible, would unleash massive pressure on Lula to adopt more radical policies.

The dramatic events beginning to unfold in Brazil have been a test for the socialist left, none more than PSOL (the Party of Socialism and Liberty, formed from a 2004 split from the rightward-moving PT during Lula’s government). PSOL wrongly decided not to stand its own presidential candidate in the first round of the 2022 elections, arguing that this could risk splitting the left and leading to a Bolsonaro victory. This has triggered a crisis in PSOL, with some sections splitting away from it. PSOL’s wrong decision on the question is a lost opportunity.

It could have used the first round to mark a socialist alternative and prepare for future struggles, which are certain to erupt should Lula win the elections and defeat Bolsonaro. This could have been done without threatening to allow Bolsonaro to win a majority in the event of a close result in the second-round elections.

The impending upheavals in Brazil are a part of a wider upturn in polarisation and class struggle unfolding throughout Latin America. The devastating environmental crisis in the continent, the repression of tribes and the indigenous peoples, soaring poverty and inequality, and erosion of democratic rights, all pose the urgent need for a revolutionary socialist alternative to capitalism.

France’s ‘president of the rich’ loses parliamentary majority

The 19 June second round of elections to France’s National Assembly - its parliament - its - marked a new stage in the political situation that shook establishment circles to their core.

Just two months after retaining the presidency, Emmanuel Macron’s party has lost its majority in the 577-seat assembly and, as French newspaper ‘Le Monde’ headlined, “The National Assembly plunged into the unknown”. Macron, viewed by workers in France as ‘the president of the rich’ due to his pro-big business policies over the last five years, has been severely weakened.

Although his ‘Ensemble’ coalition emerged with the largest number of assembly seats, he now faces a battle

to implement his policies, not just from within the assembly but also against stepped-up struggles from the trade union movement. He is now in a fragile position as unions fight against his planned increase in the retirement age, the escalating cost of living and other attacks on living standards.

Adding to Macron’s problems is the loss of some of his top team and allies, as he had pledged that those who lost their seats would stand down from their government positions. This happened to his ministers for health, environment and maritime affairs. Also losing their seats were former interior minister Christophe Castaner and the head of the assembly Richard Ferrand.

Most of these individuals were defeated by left candidates in the NUPES alliance led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon. NUPES, the ‘New Ecological and Social Popular Union’, was formed as an electoral alliance of Mélenchon’s FI (France Insoumise) with the PS (Parti Socialiste), EELV (Greens) and PCF (Communist Party) after April’s presidential election - in which each of those parties had stood separately.

NUPES did well in the legislative elections, first round on 12 June (see below), but didn’t manage to increase its appeal enough seven days later in the second round to win a majority of seats in the assembly. Achieving that would have meant attracting a layer of the abstaining

workers and youth out to vote. Instead, over half the electorate once again abstained, disillusioned as a result of declining living standards imposed by previous assemblies, whether composed of political parties on the right, the ‘centre’ or the so-called ‘left’ - the latter having been the PS which adopted a pro-capitalist agenda.

Nevertheless, FI now has 72 seats in the assembly, over four times more than its 17 in the last election five years ago. This much larger bloc needs to give a lead in opposing the policies of Macron’s party and others with which he might ally. The 6.4 million votes won by NUPES represents a big potential. It is now crucial that FI structures itself, so as to allow a

new layer of people to organise to fight not only Macron but all capitalist policies.

Marine Le Pen’s RN (Rassemblement National), the far-right party that has evolved from the National Front, which contains strong neo-Nazi elements created shockwaves by winning 89 assembly seats, due to a campaign focused on social issues. This is its highest number ever, up from just eight in 2017. That serves as a major warning to the workers’ movement. Contrary to Le Pen’s populist rhetoric, the RN’s policies are at root staunchly pro-capitalist as well as vilely racist, and will have to be countered and defeated in the political and industrial struggles to come.



Gauche Révolutionnaire

(GR), the French section of the Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI), participates in France Insoumise and explained that a vote for NUPES was “an opportunity to shake this system and the politicians serving capitalism and to encourage workers’ struggles”. Below is a shortened version of a GR statement written after the first round of the legislative elections and before the second. See socialistworld.net for the full statement and further updates.

The good vote for the NUPES left alliance in the first round of the legislative elections shows the potential for defeating Macron through our struggles!

It reaffirmed the support for

Mélenchon in last April’s presidential election, in which he received 7.7 million votes.

He had led a campaign with a programme that took up the aspirations of workers and the whole population, including demanding increased pay and a minimum wage of 1,500 euros a month, pensions at age 60, defending public services, and increasing taxes on the rich and the multinationals to pay for all that.

Macron’s coalition ‘Ensemble’, the right in Les Républicains (LR), and the far right in Le Pen’s RN and Zemmour’s Reconquête, all found themselves haunted by a common spectre: the possible victory of a left-wing coalition that shows workers and young people that they don’t have to suffer anti-social policies.

Despite a very high abstention rate, 52%, especially in small working-class towns and working-class neighbourhoods, the first round NUPES vote was on a par with Macron’s, whose vote is in sharp decline compared to the last legislative elections in 2017.

NUPES’ results have been very uneven. Its good votes were often

in areas where FI groups have been maintained, or where PCF or EELV activists led the campaign. Where FI activist groups have not been maintained, because of the lack of structures in FI, it was difficult to make up lost ground. This unfortunately confirms what we were already saying in 2017, that it is essential for FI to have local, regional and national structures, operating in a collective and democratic way.

On the one hand, this legislative campaign has seen thousands of young people and workers investing in support for NUPES. On the other hand, there are also thousands among the six million voters who will be more engaged if the FI transforms itself into a structured political force, capable of discussing, deciding, and through that, persistently taking up the defence of workers’ interests.

Many also see that the electoral sequence is only a first step and that it will not be enough to change things in a lasting way. We must therefore prepare for a mass struggle and organise ourselves to build it, and in that way advance our demands on wages, pensions and public services.

A real new mass party of struggle, of workers and youth, against capitalism, must be built in the next period. Such a party would also allow collective discussion on the real alternative we need in order to replace capitalism. It will not be possible to be satisfied with a few nationalisations, although they are essential, especially in the health and energy sectors. A plan is needed to put the main sectors of the economy into public ownership so it can be planned democratically and ecologically, under the control and management of workers, linked up with the whole population.

Volatility

There are regions where NUPES hasn’t managed to be the main opposition to Macron. Le Pen’s far right saw its vote increase to 4.2 million compared with 2.9 million in 2017. We must add the 960,000 votes for Reconquête, the far-right party of Zemmour, which hasn’t, however, qualified for the second round.

NUPES is an unstable coalition

and it can’t be said that some of the parties participating in it will really defend the demands it makes. The Parti Socialiste ended up playing its usual double game. On the one hand, the national leadership accepted the NUPES agreement, and on the other, there were PS federations that maintained their own candidates.

However, the tendency that was seen in the presidential election for a combative policy against Macron and capitalism by supporting the candidacy of Mélenchon is being confirmed in these legislative elections.

This translates in a still timid and confused way into a will to unite our camp, that of workers, youth, and the majority of the population, against those policies that make us suffer so much and constantly degrade our living conditions and even the whole of society.





WHAT WE STAND FOR

Capitalism is an ailing, crisis-ridden system based on the exploitation of the majority of the world's population by a small, super-rich elite who own most of the wealth and the means of producing it. This way of organising society, in which the pursuit of profit comes before everything else, causes poverty, inequality, environmental destruction, wars and oppression across the globe.

The Socialist Party organises working-class people to fight against the attacks from this rotten system on our lives and livelihoods, and for a socialist alternative: a society which takes the wealth out of the hands of the super-rich and is democratically run by working-class people to meet the needs of all not the profits of a few.

Building fighting democratic trade unions in the workplaces and a new mass workers' party is a vital part of the struggle to change society along socialist lines.

Because capitalism is a world system, the struggle for socialism must also be international. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International which organises across the world. Our demands include:

- **WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS**
- A £15-an-hour minimum wage for all, without exemptions. For the minimum wage to automatically increase linked to average earnings or inflation, whichever is higher.
- Share out the work. A maximum 32-hour working week with no loss of pay or worsening of conditions. The right to flexible working, under the control of workers not employers. An end to insecure working, for the right to full-time work for all who want it; ban zero-hour contracts.
- All workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness, parental and holiday rights from day one of employment. End bosses using bogus 'self-employment' as a means to avoid giving workers rights.
- No to austerity through inflation. For all wage rates to be automatically increased at least in line with price rises.
- Open the books of all companies cutting jobs or claiming they can't afford to pay a real living wage. State subsidies, where genuinely needed, for socially-useful small businesses.
- For trade unions independent of the capitalist state, with members having democratic control over their own policies, constitutions and democratic procedures. For all trade union officials to be regularly elected, subject to recall by their members and paid a worker's wage.
- Reduce the state retirement and pension age to 55. For decent living pensions.
- Replace universal credit and the punitive benefit system with living benefits for all who need them.

- **PUBLIC SERVICES**
- A massive expansion of public services including the NHS and council services. Reverse all the cuts, kick out the privateers. Bring private social care and childcare facilities into public

ownership under democratic control, in order to provide free, high-quality services for all who need them. Expand services for all women suffering violence.

- For local councillors who are committed to opposing austerity and all cuts to local services, jobs, pay and conditions.
- For a socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs, including dental and eye care – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out the private companies! Nationalise the pharmaceutical industry under democratic workers' control and management.
- Renationalise privatised utilities – including rail, mail, water, telecoms and power – under democratic workers' control and management.
- Free, publicly funded and democratically run, good-quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees and write off student debt, end marketisation, and introduce a living grant. No to academisation. For all schools to be under the genuine democratic control of local education authorities, school staff, parents and student organisations.
- The right to a safe secure home for all. For the mass building of genuinely affordable, high-quality, carbon-neutral council housing. For rent controls that cap the level of rent. Fair rent decisions should be made by elected bodies of tenants, housing workers and representatives of trade unions. For cheap low-interest mortgages for home buyers. Nationalise the privately owned large building companies, land banks and estates.

- **ENVIRONMENT**
- Prioritising major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels and nuclear power with renewable energy, and ending the problems of early obsolescence – where products are designed to 'wear out' and be replaced - and unrecycled waste.
- Nationalisation of the energy companies, under democratic workers' control and management, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need, in order to carry out a major switch to clean, green energy, without any loss of jobs, pay or conditions.
- A democratically planned, massively expanded, free to use, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.
- For a major, publicly funded, insulation and energy transition plan for existing housing stock.
- Agribusiness to be taken into democratic public ownership. For a food processing and retail industry under workers' control to ensure that standards are set by consumers, small farmers, and

all workers involved in the production, processing, distribution and retail of food.

- **DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS**
- For united working-class struggle to end discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice and oppression.
- Repeal the anti-trade union laws and all others that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest and to strike! End police harassment. For the police to be accountable to local committees, made up of democratically elected representatives of trade unions, local community organisations and local authorities.
- For the right to choose when and whether to have children – for the right to access abortion, contraception and fertility treatment for all who need it.
- For the right to asylum – with democratic community control and oversight of emergency funding resources. No to racist immigration laws.
- Expand democracy. For the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. For all MPs to be subject to the right of recall by their constituents at any time, and to only receive a worker's wage.
- For proportional representation and the right to vote at 16.
- For the right of nations to self-determination. For an independent socialist Scotland and for a socialist Wales, both part of a voluntary socialist confederation of Wales, England, Scotland and Ireland.
- Oppose the dictatorship of the billionaire owners of the media. For the nationalisation of newspaper printing facilities, radio, TV and social media platforms. Access to these facilities should be under democratic control, with political parties' coverage being allocated in proportion to the popular vote at elections.
- For a new mass workers' party, based on the trade unions, and drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplaces, and community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, socialist political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

- **SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM**
- No to imperialist wars and occupations!
- Take the wealth off 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, not to the fat cats.
- 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 the EU bosses' club. Organise a campaign with European socialists and workers' organisations to use the talks on post-Brexit relations to tear up the EU pro-capitalist rules. For a real collaboration of the peoples of Europe on a socialist basis as a step towards a socialist world.

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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Wealden bin workers' strike wins 22%+ pay increase



After 44 days of strike action, bin workers and GMB members at Wealden District Council in East Sussex have accepted a new offer and returned to work. Gary Palmer, GMB Regional Organiser told the Socialist: "Our members are satisfied. We've achieved our aims. Retaliation from employers and the police may become more common but let's be clear, these strikes are a result of poor management and poor pay. I've seen a big change in the workforce, every attack made them stronger and stronger, more resolute. The result means that we have secured bonus payments into the wage and that

means an increase for everyone between 22% and 27% over the next two years."

Gary and two other GMB officials were arrested on the picket line during the dispute. "Our court case will be heard in Hastings on Wednesday 29 June. We have to defend ourselves, these rules are unfair and it's time to stand up. We'd welcome support at the court from everyone."

- **Solidarity protest called by Hastings TUC 9.30am, Wednesday 29 June, Hastings Magistrates Court, Bohemia Road, Hastings TN34 1ND**

British Council workers strike to defend jobs

CRAIG WORSWICK
PCS SECRETARY GREATER MANCHESTER (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Around 500 British Council workers, based in the UK and internationally, took strike action on 15-17 June.

Escalating previous action on 24-25 March, workers are hoping to halt a mad dash to redundancies by their bosses, and to stop the privatisation of parts of the British Council.

The British Council oversees cultural and educational relationships between the UK and other countries, while maintaining an arms-length link to the UK government. Films and projects promoting LGBTQ+ and women's rights, local democracy and the English language are just some of the tasks overseen by this small body.

During the pandemic, the British Council was granted a loan on

punitive terms from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, a UK government department, in order to survive while other sources of income were suspended. The terms have not been released, but bosses are citing this as the reason they won't negotiate seriously with the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS).

On 15 June, a rally at Parliament attracted significant in-person and on-line support from MPs. On 16 June, a rally and march of British Council workers was held to publicise the dispute and exert pressure on the bosses.

Supporters from other PCS branches, including Socialist Party members, as well as from Manchester TUC, attended the picket and rally to back up the strike. The fight continues.

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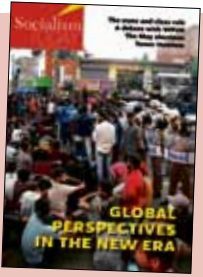
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Film review: Rebellion Extinction Rebellion documentary exposes political weakness

ADAM POWELL-DAVIES
EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Rebellion is the first feature-length documentary to go behind the scenes of climate campaign Extinction Rebellion (XR).

The documentary tracks the growth of XR since 2018, from a core of UK-based climate activists to an international environmental movement which has grabbed national headlines through direct action and civil disobedience.

The young documentary directors Maia Kenworthy and Elena Sánchez Bellot are interested in "storylines", and focus on a few leading XR personalities, the relationships between them, and their personal battles in the organisation.

The film opens with former XR youth organiser, Savannah Hallam, being asked if she would join XR again. She sighs: "I think it's hard to know whether I would do it again, because I am still not fully aware yet of how it's affected me". From the very first scene, XR is introduced as an organisation that leaves members confused and conflicted.

Savannah is filmed storming out of a meeting after her dad and XR co-founder, Richard Hallam, dismisses criticism by the organisation's youth wing over a proposed action to disrupt flights at Heathrow Airport.

Egos

The directors' focus on human drama – burnout, battling egos, tense relationships etc – reflects their own filmmaking sensibilities, and viewers seeking a more explicitly political commentary on XR might be better off looking elsewhere: for example, the article published by the Socialist Party in 2019 (see 'Extinction Rebellion' at socialistparty.org.uk).

All the arguments, frustrations and falling-outs point to a wider political disorientation in XR, and are the result of a fundamentally mistaken approach to fighting the climate crisis.

Socialists understand that the climate crisis is driven by a global capitalist system, in which nations and international blocs compete for the short-term profits of their 'own' capitalist class, with no consideration for the long-term existence of humanity and the planet.



XR figures in the documentary describe the system as "toxic" and "stuck", which co-founder Gail Bradbrook says "relies on us feeling powerless". But they never call it for what it is – capitalism. Nor do they come to the conclusion that we need to change this system – from capitalism to socialism – to end climate change altogether.

We see some XR activists groping for a correct approach by targeting protests at big businesses and important financial hubs. Indeed, mass disruption of the economy could hit the polluting bosses where it hurts most – their profits – and win some concessions for the climate movement, to at least slow the rate of environmental breakdown.

But who is involved in that disruption? Because national XR mobilisations often last for weeks at a time, participants are urged to book long periods off work. How can the XR leadership expect workers on zero-hour contracts to simply give up their wages for weeks at a time?

The best way to bring about economic disruption is to engage the mass of the working class who produce the capitalists' profits. But instead, XR actions are seen alienating workers – for example, the infamous clip of XR protesters being dragged by angry commuters from the top of a DLR train.

Due to XR's mistaken programme – and the tactics that flow from this – it can't offer a real way forward to

working-class and young people looking for an alternative to climate catastrophe. Savannah Hallam bemoans the XR culture of burnout – just "doing and doing and doing". Many activists eventually hit a brick wall, because they follow a programme that fails to challenge the root cause of the climate crisis – capitalism.

This lack of political clarity plays out on our screens when XR Youth splits from its parent organisation partway through the documentary. The same may be said in the case of a number of former XR figures who are shown to leave the organisation throughout the documentary.

Capitalism and socialism

Roger Hallam is later kicked out of XR. When he comments: "I think I've learned how enormously tragic it is to be human, because humans find it enormously difficult to get their act together", he reveals the inevitable pessimism from not understanding that our current crises, rooted in capitalism, can and will be overcome by uniting the mass of society in revolutionary socialist change.

The emotions and tensions in Rebellion point to an organisation that frustrates, confuses and misleads members through a fundamentally futile approach to solving the climate crisis. We need socialism, not a slightly greener capitalism.

- **Rebellion is available on Netflix**



TV review: Dispatches - the truth about Nike and Adidas

LAMLEY NAA AMOAKO-ATTA
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Garment workers are underpaid, overworked and mistreated. Bosses at the top reap the benefits, keeping their profit margins low by exploiting those at the bottom.

Fashion accounts for 10% of world carbon emissions, and is the second-most polluting industry. Six billion pairs of trainers are produced annually. Shockingly, 90% of them end up in landfill, which take up to 1,000 years to degrade.

A recent episode of Channel 4 'Dispatches' investigated Nike and Adidas's recycling claims. Adidas says it's created footwear from plastic found in polluted seas. However, the documentary revealed that the plastic in 'recycled' Adidas trainers doesn't come from the ocean.

One source is tourist resorts in the Maldives. One resort owned the factory producing bottled water for the island, and the plastic came from there!

Nike has an initiative called 'Grind', where old trainers are ground down and remade into materials for playgrounds and sports centres. Again, misleading, as the documentary found that most of Grind material comes from industrial waste.

Nike and Adidas are not the only ones misleading their customers. Countless companies are 'green-washing' – deceptive marketing to persuade people the organisation is environmentally friendly.

Brands claim to be sustainable, but are far from it. In that situation, how can consumers buy ethically and responsibly?

The responsibility lies with corporations. However, capitalism is a system based on profit, cutting corners and misleading the public – part and parcel in keeping margins low and profits high. It needs to be replaced with a socialist alternative if we want a truly sustainable world.

- **The truth about Nike and Adidas is available on All 4**

jobs for all unemployed people, but his position will be an unstable one, for example he controls only a minority of the Senate.

During the 2018 presidential election, when Petro stood unsuccessfully, the Committee for a Workers' International said that "it is necessary for Petro to base himself on the mass mobilisation that has boosted him, to promote the organisation of the committees that have emerged

in the heat of the campaign, and to defend an anti-capitalist social and ecological programme that allows the wealth of the country to put itself at the service of the majority of the population, expropriating the big landowners and the main capitalist multinationals." The same is even more true and urgent given his election.

- **More to follow in the Socialist and at socialistworld.net**

of Humane Colombia, replaces the hated Iván Duque Márquez and his right-wing regime.

Petro's historic election comes one year after widespread protests and strikes in opposition to Duque and his government. The movement started with proposed tax reforms which sparked a movement of millions against the government. It was reported that over 40 protestors were murdered

by the police. Over 2,000 were injured.

The tax reform law was just the spark that moved millions into struggle. Anger had been brewing already over poverty and unemployment, the government's botched Covid response, and police brutality. Petro has managed to channel this anger in his election.

Petro has pledged free university education, wealth taxes and state

● Colombia: left-wing Petro channels anger to win presidential election

For the first time Colombia has a left-wing president. Gustavo Petro, a former guerrilla fighter and leader

STAND WITH RAIL STRIKERS

JOHN REID
FORMER RMT NEC MEMBER

The biggest rail strike in 30 years has been strong and solid with large numbers on picket lines.

Our 50,000 members on the rail and London tube have shown the power of the organised working class. We are on strike to defend jobs, pensions, wages, terms and conditions and also to defend passenger safety.

This strike will be followed by other workers moving into action to defend their living conditions.

Workers the length and breadth of Britain support our action. They, like our members, are having to scrape by to pay their fuel bills and increased food bills. This at a time when the super-rich, the energy companies and food chains are raking in super-profits and dividends.

The £16 billion paid to rail companies during Covid has gone into the pockets of these privatised companies in the form of huge profits. While workers who kept the service running during Covid are facing job losses.

Figures for rail usage in May show it is 92% of pre-Covid levels.

Enough is enough! The Tory cheats and crooks under the leadership of law-breaker Boris have declared class war on the RMT.

By refusing to stand with us, Starmer has sided with government. This shows that the RMT position to adopt a policy of supporting socialist candidates that are anti-cuts and that back the interests of our members was the correct one.

All workers need an inflation-busting pay rise. This can be paid out of the profits of the companies and the super-rich.

Better still, nationalise rail, mail, the food monopolies, the energy companies, and the largest profit-soaked companies under workers' democratic control and management.



Picket line in Bristol, 21 June PHOTO: ROGER THOMAS

RMT pickets on 21 June at Leytonstone station spoke to Linda Taaffe

"I think we need a general strike. 100%. Every union. The whole lot. The Tories got a clear agenda to bust the unions. No doubt about that. They don't want to negotiate. The TUC should call action.

The Tories are bad, but Labour is no better really. It's disgusting what they said about not coming to support us on picket lines. Starmer is just a red Tory.

But there's no better time to call action. Workers are so fed up there would be a good response. We got a real fight on our hands."

• See page 2-3 for reports of picket lines around the country

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