

# PROFITS UP

# PAY DOWN

# STRIKE TOGETHER

- Nationalise energy, rail, mail and all utilities
  - Starmer's Labour doesn't fight for us
- Build a new mass workers' party

## Coventry bin strikers win!

With a 12.9% pay increase, and Labour's Coventry council agreeing that the bogus charges against Unite the Union's senior shop steward Pete Randle would not be pursued, Coventry's HGV drivers have achieved a significant win.

When workers stick together, this is what can be achieved!

• See more on page 7



PHOTO: LENNY SHAIL



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

# Workers can win against weak and divided Tories



As more rail and other strikes take place, Tory Transport Secretary Grant Shapps and would-be Tory prime ministers Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss are threatening even more anti-union laws. On the campaign trail to the electorate of just 160,000 Conservative Party members, the candidates are trying to outdo each other in championing further restrictions on working people defending themselves and their families.

But it takes more than wearing a blue dress and talking about tax to recreate the spectre of Thatcher. The Tories are gnashing their teeth, precisely because they are weak, divided, and crisis-ridden, while workers are moving on to the front foot, spurred on by the cost of living spiralling out of control. But the unions must face up to the Tory threats and press home the momentum that is building up.

Over six days, upwards of 100,000 workers took national strike action across transport unions RMT, Aslef and the Communication Workers Union (CWU). This was supplemented by industrial action by another rail union, TSSA, in two rail companies and also by the increasing number of localised disputes that are growing by the week. In addition, 115,000 CWU postal workers have voted by 97.6% to strike. Many workers are winning significant

victories, some before even getting to the picket line.

With inflation continuing to rise, this strike wave can continue to grow, and the unions can become a pole of attraction to workers who have their backs against the wall, including those not organised in trade unions. And the very weakness of the Tory government is giving confidence to workers that it's possible to win.

## Strikes hot up

Summer time has normally been a quiet period for the trade union movement, but there has been no winding down this year. In August, the RMT is planning to strike on London Underground and is taking two more days of national action on the railways, in which it will be joined by TSSA in 11 train operating companies, and Aslef are also going out again. In addition, the pressure of public sector workers is pushing their unions to ballot for strike action on pay after the summer.

Eleven years ago, 29 unions met at the 2011 TUC Congress to agree coordinating national strike ballots. This led directly to the N30 pensions strike that saw two million workers take action together against Tory pension attacks, in what was effectively a public sector general strike. That kind of coordination is what is needed right now, but this time the

fight needs to be carried through to the end.

The National Shop Stewards Network is lobbying the TUC Congress in Brighton on Sunday 11 September (see opposite) around the call for the unions to strike together. But this time, the potential is even greater than in 2011. The fight for inflation-proof pay rises to protect living standards is a common one to workers across the public and private sectors. Even barristers and doctors are being forced into action.

We welcome the comments from Mick Lynch, RMT general secretary, and Labour MP John McDonnell about coordinating action. It's clear that discussion on this is now live. In one interview, Mick Lynch reminded the interviewer that the Tory government of Edward Heath jailed trade unionists in 1972. The 'Pentonville 5' dockers' release was forced because of a mass national walkout by workers that was moving towards a general strike. If the Tories proceed to try and bring in more anti-union laws, the TUC should immediately name the day for a 24-hour general strike.

Truss, in particular, is attempting to style herself on Thatcher, although the 'Iron Lady' wasn't invincible and could have been defeated in the 1980s if the union leaders had mobilised to defend the miners. Ultimately, it was the mighty poll tax movement, in which Militant, the predecessor of the Socialist Party, played the key role that ended Thatcher's reign of terror on the working class. But these present-day Tories are out of time, or they would be if the unions faced up to the situation and came together in a joint struggle.

## Government of crisis

Whoever wins the Tory leadership election will be presiding over another government of crisis, to follow on from those of Cameron, May and Johnson. There is the real prospect of a fighting trade union movement of millions of workers ejecting them from office, as it did to Heath in 1974.

That would pose the need for a political alternative. Starmer's recent further back-sliding over nationalisation and his refusal to back strikes, even sacking Sam Tarry from his shadow cabinet for going on a picket line and speaking in favour of pay rises, shows that the closer he feels he is to Downing Street, the more he doubles down on presenting his New Labour as safe for big business. While determined to get rid of the Tories, more and more workers also see the need to build a party that represents their interests.

The fights go together. Fighting for the pay rise that workers desperately need, increasingly raises the need to bring down this Tory government. That would totally transform the balance of class forces, raising the confidence of workers in their power and put any new government under severe pressure.

But that would be helped immeasurably if workers had their own political vehicle, unapologetically supporting workers in struggle, unashamedly committed to policies such as repealing all the Tory anti-union laws going back to Thatcher herself, as well as socialist renationalisation of rail transport, and the energy and utility companies. The need for such a political strategy by the unions can't be postponed. Join us in this fight.



**Fighting for the pay rise that workers desperately need, increasingly raises the need to bring down this Tory government**

# TUC – coordinate the action!

The National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) is hosting a rally and lobby of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in Brighton on 11 September, to call for coordinated action of unions across the private and public sectors.

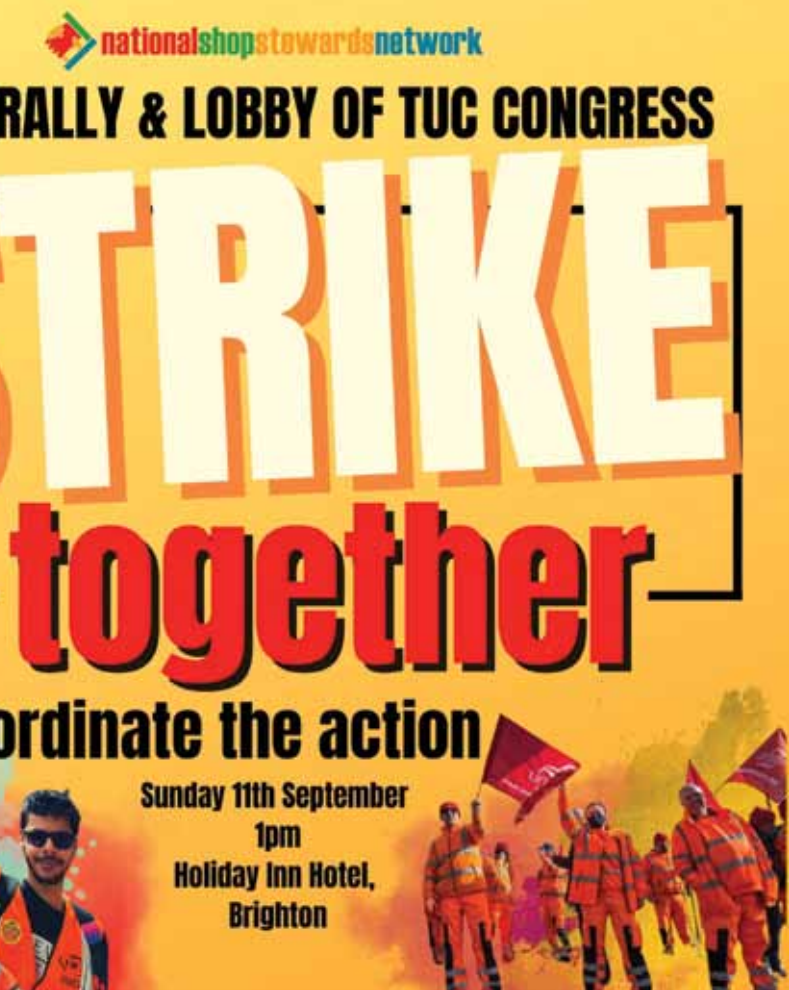
Workers from different unions and workplaces told the Socialist why they're going, and why it's important to encourage others.

"We'll be joining the NSSN rally and lobby for a number of reasons. It shows the solidarity across unions. When unions come together it shows the force of collective action. It's about the future fights that will take place. We need to strike, we can't have a pay cut. We need strike action right across the board. A general strike needs to happen and we have to build the momentum towards that. The unions must fight industrially, but we also need the creation of a new working-class party, we need to find a new political home."  
**PETE RANDLE, COVENTRY BIN STRIKER**

"I've seen the NSSN come out and support railway workers in struggle for years, bringing solidarity to pickets up and down the country with no hesitation. I support their call to lobby the TUC, to call on them to organise a mass coordination of unions in joint action against this Tory government and profiteering employers. Enough is enough!"  
**BIRMINGHAM ASLEF RAIL UNION MEMBER**

"Local government workers are the lowest paid in the public sector. We have lost 27% of our wages since 2010. Members are angry as we cannot live on such poverty wages. We want to fight. And with other trade unions fighting it has really lifted the mood and given confidence to Unison members that we can win better pay if we all fight together. The NSSN rally and lobby of the TUC for coordinating strike action is really gaining an echo amongst workers. It is vital that we do all we can to build that mood! That is why I am attending the NSSN lobby and inviting everyone to come along!"  
**APRIL ASHLEY, UNISON NEC (PERSONAL CAPACITY)**

"The trade union movement as a whole needs to realise there's a huge opportunity, based on what the RMT has started, to come together and build on the incredible breakthrough the RMT has had in the public sphere."  
**KEN MCCALL, NATIONAL EDUCATION UNION DISTRICT SECRETARY, HULL (PERSONAL CAPACITY)**



"I'm attending the NSSN rally as workers across the country are seeing their living standards decline week by week. As a PCS member and civil servant, my fellow workers and I delivered and continue to deliver vital public services - especially during the lockdown and pandemic. The government heaped praise on my department, calling it the fourth emergency service, yet has offered a pay raise of 2% in a time of massive inflation. Coordinated trade union action is the best way to secure the 10% rise and a living wage of at least £15 an hour that we need and deserve."  
**REECE, PCS REP IN DWP (PERSONAL CAPACITY)**

"I'm an NHS worker. The pressures of work and in-work poverty are terrible. I've been a rep for over ten years and I cannot think of a more important time to attend a rally of all union activists to push the TUC to take action. The NSSN rally is giving us that opportunity, and I intend to use it. All union activists need to come together in solidarity to demand action."  
**SALLY GRIFFITHS, UNISON REP IN THE NHS (PERSONAL CAPACITY)**

"There's never been a more important time for trade unions to coordinate and strike together. The NSSN has always played a role in promoting and supporting workers in dispute. As a tubeworker, I'm proud to be attending the NSSN rally and lobby of the TUC on 11 September."  
**LEWIS PEACOCK, RMT RAIL UNION MEMBER**

## Get your union branch or trades council to back the lobby

The NSSN is supported by the following unions: Unite the Union, RMT, CWU, FBU, Napo, BFAWU, POA and NUM. In addition, the rally and lobby is supported by: Brighton Trades Council, Cardiff Trades Council, Coventry Trades Council, Swansea Trades Council, Barts Health Unite branch, Cardiff Unite, Coventry general Unite branch, Coventry local government Unite, Coventry Telecoms CWU, GMP London Print Unite branch, Housing Workers Unite branch, South Birmingham Unite, Waltham Forest Council Unite, Branches of Unison have supported the plan to lobby the TUC.

● To add your support, find out about transport, and to make a donation to the NSSN, go to: [shopstewards.net](https://shopstewards.net)





AQA strike MANCHESTER SP

## Manchester AQA exam body strike

After being offered a measly 3% pay rise - a figure distorted to 5.6% by AQA with the addition of a non-consolidated £500 payment - AQA workers in Manchester went on a 72-hour strike organised by Unison, starting on 29 July.

The picket on day one was around 45-strong. One member of staff called the pay proposal an "insult". They further commented that bosses "haven't done anything for discrimination against gender, sexuality

or anything" within the workplace. The pay rise - a figure distorted to 5.6% by AQA with the addition of a non-consolidated £500 payment - AQA workers in Manchester went on a 72-hour strike organised by Unison, starting on 29 July.

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## Eastleigh VFS Car assembly workers strike

Striking automotive assembly workers at VFS in Eastleigh are very angry at the lack of respect from their bosses. After an initial 1% pay offer, with RPI inflation at over 10%, workers voted to reject. The bosses' revised offer was then only another 1.5%. Workers balloted again and rejected. "They are taking the piss" was the common view.

This is the first ever strike at VFS, a newly unionised workforce of Unite members, but there was an upbeat mood on the picket, boosted by the overwhelming support from other workers, with nothing going in or coming out of the factory.

MABEL WELLMAN AND NICK CHAFFEY  
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

## Southampton Red funnel ferry strike

"First-class service, second-class wages!" was the chant of Red Funnel ferry strikers in Southampton and the Isle of Wight, fighting for a 16% pay rise on 27 July. When local supermarkets pay more, and without the extra safety responsibilities that come with working at sea, the company cannot retain staff.

Support for the Unite strikers was

very noticeable and loud. A number of RMT train staff striking on the same day visited the picket in solidarity. The idea of holding a joint meeting with all local unions to coordinate future action was warmly supported. Further strike days are scheduled throughout August.

SUE ATKINS  
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

## Airport workers' victories

Airport workers have proven that, such is the power of workers, sometimes even just the threat of strikes can score victories. 95% of British Airways (BA) check-in staff in GMB and Unite unions voted for strikes on a turnout of 80% in June. Bosses had been refusing to reverse a 10% pay cut imposed during the pandemic.

By July BA bosses had made a U-turn, pledging to restore pay and offer workers a one-off bonus. Workers in both unions have voted to accept the offer.

Meanwhile, refuelling workers at Heathrow represented by Unite, also suspended a planned three days of strikes after voting to accept a 12.5% increase in overtime pay and a £2,500 bonus.

And at Gatwick, bus drivers in Unite have won a 21.5% pay rise. Here bosses were jolted into action, not by a strike vote, but because the union grew from one or two individuals to 100% membership over the course of just a few months.

## Felixstowe dockers vote to strike

92% of dock workers at Felixstowe, members of Unite, have voted for strike action on an 81% turn out. Workers rejected a real-terms pay cut offer of 5% while RPI inflation runs at 11.9%. The

container port is responsible for 48% of the UK's container trade making the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company extremely profitable and its workers potentially extremely powerful.

# Aslef train drivers: "We have a new word for scabs here. We call them Starmers"

Socialist Party members joined Aslef train drivers' picket lines on 30 July. Another strike day is scheduled for 13 August.

## ● North East

This is certainly turning into a summer of discontent! Aslef strikers underlined to us the rotten role of this Tory government, and Transport Secretary Grant Shapps, in scuppering negotiations. This is clearly a Tory government hell-bent on ensuring it is workers who pay.

Workers on the Aslef picket line also patently understand it's not wage increases that create inflation. Prices are skyrocketing but, alongside many other workers, rail worker's wages have not kept up with inflation. Many Aslef members haven't had a pay increase since 2019.

On every picket line we visited, workers were scathing of Keir Starmer. Also, although the strikers are happy to have local Labour MPs visit the picket lines, the feeling of the strikers we spoke to is that the Labour Party no longer represents them, and there was agreement over the need for a new mass workers' party.

The funniest comment was when I asked if many trains were running. One of the drivers flipped that managers were supposed to be running the trains, but they

probably didn't know how to use the ignition keys.

ELAINE BRUNSKILL

## ● Bristol

Standing on an Aslef picket line in Bristol for the first time in 40 years, the mood was determined and confident. When I raised the idea of co-ordinated action with other unions, all the pickets thought that was blindingly obvious and the only way to go from here. Mention of the Labour leadership's role drew immediate contempt, with one worker saying: "We have a new word for scabs here. We call them Starmers". All the pickets bought a copy of the Socialist.

ROBIN CLAPP

## ● Northampton

There was a brilliant turnout with drivers lining the picket all day, the whole time they had a chorus of supportive honks and cheers from drivers passing by.

One of the workers we spoke to had come down from the Coventry picket where he had met Socialist

Party member and ex Labour MP, Dave Nellist. He shared with us how he had withdrawn his Labour Party membership a month ago. Another striker was considering doing the same. The victory won by the Coventry bin workers against a Labour council is well known (see page 7) and has inspired many. We spoke to strikers of the need for a new political party to represent workers.

HARRISON CAIRNS

## ● Reading

Members of the public showed fantastic support to the strikers. One woman gave the pickets a gift card to buy drinks at a local coffee shop. We could see why the capitalist media struggles to find anyone that doesn't support workers fighting against the cost-of-living crisis!

Among other trade unionists who attended there was an understanding of the importance of supporting the rail strikes and an acknowledgement of the positive effect these are having on the confidence of their own members.

NEIL ADAMS



Sutton PAUL TOOLEY-OKONKWO



Euston IAIN DALTON

# CWU BT and Openreach workers: "The price of everything is going up except our wages"

CWU members working for BT took two days of strike action on 29 July and 1 August, fighting for better pay. Socialist Party members report from the picket lines.

## ● Leicester

Ahmed Kasu, rep for CWU Midland Counties branch said: "We aren't getting a pay rise. Yet those at the top have bumped their pay up significantly. They want to give us peanuts for the work we do.

"We worked through the pandemic; our engineers put their lives on the line whilst these CEOs are sitting cosily in their homes. We've ensured that the company has made a significant profit and they have rewarded shareholders,

yet they don't want to reward the workers that made them their profit.

"We need to make a stand. The price of everything is going up except our wages!"

STEVE SCORE

## ● North Benfleet

I spoke to Nigel Bailey, CWU SE Anglia Branch Secretary, on the picket line. "The mood is very positive," he said, "no one wants this strike but the company won't move so we're going to have to make them."

Nigel already subscribes to the NSSN bulletin so he was positive about the NSSN lobby on 11 September - "The TUC needs to pull all of these disputes together."

Nigel had the following advice for pickets everywhere in the UK's

summer strike wave: "Hydrate, use a high SPF and never look directly at the Sun - the newspaper that is."

DAVE MURRAY

## ● Doncaster

The biggest cheer was when two 'white van men', plumbing contractors, refused to cross the picket line and one of the strikers said: "Feel the power! Toilets not getting fixed today!"

ALISTAIR TICE

Now that's what I call a front page ... We should have these in all the exchanges!

REVIEW OF THE SOCIALIST FROM  
OPENREACH ENGINEER IN SHEFFIELD



# STRIKE WAVE SPREADS IN FIGHT FOR PAY

## RMT rail workers: "We are all militant and we all stand together"

Railway workers in RMT took another day of strike action on 27 July, defending pay, jobs, terms and conditions. The next scheduled dates are 18 and 20 August. RMT members on London Underground are scheduled to strike next on 19 August. Socialist Party members report from just a few of the many picket lines we visited.



Bristol Temple Meads ROGER THOMAS



Birmingham New Street NICK HART

## ● Retford

"We're getting a good vibe with support from the public passing the picket line. It's not going to be an easy process but we need to sweat it out. Jobs security is a priority. We're focusing on the terms and conditions of any pay rise. The employers always portray us as greedy, but if they get what they want, the job wouldn't be worth having.

"They've offered us a one-off £600 'incentive' not to strike, but given themselves massive rises. Network Rail chief executive Andrew Haines has just given himself £38,000 while we fight for our T&Cs and job security. Does this not go against one of the things we are actually fighting for in this dispute?"

BASSETLAW RMT BRANCH SECRETARY WAYNE BARNETT AND REP REX REVILL SPOKE TO JON DALE AND PAUL TOOLEY-OKONKWO

## ● Tyneside

On Tyneside, the Socialist Party visited three RMT picket lines. On all there was a gritty determination to fight for decent pay and conditions.

As one striker said: "The RMT has a union culture, we are all militant and we all stand together."

There was derision, both from RMT strikers and Labour Party members

present, towards Keir Starmer, who has unceremoniously ditched all previous pledges to nationalise rail, energy, mail and water.

RMT members we spoke to also recognise that both Sunak and Truss have their sights on a battle with the RMT. As one striker said: "The difference between them is one wants to burn us, the other would have us drowned."

## ● Hastings

There was a confident mood on the RMT picket. Strikers said that they were willing to be in this dispute for the long run - one claiming they were certain the RMT could renew its ballot if necessary.

Our argument for coordinated action was widely supported, it is already widely discussed on the picket line. Several members, including a visiting GMB rep, agreed to raise the upcoming NSSN rally of the TUC (see page 3) with their branches. The mood is out there for coordinated strikes - we need to turn that willingness into concrete action!

JAMES ELLIS

## ● Eastleigh

Eastleigh RMT signallers are determined to win their fight, especially the protection of jobs: "We need

a general strike, everyone out and more support from Labour." They are angry at the costly and dangerous use of contractors, often unskilled, to do the jobs they are brought in to do, especially managers, who put lives at risk on strike days through their incompetent attempts to run trains.

MABEL WELLMAN AND NICK CHAFFEY

## ● Birmingham

Everyone I spoke to on the picket agreed that strike action should be co-ordinated between the unions - some said a one-day strike of all transport unions to shut everything down, others said staggered strike action over a few days of drivers, then signallers etc.

NEU MEMBER

## ● Leicester

Leicester RMT had solidarity visits from PCS, CWU, FBU, Unite, Unison, NEU and Leicester and the district Trades Council. CWU and FBU reps took NSSN leaflets and said they would propose the model motion calling on the union leaders to coordinate strikes.

HEATHER RAWLINGS

Get all the latest union news

nationalshop  
stewardsnetwork  
NSSN bulletin: shopstewards.net



UNITE NORTH WEST





## Drug firms' NHS extortion

JON DALE  
MANSFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

Two profiteering drugs companies have extorted a 2,600% price rise from the NHS for an essential epilepsy drug. In 2012, US giant Pfizer, and a smaller UK company, Flynn Pharma, increased the price of a 28-pack of phenytoin capsules from 66p to £15.74. Instead of the NHS spending £2 million on phenytoin in 2012, it paid about £50 million in 2013.

The companies could hardly claim expensive research as the reason for the price hike. Phenytoin was approved for epilepsy treatment in 1953!

After four years of blatant profiteering, in which time the companies banked an extra £170 million profit, a Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) investigation issued fines. Pfizer faced a record £84 million, and Flynn £5 million. Even though they were still up over £80 million, instead of paying up, the companies appealed!

Six years later, after another investigation, the CMA has cut the Pfizer fine to £63million and increased Flynn's to £6.7million. The companies now intend to appeal again.

While they employ expensive lawyers to argue their case year after year, profits keep rolling in. It shows how toothless so-called regulatory bodies like the CMA are. Capitalism can't be 'regulated'.

Pfizer has made record profits from its Covid-19 vaccine, which many poorer countries can't afford to buy. Its profits increased from \$9 billion in 2020 to \$22 billion last year.

Trade unions should demand drugs companies open their books to inspection. Let's see how much profits they suck out of the NHS. We need a workers' party fighting for a socialist programme of nationalisation of the pharmaceutical industry.

Public ownership and democratic planning on a global scale would ensure everyone could get the treatments and vaccines they need.

# Unison in local government: serious campaign needed on pay

HUGO PIERRE  
UNISON NEC, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Unison members in England and Wales working for schools and local government have been offered £1,925 and an extra day's holiday to settle their 2022 pay claim, which was for RPI inflation or £2,000.

The offer could mean a 10.5% rise for those on the lowest grade. Given that pay rises for the last decade have tended to be 2% or less, the offer can seem better in comparison. But it starts to fall well below inflation (11.7% when the claim was submitted) to 8.5% for those on average pay levels, and to less than half the inflation rate for those earning £30,000.

This is the first time in memory that the employers have made a 'flat rate' pay offer to the Unison claim. However, local government and school workers will see this as a cynical move to play 'divide and rule'.

Unison pay negotiation leaders – the NJC committee – were believed to be preparing to go straight to an official strike ballot before the offer was made. They had also agreed to look at a disaggregated ballot of individual branches, so that as many areas as possible could take strike action even if the Tory anti-union 50% threshold wasn't met nationally as a whole.

Now the NJC committee has



Tower Hamlets Unison Strike 2020 HUGO PIERRE

decided to organise a consultative ballot. But it has failed to make a recommendation to reject the offer and prepare members for strike action. Socialist Party members have campaigned in their Unison branches for an immediate official ballot.

The claim would leave members even further behind their pay levels of 2009. They have lost 25% since then and rapidly-rising inflation would put many more members into the low-pay trap.

The pay offer as it stands could put jobs at risk too, as there is no extra funding for it. The employers estimate the overall wage bill would

increase by approximately 5%, but most councils have only allowed for 2% pay rises. Unless there is a fight for the funding, this could lead to job cuts in councils and schools.

Unison branches are now starting to consult their members. This is against the background of strike action starting in Unison branches in Scotland, which have rejected an offer from the Scottish councils.

Reject the offer. Campaign for strike action to get an RPI inflation-proof rise, and to demand full funding for the pay rise. Unison in local government should aim to coordinate with other unions and sectors.

## Tories NHS performance 'inadequate'

'Inadequate, requires improvement'. That is how the Health and Social Care House of Commons Select Committee evaluates the government's progress towards its commitments for health and care. Central to the failings are the chronic staff shortages. The

NHS is short of 12,000 hospital doctors and 50,000 nurses and midwives.

The report is damning, and the government has no solutions. It refuses to invest the levels of funding needed, including financing a decent pay rise for staff.

## Health workers get ready for action

After the Tory government's public sector pay announcement of 5% to NHS workers, the health service group executive of Unison, the biggest public sector union, discussed its response.

Unison's position, along with all other unions, is to oppose the pay award and seek to improve it.

The health service executive met and was unanimous in its opposition.

It was agreed that to improve this offer, industrial action was required.

Unison is now drawing up plans and setting the timetable for an industrial action ballot, with the objective to coordinate action with the other NHS unions where possible.

Socialist Party members on the health executive are pressing to ensure that no momentum is lost, that all available time in advance of a

ballot be used to build the campaign, and that the union puts in all the resources necessary to give the best possible chance of the biggest possible vote for action.

**NHS WORKER**

● The national council of the Royal College of Nursing has announced that it will ballot its members on whether they want to take industrial action.

## Energy: profits bonanza and bulging bills

### Nationalise now!

While profits for the energy giants are soaring. The energy price cap for us is predicted to hit £3,615 a year by January, up from £1,400 less than a year ago. And the average price of unleaded petrol is 182.77p per litre, up from 133.1p in July 2021.

The energy bosses don't want to cut into their massive profits. And you can't control what you don't own. The energy industry should be renationalised – under democratic workers' control and management.

That way the energy industry can be properly planned to meet our needs and rapidly switch to green energy to combat climate change. Instead of profits lining the pockets of the rich, that money could be used to invest in infrastructure and bring down our bills.

## Quintupled

**Centrica (British Gas owner) half-year profits went up 500% on 2021 figures, to reach £1.3billion in the first half of 2022**

## Doubled

**Shell half-year profits in 2022 are £17.3 billion, up from £8.7 billion in 2021**

## Doubled

**BP half-year profits in 2022 are £11.9 billion, up from £5.4 billion in 2021**



# Coventry bin workers defeat strike-breaking Labour council



COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

DAVE GRIFFITHS

COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

After over 27 weeks of strike action, burning through two braziers, and in temperatures ranging from -8C to +40C, workers have won a wage deal that the council could have paid from the start.

Instead, the Labour council made public attacks on the workforce, organised strikebreaking through an 'alternative' workforce, and suspended a union rep in an all-out attack on the workers' union.

But the council seriously underestimated its workforce. Their win was made possible by the sheer determination of the HGV drivers, the complete backing of Unite the Union, and the solidarity given to the drivers from people in Coventry and around the country.

During the dispute, Unite also stopped funding to the regional Labour Party and suspended over 20

Labour city councillors from the union.

The HGV drivers' dispute was a significant strike from a national perspective. It has both inspired and become part of a wave of disputes across Britain, as workers fight back against the Tory war on workers. A war that seems to have been joined by Labour.

"It is the longest strike in Unite's history", say convenors Haydn Jones and Pete Randle. During it, refuse workers have won pay awards across the country.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham tweeted: "This win shows the new direction of Unite the Union. We will defend our members' pay and conditions however long it takes. This continuous action has delivered real-terms pay increases for our members".

Unite national officer Onay Kasab said: "Unite members relied on the strength of collective action which has secured yet another win for

workers. Congratulations to the Coventry HGV strikers!"

## Labour

Disgracefully, the council is attempting to play down the financial value of the victory. The pay rise equates to the Grade 6 that the drivers were demanding. Unite explains that, contrary to the 'untruth' being spread, this is not based on an extension of the normal working week. The rate for new starters will increase by 8%. In addition to the pay rise, a lump sum payment of £4,000 will be offered to those workers who wish to work the Christmas period.

Labour leader Keir Starmer dismissed the "dispute in Coventry" as part of his 'standing up to unions' symbolism. His remarks merely strengthened the workers' resolve. He has recently doubled down on his failure to support workers, telling MPs not to attend picket lines and sacking MP Sam Tarry from Labour's front bench.

Little wonder that, as well as their union pride chant of "Unite, Unite, we stand up and we fight", the workers' main chant was: "Labour by name, Tory by policy".

The drivers have given support to numerous disputes in the area over recent weeks, attacking not so much a 'standard-of-living crisis' but what they call a 'crisis of greed' from the bosses as profits soar.

The workers have become a true 'band of brothers and sisters'.

Having defeated the attack on them, they will return to work heads held high. But they are aware that it's not over – that what's forced out of them today, bosses will try to get back tomorrow.

The same unity that they have shown will be needed, as will strengthening the union, because whoever becomes Tory leader will continue a war on services. Labour's refusal to resist that means we remain under threat.

There are many lessons from the

Coventry dispute and two in particular stand out.

## A fighting union

First, the kind of trade union working people need. That is: a fighting combative union. This needs to become the norm in Unite in its 'new direction', and in other unions.

Drivers remain angry that the path to their deal was disrupted by another union.

Secondly, what kind of political representation workers need. Following the attacks of a Labour council and Labour's utter failure to respond to the crisis workers face, shop stewards have discussed asking the union to disaffiliate from the Labour Party. A new political voice is needed.

Unite and the trade union movement will have to draw all the necessary conclusions from the lessons of the Coventry HGV strike and what we have seen from Tory-lite 'blue' Labour.

# Hackney council workers fight on

CHRIS NEWBY

HACKNEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Just under three months after their first set of strikes, Hackney council workers in Unite the Union in bins, street cleansing and housing maintenance have been forced to take three further days of strike action.

Hackney's Labour council is intransigent in refusing to budge on its insulting 1.75% pay 'rise'. This is, in reality, a pay cut.

Since the first strikes, RPI inflation has increased even more, by nearly 3% to just under 12%.

Passenger transport drivers and assistants for special educational needs students are still involved in this dispute, but are not involved in the latest strikes because it is the school holidays.

Workers are angry that the council is not prepared to meet their 10% pay rise demand, at the same time as they are sitting on £300 million reserves.

There were determined picket lines at the Millfields bin depot and the Florfield housing maintenance depot.

All the workers came together for a lively demo of over 100 through central Hackney.

It was clear that many of the passers-by, including passing bus drivers, were fully in

support of these workers, with thumbs up and tooting of horns.

The workers are determined to continue their fight for a decent pay rise. The slogan on Socialist Party leaflets and the Socialist newspaper of 'All strike together' went down really well.

Ten strikers bought a copy of the Socialist.



Strikers on the march CHRIS NEWBY

# Union officers arrested on bin strike picket

NICK CHAFFEY

SOUTHERN AND SOUTH EAST SOCIALIST PARTY SECRETARY

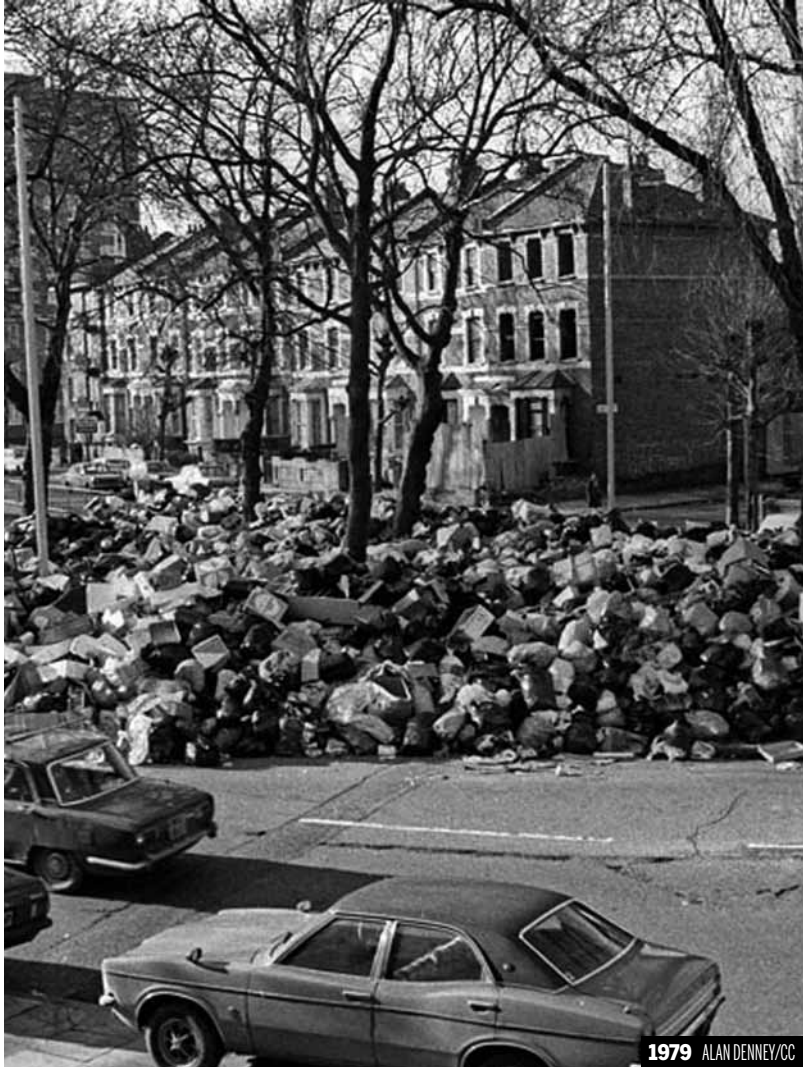
On Tuesday 2 August, GMB officers were arrested by Surrey police whilst lawfully picketing at Surrey Heath bin depot in a dispute over pay at Surrey County Council.

This is the second time GMB officers have been arrested, and indicates an increased willingness of police to intervene on the side of employers and local councils in the face of effective strike action.

With new anti-trade union legislation in the offing from Tory prospective Prime Minister Liz Truss, the trade unions need to step up the response. Maximise our strength in the form of coordinated strike action on pay, linked to a call for the removal of all anti-trade union legislation.

Starmer and Labour's unwillingness to back the recent strike wave has only emboldened employers and the police to act in this way. If Labour won't defend workers in struggle, an urgent task for the trade unions is to launch a new party that will fight in our interests on jobs, pay and trade union rights.





1979 ALAN DENNEY/CC

“”  
Instead of standing up to big business, the Labour government did their bidding

ALISTAIR TICE  
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

With the rising tide of pay strikes and ballots, there is much talk of a 'summer and autumn of discontent', with comparisons to the 1978-79 so-called 'winter of discontent'.

Due to the Tory media's vitriolic attacks on the strikers at the time, and repeated ever since, the winter of discontent is mainly remembered by many as the 'dirty jobs strike', with images of rubbish in the streets and the dead going unburied.

But in reality, it was a four-month period of a series of local and national strikes by mostly low-paid workers, many of them women, for pay rises to catch up with inflation, against a Labour government's pay restraint policy. It involved 4.6 million people in strike action. It included a one-day strike by 1.5 million council manual workers and NHS ancillary staff, which was the biggest strike day since the 1926 General Strike.

### Are we heading for something similar today?

There are certainly many similarities with the situation in 1978. The end of the post-war economic boom was marked by a quadrupling of oil prices following war in the Middle East, resulting in very high inflation, peaking at 27% in Britain in 1975. Today we have the highest inflation rate for 40 years.

While it was a Labour government from 1974-79, like the Tory government today, it was very weak. Its small parliamentary majority gained in two elections in 1974 was eroded by by-election losses which eventually left Prime Minister James Callaghan dependent on Liberal Party, Scottish Nationalist and even Ulster Unionist

votes, before finally losing a parliamentary vote of confidence in March 1979.

Labour had been pushed into office by the power of working-class people in trade unions, that had brought down the previous Tory government of Ted Heath. He had tried to face down strikes with a snap "who runs the country?" general election in February 1974. He lost.

Labour's chancellor Denis Healey promised to "squeeze the rich until the pips squeak". But workers' hopes in a Labour government were quickly disappointed. Rather than implement socialist policies when met with economic difficulties, in September 1976 Healey ran to the International Monetary Fund for a loan to support the currency, in exchange for which he agreed big cuts in public spending and wage restraint to curb inflation. Instead of standing up to big business, the Labour government did their bidding.

### Inflation

Like today, wage rises were falsely blamed for inflation or causing a wage-price spiral. Like the Tory governments of the last 12 years, the Labour government imposed wage restraint. Initially this was with the voluntary agreement of the union leaders in the Trades Union Congress (TUC). This was called the 'social contract'. In exchange for the trade unions restraining pay demands, i.e. accepting real terms pay cuts, the Labour government promised to maintain public spending. They quickly reneged on this. But the union leaders, including the 'left' ones, fearing another Tory government, still held their members back.

So with a few exceptions, most notably the ten-week firefighters' strike in 1977, which the TUC did not support, the Labour government was able to hold wage rises down for three

years to the well-below inflation limits they set, without provoking much industrial action. But like today, successive real-term pay cuts meant that workers' anger eventually exploded in a wave of strikes.

With inflation still at 10% in 1978, Callaghan imposed a 5% pay limit. At last, feeling pressure from below, this was without TUC agreement - although only on the General Council chair's casting vote.

### Pay cuts rejected

It was Ford motor car workers in the private sector who were the first to break through. Rejecting the company's initial 5% offer, 57,000 Ford workers struck in September for two months, rejecting several 'final offers' before settling for a 17% pay rise.

It's been the RMT rail union (followed by Aslef and TSSA) in the privatised railways and the Communication Workers Union in privatised BT and Royal Mail who have been leading the way today. Ballots of public sector workers are being prepared in local government, universities, teachers, civil servants and most likely NHS workers and firefighters.

The Ford workers' victory broke

“”  
Workers' anger exploded in a wave of strikes



Alan Randall. 25/1/79.

the floodgates in the same way the recent RMT strikes have transformed the mood and confidence of workers. Bakery workers struck for six weeks in November and December 1978, then road haulage lorry drivers, organised in the TGWU transport union, now part of Unite, struck through January 1979, eventually winning a 20% rise.

On 22 January, the four public sector and health unions called a one-day strike for a £60 minimum wage for a 35-hour week. One and a half million workers struck that day, predominantly low-paid, council manual workers and NHS ancillary staff. 100,000 marched in London.

This led to ongoing local and national strikes by refuse collectors, gravediggers, ambulance drivers and hospital workers, and later civil servants gaining pay rises of between 9% to 14%. With the Labour government hanging by a thread in parliament, the trade union leaders were desperate to end the strikes and agreed a 'concordat' with the government in mid-February, ending the strike wave.

The winter of discontent had an element of being a rolling general strike, which could be repeated today as unions name different days and lengths

of strike action. That's why the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) has called for a lobby of September's TUC Congress to demand coordinated strike action.

The TUC has called a lobby of parliament on Wednesday 19 October. The Socialist Party calls for this to be turned into a massive demonstration, bringing together private and public sector workers in a show of workers' power, which would raise the confidence and consciousness of the organised working class and beyond.

### Trade union strength

However, there are differences with the situation today compared with 1978-79. Then, over 13 million workers were trade union members, twice the figure now. Over 50% of all employed workers were in a trade union and 75%-80% of employees were covered by trade union collective agreements. Workers had not recently suffered any major national defeats; in fact quite the opposite. Trade union power supported by working-class votes had effectively brought down the Tory government only four years earlier. Whereas most workers today can't even remember the last

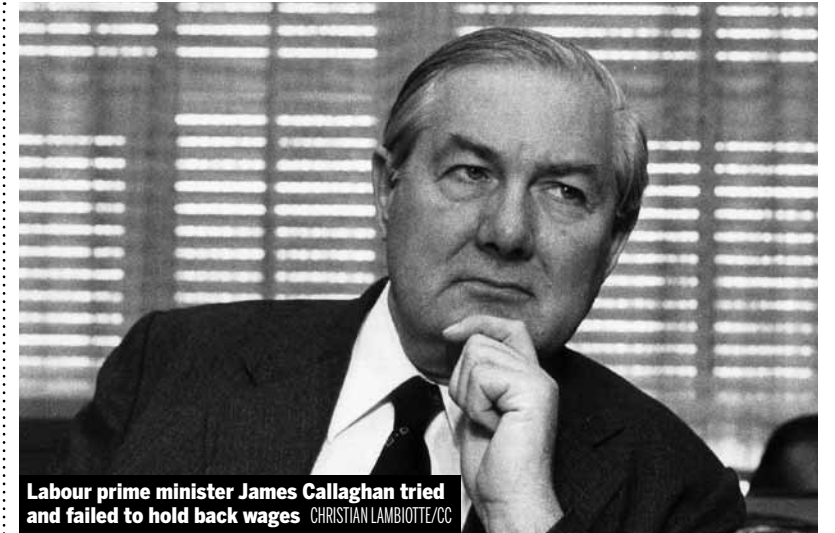
“”  
The place is practically being run by strikers' committees

Then Tory opposition leader, Margaret Thatcher

time our side won in a major national dispute. In 1979, only 290,000 working days were lost through strikes, 1% of the 29 million lost in 1979.

The strength of the trade union movement, built up during the post-war economic boom, was also represented in the 1970s by the 350,000 shop stewards and workplace reps elected in industry and the public sector, who exercised a pressure on the trade union leaders and often acted independently.

The Heath government had introduced anti-trade union laws, but these were defeated by several major strikes in 1972, especially the semi-spontaneous general strike that developed from below to release the 'Pentonville Five' dock shop stewards who'd been jailed. This meant that in the late 70s there weren't any effective trade union laws in place. So, unlike today, workers could 'down tools' and walk out on strike without a ballot, and could picket other workplaces to ask for solidarity action, so-called secondary picketing,



Labour prime minister James Callaghan tried and failed to hold back wages CHRISTIAN LAMBIOTTE/CC



Then Tory opposition leader Margaret Thatcher was dismayed at the level of workers' control during the strike wave

all of which is illegal now - and the Tories plan measures to clamp-down further.

Many of the 78-79 strikes started unofficially, such as at Fords and the lorry drivers. Or they continued unofficially in the case of sections of council and NHS workers, usually made official later by reluctant trade union leaders. Secondary picketing and solidarity action was a big feature as well: the lorry drivers picketed ports, refineries and 'scab' haulage firms.

### Workers' control

Shop stewards committees and strike committees often played the leading role at a local level. 'Dispensation

committees' were established in some cities, notably Hull, by striking lorry drivers, which decided on emergency supplies. This occurred in the NHS ancillary strikes as well, with shop stewards deciding on emergency cover levels. This showed a high level of workers' control which scared the bosses, the government, and the trade union leaders. Thatcher, then the opposition Tory leader, screeched in parliament: "Now we find that the place is practically being run by strikers' committees... They are 'allowing' access to food. They are 'allowing' certain lorries to go through..."

Trade unions are not at that level today. But the forthcoming strike wave will afford the opportunity for workers, especially the new generation of young workers, to rebuild and re-energise the movement through collective and coordinated strikes, demonstrating the real power of the organised working class.

This cost-of-living crisis is severe. The draconian anti-trade union laws

cannot be allowed to stand in the way of effective action, especially if that poses the real possibility of bringing down a weak and divided Tory government, as in 1974. As Unite general secretary Sharon Graham has said, "If you force our legitimate activities outside of the law, then don't expect us to play by the rules."

The beginning of a resurgence in trade union action has, given the anti-union and pro-business positions of Starmer's Labour, understandably led to some left trade union leaders and many of the best activists thinking that trade union power alone is enough to fight the bosses, the Tories and the capitalist system.

However, a big lesson from the winter of discontent is that workers do need political representation. Despite demonstrating trade union power and winning some big wage rises, disillusionment with the pro-capitalist policies of the Labour government led many workers to stay at home in the May 1979 general election. Margaret Thatcher won, ushering in 13 years of Tory and anti-union rule.

In the early 1980s the democratic structures and participation of working-class people meant that a major battle was possible in the Labour Party to fight to change it. The left in the party, including supporters of Militant (forerunner of the Socialist Party), and those around Tony Benn, won support among the members for democratic changes and more socialist policies.

That is impossible now in Starmer's Blairised Labour Party, with democracy and the trade union voice shut down, and Corbyn's pro-worker policies driven out. It makes it essential that trade unions stop funding an anti-union party and begin the process of building a new, trade union-based, working class and socialist party.



Front page of Militant - the Socialist's predecessor - during the strike



# Torquay: We can't go on like this!



**RICHARD WORTH**  
DEVON SOCIALIST PARTY

Over 30 people attended a public meeting organised by Devon Socialist Party in Torquay on 28 July. They gathered to express their anger at the cost-of-living crisis and support workers taking strike action for inflation-beating wage increases.

Lee Rundle, a bus driver from the RMT union, speaking in a personal capacity, opened the meeting with an inspiring contribution about the struggle of fellow rail workers and how their fight is our fight. All workers need an inflation-beating pay rise, with no attacks on their terms and conditions. The Tory government wants to break the RMT to defeat workers everywhere. But together we can build support and solidarity for rail workers and all workers taking action for pay rises to survive the growing cost of living.

James Martin, a train driver from Aslef, also in a personal capacity, told us about their strike action. Train

drivers, 95% of whom are members of Aslef, had voted overwhelmingly to strike to win a pay increase after suffering three years of no wage increases.

Ryan Aldred, a Socialist Party organiser in the south west, emphasised how the government was trying to make us pay for the crisis of their rotten profit-driven capitalist system. Workers everywhere are facing rising food, energy, rent and mortgage increases. Rail workers, posties, teachers, college lecturers, civil servants, health workers and many more are planning industrial action to win wage increases. We need coordinated strike action, striking together to protect living standards.

We also need to join the struggle to build a political alternative to the Tories and the red Tories of Sir Keir Starmer's Labour Party. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) will be standing in council elections and would aim to stand 100 candidates nationally in the next general election. He called on all

present in the meeting to consider becoming a TUSC candidate to offer the people of Torbay and Devon a fighting, socialist alternative; and to join us in the Socialist Party to fight for a better, socialist world.

Many attending spoke about the difficulties they face because of the rising cost of living. Many ideas were discussed. A supporter of the 'Don't Pay Campaign' explained how it is calling for a mass non-payment of energy bills by over a million people on 1 October, by cancelling their energy provider direct debits.

Everybody attending thought the meeting was a great success, bringing lots of new, like-minded people together to build support for workers, trade unions and socialist struggle in Torbay and Devon.

A collection for the Socialist Party's Fighting Fund raised £110. After the meeting many said that they wanted to join the Socialist Party and another meeting in Torquay will be held soon to build on this excellent start.

## South west: Striking workers join Socialist Party

**ROBIN CLAPP**  
BRISTOL SOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

In all corners of the south west, a significant number of striking workers have embraced our slogans and general approach with enthusiasm. An RMT worker has joined us in Salisbury, while a young CWU BT worker on his first ever picket in Bristol asked us how he could become a

member of the Socialist Party.

A really successful Socialist Party public meeting in Torquay (see above) around the issue of fighting back against the cost-of-living crisis, witnessed an ASLEF member standing up and ripping up his Labour Party card. The next day he applied to join us!

There's a new mood of working-class resistance in the air. Whichever

Tory clown gets the keys to Number Ten, their honeymoon will be cut very short by escalating trade union, social and community struggles.

On our local Socialist Party stall we had our best sale since before the pandemic. One young couple asked to shake my hand, saying the last couple of weeks have been a real education for them in learning about the power of working-class solidarity!

# Committee for a Workers' International rally GLOBAL CAPITALIST CRISIS: HEARING THE SOCIALIST WAY OUT



**SCOTT JONES**

A taste of the electrifying and explosive events and mass movements around the world came to London on 30 July at the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) rally, with the theme of what is the socialist way out of the global crises.

Speakers from across Europe and the world told the hundreds in attendance about the struggles that the sister parties and co-thinkers of the Socialist Party are involved in and the situation confronting the working class.

It was the first CWI event of its kind since before the pandemic which, as chair René Arnsburg of Sozialistische Organisation Solidarität in Germany said, "ripped across the globe". And it was fantastic to be back in a room with socialists from around the world, listening to the speakers in front of us, even if some of the speakers were still forced to speak via video because of visa problems.

Prasad Hemakumara of the United Socialist Party in Sri Lanka was speaking literally from the frontline in the struggle, visibly tired from coming straight from the continuous protests and occupations taking place there. The 'Aragalaya' movement has led to the overthrow of numerous politicians, but especially the hated president Gotabaya Rajapaksa. He was forced to flee after the iconic

events of 9 July, images of which spread around the world like wildfire, as a million people descended on the capital, confronting armed guards and barricades, sweeping them aside to storm the presidential palace.

TU Senan, a member of the International Secretariat of the CWI, explained to the rally: "Sri Lanka is the best example of the unimaginable misery capitalism is creating in the world, and also the uprisings it can cause. Sri Lanka is a country that just ran out of food and fuel, and the ruling class is saying worse is to come!" But not for them, as the speakers pointed out. More interested in making money than providing the basics, the ruling class is now doing its best to ensure that their profits are not harmed.

In the face of increased repression, the movement is now demanding that all politicians follow Gota out of the door. And the CWI is fighting for the alternative that can sweep aside them all and end the crisis – a socialist alternative.

This was a key theme throughout the rally, particularly the need to build new mass workers' parties as part of the struggle to achieve socialism.

They are needed to give a political voice to the trade union and workplace struggles, so that workers are not fighting with one hand tied behind their backs. Rob Williams, Socialist Party England and Wales,

spoke about the hundreds of thousands of workers on strike this summer, set to be joined by more in the autumn. These workers, he said, are drawing the same conclusions as the Coventry bin workers who have won a massive victory after seven months of struggle against a Labour council (see page 7). The Socialist Party is playing a key role in raising the need for a new party that is 100% on the side of striking workers and our class, against the Tories and their new anti-union leader, whoever that may be, and Keir Starmer who sacks his shadow cabinet members for standing on picket lines.

In the US, a strike wave has also taken place, followed now by a union recognition wave, as workers at companies and in industries previously unorganised build unions, most notably Amazon and Starbucks, as Claire Bayler from the Independent Socialist Group (ISG) in the US explained. "Winning union recognition is just the first step," she said. "We need to build a party of the working class too. And there is an appetite for socialism as people are fed up with both corporate parties."

The ISG is also intervening in social movements such as the protests against the overturning of Roe v Wade and the right to abortion. Hundreds have been attracted to ISG. These movements also need a new party having been betrayed by the "graveyard of these movements", the

Democrats.

In France, the three-way struggle in recent elections between the president of the rich Emmanuel Macron, the far-right National Rally under Marine Le Pen and the left movement La France Insoumise led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon was described by Gauche Révolutionnaire's Lucie Mendes. She said: "Many strikes are taking place but Macron only serves the interests of the rich in attacking workers and youth. There is a lot of anger and the far right filled a void". France Insoumise achieved a more than fourfold increase in its number of seats in parliament but could have countered the far right better if its main slogan hadn't been simply 'Mélenchon for prime minister'. But Gauche Révolutionnaire "led our own campaign", as well as participating in France Insoumise, because a "socialist programme is needed to fight the capitalist system. The working class needs a party of their own, not just a movement like France Insoumise."

The workers and masses in Africa are also crying out for an alternative to the corrupt ruling classes in all parts of the continent. Weizmann Hamilton, speaking on behalf of the Marxist Workers' Party in South Africa, said: "Thunderclouds gathering above will have the effect of creating turmoil for capitalism, which is flying through these thunderclouds blind. A repeat of what happened in Sri Lanka will happen several times over."

Weizmann described the battle for a workers' party in South Africa and the role the trade unions must play in that. It was inspirational to hear how CWI members in South Africa have

ensured that the idea of a new workers' party "has never been buried" and are playing a pivotal role in the process to build one.

Speaking via video from Nigeria, Soweto of the Democratic Socialist Movement echoed this, explaining the part we are playing in building a mass workers' party with a socialist programme in a country that "is the poster boy for capitalist failure, with corruption and wealth for the elite and misery for the rest of us."

The process towards such parties is not straightforward, and pretenders exist such as in Latin America where a new 'pink wave' is spreading. In Chile, a mass movement against the right-wing government in the last few years has seen a new 'left' president elected. But as Pamela Andrea Meza Lobos of Socialismo Revolucionario in Chile told the rally: "Gabriel Boric came to power on the back of the movement but has not fulfilled a single demand of the movement despite promising everyone."

This betrayal has taken place at a rate of knots, and is keenly felt by the workers and youth who were "brutally repressed during the uprising with 400 people blinded by police and similar methods to dictator Pinochet used." Given the rightwards shift of Boric, "the need for a political alternative for workers and youth is huge and we fight every day to create this alternative." As Pamela also pointed out, "Latin America has seen multiple convulsions" and the entire region will see similar movements and the need for new parties of the working class and poor.

Examples of what can be achieved by our forces and the working class fighting on the political plane were



**The general strike, class battles, revolution and socialism are back on the agenda**

given by Peter Taaffe, the political secretary of the Socialist Party, who pointed to the struggles of Liverpool City Council in the 1980s when, led by Militant, forerunner of the Socialist Party, the council mobilised the working class to fight for the return of funding cut by Margaret Thatcher's Tory government, creating jobs, building homes and much more.

Thatcher was then ultimately toppled by the 18 million-strong non-payment movement against the poll tax, again led by our forces, resulting in the so-called 'Iron Lady' being reduced to iron filings. As Peter said: "These victories will be achieved once more as capitalism finds itself in a historic cul-de-sac. You could stick a pin in a map of the world and not find anywhere where there is stability for capitalism. Socialism or barbarism is the choice facing the working class and, on a world scale, a movement is coming."

The atmosphere at the rally was summed up by Tony Saunois, secretary of the CWI, who closed the event. He said: "Being back in a room collectively discussing allows us to best sharpen our ideas with which to intervene in struggles." Struggles which are on their way despite "the capitalist class claiming victory in 1992. All it has brought is war, misery, and poverty."

Tony pointed out that the ruling class is now preparing for the coming class battles which its system has thrown up and "we need to prepare. To put this system in the dock. The general strike is back on the agenda. Class battles are back on the agenda. The working class is driving events. Revolution and socialism are back on the agenda."





SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER IN CWU

Industrial relations between the Communication Workers Union (CWU) and senior Royal Mail management have taken a serious turn for the worse and are probably at an all-time low. It seems Royal Mail has chosen this as the time to try to break the CWU, which is viewed as one of the most combative trade unions.

Last week the CWU started its second strike ballot, on terms and conditions. It follows the massive 97.6% ‘yes’ vote, with a 77% turnout, over the imposed 2% wage increase. Deputy General Secretary for postal, Terry Pullinger, called for CEO Simon Thompson and his board to be removed. Their sole role is clear: to protect profits and by doing so attack our members’ hard-won terms and conditions.

£758 million  
Royal Mail profit

It is reported that the CEO then held a video conference call with 200 senior managers, in what can only be viewed as a call to war. What they used to call ‘executive action’ they now term ‘emergency response measures’. It means enforcing changes, no longer respecting the industrial relations framework of consultation with the union.

Royal Mail announced it will

Battle lines drawn up between  
Royal Mail and CWU



implement 500 ‘tabletop revisions’ by October, and 51 ‘structural revisions’ by quarter four of this financial year.

They intend to push ahead with 346 dedicated parcel hubs and will recruit 2,400 agency staff to carry out this work. We expect these will then be used to carry out work when the CWU takes strike action.

All of these are against the Pathway to Change national agreement made in 2021.

We now believe Royal Mail are going to further announce major changes to sick pay and sickness procedures, changes to start times by up to three hours, and push forward total flexibility and annualised hours. They want to bring in new members of staff on worse terms and conditions, which I believe could lead to ‘fire and rehire’.

All of this is against the backdrop of Royal Mail making £758 million in profits. It gave £400 million to shareholders, with another £138 million to be paid out soon, and millions to directors.

This is clearly a very serious situation. Our members are now preparing for potentially our longest dispute since the 1971 strike. We believe this will be a make-or-break strike.

We now must name a series of strike dates to show we mean business. CWU should call for a meeting with other unions who are also in dispute to see if we can call joint days of action, and make a call to the whole movement to support us in our fight.

Interview – FBU executive member  
Firefighters face pay and service cuts

*The national executive council of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) has recommended to members that they reject the Tory government’s insulting 2% pay offer.*

*Joe Weir, FBU executive council member for the south east, spoke to Paul Couchman, Staines Socialist Party.*

*We carry extracts from Joe’s interview here. See more at socialistparty.org.uk*

ARE YOU STILL CAMPAIGNING AGAINST CUTS TO THE FIRE SERVICE?

Yes, the campaign never stops really. There’s been an acceptance now from certain sections of management that actually the cuts have gone too far and too deep. We’re hoping that this can open some discussions around trying to increase the establishment [engines, equipment, staffing, etc], to make things safer. Because it has become dangerous. We have seen nationally, since 2010, 11,000 firefighter jobs cut. We need more funding, so that we can make it the fire service that residents deserve.

WHAT’S YOUR FEELINGS ON THE RMT STRIKES AND THE POTENTIAL WAVE OF PUBLIC SECTOR STRIKE BALLOTS?

We absolutely support the striking workers of the RMT. It can’t be right that employers can seek to change terms and conditions, and to remove jobs, all the while ensuring that rail workers, and every other worker across the public sector, take real-terms pay cuts.

Inflation is at 11%. We’ve got pay offers of 2% for the fire and rescue service! We’re consulting our members. The advice from the executive is to reject that pay offer, because 2% would be a 9% real-terms pay cut. And that’s on top of the fact that since 2010, with the pay freeze and the 1% - 2% pay rises we’ve had, we have seen real terms pay cuts of in excess of 20%. So that can’t continue. We need a pay rise across the workforce.

I hope a number of unions take the lead from the RMT, including my own union. And that members see that strength in collective action, and solidarity amongst workers, is what we need.

DO YOU THINK THE FBU WILL END UP JOINING THE WAVE OF PUBLIC SECTOR STRIKES?

The executive council recommendation to reject the pay offer has in itself thrown up the question of what will be next. We are talking about industrial action, nothing has been ruled out.

There’s a lot of work to be done, and that will be done in full conjunction with our members, as you’d expect. We are a grassroots union, it’ll be for them to determine how we respond, how we fight back.

WHAT’S YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE DISCUSSION AND THE DECISION OF THE FBU TO CONTINUE TO BE AFFILIATED TO THE LABOUR PARTY?

This was debated. At the executive council it was felt at this time that the Labour Party still offers workers, and particularly the fire and

rescue service, the best opportunity to progress the challenges workers are facing.

But let’s be honest about it. We’ve got an individual in the leadership of the Labour Party, Sir Keir Starmer, who campaigned on pledges virtually all of which he has now reneged on. We had some very popular policies in the Corbyn years, that included renationalisation of energy, and water etc, and again they seem to be moving away from that. We’ve got shadow cabinet members tripping over themselves to avoid supporting striking workers, seemingly at the instruction of the leader of the Labour Party.

That’s not something the FBU wants to see. We think the leadership of the Labour Party need to start talking and engaging with unions again, and supporting workers, and moving workers front and centre of any campaigns.

Am I naïve enough to think that we won’t have another resolution back to conference next year? No I’m not. I think it’s likely, inevitable, if we continue down this vein, if the Labour Party doesn’t change direction. But we feel at the moment that we should be trying to move the Labour Party back to its original roots.

ANYTHING ELSE YOU’D LIKE TO SAY TO READERS OF THE SOCIALIST?

Keep up the good work. We’re all fighting for the same thing. And I hope to see some of you on the rail strike picket lines!



Lives ruined by poverty, children’s  
social care wrecked by austerity



KRIS O’SULLIVAN  
BIRMINGHAM NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER  
AND CARE LEAVER

In March, a “once-in-a-generation” review of the children’s social care sector was published. The Independent Review of Children’s Social Care was commissioned by Boris Johnson’s government in the wake of the tragic killings of toddlers Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson in 2020. Both murders put a national spotlight on the utter inadequacies and shortfalls in our broken social care system that is meant to protect the most vulnerable and at-risk children.

A year in the making, the review provides a wealth of statistics, figures, and projection models that are useful for anyone trying to understand the disorganised nature of children’s social care – but offers no real solutions.

There are many complex reasons why children and young people are taken into care. And it can be a very turbulent experience, with long-lasting effects on families. For abuse and urgent safeguarding reasons, child social care is an unfortunate necessity.

But lots of working-class youth have been taken into care due to financial pressures that have contributed to family breakdown. Professionals in the field put poverty as one of the main reasons why children go into care.

Around 80,000 children are

currently in care. The review projects that number to drastically rise to 100,000 within a decade. So, why the increase?

In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crash, from 2010, the first public sector institutions to receive the axe of budget cuts were in the welfare state, including social services and local authority departments specialised in supporting struggling families.

Families at breaking point

Austerity cuts matter as they have directly contributed to the material conditions of creating breaking points in families. Widespread poverty increases the likelihood of children going into care.

Since 2010, council preventative and family support services in England have been cut by 71%. Some council’s ‘cost-cutting’ housing initiatives have been akin to social cleansing. This has resulted in many homeless and struggling families being relocated to areas with no support or preventative services available.

A combination of draconian punitive welfare reforms have pushed more children into absolute poverty – currently 3.9 million children. In some areas of my home city, Birmingham, the percentage of children living below the poverty line is as high as 50%.

Teenage pregnancy support, respite care for disabled children, and

support services have all experienced millions of pounds of cuts. Former Tory work and pensions secretary Iain Duncan Smith even tried to change the definition of child poverty.

Gutting public services also meant marketisation, privatisation and big business profiteering. The review says: “We do not generally refer to this as a market, as homes for children should never been seen as a commodity”. But the next paragraphs in the report demonstrate the exact opposite. There is profit being made from children being in care, which is completely unacceptable.

Gordon Brown’s Labour government introduced the Children and Young Person’s Act 2008, allowing local authorities in England and Wales to privatise social work services for children in public care. From the start of creeping privatisation under Tony Blair, the Tories since then have ideologically pushed for more and more involvement from market forces within children’s services. 79% of children’s homes are run by the private or ‘voluntary’ sector.

These companies are not involved for altruistic reasons. The overarching aim is profit.

The £3.7 billion care industry is a very lucrative one. The Financial Times stated in 2013: “Fostering sector is ripe for consolidation”, meaning that our struggling children’s services, decimated by ideologically driven



These  
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austerity cuts, are seen as a prime cash cow for wealthy individuals.

The Financial Times also said: “Fostering is a growth market. More than 50,000 children were placed in care in 2012, up 3.7% in 2011... The number is widely expected to grow as benefit cuts pile the pressure on struggling families and children with severe disabilities are given life-prolonging medical treatment”.

I have met and lived with foster carers who have massive fears of how much foster care is privatised.

The Social Audit Network states: “Millions of pounds that could be reinvested in the care of children are instead leaving the system as bumper payouts to shareholders. Directors enjoy very generous pay packets, while some companies are siphoning profits out through tax havens in the Channel Islands and the Caribbean”.

The most profitable company was actually an organisation I was assigned to when I was in care, Foster Care Associates. An income of £127 million in 2014, £7 million payouts to its owner, and the salary and other benefits of the highest-paid director came to £406,000.

Profit

In 2018, Foster Care Associates was sold to private equity firm Capvest, who had a portfolio of businesses including private hospitals, meat processors, and a Scandinavian rubbish collector. Capvest, like so many other private equity firms, sees the child-care sector for what it is – a profitable market for big business.

Looked-after children, care leavers and the users of associated services are not a “growth market” to be exploited. They are a marginalised group.

The review’s two standout recommendations are:

- Adding ‘care experienced’ to the list of protected characteristics in equality law
- A windfall tax on the top 15 largest private children’s homes and fostering providers

While it’s a positive step for disadvantaged people to have their rights technically protected under the law, if the material economic conditions of austerity-gutted services, low-paid jobs, skyrocketing rents and the ever-increasing cost of living are still in place that effect these vulnerable communities the most, then what’s the point? How would my protected characteristic protect me from scumbag landlords, low-paying bosses or ever-increasing NHS waiting times?

And, at best, windfall taxes are a stopgap. At worst, they allow companies to carry on profiteering – no more than a nice PR stunt.

The childcare sector needs to be taken back into public ownership, and run democratically by service users and workers. The organised workers’ movement, through trade unions, can fight for the rights of everyone in the sector – service users and workers. Foster carers deserve to be recognised as key workers also.

Austerity, poverty, and capitalist profiteering contribute to children going into care. This rigged system needs to be replaced by something radically different to take care of all society’s needs – reverse every austerity cut, put people first not profit, and for workers’ control and democracy of our social care services.

This is a fight for socialism.





## 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!

### JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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# Podcast review: The People Vs J Edgar Hoover

## How far will ruling class go to defend capitalism?



J Edgar Hoover, the FBI's director for 50 years PAUL CARSOLO/FBI/CC

RYAN ALDRED  
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

The People Vs J Edgar Hoover documents the life and legacy of the former director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Hoover built and shaped the FBI from its infancy to the reviled institution that it is today. The series certainly doesn't pull any punches in highlighting Hoover's murky dealings. The series does a good job of charting Hoover's rise to power, and provides context, raising some of the turbulent periods which gave rise to the FBI. But, at times, it can be shallow in its analysis.

### Watergate

For instance, it asserts that "the Watergate burglary marked the beginning of a new era, of a time when the people could demand accountability from those in power." But this discounts the effects of mass social movements taking place at the time.

During World War One, Hoover worked in the 'Alien Enemy Bureau', gathering files on foreign nationals, outlining their political beliefs and deporting those viewed as a threat to national security. From there, he went on to head the Radical Division, tasked with policing left-wing movements, and responsible for deporting thousands of people.

After World War One, Hoover was ordered to destroy the files he had gathered on thousands of people, but he instead transferred them to what would become the FBI.

With thousands of strikes, race

riots and social unrest, Hoover's ruthless determination to root out those who had any association with socialist or communist ideas got him quickly promoted. He personified the determination among the ruling class to maintain the capitalist system.

In one instance, 10,000 arrests were made in a single day. Initially this was supported by the media. They began to waver when the lack of due process and denial to accessing lawyers became abundantly clear.



**US presidents welcomed Hoover keeping the working class at bay, whatever they thought of his tactics.**

The series goes into great detail about the lengths that were resorted to, often illegally, to prevent socialist ideas from taking hold. The series emphasises that workers were fired or discredited for as little as having membership of the Communist Party.

Organisers were blacklisted. FBI agents went to employers to intimidate those willing to hire left wingers.

The FBI purports to uphold law and order through strict adherence to the US Constitution. But J Edgar Hoover, and by extension the entirety

of the FBI, often bent and broke the rules to satisfy the needs of the capitalist state.

The series refers to the 'deep state', explaining it as a state operating in its own interests. While there were elements of this happening. US presidents were, nevertheless, not only complicit but welcomed Hoover keeping the working class at bay, whatever they thought of his tactics.

### Martin Luther King

Later episodes highlight the despicable role the FBI played in monitoring and persecuting black people. Civil rights protestors were routinely bugged and had their phones wiretapped. The FBI feared Martin Luther King Jr (MLK) because of his popular appeal to millions, which it felt it could not control.

In the same way as the FBI later went on to try to intimidate anti-Vietnam war protestors, MLK received an anonymous letter with a tape spelling out that if he didn't kill himself, he would be exposed as an adulterer, days before he was ultimately assassinated. Vigilante action by the Citizens' Commission in the 1970s exposed these shady dealings, persecution of black people and harassment of left-wing activists, creating a huge public outcry.

As we go into a period of increasing class battles, this series gives great insight into the lengths the capitalists will go to in order to maintain their system, and is certainly worth a listen.

- **The People Vs J Edgar Hoover is available at [bbc.co.uk](https://bbc.co.uk)**



When My Love Blooms  
STUDIO DRAGON/BON FACTORY WORLDWIDE

## TV review: When My Love Blooms

### Class struggle and romance in South Korea

PETE MASON  
EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

'When My Love Blooms' is a typical K-drama weepy with a sharply contrasting plot line of class struggle.

"Once again we are marching on the streets for a better tomorrow", Marxist student Han Jae-Hyun tells a rally commemorating the Korean revolution of 1987. But it is now 1993, and after six years of democracy, great hardship remains for the workers: mass sackings and evictions.

### Waterboarding

"Back in the 1980s people died at the hands of the military. But we don't know who ordered that and the truth has never been exposed, putting them down in history as angry mobs". It was the death of a student from waterboarding that sparked the workers' uprising in June 1987, which finally pushed the dictatorship out. A massive workplace unionisation drive took place.

Student leader Han blames "this capitalist society where only one side benefits", and inspires the undying love of Yung Ji-Soo, who is tear-gassed by the riot police gathered outside the university gates. They run away together, but are mysteriously estranged.

Now, almost 20 years later, they meet again. Han has married the daughter of a chaebol (family-owned conglomerate) and has just been released from serving four years for various corporate crimes. It looks like he'll be indicted for more corruption crimes of the chaebol. Yung has remained true to the cause.

Sacked shopworkers are protesting outside the headquarters where Han works as a corporate executive. A once sacked shopworker herself, Yung joins them and is arrested. Standing outside the headquarters is an old man with a placard condemning the company for causing his son Kwon Hyeok-su's death.

As the plot slowly reveals the backstory of the two lovers, moving

gracefully between the two periods in almost equal measure, the brutality of the corporate world today is revealed. "Five years ago," one character testifies, "Hyungsung Steel committed [illegal] meticulous and malicious destruction of the labour union and that was an immediate cause of Kwon Hyeok-su's death."

Revealed is a corporate strategy of drawing in individuals within the union leadership who they can manipulate, persuading them to accept a flawed agreement, then breaking up the workplace-based union and engaging in mass sackings.

The chaebol bosses then discard the union leader they duped by spreading rumours that he is a corporate spy. Sacked, cornered, betrayed, and facing litigation, he commits suicide. It has happened twice in this chaebol. This revelation is a turning point in the plot.

Right-wing union leaders have ever been corporate fodder. But in the UK, union dupes have been made life peers rather than driven to suicide!

### Which side will he choose?

The series contrasts Han's quietly spoken father, a steelworker and union leader, who inspired him and who he takes after, and the brutal, arrogant company boss who becomes his father-in-law. The failure of the revolution to overturn capitalism, leaving the owners of the chaebols in place, and hence the corrupt political system they buy and own, is implicit from the first episode. What will Han do? Which side will he choose, now he has found his long-lost love?

Replete with K-drama tropes, beautiful music, and painstakingly slow, nevertheless this is an attractive romance with some conviction. Don't expect a socialist solution, but the raw class divisions in Korean capitalism form the dynamics of the plot.

- **When My Love Blooms is currently showing on Netflix**



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# the Socialist

Issue 1190

5-17 August 2022

formerly **Militant**

# YOUTH FIGHT FOR A FUTURE £15-AN-HOUR MINIMUM WAGE NOW!

**CALLUM JOYCE**  
OXFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

**O**n 13 August, students and young workers in the Socialist Party will be organising across the country to fight back against the cost-of-living crisis and the dismal prospects available to young people.

In Oxford we will be running a campaign stall to discuss with local working-class people and students and help spread the message around the need for young people to fight for a better future than is currently on offer under capitalism.

It is important that other young people and workers don't just agree with our ideas, but that they also get organised themselves and join in a united struggle for better pay, working conditions, and housing.

As inflation continues to rise and people struggle to pay their food and fuel bills, it is obvious that working-class people need a minimum wage of at least £15 an hour, with no exemptions.

If young people do the same work they should get the same rate! And we need pay rises at least in line with inflation.

Unfortunately, our local Labour council has abandoned the working-class people that brought it to power and only calls for a living wage of £10.50 an hour locally.

This is common throughout the country, and is more evidence that Labour provides no alternative to Tory cuts and austerity.

There is a clear need for new political representation – a new mass workers party that will fight for socialist policies.

If you are a young person and want to fight for a better future join us. Let's build a mass campaign across the country to fight for a decent standard of living for all people and for the socialist transformation of society to end this system of poverty and exploitation.



TOMMY LIVERPOOL

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS ►► see column on p14

