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UNITE THE STRIKES



END THIS COST OF LIVING NIGHTMARE

“I don’t know what we’re going to do. We can’t go on like this”. Everybody is saying it.

With the energy price cap average set to rise to £3,549 this autumn, and even higher in January, and talk of inflation hitting 18% in the new year, working-class and many middle-class people face the next few months with dread.

Not so the bosses of the energy companies who are doing just fine, as are the bosses of the water companies, the rail companies, the

supermarkets - the list goes on. Unite the Union’s research showed profits up 73%!

No wonder the summer strike wave is spreading - and no wonder the strikes are widely supported. We all need a real pay rise, and the unions are showing how a fight can be fought.

The national strikes of CWU members in Royal Mail, BT and the Post Office are a significant step up in the national strike wave, following the continuing rail strikes.

After that, the massive strike at Felixstowe port, the action of bus drivers, bin workers and many more around the country. And workers in the NHS, schools, councils and the civil service are getting ready for

autumn ballots. Largely unorganised workers at Amazon joined the strike wave, learning the need to get organised and fight back.

The Tory leadership contenders tear lumps out of each other but agree on one thing: that it shouldn’t be the super-rich and big business who pay for this crisis - it should be us.

But the pressure on them in this cost-of living crisis is so great, they’re so divided and weak, that they can be forced into concessions and U-turns at any point.

And more than that, they can be forced from government. If the union leaders coordinate and generalise the strike action, the killer blow can be landed.

Picket lines are full of discussion about what needs to be done - strikers talk about the need to all strike together. They say: “We need a general strike!”

That’s why the Socialist Party supports the rally and lobby of the TUC congress in Brighton on 11 September called by the National Shop Stewards Network. It’s more important now than ever to demand of the TUC leaders that they step up to the plate and take a lead.

The 19 October lobby of parliament, that the TUC has already called, should be a step towards coordinating national action that demands the following:

- Inflation-proofed pay rises for all
- Nationalise the energy companies. Seize their profits and cut our bills
- Bring rail, mail, buses, water and BT into public ownership under the democratic control of workers and service users
- Increase benefits and pensions in line with price rises
- A minimum wage of £15 an hour now
- Kick out the Tories. Build a new mass workers’ party that fights for us, not the bosses and the super-rich

STRIKE TOGETHER AND COORDINATE THE ACTION!

Join the National Shop Steward Network rally and lobby of the TUC congress – Sunday 11 September, 1pm, Holiday Inn Hotel, Brighton

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

Energy companies ask for bailout: we say nationalise now!

DUNCAN MOORE
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

The energy price cap will rise to £3,549 per year as of 1 October. This is more than three times its level this time last year; and prices are set to rise further. Energy consultancy firm Cornwall Insight predicts a price cap rise to £5,389 in January and to £6,616 in April.

But we can't afford these bills. Millions of us will be in fuel poverty by January, forced to choose between "heating or eating"; for some it will be a case of neither. The NHS warns that thousands of the most vulnerable, the elderly and those with long-term health conditions, will die avoidable deaths this winter.

Energy suppliers are alert to this danger too - the danger to their profits due to millions of customers being unable to pay. Their proposal for a 'deficit tariff scheme' is designed to keep them and their broken system afloat, while the rest of us pay for it.

The idea is for the banks to create a deficit fund, backed by the state, which the energy suppliers would draw on to cover the difference between the current consumer price cap and wholesale electricity and gas prices. The price cap would be frozen at its current level of £1,971 a year; at a cost of £100 billion over two years. The energy suppliers' debt to the banks would be paid off gradually, either through a surcharge on energy consumers or by taxes.

This works fine for the capitalists! The energy suppliers like Scottish-Power and Centrica stay in business with their CEOs paying themselves seven-figure salaries; the big energy producers carry on coining it, with



- **Bring bills down.** Reverse the energy price cap hikes, and cut prices, including for pre-payment meters. **Cancel all debts caused by inability to pay**
- **Open the books of the energy companies to trade union and community scrutiny.** For democratically elected committees to enforce price controls
- **Seize their profits.** No to bailouts or phony nationalisation that leaves the capitalist bosses in place. **For nationalisation of suppliers and producers under democratic workers' control and management, with no compensation for the fat cats – so investment can be planned to meet the needs of people and the environment, securing the jobs, and terms and conditions of workers in the energy sector**
- **Resist energy cut-offs.** Build a democratic mass movement that mobilises working-class people in local communities to resist attempts to cut off a household's services, forcibly convert to prepayment meters, or collect utility debts
- **For councils to use their own financial powers to provide emergency support to households and small businesses, and to demand the money back from the government**
- **Unite the strikes to resist price rises and win real pay rises**
- **Build a new mass workers' party based on the trade unions, that fights for socialism as an alternative to the capitalist profit system that is run in the interests of a super-rich minority**

'Unlike our water, the solution is clear: nationalise!'

KELLIE O'GARA
SALISBURY SOCIALIST PARTY

Water in Cambridge is reportedly 40% sewage. Thousands of fish lie dead in Swindon. British waste reaches as far as the French coast. Any wonder the obscene practice of dumping raw sewage into our waterways has come under immense scrutiny?

Over 50 UK beaches have been declared unsafe for bathing and the impact on wildlife and the environment is evident.

Sewage dumps are a so-called rare event. Yet, recently, Southern Water made four dumps in a single week and there were 373 cases of sewage discharge in 2021.

Water companies have dished out dividends to the tune of £72 billion

since privatisation in 1989, rather than investing in now crumbling and leaking infrastructure.

Truss cuts
In her two years as environment secretary, Liz Truss failed to meet water bosses to deal with sewage dumping. Her £235 million cuts to the Environment Agency are credited with helping to double the instances of sewage discharge into our rivers and seas!

Privatisation is a failure. Greedy bosses cannot be allowed to pollute our water for profit any longer. Unlike our water, the solution is clear. We need nationalisation under democratic working-class control - to seize their profits, and plan investment to protect our environment and reduce our bills.

39%
average pay rise for the bosses of FTSE 100 companies

Food boss profits high, food bank supplies run dry

The number of food parcels distributed by food bank, The Trussell Trust, has increased by 81% in the five years to the end of March. No doubt, with the price of everything rising, that will increase further still. A food bank in Liverpool reports 300 queueing for 150 parcels. As more and more of us are squeezed, demand outstrips supply.

But not all of us are feeling the pinch. Louis Dreyfus, one of the four grain giants that do 70% of global grain trade, increased its profits by more than 80% on 2021. In the UK, supermarket Tesco tripled its profits in 2021. Other major supermarkets did very well too.

Like energy, water and housing too, super-rich capitalists are being allowed to enrich themselves at our expense, depriving us of what we need to survive. We need a system based on democratic public ownership so we can plan and ensure supply to meet the needs of all.

BP and Shell set to make a combined profit of £40 billion this year alone; and the bankers cream off the top. All of it paid for by the working and middle classes.

Who pays?
The price cap rise is going to cause destitution and misery for millions. Energy prices should not merely be frozen, they should be drastically reduced. But a £100 billion bailout for the energy companies is not the way to do it.

The government bailed out the banks in 2008 and handed us the bill; then gave a £400 billion bung to big business when the pandemic hit. Now we are being asked to do the same for the energy giants. But why should we keep taking a hit to prop up a failing system?

Instead, the entire energy industry should be nationalised, with compensation to shareholders paid only on the basis of proven need. Publicly owned and democratically controlled, the vast amounts of money currently wasted on share buybacks and bloated executive pay could instead be used to invest in renewable energy production and home insulation, with prices decided by service users, communities and the trade unions.

This profit system is broken

Join the fight for a socialist alternative



HELEN PATTISON
SOCIALIST PARTY LONDON REGIONAL SECRETARY

As well as energy bills rocketing at home, our public services are at crisis point. There are over 100,000 vacancies in the NHS. Nearly 7 million people are on waiting lists. And this will only get worse as overworked and underpaid health workers leave at the highest rate in four years. And getting an appointment with a GP is becoming as likely as winning the lottery.

People are dying because ambulances are queued up outside hospitals, mainly due to the fact that there's nowhere for elderly patients to go because of the crisis in the privatised care service.

It's not just health staff; only two-thirds of new teachers are still in the job after five years, and more

and more school buildings are at risk of collapse because of austerity.

The crisis is not just confined to the public sector. Millions of working people are feeling the strain. This is the real cause of the strike wave we are seeing now, with both local and national strikes, as workers say enough is enough.

This growing anger and mood for struggle is not what the government or bosses were banking on. The fight for the leadership of the Tories has been a battle over how the working class will be made to pay for the impact of Covid and the growing economic crisis. But while they're fighting among themselves, working-class people are fighting for a pay rise, for decent funding, and against privatised companies who have been lining their pockets from public sector contracts.

When the call for pay rises or slashing bills has come up, every time the response has been, 'we can't afford it'. The energy giants have said it, the rail companies and Royal Mail. Yet at the same time we hear about their huge payouts to shareholders and CEOs paid millions every year.

We can't trust the government or these private companies to act in our interests. Our schools, hospitals and public services are run on a

shoestring while private profit piles up in the hands of a rich minority. We need an alternative. There's growing support for renationalising our vital services, even among Tory voters!

What's happening in energy, water, Royal Mail and other privatised industries - profits, huge handouts for the bosses and shareholders, and peanuts and worsening conditions for workers - is replicated throughout big business and the economy as a whole.

We're living in a broken system that can't be patched up. To have the wage rises we need, services we can afford, quality health, education, social care and childcare that meets our needs and those of the workers who deliver those services, we have to fight for an alternative to the failed capitalist profit system.

If all the major companies were publicly owned, working people could democratically plan where investment should go and what the priorities for spending should be. By doing away with a system based on maximising the profits of a few, we could run society in the interests of the majority. This is the socialist society that we are fighting for here and internationally. Join us in that fight - we can't go on like this anymore.

● **What we stand for, see page 13**



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to find out more about joining us today!

Homelessness rising, Labour hiding

Build a party to fight for rent control and council homes

PAUL KERSHAW
CHAIR UNITE LE1111 HOUSING WORKERS BRANCH

Homelessness rose by a dramatic 11% in the first three months of the year. A series of government figures show a mounting housing emergency even before the full impact of rising bills is felt in the winter.

Low pay and insecure jobs result in homelessness. The official figures show 10,560 households were homeless or threatened with homelessness despite being in work. That is the highest number of people in full-time work recorded as homeless since the government started recording this figure in 2018.

There was an increase of 16% in rough sleepers in London compared to the previous three months and a 23% increase on the same period in 2021. Local authorities implementing government austerity policies have certainly not increased spending on homelessness services by 23% over the last year!

Councils could mobilise tremendous support defending their communities by providing adequate services and billing the government. That is Unite the Union's no cuts policy, but what council is making that pledge to defend their community?

Tory leadership candidates compete to be more right wing, calling for the abandonment of house building targets and shrinking the state. But Labour has failed to put an alternative to defend working-class people. Pressed on BBC radio's 'Any Questions' whether Labour would support rent control, shadow cabinet member Thangam Debbonaire refused to comment.

A mass party calling for emergency measures to combat the housing crisis including a ban on economic evictions and rent control would get huge support.

A policy of protecting tenants with secure tenancies, no increases in social rents and a serious programme of building secure, environmentally sustainable and truly affordable council homes would inspire workers facing the prospect of a desperate winter.

Workers are fighting back on pay through their unions. Many of those same unions fund Labour who are absent without leave in the face of this crisis. As well as fighting for policies that defend union members, there is an urgent need to take steps to build a mass working-class political voice. If Labour won't offer an alternative, we need to build a party that will.



£130 billion of London homes empty

London has 87,731 vacant homes, according to a recent study. CityAM estimates that the value of this empty property is £130.8 billion.

Despite rising homelessness and evictions, the same report says that London actually has a surplus of homes. The problem being, those that need them can't afford

them! Much of London's empty property is built, bought and sold as a financial asset, not to meet people's needs.

The Socialist Party says: introduce democratic rent controls, build council homes to meet need, nationalise the big property developers and seize the empty homes of the super-rich!

Felixstowe dockers have shown their power

DAVE MURRAY
SOCIALIST PARTY SECRETARY, EASTERN REGION

Inaninspiringshowofstrength,just under 2,000 dockers at Felixstowe port, in Suffolk, brought 48% of UK freight imports to a standstill in their eight-day strike. The strike, called by their union Unite, was in response to the company's refusal to meet the union's claim for a 10% pay rise.

The company recently had a record 28% rise in profits and £42 million dividend payouts to shareholders. The vast majority of this will end up in the coffers of the Cayman Island registered parent company, CK Hutchison Holdings limited.

You might think you've never heard of CK Hutchison. But if you've shopped at Superdrug, Savers or the Perfume Shop, if you've travelled by rail – it is one of the parasitic rolling stock leasing companies – if you are on the 3 mobile telephone network or if you use energy, water or sewage, then you have contributed to its financial success, and to its founder Li Ka-Shing as the world's 23rd richest person.



Liverpool dockers came down on Saturday 27 August, fresh from their overwhelming vote – 88% turnout, 99% yes – to take action on pay.

Tuesday 30 August will see a return to work, but perhaps not a return to normal. It will take the best part of a month to deal with the backlog, with a workforce that has felt its enormous power.

Phil Pemberton reckoned on a short pause to give the company time to come up with an improved offer. But "if we don't get that, we'll have no alternative but to strike again".



We couldn't have wished for anything better [from our members]

Unite deputy convenor at Felixstowe
Gary Joy

The Socialist Party is 100% behind the dockers in this pay dispute. A win will strengthen all workers.

Our likely next prime minister, Liz Truss, emphasises the role that low-wage, low-tax, low-regulation 'free-ports' – more accurately capitalist free-fire zones – will play in securing a future for their ailing capitalist system. With freeports planned for Felixstowe/Harwich, Tilbury, Liverpool, Teesside, Humberside, Solent and Plymouth, dock workers are likely to find themselves in struggle again and again.

The ports should be nationalised, and become part of a publicly owned, sustainable, integrated transport system, under workers' control and management. With the Labour Party in the hands of Keir Starmer, there is an urgent need for the trade union movement to form an independent party of the working class to advance this programme.

that is sweeping the country, he added: "Enough is enough. The working class is ready to stand up. We all need a decent pay rise".

Gary Joy, the union's deputy convenor at the port, said: "We think it's absolutely fantastic the support we've had from our members in sticking up for our jobs, conditions and pay. We couldn't have wished for anything better. And let's hope together we stand strong and get what we deserve."

The picket line has been a display of the power of the organised working class. Hundreds were there when Sharon Graham visited on Wednesday 24 August. She spelt out the issues and strategised with the workers' representatives.



The working class is ready to stand up. We all need a decent pay rise

Unite convenor and branch secretary at Felixstowe, Phil Pemberton

company could raise workers' wages by 50% and still make a profit.

Unite convenor and branch secretary at Felixstowe Phil Pemberton told us: "If we are generating profits for the company, we want our fair share". In relation to the strike wave

best. Last year, the dockers got 1.3%, an effective pay cut, not much of a reward for keeping the port running normally throughout the pandemic.

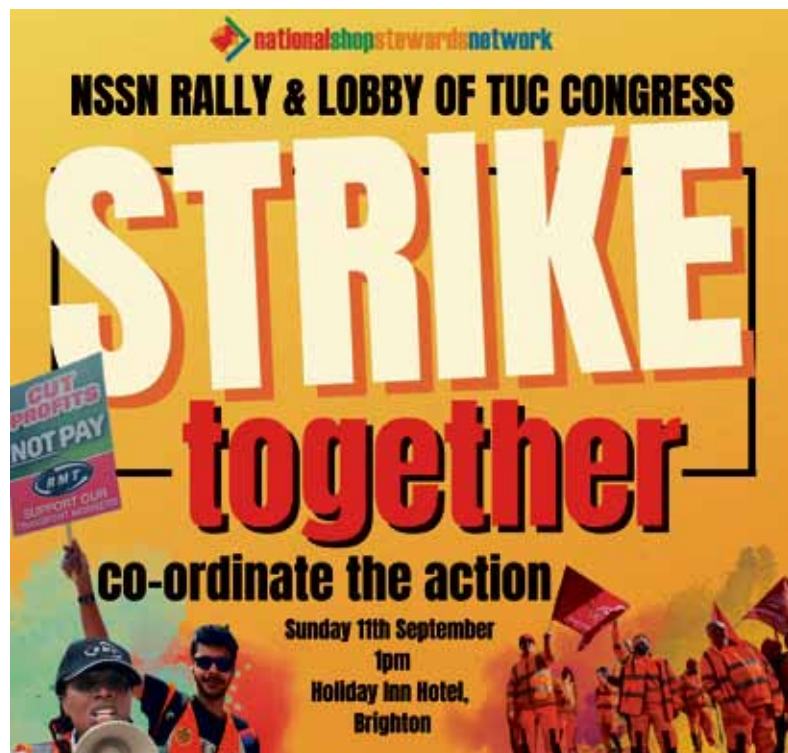
The current offer, 7%, is well short of both the union's pay claim and inflation. The company argues that the average earning of their employees is in excess of £40,000, and that adding a one-off, non-consolidated £500 bonus makes the offer up to 9%.

Unite national officer Bobby Morton described the company as "dirty, lying, scumbag bastards". In reality, the average wage of the workers involved in the dispute is £33,000.

The company is asking the dockers to swallow a 5% pay cut on today's inflation figures, and inflation is set to get worse. Sharon Graham said the

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: "Nobody notices when the bosses go out on strike. They notice when workers go out on strike. Because you make the money".

The workers' share of this enormous jackpot has been limited at



The NSSN is supported by the following unions: Unite the Union, RMT, CWU, FBU, Napo, BFAWU, POA, NUJ 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, Cardiff Unite, Coventry local government Unite, Coventry Unite Tom Mann branch, Doctors in Unite, GMP London print Unite branch, Housing workers Unite branch, Nottingham Unite Area Activists Committee, South Birmingham Unite, Waltham Forest council Unite, Lambeth Unison, Mid Yorks health Unison, Coventry Telecoms CWU, CWU Scotland No.2 branch, United tech and allied workers branch of the CWU, Doncaster RMT, Piccadilly and District RMT, Sheffield RMT, and additional Union branches have supported the plan to lobby the TUC.

● To find out about transport to the lobby, to add your support, and to make a donation to the NSSN, go to shopstewards.net

Strong BT strike continues

Plymouth

Picket supervisor Martin Brewer said: "We're out here because while our CEO is paying himself £3.5 million a year, we've got workers using food banks. They use Swiss banks, we use food banks. The mood among the members is solidly behind strike action".

RYAN ALDRED

Enfield, north London

"If you don't give people enough to eat, there will be riots and revolution. And that's what's going to happen". A striking BT worker made this prediction at the 30 August picket line.

On their first strike day in July, out of 6,000 workers in London, only 73 went in.

One of the pickets from the Communication Workers Union (CWU) had heard about a class of apprentices that wanted to join the strike. Their instructor told them that it was their right, and the whole class was pictured on one of the 'pay rise' picket lines.

IAN PATTISON

BT Tower

Looking forward to striking together with Royal Mail workers on 31 August, one said: "This is a positive step and shows how we can win both our disputes".

ROB WILLIAMS

● **See 'Historic action by Royal Mail, BT and Post Office workers' at socialistparty.org.uk.**

Communication Workers Union (CWU) members in Royal Mail were out on national strike on 26 August – the biggest strike yet in the summer wave – for a decent pay rise without strings.

More strikes will take place on 31 August and 8 and 9 September. Postal workers made recently privatised Royal Mail £758 million profit in the last two years, essential workers who kept the service going through lockdown. And £400 million has been paid to shareholders in dividends.

The CEO got an annual pay and perks package worth £753,000. The deal included a bonus of £142,000.

But he expects Royal Mail workers to accept 2%, plus another 3.5% which they will have to pay for themselves through job losses and increased working. All the CWU is asking for is a pay rise that keeps up with inflation.

The company is taking advantage of new anti-worker laws to bus in agency workers to try and break the strike. But the strike remains solid.

Socialist Party members visited hundreds of picket lines to show our solidarity with the strike. We handed out leaflets arguing for coordinated strike action, as well as the renationalisation of Royal Mail, BT and all telecommunications.

Below are just some of the reports.

● Wales

Everywhere cars tooted their support, as many workers understand that they might be taking action themselves soon. The bosses, Tories, and Labour politicians expect us to take big real pay cuts this year.

At every single picket line, there was widespread support for the idea raised by the Socialist Party that the Trades Union Congress (TUC) should make a call for all workers to strike together and to coordinate the action. Many strikers expressed an interest in coming on the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) lobby of the TUC on 11 September.

DAVE REID

● Leicester

John Wilkinson – assistant area rep for Leicestershire, and shop steward for deliveries at Leicester Mail Preparation Unit – said:

"Royal Mail say that they've given us 5.5%, but they haven't. Its pie in the sky.

"They've imposed a 2% pay rise on my members, which equates to roughly around £1 a day. They say that another 1.5% will be linked to changes to terms and conditions, but they are forcing them in.

"Then the last 2% is linked to a £500 bonus. But nobody from Royal Mail headquarters – right down to the local line managers – can tell us how we're going to earn that. So effectively it would be a pay 'rise' of 2%.

"There are picket lines in every town and city in the country. But we are hoping to have the biggest turnout in the country. The strike is strong and massively supported.

"Nobody wants to lose money by being out on strike, but we have been forced into this position. Our backs are against the wall.

"The pay increase is insulting to

Royal Mail – biggest strike yet in summer wave



Bedworth ADAM HARMSWORTH

our members, and insulting to the service that we provide to the public. And the terms that they are offering are taking us back 100 years."

STEVE SCORE

● Waltham Cross, Hertfordshire

As well as pay, Waltham Cross pickets were really angry about the attacks on working conditions. "They want to be able to turn us on and off like a tap".

"Annualised hours would mean delivering mail in the dark in the evening in winter". "They call themselves a family firm, but we won't be able to pick up our kids from school as we do now".

"They've even been telling us we're not walking fast enough! After everything we did during the pandemic, turning the company around".

And there wasn't much love for Labour, "Starmer is just a Tory with a blue tie", said one picket.

CHRIS THOMAS

● Acton, west London

With the number of high-rise tower blocks going up, the posties are being expected to deliver more and more in the same amount of time, or less as the bosses cut hours.

BEN GOLDSTONE

● Leeds

One CWU rep texted us later in the day: "Thank you for the pic, and showing your support and solidarity this morning at my office, and for doing the rounds showing same around our neighbouring offices".

Pickets told us that they had accepted the extra pressures during

the pandemic, but now management are seeking to turn that into a new normal.

IZABELLE GRANT AND IAIN DALTON

● Bromsgrove, Worcestershire

Eroding of conditions and pensions were a big concern. More packages being delivered is difficult to handle for posties, while letters are left in the office. The strikers asked the question: 'Who is there to vote for, as Labour are as bad as the Tories'.

CAROL LEACH

● Bristol

On the picket line, striking workers said: "It's a global problem, the corporations are sucking all the money out". "The small man and woman are

fed up of only getting scraps from the top. The scraps are getting smaller and smaller. They're even trying to take our scraps away".

"If we all strike together we can bring the country down. Not the whole country, just the rich".

TOM BALDWIN

● Birmingham

Quinton

On hearing about the NSSN lobby of the TUC, one worker said: "We should all go to Brighton". They took leaflets to display in the staff area.

Another added: "At some point the employers will realise they cannot keep taking the piss out of all of us. This used to be one of the best-paid jobs in the country. Now I wouldn't even consider becoming a postie if I was young".

LUIS BERTOLINI

Kings Norton

One passing teacher stopped to offer support to the posties: "We've all had enough. I'm hoping it'll be us teachers on strike in a few months". She left her details to find out more about the local Socialist Party branch

AMANDA

Sutton Coldfield

Management hired five extra vans, but couldn't find any agency workers to drive them, and were forced to close the office.

JOE FOSTER

● Ipswich

Even some of the agency workers refused to cross the picket line. Carl Williams, assistant secretary of the local CWU, said: "Something is happening in this country, and has changed in the last 18 months. People can only take so much".

Rob Richards, CWU Area health and safety rep, stated: "It's about time, workers fighting back against corporate greed. Enough is enough".

TERESA MACKAY

● York

Area CWU rep Neil Jones was critical of the TUC leadership, who he said should be uniting the struggles taking place.

He took some leaflets advertising our 'What the Socialist Party stands for' meeting. Local strikers are invited to attend.

MALCOLM RICHARDSON

● Wednesbury, Sandwell

Striking posties told us: "I'm working full time and I'm on the breadline", but "we're all in this together, our fight is your fight".

GARETH KNOX

● **See 'Historic action by Royal Mail, BT and Post Office workers' at socialistparty.org.uk for more about the strike**

Organise to make sure school staff are ready to vote for action on pay

● **Support Staff: Vote to reject the pay offer, build a joint strike alongside teaching staff**

● **Teachers: Vote for strike action in the National Education Union (NEU) online ballots from 24 September**

● **Build for a coordinated programme of strike action, united across school unions**

● **Strike to win the funding needed for pay, to reduce workload and meet students' needs**

As schools and colleges reopen for the new academic year, staff and parents alike will be worrying how they are going to manage through a winter of soaring energy, food and housing costs. School workers must answer this threat collectively, by voting to make sure we can join the growing wave of strike action to demand pay rises that match the rising cost of living.

Teachers

With inflation forecast to reach over 18% by early 2023, the 5% pay award imposed on most teachers in England and Wales from this September is woefully inadequate. It is also just the latest in years of cuts that have already seen teachers' pay fall by 20% in real terms since 2010.

Socialist Party members on the NEU national executive have been calling for months for the union to announce a timetable for a ballot for strike action on pay. In an important step forward, a preliminary online ballot of teacher members in state schools has now been called, opening on 24 September. NEU members in sixth form colleges and further education will also be balloted separately.

Every workplace group, rep and local officer must mobilise immediately to make sure the union has every teacher member's correct current



contact details, so that they receive their vote. Workplace meetings are also vital to bring members together and convince every member to vote for action.

This 'indicative' ballot, unhelpfully required under union rules, inevitably delays the date that the NEU can open a formal ballot for strike action. But there must be no 'ifs' or 'buts' the NEU must make clear that a postal ballot will quickly follow, so that a first day of strike action can be taken before Christmas. The preliminary online ballot must, nevertheless, be seriously built for, and used as a trial-run to see if, and where, additional work needs to be done to meet the 50% turnout requirement imposed by anti-trade union legislation.

A proposed timetable for a full ballot and ongoing action needs to be announced so that both members and the government know that we are fighting to win. With the other main teaching union, NASUWT, having also announced they will ballot on pay, teachers can vote for action with confidence that a firm programme of strike action, coordinated across school staff, and taken wherever possible alongside other unions in the public and private sectors too, could achieve the real pay rise that's vitally needed.

A firm stand on pay this year must also be used as a springboard for further action to demand a complete overhaul of the existing pay and conditions document, which has not only allowed real salaries to plummet downwards but has also allowed teacher workload to spiral upwards. We need to demand a new national contract that ensures decent salaries for all staff, an end to performance pay, and fully funds guaranteed staffing levels with legal limits on overall working hours and class sizes.

School support staff

As the lowest-paid section of the school workforce, support staff desperately need an inflation-busting pay rise. But their 2022-23 pay award, even when the proposed 4% percentage and £1,925 flat-rate rise are combined, certainly won't match the rising cost of living over the year ahead. As Unite has rightly responded: "The employers' pay offer

is another real-terms pay cut, on all pay spines. The truth is it's an insult."

Alongside Unison, Unite and GMB, the NEU will be consulting its support staff members over whether to reject or accept the offer. The NEU, with its consultation vote running from 1-19 September, should be following the clear lead set by Unite and recommending rejection of the offer. That rejection should be followed by a strike ballot of support staff alongside their teaching colleagues. That way, both sectors can take action together, building unity across the whole staff.

Agency supply staff

Some of the most exploited teachers in schools are agency staff. The privatisation of supply teaching has driven down pay levels well beneath the statutory entitlements that would apply to staff employed directly, with huge profit margins being taken out of school budgets by the agencies.

Because they are not employed directly by schools, agency staff won't be included in the ballot for strike action. What's more, the government has changed the law to make it legal to employ agency staff to cover for striking workers. Some schools may therefore try to recruit agency staff to keep classes open on strike days, to undermine union action.

Agency colleagues won't want to be strike-breakers. But when they stand firm to support their union colleagues taking strike action, permanent staff also need to be organising to support their supply colleagues too. Union reps should talk to agency staff about their pay rates and make very clear to management that they won't accept their schools using rip-off agencies that offer unacceptable pay.

School Funding

Of course, if pay rises are to be won, as well as workload cut and jobs protected, schools and colleges need to be fully funded to meet the needs of both staff and students. Colleagues must not be put off voting for a pay rise because they fear school budgets won't be able to cope. The battles for both better pay and better school funding are two sides of the same coin. Strike action, supported by our school communities, is the most powerful way of winning both.

being worth 80% of the 2009 level.

Unison's new left leadership at national level, under the banner of 'Time For Real Change' has explained the shortcomings of the employer's offer, but have neither recommended rejection or criticised the national negotiators for not recommending rejection. The best fighters in the union will be comparing this to the period of the right-wing leadership and questioning what is the difference.

It is also clear the employers have no agreement for additional funding from the government for the offer. Unison and the other trade unions must demand the additional funding and fight for this to be announced in the Autumn Budget Statement.

Councillors, including all Labour councils around the UK, have refused to fight for the resources needed to provide the decent services and now many of them are at breaking point. The local government trade unions must demand councils cough up an inflation-proofed pay rise and the money from the Tories to find it.

Newham bin workers strike over well-below inflation pay offer



Socialist Party members supporting the strike HANNAH SELL

FERDY LYONS
EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

On 27 August Newham refuse loaders and drivers started a week-long strike over pay and conditions after an enormous mandate of 99% vote in favour on an 81% turnout. The strike went ahead after weeks of negotiations with the Labour council, which only offered a measly £850 pay increase, when the workers are asking for £2,300 in line with inflation.

The day before the strike started the mayor was already spinning lies about how much the workers would earn with their so-called generous offer, but what they didn't mention is that the rate was calculated with overtime included. The workers on the picket saw through this as they know the strike is about the basic rate of pay. People should be paid enough to live on to begin with, and not have to rely on working overtime to pay their bills.

The picket line had well over 30 workers, which was a great turnout considering it was an early morning on the Saturday of a bank holiday weekend. The picket was strong with no refuse worker crossing, and only one scab contractor bin lorry bought in, which was welcomed by boos from the pickets.

The workers were also resolute in their demands and are ready to stay out, with one telling us that if the council doesn't come back with a suitable offer, they'll be out for another two weeks in September. It was clear to the workers that this cost-of-living crisis is hitting working people hard, and something more is needed to fight it, with some of them even calling for a general strike.

Strikes at the council are only set to grow with the cleansing department preparing to ballot as well, and one worker from the civil enforcement team who walked past the picket told the workers how badly they were treated, being overworked, underpaid and in some cases even having to pay to use their moped to drive around the borough! It's time we had coordinated action at Newham council throughout the departments and unions!

The Labour mayor claimed the extra £1 million needed to pay the refuse workers is unattainable, pleading poverty, stating the "council doesn't have that level of money spare, as all our money is spent on vital services". This is a flat-out lie; Newham Council increased its total 'usable' reserves to £616 million during the pandemic. This Labour council can easily afford to meet the demand of the refuse workers and invest properly in all council services.

If they did this, and launched a struggle to demand extra funds from the Tory government, it would get a huge response from the workers and residents of Newham. Instead, Newham Labour carries out the Tories' bidding, making cut after cut and pushing extra charges onto residents. Only in February this council pushed through another £7.6 million of austerity. This latest brutal onslaught follows a mammoth £47.9 million in 'savings' (cuts and charges) over the past two years.

We need to coordinate the strikes against the cost-of-living crisis! We need to build a new alternative to Labour! We need a mass workers' party that will stand up for workers!

Scottish waste strikes having major impact

SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND

From day one, the strike action across many of Scotland's councils in waste services has had a huge impact. Strikes for eight days began on 24 August by Unite members in 13 local authorities. Edinburgh had already been on strike for a week.

They were joined on 26 August by Unison and GMB members in a number of other council areas. In all, 21 councils will see strikes across waste services. The action is headline news in the press, TV and radio while politicians are busy blaming each other.

There has been a large mobilisation at picket lines across the country, overwhelmingly supported by the public.

The anger over the insulting 5% pay offer from local government

organisation CoSLA, supported by the Scottish government, is intense. With inflation rampant at over 12%, and expected to rise to 18% early next year, these below-inflation pay offers are an insult. Another offer was rejected on 29 August.

One of the most important features of the strikes thus far has been the refusal of Unison and GMB members to cross the Unite picket lines – before taking action themselves, adding to the number of areas where strike action will be taking place in the bin depots and recycling centres across Scotland.

Socialist Party Scotland and the National Shop Stewards Network are supporting national coordinated action across the public and private sector. We say strike together – coordinate the action – build towards a 24-hour general strike.



Gloucestershire Müller HGV drivers and shunters strike over roster changes

CHRIS MOORE
GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

HGV drivers and shunters at Müller's Stonehouse factory in Gloucestershire are striking over imposed roster changes by the company, breaking agreements with Unite the Union. As Derrick Arlett-Johnson, senior Unite steward at Müller Severnside, told Socialist Party members visiting the picket line: "This dispute is about work-life balance and the right to have a family life."

Derrick explained that Müller had breached the national agreement over retaining current roster patterns, and no standardisation of rosters. Now it

is forcing new rosters on all drivers, including a requirement for increased weekend working. Over a year, this amounts to an additional 32 days for some drivers, so these changes have a huge impact, especially on parents, grandparents and anyone with family or other commitments. As Derrick said: "It's a long-term and loyal workforce who worked their socks off during the Covid lockdowns and this is the thanks we get."

The company started to call in drivers for one-on-one meetings, in breach of agreements, in an attempt to impose the changes. Unite objected and stopped this intimidating approach, forcing the company to

With the local government waste strikes spreading, CWU members in Royal Mail, BT and Openreach taking action, and schools and nurseries due to strike in early September, it's clear that the working class is back and fighting for their rights as the recent railworkers' strikes among others have proven.

Now the TUC and STUC need to step up and build coordinated action as a step towards a 24-hour general strike over the cost-of-living crisis.

● See socialistparty.scotland.org.uk for picket line reports

Get all the latest union news



with the NSSN bulletin
shopstewards.net

Local government: Reject the pay offer, strike for more



SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN UNISON

Unison members in local government are receiving ballot papers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland asking their views on another below-inflation pay rise. Employers have offered a £1,925 (£2,355 in London) increase. The offer does not meet the joint union claim for £2,000, or the rate of inflation (11.6% RPI when the claim was submitted), whichever is higher.

Even for the lowest-paid members, this does not meet inflation, which is rising month on month. A teaching assistant on 'Scale 3' could find themselves almost £10 a week worse off than they were at the start of the year if this rise is agreed.

Branches are sending out consultation ballots to members. A number of branches with left leaderships will be recommending the offer is rejected. While the increase is more than many members have seen in some time, it will not meet the cost-of-living crisis members are facing this year.

Many of these branches will be making it clear that Unison members in local government can launch a successful campaign of industrial action to win the full claim. Local government workers can join rail workers, postal workers and many others who are taking national strike action for inflation-proofed pay rises now.

But this will be in contrast to Unison's national negotiators, who argue this employer's offer is the best that can be achieved by negotiation alone. However, they have not recommended members reject the offer, and instead are leaving them to decide on their own. There isn't even any material explaining what the offer means, either in comparison to the claim or against the background of rising inflation.

Local government workers have had their wages frozen since 2009. Employers have used austerity to hold down wages in a period of cuts to budgets. The right-wing union leaders during this time failed to organise an effective fight against pay restraint, and this has led to pay

consult in line with agreements.

However, Müller openly declared that it intended to change rosters regardless. A strike ballot of nearly 70 staff had a 77% turnout and an 84.6% 'yes' vote. The first three-day consecutive strike action started on 25 August, with the next on 1 September, with 24-hour pickets. Unite has declared more strike days will be set if the dispute is not resolved.

Stonehouse Müller drivers supply milk products to M&S, Waitrose, Tesco and Sainsburys nationwide. The company, which reported profits of £16.5 million in the UK and Ireland last year, tried to intimidate strikers saying they would lose their jobs and that the action was illegal, and the union had not consulted. Staff responded by increasing union membership. Unite has four reps spread over the workforce and is well organised with high union membership among the drivers.

Müller's eight other UK sites have similar concerns and pressure is likely to build. Whatever happens in Stonehouse will have repercussions nationally.

EUROPEAN CAPITALISM IN CRISIS - FIGHT FOR A SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

The following article is based on an introduction by **Niall Mulholland** to a discussion on European perspectives, which was held at the Committee for a Workers' International's (CWI) summer school, in London, on 1 August.

European capitalism is marked by intense crises: economic, social, political, environmental and military.

Due to the reckless policies of capitalist governments across Europe, the human and economic fallout from Covid continues. On top of that, we have the cost-of-living crisis, a hike in inflation, low economic growth and a slide into recession in several countries, and a devastating war on the continent.

And climate change is clearly a matter of life and death not just in the poorer parts of the world but also in Europe. A summer of deadly heat-waves and droughts will most likely be followed by devastating winter floods.

This is the most disturbed period in Europe for decades. The post-Berlin Wall relative 'stability' of the capitalist system is at an end.

And now the working class is starting to put its stamp on events, as seen by the rise in industrial action in many countries.

Mass consciousness is being shaken by these processes, by the sense of great instability and the bitter nature of the class struggle.

Many of the political parties and institutions of capitalism are shaken to the core and lack popular legitimacy. Revealing their shrinking social support, capitalist governments increasingly resort to state repression.

They are also deploying 'culture wars' and renewed attacks against minorities, immigrants, refugees, and attacking the hard-won rights of women and LGBTQ+ communities to whip up reactionary support.

Playing with fire

The ruling elites are playing with fire, as we saw with the explosive Black Lives Matter movement and recent protests in reaction to the overturning of Roe v Wade for the right to abortion in the US.

All these factors are pushing millions of workers and youth to seriously question the profit system and to look for an alternative.

This is still a contradictory process, with mass consciousness lagging behind what has to be done to match the needs of the working class.

The weakness of a socialist alternative that fights resolutely for fundamental change means an even more protracted crisis. The working class will go through lessons of setbacks, as well as steps forward, before the

PHOTO: PAUL MATTHESSON



fundamental transformation of society is posed.

Yet social and political explosions are the order of the day. The most sober sections of the ruling class are deeply worried about where things are heading: "We have now moved into a third epoch in history of the post-war global economic order... a new era of world disorder... This new epoch of the world is creating huge challenges. It is possible - perhaps even probable - that the world system will shatter. In such a world, billions of people will lose hope of a better future..." wrote Martin Wolf in the Financial Times.

The economic situation is marked by high inflation not seen since the 1970s and a struggle by working-class people to meet their basic needs.

The supply chain problems caused by lockdowns, the effects of the Ukraine war, and ongoing national and personal debt crises are all causing a 'perfect storm' of economic crisis.

Even Europe's 'strongmen' rulers are under pressure. Turkey's President Erdogan struts around the global stage but faces a brewing revolt at home, where inflation is now running at nearly 80%.

While the economy formally grew by 11%, one third of Turks cannot meet their basic needs - increasing to four-fifths of the population who can 'barely meet their needs'.

This means not just the poor and working class, but also the middle classes are being hammered.

In northern Europe too, the cost-of-living crisis is felt keenly. The IMF revised downwards growth for the Eurozone from 2.6% to 1.2% for 2023.

Possible further cuts in gas supplies from Russia could see another 1.3% fall in the Eurozone in 2023 to "near zero growth".

Germany, the economic powerhouse of Europe, expects 1.2% growth in 2022 and just 0.8% in 2023. German inflation hit 8.5% at the end of July, with a surge in the price of food.

And there's no relief outside the Eurozone. UK inflation is running at over 10% and the economy is heading towards recession at the end of the year. The UK has the lowest growth of the G7 countries, expected to be at 0.5%.

The economic crisis of British capitalism is the underlying reason for the crisis in the Tory party. Three Tory prime ministers have been removed by their party in just six years.

A major showdown with unions is taking shape, as a series of workers take industrial action or plan to over pay and conditions.

Deep economic crisis and political upheaval are spreading across the continent. Rising inflation, low growth/recession and burgeoning

debt are huge burdens on the economies. Rising interest rates are piling pressure on millions of mortgage payers.

The European Central Bank admitted it is a "delicate exercise" to know how to raise interest rates to fight inflation without causing a new Eurozone debt crisis.

In the words of the economist Nouriel Roubini: "The next crisis will not be like its predecessors... Today, we are heading for a combination of 1970s-style stagflation and 2008-style debt crises - that is, a stagflationary debt crisis... The space for fiscal expansion will also be more limited this time. Most of the fiscal ammunition has been used, and public debts are becoming unsustainable."

Instability is most pronounced in Italy, which is one of the Eurozone's largest economies. Italian public debt is nearly at 150% of GDP.

The Italian ruling class and Brussels demand deep public sector cuts but this helped trigger a political crisis in the ruling coalition - along with differences over Ukraine - and the fall of Prime Minister Draghi.

In the absence of a credible, mass left alternative, the September elections look likely to return an unstable populist, right-wing government, including the Brothers of Italy - descendants of the neo-fascist MSI.

This 'whip of counterrevolution' and any attempt to impose cuts against the working class will provoke massive social and industrial explosions.

Italy is one of the weakest links in the Eurozone and EU and hastens the centrifugal tendencies.

Collapse of the 'centre'

Another feature of this period is the collapse of the so-called political 'centre'.

President Macron has lost his majority in the French parliament. This considerably weakens his attempts to take on the rights and conditions of the working class, as he intended.

Despite his political flaws, Jean-Luc Mélenchon's vote of 21.95% in the French presidential elections shows the potential for the left and the mood of anger towards Macron. This is a harbinger of big class battles to come, with the shadow of the revolutionary events of May 1968 looming over today.

Even the populist 'strongman' of Europe, Viktor Orbán, in Hungary, faces growing discontent at home, as the country faces a steep economic downturn.

Orbán is pulled in two directions: seeking closer ties and energy supplies with Moscow, while trying to get \$15 billion worth of EU pandemic

recovery funds, which are dependent on fighting corruption and weaning off Russian energy!

Even where economies are growing, political polarisation and major upsets are a feature, as we see in Ireland.

Sinn Féin is set to become the largest party in the next general election, overtaking the two traditional parties of Irish capitalism.

Although Sinn Féin long ago jettisoned its socialist veneer, it is gaining from apparently radical policies, particularly on housing.

Sinn Féin's pro-market policies mean it will not deliver the goods for working-class people, and it will be tempted to divert attention onto a 'border poll'.

The national question will grow as an issue across Europe as the crisis of capitalism deepens.

It has become more complicated in a period of capitalist crisis, as we see with the sectarian tensions around Brexit and the 'Irish Sea border'.

It can be reasserted in Catalonia and other parts of Spain and in other parts of Europe.

The Scottish National Party has announced new dates for a referendum on Scottish independence but will conduct a struggle in a half-hearted way as befits such a pro-capitalist party.

This will not satisfy the Scottish working class and will only enrage the British ruling class.

The national question can embolden sections of the working class to take on the oppressive capitalist state and ideology. But with the leadership in the hands of petit-bourgeois nationalists, it can have dangerous consequences for working-class unity.

Renewed nationalist and ethnic tensions between Kosovo and Serbia are a warning of what can develop unless a strong left alternative is developed with a sensitive, independent position on the national question.

We see the horrific consequences of the lack of a mass socialist movement starkly in Ukraine and Russia.

The working class in these countries is largely prostrate, without enough organisation and leadership to intervene decisively to cut across war.

The bloody conflict is dragging on, now in its seventh month, at a huge cost to human life and resources.

Russian forces are grinding away, seizing territory in the east and south east. Kiev claims to be 'regaining territory' in the south and has conducted missile attacks on Crimea.

While the European powers and the US have pumped billions into the Ukraine war effort and beefed up European militarisation plans, they also fear the consequences of the conflict spreading and dragging in other countries.



The European powers and US are also expressing differing emphases on the war aims and 'acceptable outcomes'.

The UK, the Baltic States and Poland take a hard-line pro-Kyiv position. France and Germany appear more open to accepting some territorial losses.

Germany is particularly prone to the wider fallout from the Ukraine war. The German economy could enter a slump should Russia cut gas deeply or completely, hitting both industries and homes.

The war and sanctions have hit Russia hard but it cuts both ways. Gas prices have accelerated, by 25% at the end of July, when Russia cut gas supplies to the West.

The deal made between Russia and Ukraine over releasing grain supplies shows that the European powers and the US are worried about the social and political consequences of severe food shortages and price rises in Africa and at home.

The first flushes of war fever engendered by the European powers and US are now a fading memory. Ukraine

has not served as a longer-term distraction from problems at 'home', as the European elites hoped.

The awakening of the organised working class is a common feature across Europe. Strike levels are growing and having an impact on mass consciousness.

Young people are getting organised in the workplaces, fighting terrible precarious conditions and zero-hour contracts.

This will start the process of shaking up the unions. Fresh layers of union militants will be very open to socialist ideas and programme, including for combative and democratically run unions.

But the working class cannot fight with one arm tied behind its back - it also needs political representation. Yet the left political formations, in the main, have shown their extreme poverty of ideas and fatal compromises with pro-capitalist parties.

Podemos, which is in government with the social-democratic PSOE, in Spain, is carrying out anti-working class measures. A massacre of immigrants trying to reach a Spanish

enclave from Morocco is a bloody stain on the record of Podemos.

Syriza, in Greece, and Corbynism, in Britain, went down without a serious fight, which led to sections of the left becoming disillusioned. But others are mulling over the bitter lessons and can return to activity if a viable left political vehicle is on offer.

The assembling of new mass working-class parties is a complicated process. The CWI in Europe aids the process along where we can, participating in, for example, the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition (England, Scotland and Wales), Cross Community Labour Alternative (Northern Ireland) and Jean-Luc Mélenchon's left formations (France).

The CWI can play a pivotal role in intervening in events and rebuilding support for the ideas and methods of revolutionary socialism.

There is a marked interest in socialist and Marxist ideas among sections of youth and workers. By audaciously defending the Marxist ideology and programme and method, the CWI can be confident of growing in Europe.



Enough is Enough Clapham launch

Cheers for taking wealth from rich – anger at Starmer’s Labour

THEO SHARIEFF
SOUTH WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Over 1,000 attended the launch rally of the ‘Enough is Enough’ campaign in Clapham. With trade union speakers like Mick Lynch of the transport union RMT, Dave Ward of the Communication Workers Union, as well as Jo Grady of the University and College Union - who have been collectively leading national strikes involving hundreds of thousands of workers - people were enthusiastic to hear about how the fight against inflation austerity and the Tory government could be built further.

Speakers talked about the ongoing cost-of-living crisis and the effects of decades of privatisation and austerity on spiralling wealth inequality, and the collapse in living standards

for working-class and young people. Every mention of taking the wealth out of the hands of the rich to provide what the majority need - decent jobs, council housing, fully funded public services run for social need instead of profit - was met with massive cheers.

There was also palpable anger in the room at Starmer’s Labour Party - which has clearly come out in support of the bosses in the current strike wave, punishing Labour representatives who dare to show support for striking workers.

That is why Socialist Party leaflets calling for the building of a new mass workers’ party, which the trade union movement would have to play a central role within, as well as the further coordination of the strike wave were taken with great enthusiasm from the crowd as the rally ended.

Drag queen story hour counter-protest

GINNY BAYLISS
SWANSEA SOCIALIST PARTY

On 13 August, members of Cardiff and Swansea Socialist Party branches united with other left-wing groups from across the area to counter-protest demonstrators, including the far right, outside a drag queen story hour for children and parents at Cardiff Central Library.

Despite calling the protest, alt-right group Patriotic Front did not show, which left a handful of poorly organised, local agitators to be dwarfed four or five to one by counter-protesters.

Though the protesters screamed homophobic and transphobic abuse through megaphones, the significantly larger numbers of counter-protesters allowed it to be drowned out, and the morale and numbers of anti-drag protesters fell yet further.

South Wales Police, true to form, coddled the protesters while threatening counter-protesters with arrest. Ultimately, though, the event was able to go ahead without incident.

Although this was an emphatic win for the counter-protests, the fact that these events are necessary shows that the far right continues to try to use queerphobia as a rallying point.

Sections of the increasingly unpopular and divided Tory government will also use anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric. But Starmer’s Labour does not have a programme to significantly improve LGBTQ+ rights.

True queer liberation demands the creation of a new workers’ party that fights for the rights and well-being of the whole working class and for socialism, rather than manufacturing culture wars to distract from our ever-growing list of capitalist crises.

Sheffield: Large, lively meeting discusses general strike



GARY DRABBLE
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

Over 40 people - 27 in person and 14 on Zoom, including 16 non-members, attended the Sheffield Socialist Party Branch open meeting on 25 August. They heard guest speaker Joe Howard, assistant branch secretary of transport union RMT, talk about their current dispute and the need for solidarity and working-class unity.

This was followed by a speech on ‘General Strikes, the lessons of 1926 and what it means for us today’ by a member of the civil service union PCS and the Socialist Party.

The lively discussion that followed included contributions on the role of the trade union leadership and how we should organise within the unions. It also raised the need for a new workers’ party and building for the National Shop Stewards Network lobby of the TUC on 11 September.

Following the meeting, two people have joined the Socialist Party, bringing the total to seven new members in three weeks, reflecting the changing class consciousness.

In addition, a further non-member has agreed to stand as a candidate for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition in the 2023 local elections, meaning we already have 15 candidates for 28 of the Sheffield wards up for election.

Selling the Socialist in Fowey – in memory of Tim

ROB ROONEY
CORNWALL SOCIALIST PARTY

“Mourn the dead, fight for the living” was on my mind as I set out to sell The Socialist in Fowey, south Cornwall. The day before, my friend Tim Caulfield had died. A Corbynite when I met him six or seven years ago, he saw himself as an anarchist in his last year or so. We had spirited discussions about our differing perspectives but were, essentially, kindred souls.

Within five minutes of setting up on a street corner in the centre of Fowey, I was approached by a man called Jonno who said: “A friend of mine who’s just died was a socialist.” He was talking about Tim and we swapped stories about him. He bought a paper and said: “I’ll read this in memory of Tim.”

Buoyed up by that encounter, I made the street ring with my slogans: ‘Get your Socialist paper’, ‘support the strikes’, ‘let’s get rid of the Tories - just one big push is all it’ll take’, ‘nationalise the energy companies - no bailout for the profiteers’.

One woman on holiday from Newbury bought a paper. I told her about the Socialist Party branch in Reading. A man from Brighton bought a paper. He already knew about the Brighton branch of the party. Another man looked genuinely excited to see the paper on sale. He told me to wait there while he found some money. Five minutes later, he was back with his family, fiver in hand. I handed out a RMT leaflet and the young girl with him said: “Mam’s on this strike.”

Fowey is a well-to-do holiday place

and the streets were thronged. Most were in holiday mode but it seemed to me my slogans struck a chord with many who realise that when the holiday is over, it’s back to reality and the day-to-day struggle.

My day was capped when a local man bought a paper. He told me that I have my work cut out in Fowey. I replied that things can change very quickly and asked him to think about joining the party if he likes what he read in the paper. He said he would.

Eight papers sold in 90 minutes and £12 fighting fund. I feel like I’ve staked out a corner of Fowey for socialism and I’ll be back next week.

In memory of Tim Caulfield – born Wythenshawe February 25 1948, died in Bodinnick 23 August 2022

Fighting back in Todmorden

FRANK HOLT
BRADFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

On Friday 19 August we set up a Socialist Party campaign stall in Todmorden which is a small market town on the border of West Yorkshire and Lancashire. To the best of our knowledge a stall had not been held

here before so we did not know what would happen.

As it was it exceeded all expectations. Ten papers were sold, £9.17 fighting fund was raised and one contact card was filled in.

A wide range of people stopped to talk to us, including young shop workers, mothers pushing prams,

older workers and retired people. A pensioner said that it was about time someone started to fight back and a climate activist wished us the best of luck.

I think that we may hold a stall in Todmorden again and it also looks promising for next year’s local elections.

Rail and underground strikes combine to show workers’ strength

Tens of thousands of RMT members were striking again over an insulting pay offer, jobs cuts and destruction of their working conditions in August – this time with other rail unions. On 18 and 20 August, TSSA union were out with the RMT members on railways nationally. And on 19 August, Unite the Union was striking with the RMT on London Underground and Overground. Plus, on 19 August, bus drivers in west London were striking at the same time over pay.

● Broxbourne, Hertfordshire

A striking worker explained to me how the workers are best placed to understand what modernisation was needed on the railway, how it could work, and that nationalisation is needed. He gave the example of how the company invested in new trains that didn’t even fit the platforms!

Now work to the station is being done by four different contractors that don’t communicate and disregard health and safety, but blame workers when something goes wrong.

He agreed that we all need to strike together and that the movement also needs a political voice. He agreed the TUC should use its upcoming congress to coordinate the fightback, and that RMT general secretary Mick Lynch should use his authority gained from this strike to take a proposal for coordinated action to the TUC.

He also said that if there was a general election, Mick Lynch should stand, so workers can have a political voice. He said: “Some people argue we can’t change anything. And they are right. We can’t change anything on our own, as one person. But we can when we stand together”.

BEA GARDNER

● Newcastle and Gateshead

This round of strikes was the first time I’ve ever been on a picket line where a bride turned up! A TSSA rep who was getting married later that day came along to Newcastle Central station.

The mood of the strikers on all three picket lines we visited in Newcastle and Gateshead was rock solid. They understand that whether Liz Truss or Rishi Sunak is elected as Tory leader, there is a battle ahead – both have said they intend to further ratchet up anti-trade union laws.

Strikers we spoke to were saying there needed to be coordinated action, including a general strike to thwart the Tories’ attacks. We didn’t speak to a single striker who felt the Labour Party under Keir Starmer would speak out for them. There was anger about the sacking of Sam Tarry from the shadow cabinet, for the crime of supporting workers in struggle.

There’s a growing understanding that workers need a new party that represents us, not the capitalist bosses.

ELAINE BRUNSKILL

● Leicester

There was lots of tooting from motorists and visits from several unions in solidarity in Leicester.

Nigel from the RMT said that we are reaching a poll tax moment, where everyone is feeling the rise in energy prices. Sean said he could feel that we are reaching a turning point. Everyone supports striking together.

There was lots of discussion about Keir Starmer’s Labour Party not supporting workers. The idea of unions disaffiliating and building a new workers’ party went down well.

John from the Communication Workers’ Union stood in solidarity, and invited the RMT and TSSA pickets to their picket line. He was explaining why they are striking: “The deal has more strings attached than the London Philharmonic Orchestra”.

Picket lines are becoming the conduit for building rank-and-file solidarity, discussing politics, sharing stories and good natured banter.

HEATHER RAWLING



● Edmonton Green, north London

There were no London Overground trains at Edmonton Green, and even though national rail services weren’t facing strikes on 19 August, there wasn’t a train running until 1pm because of the knock-on effect of all the week’s rail strikes.

An agency worker felt he had to go in. But the striking RMT members did a great job of persuading him to join the union, which he agreed to do, and to get his workmates to do the same. The striking workers explained that because agency staff are technically self-employed, other workers like them in RMT have taken strike action without even balloting.

The strikers reported that managers who were working were dressing up as regular rail workers to give the impression that more staff were in. But worryingly, rumours were going round that private contractors were planning to do maintenance work, even though it wouldn’t be safe with the strike on.

IAN PATTISON

● Cockfosters, London Underground

Workers picketed a very quiet Cockfosters fleet depot and tube station in north London early on 19 August. Workers on both pickets spoke of the looming attacks on pensions: one older striker is paying especially close attention as his hard-won pension faces being snatched away by TfL bosses right before retirement.

At the depot, RMT members coming from the night-shift stopped to support the pickets, and for a bacon sandwich and cup of tea (thanks Chris!) They explained how security had initially refused entry to the depot manager, telling him: “We’re not allowed to let anyone in!”

Only one tube driver went into work at the station, citing his Aslef membership as a reason to do so. The debate was about how best to persuade him to stay on the right side of the line next time. The feeling is that when details of potential pensions attacks become clearer, motivation to strike will be even wider and stronger. As one picket put it: “It’s a class war, decide whose side you are on”.

JOSH ASKER

● Birmingham New Street

A striking rail worker told Nick Hart: “In all the years I’ve worked on the railways, I’ve never known all the grades to be as brassed off as this at the same time. Management and the Department for Transport are wrecking the future of our railways”.

● Worcester

Socialist Party members visited both RMT pickets on 20 August. The picket at Shrub Hill involved station staff and guards, the pickets at the rear of the station are from signals and telecoms grades and Permanent Way staff. The mood is determination, and understanding that this is a fight which must be won.

PETE MCNALLY
FORMER MEMBER OF ASLEF, RMT AND NUR

Different trade unionists organised demonstrations in support of striking rail workers.

● Swansea

Swansea Trades Union Council organised a great solidarity rally and march on 20 August, with all the local and regional striking leaders in attendance, along with reps speaking from Unite, Unison local government and health, PCS, GMB and Youth Fight for Jobs. After the rally, 150 protesters marched through the city centre.

ALEC THRAVES

● Plymouth

100 joined the trade union solidarity march in Plymouth, with representation from Unite, Unison, NEU, Usdaw, UCU, PCS and Napo, and the RMT leading the march back to the railway picket.

RYAN ALDRED

Profits for greedy bosses – wage crisis for us



STEPHEN BROWN
OXFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

2022 may go down as the year the penny dropped. Millions are beginning to understand how much of our economy has operated as a kind of scam for many years.

As the RMT representatives keep saying, there isn't a shortage of money. There is plenty of money around. Since 2008 the government has spent nearly a trillion pounds bailing out the banks. Where did that money go? It certainly didn't trickle down. The opposite happened. It went into assets, stocks, shares, property. The stock market grew, the rich got richer, prices and rent went up.

During Covid the government splashed out £450 billion. Where did that go? That's £10,000 for every adult in Britain. And as the economist Gary Stephenson says, if your bank account isn't £10,000 better off than before Covid, someone else has got your £10,000. Who could that be? Well, the wealth of the richest 250 people in Britain grew by 22% in the first year of Covid alone. In that time, the typical billionaire made, wait for it... £600 million.

And whether it's the railway companies, the telecommunication companies or the supermarkets, they are all still raking in huge profits. Railway companies made over £500 million even during the worst of Covid, Sainsbury's this year made over £600 million.

Greed crisis

It is not wages that are driving up inflation. As trade unionists are saying, it is profits. Wages, especially in the public sector, haven't really

increased in recent years and inflation is going through the roof. But wage increases can mitigate some of the worst effects of the cost-of-living crisis for workers. As someone said at the TUC rally on 18 June, it's really a wage crisis. Or, more accurately, a greed crisis.

When prices and profits rise, and wages stagnate, workers are being impoverished. It is an attack on workers, their families and living standards.

And as if to illustrate this, there are now more food banks in Britain than McDonald's outlets. Companies such as BT are even incorporating food banks into their premises or, as they call them, a 'food pantry'.

Even before the pandemic, there were 2.5 million people in Britain living in destitution. This included over half a million children. That is set to rise massively over the next 12 months.

So, if one of the major factors contributing to the cost-of-living crisis is that the richest have been given huge amounts of money in recent years, part of the solution has to be to take a huge amount of money away from the richest in society and give it to the workers.

The leaders of the RMT and other unions have helped to raise awareness among the general public around the need for industrial action and to improve understanding of the bigger picture that has seen this huge transfer of wealth to the richest in our society in recent years.

Now the unions must begin to organise politically, to form a union-led, mass workers' party to fight for nationalisation, reversing cuts, a decent living wage for all and a socialist alternative to capitalism.



The great boxing rip-off

JAMES COLLETT
GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Did anyone watch the fight on Saturday 20 August? No, me neither. I can't afford a Sky subscription and I couldn't afford the ridiculous £30 pay-per-view price. And Sky were obviously busy taking down all the free streams, the bastards.

I've been in love with boxing since I was ten years old, when I was allowed to stay up late with my grandfather to watch Nigel Benn fight on ITV. Not only were world title fights shown free on terrestrial television in those days, but the undercards were always good and you could tell from the broadcasts that there was a great atmosphere in the venue.

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WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

• editors@socialistparty.org.uk
or, if you're not online, write to the Socialist Inbox, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT

Trades Union Congress: Will it act to coordinate the strikes?

DAVE GORTON
NSSN COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

In the past few months the pages of the Socialist have been packed with reports of strikes throughout Britain. Significantly, hundreds of thousands of railway, telecoms and postal workers are taking nationwide action. These strikes are popular, demonstrated by BBC journalists scrambling round for negative comments from the public about the RMT rail union's action..., and failing!

The growing strike wave demonstrates the potential power of the trade unions, and makes a mockery of the views of a few, including some calling themselves socialist, who had consigned the role of organised labour to history. By withdrawing our labour, workers can hit the capitalists where it hurts most, in the pockets of big business and the super-rich.

Lower trade union density in the

recent past doesn't mean working people are apathetic or they've abandoned the struggle. It's a reflection that, for a whole period, they didn't see unions as fighting for them collectively. In the immediate aftermath of this year's Trades Union Congress (TUC) march in June, and the RMT strikes on rail networks and London Underground, internet searches for 'join union' rocketed by 184%.

As strikes spread further, support for the idea of striking together and coordinating the action is growing. When the TUC tweeted at the end of August that it was set to make an announcement, thousands optimistically anticipated the announcement of a general strike!

The TUC, bringing together seven million workers in Britain, has the ability to organise such action. That's why the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) has organised a lobby of the TUC when it meets in Brighton on 11 September, to put the pressure on the leaders to act.



national shop stewards network

NSSN RALLY & LOBBY OF TUC CONGRESS

STRIKE together

co-ordinate the action

Sunday 11th September
1pm
Holiday Inn Hotel,
Brighton



What role has the TUC played historically, and how can coordinated strike action be organised today?

The TUC celebrated its 150th anniversary four years ago. It was formed with the ideals of uniting the disparate craft and trade unions into one body and seeking independent political representation for the working class in Britain and Ireland.

But by the time of the 1926 general strike, the right wing of the TUC leadership was playing the role of what leader of the Russian revolution Leon Trotsky termed the 'political police' on behalf of capitalism. They played a reactionary role, seeking no more than a few crumbs from the bosses' table and policing the working class away from revolution.

In Peter Taaffe's book, "1926 General Strike – Workers Taste Power", he relates how Liberal prime minister Lloyd George had told union leaders seven years earlier: "If you carry out your threat and strike, then you will defeat us. But... have you weighed the consequences? If a force arises in the state which is stronger than the state itself, then it must be ready to take on the functions of the state, or withdraw and accept the authority of the state." The miners' leader Robert Smillie's reaction was: "From that moment on we were beaten and we knew we were!"

The 1926 strike itself was a magnificent show of working-class strength, defeated because the TUC general council caved in at the height of the struggle. But workers were willing to fight, there were more on strike the day after it was called off, and the miners fought on.

There are other examples of the TUC holding workers back for fear of challenging the status quo. In the 1970s the TUC leadership, under general secretary Len Murray, played a key role in preventing action against below-inflation pay rises by signing up to the Social Contract – an agreement to limit wage rises to 5%. This was done to save the Labour government rather than to advance workers' interests.

But the pressure eventually told. The official 5% limit was brushed aside in a wave of strike action. The Washington Post commented: "The most significant change is that the leaders of the union movement have lost control over their rank and file. The workers have taken things into their own hands."

During the 1980s, the TUC failed to organise solidarity action for the miners' strike in 1984-85 and printers' strike at Wapping in 1986-87. Both ended in defeat, changing the political landscape of Britain. To make matters worse, some trade union leaders, later exposed as agents of the British state working against trade unionists, were able to hide in open view on the TUC general council!

'National unity'

Twice during the pandemic, outgoing TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady thanked Tory chancellor Rishi Sunak for "real leadership" over the furlough scheme. On the second occasion, she was pictured with him and the director general of the business confederation, the CBI, after 'successful talks' had led to a reduction in pay for those forced out of work. It was an outcry from workers and employers who then forced the government into another U-turn, not the TUC!

So, is the TUC worthless? Won't its leaders forever sell out the working class? Three of the last six TUC general secretaries became barons in the House of Lords, another was knighted. O'Grady is a director of the Bank of England.

But the TUC general council itself is made up of representatives from all the larger unions who have the power to build much sterner opposition and to consolidate strike action across the whole economy. They don't have to rely on the TUC general secretary or other officials.

In 2011, the TUC conference led to the major public sector trade unions

calling a one-day public sector strike in defence of pensions. When the majority of TUC leaders capitulated after just one day of generalised strike action, the left of the TUC did organise separately to try and stop the retreat. This approach needs to be built on today. Unite, Union, RMT, NEU and PCS are among the unions calling for coordinated strike action at this year's conference. Think of the effect if some of these unions and others coordinated strike action across several industries on the same day(s). There would be a partial one-day general strike which would then give greater confidence to workers everywhere.

And if the left leaders were unable to win their position on the general council, they would need to go over the TUC leader's heads and appeal to workers directly. As more workers are demanding action from their unions over rising prices and the obscene accumulation of profit by the ruling class, socialists must maintain the pressure on the TUC general council to link the struggles.

The working class taking action together could potentially bring down this Tory government. We would be strengthened further by a mass party of our own armed with a socialist programme. Workers are already growing in confidence of their collective power from the existing strike wave. Coordinated action would build this further still; join us at the NSSN lobby as part of the fight to make it happen.

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WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations!
- Take the wealth off the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need, not to the fat cats.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No the EU bosses' club. Organise a campaign with European socialists and workers' organisations to use the talks on post-Brexit relations to tear up the EU pro-capitalist rules. For a real collaboration of the peoples of Europe on a socialist basis as a step towards a socialist world.

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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**WORKING
CLASS
STRIKING
BACK**



The following statement was circulated by the United Socialist Party (CWI in Sri Lanka) to socialist parties and groups in Sri Lanka on 12 August

We are at a crucial juncture in Sri Lanka as the capitalist class, the state, elite and their institutions, regional powers, China, and the western imperialist powers have a common aim: defeating the mass movement that has developed - while also fighting for their individual interests and investments.

Capitalists have no solution to the crisis. Printing money, adjusting the interest rate, increasing tax, selling public services, land and essential services to the vulture capitalists, cutting wages, and borrowing more money with draconian conditions attached to it, were the methods that they all agree upon. This is not acceptable for the struggling masses as it will only increase poverty and misery.

Capitalist representatives are prepared to use maximum force and do 'whatever it takes' to hold onto their control. Socialists and trade union activists should step up our collaboration and fight back to prevent repression and take the mass movement forward.

The current parliament does not represent the masses. Demands for the resignation of the president and all 225 parliamentarians were met with military repression. But the masses have shown their power and strength, and shown that anything is possible. The masses should not accept a bogus proposal of an 'interim government' of looters. The movement should organise an interim government of representatives of workers, the poor and oppressed that can take emergency measures to alleviate the crisis people face, and to organise elections to a revolutionary constituent assembly which can decide on the future of Sri Lanka.

We welcome the demands that are articulated so far by the masses and 'Aragalaya' (the Struggle), though these demands are still somewhat limited, as they do not challenge the capitalist roots of this crisis. But even to win these demands, we need a strong involvement of the organised working class and the building of a democratically organised mass organisation that puts forward an alternative socialist programme. Socialists, together with our supporters in the organised workers' movement, can take an initiative towards this.

We have had many discussions in the past with the left to unite our work on specific issues, and possibly to agree on a general programme. The JVP (People's Liberation Front) leaders, though claiming to be on the left and even Marxist, never engaged in such democratic discussions or even tried to come close to putting forward a socialist programme, as

An open appeal to socialist organisations - building for a socialist future in Sri Lanka



United Socialist Party members on the 28 April general strike PHOTO: USP

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the international socialist organisation which the Socialist Party is affiliated to. The CWI is organised in many countries around the world. We work to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against capitalism, and to fight for a socialist world.

socialistworld.net

they in practice work within capitalism. The rump of the (formerly Trotskyist) LSSP, the communist parties and a few other small organisations are mere opportunists, having repeatedly made alliances with capitalist parties, taken part in coalition governments and no longer having anything to do with building the forces of socialism.

We are appealing to the rank-and-file members and supporters of these organisations who want to struggle to break with them to come towards a socialist programme. In the past we argued that the mere collaboration of a few socialist groups alone will not be enough to create a mass organisation; but joint action on a clear programme can be a starting point to involve a wider section of the working class, particularly the organised workers in the trade unions.

Given the past history, we also face enormous difficulty in developing a general programme that we can all agree on. However, joint action based upon concrete demands that we agree on can take place while discussing what a clear programme should contain. The United Socialist Party will continue to fight for a socialist programme, as we hold that

no solution can be found for the current crisis on a capitalist basis. We propose all left parties trade unions and socialists put forward a socialist programme and fight to win the working class and struggling masses to that programme.

Reject all capitalist representatives

Together, we should call on the struggling masses to reject all capitalist representatives as they seek to save the current system. There should not be any trust in any of the capitalist parties. Any interim arrangement with the capitalist representatives can only destabilise and weaken the movement. Instead, we must build our own political platform. With a democratic federal structure, and with a clear programme, we could bring together key sections of society and the masses. Setting up a 'peoples' council' just to assist the capitalist government will not deliver on the needs of the masses.

What organisation?

There is an agreement emerging on the need for building democratically organised committees in the villages and the towns to organise resistance, and democratically supervise the distribution of supplies. However, this should involve the participation

of workers, farmers, and other key activists reflecting genuine representation. Democratic structures should be established where delegates are elected and accountable to the committees. Discussion should be held in terms of the role these committees can play.

For example: can these committees take responsibility for and have maximum influence in workplaces that produce essential commodities? How will union branches be established and incorporated? Can they bring together farmers, youth, and others? Open discussion should start about the nature of the committees along with working to build such committees - which is an urgent task. These committees, through elected delegates, can form a national body. This body can determine political representation too - deciding also what sort of constitution is needed.

The national body can help to build key sub-committees, such as defence committees, to protect protesters from attack by the security forces and pro-government supporters. Such a committee could also appeal to the rank-and-file soldiers to be involved in the protection of the masses. It is not an easy task to organise this without clashing with state institutions, which would claim to have the power to organise society. Hence taking over key institutions

and bringing them under the democratic control of the masses should also be organised.

What programme?

We must establish a united voice on at least the key demands that are fundamental to any socialist organisations. The call for mass mobilisation should be linked to calling on the organised working class to take action such as a general strike. We must fight for the protection of nationalised services and bring them under the democratic control of the workers; nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy; implementing an adequate minimum wage universally for all workers; free trade zones and special concessions made to foreign investors to carry out super-exploitation should be abolished; trade unions and workers' organisations to be organised democratically and independently of capitalist parties.

We must demand non-payment of debt altogether. This includes micro debt. All the debt of farmers must be cancelled immediately, for example. We should also reject any deal with the IMF and the Indian and Chinese capitalists' looting. An international appeal should be made, particularly to the workers in the south Asian region, for solidarity actions and support.

The call for the abolition of the executive presidency and draconian laws, such as the Prevention of Terrorism Act and anti-trade union legislation, poses the need for the complete change of the constitution and the complete reorganisation of society. The call for a democratically elected revolutionary constituent assembly is vital to meet this need and to prepare to reorganise society. This can lead to a workers-led government and the implementation of a planned economy.

Such demands should be articulated in all our material and campaigns. While defending the freedom of press, free speech and all democratic rights, socialists should also make clear their position on the national question if we are to unite workers of all ethnicities.

We must boldly advocate a socialist alternative

Some organisations, such as the JVP, use Marxist rhetoric, but in reality do not put forward socialist ideas or work to build the forces of socialism. Collaboration with capitalists and defenders of capitalism is justified by the argument that there is no mass support existing for socialist change at this stage. This is exactly the opposite to the strategy of Lenin and the Bolsheviks in 1917 as they worked to build majority support for 'All Power to the Soviets' and socialism.

We know that no mass movement is pure or develops in a straight line. Economic and social demands that the masses articulate can push them to take a leap in consciousness to see the limitation of capitalism and the inability to achieve lasting solutions within the boundaries of capitalism. But socialist and left organisations, including the trade unions, must lead the discussions on this openly and boldly, and put forward the necessary concrete steps that need to be taken. That is how we can work to build confidence in socialist ideas among the masses. The masses are looking for an alternative - we must explain that the alternative is a socialist one.

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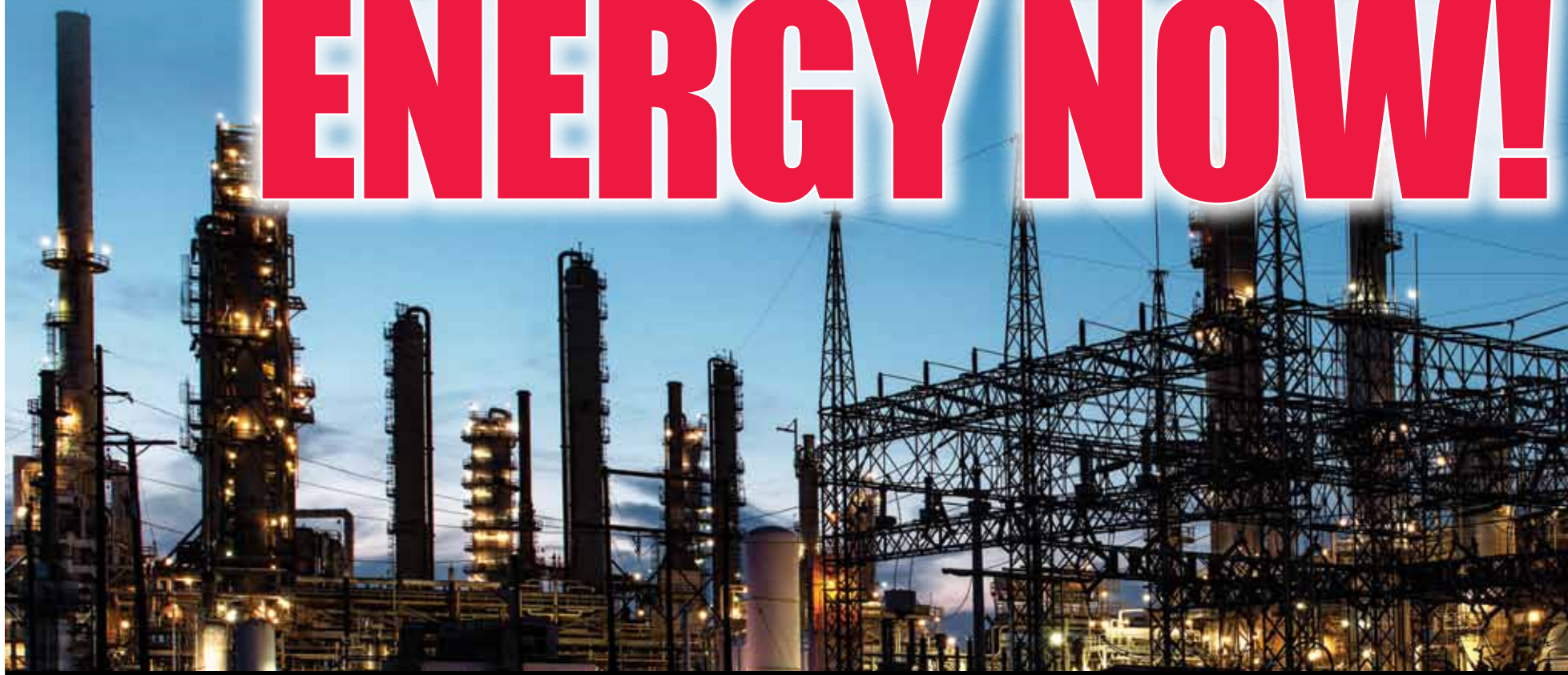
Issue 1192

1-7 September 2022

formerly **Militant**

SEIZE THEIR PROFITS TO CUT OUR BILLS

NATIONALISE ENERGY NOW!



Where will you find an extra £2,000+ this year to cover the extra added to your gas and electric bill?

The answer for many will be: skip meals, send the kids to school in old uniform, go deeper into the red on the credit card. The question for more and more of us is: which bill can I get away with not paying this week?

But not everyone has to face this torment. The prices of life's essentials are set to be rising at 18% annually by the end of the year. That extra cash is going somewhere, and it's not going into our pockets! Instead, a small number

of super-rich individuals - among them the owners of the big energy companies - continue to award themselves obscene pay packets and lavish dividends. BP made £11.9 billion in profit for the first half of this year, and Shell £17.3 billion.

The argument that privatised energy companies would compete to win customers, and in doing so drive down prices, seems like a very distasteful joke. And none of the half-baked ideas of the establishment politicians to deal with the crisis amount to anything more than bailing out the energy industry to the tune of billions - intending

to make us pay for it later like they did with the banks.

Nationalise

Instead, nationalisation is needed, of the energy retailers and producers. And socialist nationalisation, with no compensation to the billionaire owners, and where workers and service users have democratic ownership and control over prices and investment.

As it stands, workers don't have a mass party that argues for these measures as part of a broader set of socialist policies - the only way to save us from cost-of-living hell.

But we do have trade unions leading strikes and demanding real pay rises, showing the bosses that if we don't go to work, they can't make a profit. Imagine if those same trade unions established a new mass party, bringing together workers on strike and people fighting to bring down bills and raise pensions and benefits.

Such a party could put up a real challenge to the Tories and the bosses, take steps to seize the wealth of the billionaires, and use it to provide a decent income, and affordable, warm homes for all.

• See more page 2

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



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