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formerly **Militant**

Bankers' bonuses Bosses' bailouts Tax cuts for the rich

FORCE TORIES OUT

Strike together for a real pay rise Build a new mass workers' party

RYAN ALDRED
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Lift the cap on bankers' bonuses and bailout energy bosses' profits; these are the first acts of Liz Truss' new government to deal with a cost-of-living emergency.

The energy companies' gargantuan £170 billion 'excess' profits will be protected by the government borrowing over £100 billion to deal with the energy crisis. Perhaps they'll get bankers to pay for the loan out of their bonuses and break with the Tory tradition of hammering the poor?

Meanwhile, the rest of us are wondering how the hell we're going to get through winter - 14% of families are already behind on their bills. The most expensive government intervention on energy in Europe means that we'll still be paying double what we did a year ago from 1 October.

Implementing her campaign promise to reverse the National Insurance hike won't be enough. The poorest 10% will save a whopping £7.66 a year on their annual tax bill! Meanwhile, those earning over £100,000 will save £1,800. The Tories' mini-budget offers little prospect of a lifeline for workers.

But workers are fighting back. We'll see the largest coordinated strike action so far this year when rail and Royal Mail workers, together with dockers at Liverpool and Felixstowe, strike on 1 October.

The Trades Union Congress, which brings together the trade unions in Britain, has an opportunity to seriously build for even bigger coordinated strike action with a number of unions calling for linking up strikes, and more unions balloting for strikes this autumn.

It's become abundantly clear that enough is enough. But what do we do at the ballot box? If we hold our breath waiting for any fight from Keir Starmer then our faces will be bluer than his policies! With Labour shadow cabinet members banned from speaking out on picket lines and being sacked for doing so, workers need a party of our own.

Labour has firmly ruled it out, but we need rail, mail and the utilities back in public ownership, this time democratically controlled. What better to put that case than a mass party made up of rail staff, posties and the millions of workers being hammered by profiteering bosses and the Tories?

Over 6 million people are trade union members in Britain, with millions more workers behind them desperate for change. If we can challenge the bosses in the workplace and their representatives at the ballot box, we can stop people from having to choose between heating or eating, and instead leave Truss and Starmer out in the cold! Let's build a movement to kick them all out, and build a socialist alternative to profit-driven capitalism.

Truss licence to frack will meet resistance

CHRIS BAUGH
LANCASHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

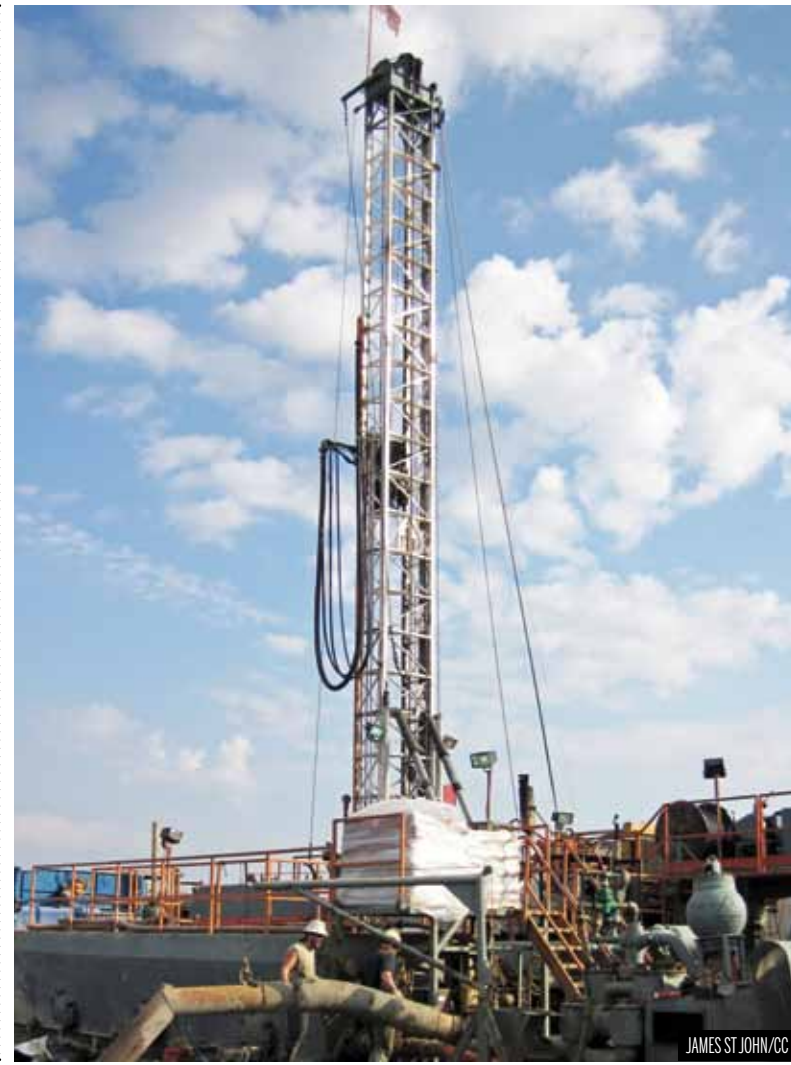
One of new prime minister Liz Truss' first announcements was to end the moratorium on fracking, in force since 2019. The ban was introduced after fracking-induced earthquakes, protests, and direct action at Preston New Road and many other fracking sites.

Polls consistently show less than one in five support fracking, even fewer in areas near fracking sites. A politically unpopular move, the weeks-old cabinet is reportedly already split on the plans.

Fracking is a shale gas extraction technique that pumps large volumes of water, sand and chemicals at high pressure into a gas well, to crack the shale rock. It adds to greenhouse gas emissions, including risking toxic methane gas emissions. Secrecy about the precise chemicals used leaves workers and nearby communities at risk of exposure to a range of toxic and carcinogenic substances.

In ending the moratorium, Truss is ignoring a leaked report by the British Geological Survey which had been delayed because of the Queen's death. It admits that fracking-induced earthquakes and their magnitude remain "a scientific challenge".

Current regulations mean drilling must stop if earthquakes exceed a



JAMES ST JOHN/CC

magnitude of 0.5; the fracking companies are reportedly lobbying for a substantial rise in this figure.

The 2019 earthquakes on the Fylde in Lancashire registered at 2.9, and 3.5 at Coniston in Cumbria. While there is no immediate risk of Blackpool Tower or the Old Man of Coniston collapsing any time soon, there is the genuine risk of damage from further earthquakes caused by fracking.

Earthquakes

The earthquake in 2019 was felt across the region. Fracking at Cuadrilla's Preston New Road site was suspended within hours. Since the earthquake there have been no published official reports of damage to property, but a total of 197 complaints were made about damage to property, with a third from the small seaside town of Lytham St Annes.

Proceeding with fracking under these circumstances demonstrates the loyalty of Truss, a former industrial economist at Shell, to the fossil fuel companies, and the Tories' contempt for public safety. Oh well, what's a few earthquakes in 'the desolate north'?

Truss made the fracking announcement as part of a package to freeze energy prices at an unaffordable level which doubles last year's bills. It is the usual Tory greenwash to claim that fracking will help people with energy bills.

Tories also claim that fracking will

provide much needed jobs in areas of low employment. According to government reports, it would produce potentially 400 jobs in Blackpool and on the Fylde Coast.

Instead, public investment in offshore windfarms in the Irish Sea could generate huge quantities of energy and provide up to ten thousand new, skilled, unionised jobs.

In Lancashire, local trade unions, climate activists and NHS campaigners are discussing protests in the coming weeks: against the cost-of-living crisis; in solidarity with strikers; defending the NHS; and opposing fracking, putting forward a climate jobs alternative.

Any attempt to restart drilling on Preston New Road, or at any other sites, is likely to meet with public resistance.

There is an alternative to the madness of the capitalist market responsible for the massive poverty around areas like Blackpool, and plans to frack the countryside in Little Plumpton with its damaging environmental consequences.

The trade union struggles taking place, the impact of rising living costs and the urgent issue of cutting global greenhouse emissions, all point towards a socialist answer: bringing energy resources into public ownership, with democratic workers' and community control, as part of the socialist transition needed to reverse the slide to climate disaster.

Pub landlord: 'A straw poll of punters would see a clear majority for nationalising energy – they would be right'

The effects of rising energy prices, on top of the Covid-19 pandemic, threaten the existence of many pubs and other small businesses. Without a rescue package, as many as seven in ten pubs could go under this winter. And a delayed or insufficient package won't be enough for many.

Trevor Maris and Karen Hall own a traditional micropub, the Chesterfield Alehouse in Derbyshire. The Socialist recently spoke to Trevor.

Before we talk about energy costs, the past two weeks must have been somewhat strange. Have you noticed any difference in what your customers have been discussing?

Obviously the death of a monarch has been a unique experience for most of our customers and it would have been very strange for it not to feature in discussions around the pub. There have been a few arguments between those who still want to retain a monarchy and those - probably the majority - who think it is an outdated relic.

What has been most interesting, though, is the almost universal criticism of the blanket coverage on the BBC and other media, which has been seen as a cynical ploy to detract from the economic crisis most of us are facing.

Has the Queen's death caused any issues for you as a small business?

Yes. It added further delays in, what for some will be, rescue packages being announced. This comes on top of the delay caused by the Tory leadership contest. By the way, before her death, the main topic of pub conversation had centred around one question: 'Are they really the best two on offer to be prime minister?'

What is the situation, then, with financial assistance?

We're still waiting. It will now be November before there's any actual help. And backdated payments won't prevent some small businesses going to the wall.

Everyone has known for over six months that energy prices will rise in October but the government has



so far done nothing to help. The long, hot summer has already meant an increase for pubs in electricity usage to keep beers chilled. Some won't survive.

Liz Truss has said she will introduce a temporary six-month cap on energy prices and create an 'energy supply taskforce', but that's like using a glass of water to put out a forest fire.

Many small businesses are already further indebted by having to repay loans taken out under the Bounce Back Loan Scheme during the pandemic.

What would help?

The temporary reduction in VAT to 5% on food and soft drinks during the pandemic helped pubs but that was stopped in March this year. There is a call for another reduction in VAT but across the board rather than on a limited number of goods. This would provide some immediate relief and prevent some collapses.

When Rishi Sunak was chancellor, he said small businesses were "the heart of our economy". Nothing the government is currently doing backs up that statement.

What are your customers saying about the energy crisis?

If I did a straw poll tomorrow, there would be a clear majority for nationalising energy. I've no doubt about that. And they'd be right!

Strike wave is back - and growing

NSSN action summit to demand union coordination

ROB WILLIAMS
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL TRADE UNION AND
WORKPLACE ORGANISER

The mourning period for the Queen acted as a pause button for the strike wave that grew over the summer.

The localised disputes that have been developing for the last year have been joined over the last few months by national action on the rails, BT and Royal Mail. The Trades Union Congress (TUC) postponed its congress that was due to take place from 11-14 September, at a key moment as public sector unions started to move to industrial action ballots on pay.

But this has only been put on temporary hold. In fact, the rescheduled TUC Congress in Brighton on 18-20 October will be held as many of those ballots happen. Moreover, the strikes will be back on.

On 30 September, 115,000 CWU members in Royal Mail will recommence their action and the next day 50,000 rail workers will join them in RMT and Aslef. And 1 October will also see 2,500 dockers in Liverpool and Felixstowe in the midst of their weeks of action. These strikes will be taking place during ten days of action being taken by UCU members in 26 further education colleges, as well as rolling action by Unison members in over 20 universities. In addition, local strikes, such as the Newham bin

workers, have started again and have been escalated.

The TUC's lobby of parliament has been shifted as well, from 19 October to Wednesday 2 November. Its timing lends itself even more to be a vital platform to build coordinated strike action.

Midweek demo

The TUC and the unions must mobilise to make it a mass midweek demonstration, that can reach out to all workers fighting the cost-of-living crisis, and working-class people facing huge energy prices.

The proposal by chancellor Kwasi Kwarteng to remove the caps on bankers' bonuses shows their priority - to protect profits at the expense of workers' pay. And if Truss moves to implement her threatened new anti-union measures, the unions should prepare



to call a 24-hour general strike as a first response.

The National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) has rearranged its pre-TUC Congress event to Sunday 16 October. The push into autumn makes this even more important.

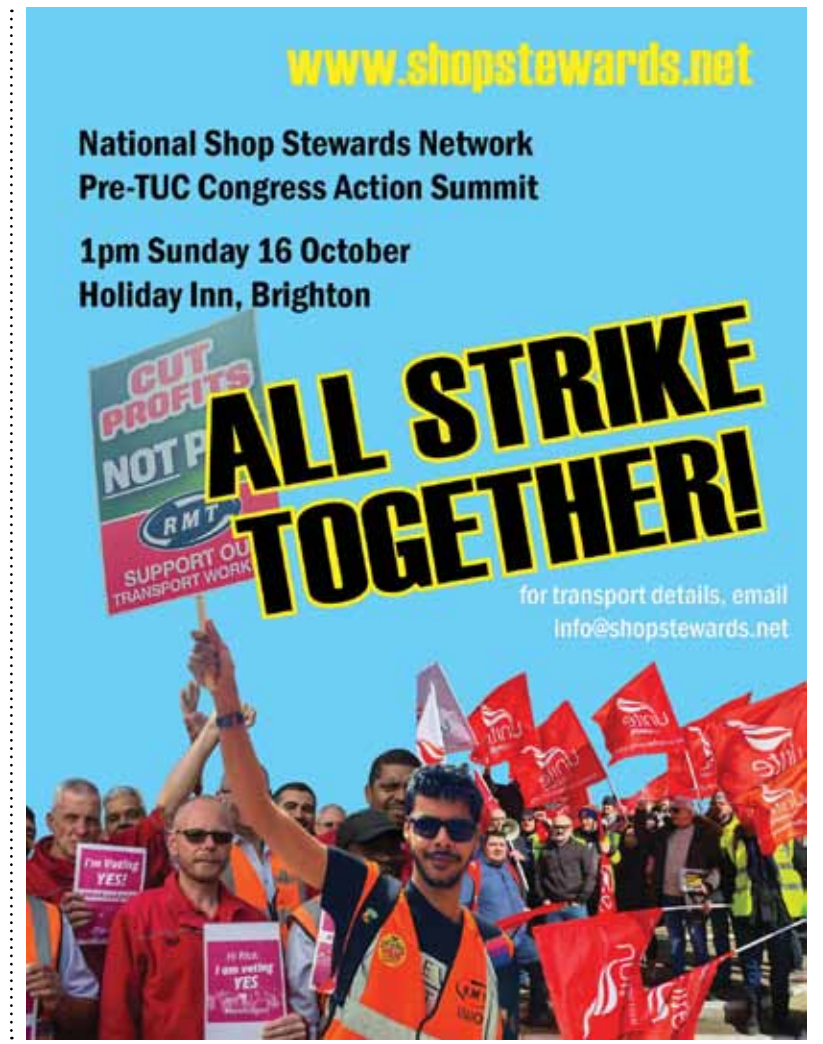
It is now an action summit - to bring together striking union reps and members or those moving into action - to demand that the unions coordinate action so that millions of workers across the private and public sectors, all struggling to keep a roof above their families' heads, can strike together.

The death of the Queen held up the strikes. But the first actions and comments of Truss's Tory government have shown, like Covid did, that there is no such thing as national unity in this crisis.

The choice is simple: workers' jobs and wages or the profits of the fat-cat employers. That's what faces the unions now.

Get all the latest union news

nationalshopstewardsnetwork
with the NSSN bulletin
shopstewards.net



Bankers' bonuses unleashed by pro-rich Tories

NEIL ADAMS
READING SOCIALIST PARTY

The daily injustices for working-class people under the Tory government become ever-more clear. Kwasi Kwarteng, the chancellor, has announced he is considering bringing an end to the cap on bankers' bonuses, whereby bonuses are limited to twice their salaries.

If this goes ahead, it will only further fuel the anger of workers struggling to make ends meet. Most of us would be quite happy with a bonus that is twice our salary!

As ever, the excuse given is that these financial 'masterminds' need to be massively remunerated for fear of losing their talents to competitors. But the reality is that they play fast and loose with other people's money, safe in the knowledge that they will be bailed out by us regardless, like they were following the 2007-08 crash to the tune of £500 billion. And we never seem to benefit from the so-called trickle-down effect!

To stop the rich getting endlessly

richer at our expense, we need a party that is prepared to fight for socialist policies, including nationalisation of the banks and finance houses under democratic workers' control. This way the banks could be run in our interests and used to finance socially useful measures.



Benefits shrink as bills loom

Fight for decent benefits that rise with the cost of living

KAREN SEYMOUR
MANSFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

The cost of living is now 13.9% higher than it was last year, according to official RPI inflation. Universal Credit (UC) and other benefits rose by a measly 3.1% in April, and are not due to rise again until next spring. How are people supposed to manage until then?

Many were already struggling to survive even before the cost-of-living crisis, parents skipping meals so their kids could eat, for instance. Food banks have been fighting to keep up with demand. Meanwhile, some people are taking drastic measures to try to cut down on energy, including turning off fridges and freezers at night, and using dangerous candles to light their homes.

Two-thirds of families claiming UC are in work.

Some part-time workers claiming UC, often to be able to care for children or elderly relatives, are coerced into taking on more hours, under threat of sanctions if they refuse!

Some families will miss out on any increase at all. The benefit cap, frozen at £20,000 (£23,000 in London) since 2016, will rule out any cost-of-living increase for many - including families with a number of children.

Scrap the cap

The cap includes housing benefit, which goes directly to the landlord. It is not money that can be used for day-to-day expenses!

The government argues the cap incentivises work, encourages people to move to smaller homes, and is fair to taxpayers. In fact, it causes social cleansing, pushes poorer families out of inner cities, and families into overcrowded housing. It is designed to wear low-income families down, making our lives just that little bit harder.

Meagre 'emergency' cost-of-living

payments bear no relation to the extra we are having to pay at the check-outs and in our bills. The government is paying as little as it can get away with, trying to avoid social unrest. The growing strike wave shows that this won't work!

The Socialist Party fights for decent benefits that rise in line with the cost of living, and scrapping the benefits cap. We need a welfare system that is a proper safety net for those who fall on hard times, not something they are frightened to use.

Join the fightback

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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

NEU consultative ballots

Teachers and support staff: Reject the pay offer and vote 'yes' to strike!

MARTIN POWELL-DAVIES
NEU MEMBER

The new academic year has started, but staff and parents alike will be worrying how they are going to manage to get through an autumn and winter of soaring energy, food and housing costs.

Education workers must answer this threat collectively, aiming for every member to use their vote in this September's preliminary ballots, so that we can join the growing wave of strike action fighting to win pay rises that match the rising cost of living.

As the lowest-paid section of the education workforce, school support staff desperately need an inflation-busting pay rise. But the government offer is at least 4% under inflation. It would leave a teaching assistant £10 a week worse off in real terms.

The National Education Union (NEU) has begun a consultative ballot of support staff. Reject the offer and vote yes to strike. Join with teacher members of the NEU, and support staff in other unions, in saying no to poverty pay!

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 actually a huge pay cut. It is also just the latest in years of cuts, that have seen teachers' pay fall by 20% in real terms since 2010.

Some school staff worry: can we afford to strike? If we don't - especially when other unions are taking action

- that will only embolden new prime minister Liz Truss and the Tories to keep cutting school budgets, holding down our pay, and piling on yet more scrutiny and workload.

Others might worry: is there enough money? Yes - but it's being hoarded by profiteers instead of being used to fund education and meet public need.

The FTSE 100 companies paid a record £110 billion in dividends to shareholders in 2019, double what it was a decade previously. The energy companies are making money hand over fist. In the first half of this year alone, BP made £11.9 billion, Shell £17.3 billion. Nationalisation could take hold of these profits.

Fight for pay and funding

So it's not 'either' pay 'or' school funding - our campaign is to win both. It will be understood by communities who are growing angry at seeing how society's wealth is being used to boost the cash piles of a minority, while they can't pay their bills.

The battles for better pay and for 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.

With support staff unions consulting over pay, and the NASUWT teaching union also talking about action, NEU members can vote with confidence that a strong programme of strike action could be coordinated across school staff, and alongside

other unions in the public and private sectors too. For example, UCU members are about to take action in 26 further education (FE) colleges.

This government is under pressure. Our action can make it think again on pay.

A determined stand this year can be a springboard for further action to demand a complete overhaul of existing pay and conditions, including limits on working hours and class sizes, and an end to performance pay.

What NEU members can do

- Make sure the NEU nationally has your correct email and mobile number, so that you get sent your online vote.

- Talk to all your NEU colleagues and urge everyone to be ready to vote for strike action.

- Look out for the NEU messages containing your personal voting link - for teacher members in state schools, from 24 September. The online vote for NEU members in Sixth Form Colleges and some FE Colleges will open on 12 September.

- Local officers, reps and 'ballot volunteers' must organise to make sure we build the big ballot turnouts that we need. Personal contact is key - conversations, workplace meetings and phone calls are far more effective than emails!



PHOTO: JOSH ASKER

Scottish teachers' massive rejection of pay insult

JIM HALFPENNY
WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE EIS JOINT SECRETARY
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)

In an indicative ballot, members of the EIS union, who make up over 80% of teachers in Scotland, have voted overwhelmingly to reject a derisory 5% pay offer and to take industrial action including strike action.

The turnout for the ballot, conducted over just two weeks, was a phenomenal 78%, with 91% voting in favour of strike action and 94% to reject the 5% offer.

Unless a major improvement is made to the current pay offer, a formal strike ballot will now take place.

The employers - the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) - and the Scottish government need to stop attacking workers and play their part to invest more in education and in teachers.

While we, and other frontline workers, did essential work throughout the pandemic the rich and the privileged were making huge profits at our expense.

Schools need to provide quality education, to help alleviate the effects of poverty and give every young person a good and equal chance to thrive.

● See full article on the Socialist Party Scotland website

PCS national ballot on pay and jobs

Vote 'yes' to defend our jobs, improve our pay and protect our pensions

DAVE SEMPLE
PCS BRANCH SECRETARY WIGAN, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Socialist Party members in PCS will be campaigning for a massive 'yes' vote in the ballot which starts on 26 September.

The Tory anti-union laws require a turnout of at least 50% for a strike ballot to be legal, so it's vital that all members vote, and vote 'yes'. A huge 'yes' vote will send a message to the Tories that we are serious about tackling the cost-of-living crisis impacting on all of us - to defend our jobs, improve our pay and stop the attacks on our pensions.

We need to send a message to Truss, the new Tory leader, that we will resist any attempt to impose regional pay rates - in reality pay cuts - which she announced as part of her leadership campaign.

Truss's threats

We need to make clear to her that we will fight any new anti-union legislation, which again is a threat made in her leadership campaign. The Tories are divided and weak. They can be beaten with resolute, coordinated union action.

The action being taken on the railways, Royal Mail and the ports has already been announced, which if left unchallenged will decimate vital local services at a time when they are required the most.

This is on top of existing staff shortages, office closures and intolerable work pressures, all of which will increase the already unacceptable stress levels of hard-working staff, and cause more poverty and hardship for all of us.

Government pay policies have held down our pay for more than a decade. We are at least 20% worse off in real terms already, and with



ROGER BLACKWELL/CC

called and it is crucial that all members vote 'yes'.

The ballot includes the demand to defend our jobs. 91,000 job cuts have already been announced, which if left unchallenged will decimate vital local services at a time when they are required the most.

This is on top of existing staff shortages, office closures and intolerable work pressures, all of which will increase the already unacceptable stress levels of hard-working staff,

and cause more poverty and hardship for all of us.

Job cuts

Socialist Party members argued tirelessly for opposition to job cuts to be included in the ballot. We are pleased to see that the union leadership has now done so.

Government pay policies have held down our pay for more than a decade. We are at least 20% worse off in real terms already, and with

current RPI inflation at over 12%, and the huge increase in energy prices, PCS members face a cost-of-living crisis. This will result in thousands of our members facing severe hardship: the Tory government's derisory limit of 2-3% on civil service wage increases just doesn't cut it. We must fight for more.

The union's 10% pay claim, a minimum hourly rate of at least £15 and a 2% reduction in pension contributions is modest set against the state of

the economy, which is certain to get much worse. Coupled with this are attempts to cut our redundancy entitlements in order to sack many of us on the cheap. Our demands need to be met in full.

Political response

It's clear a Starmer-led New Labour government will not resolve our problems. It's crucial that the trade union movement unites, and builds on the magnificent show of strength demonstrated by railway and tube workers, communications workers and the ports. Workers in the construction industry and companies such as Amazon have also stood up for themselves. The mood to take on the Tories is growing and paying off.

The cost-of-living and energy price crisis demands an immediate industrial response, but also poses the need for energy, rail, water, mail and telecommunications, as a start, to be taken into public ownership - something already ruled out by Starmer. We need a political party based on the interests of workers, based on socialist ideas. Union leaders should take steps now towards such a party, including standing candidates in the general election, whenever it is called.

We must campaign together with other workers, strike together with other workers, and as a start - vote 'yes'!

- It is a postal ballot. Ballot papers must be posted back by 4 November to ensure they are counted.
- If you are not already a PCS member you need to join! Go to pcs.org.uk

Fighting the cuts to libraries by Hackney's Labour council



Hackney library workers in a previous battle

BRIAN DEBUS
HACKNEY UNISON CHAIR, PERSONAL CAPACITY

On Monday 5 September, every staff member in libraries in Hackney received a letter from the 'Strategic Director' notifying of possible redundancy, deleting nearly 100 people's jobs.

This will mean nearly every staff member having to apply for a new post, in a new structure, with no guarantee of a job.

The bosses claim that 'only' 19 full-time-equivalent posts will go, but because of the wide range of hours and working arrangements in libraries - from job-shares and part-time workers to weekend assistants - that will affect as many as 100 people.

In an illustration of the council's priorities, initially the cuts being demanded amounted to £200,000. Then in May, the council increased the budget for four senior manager posts by £50,000 - and now the cuts are £250,000! So there's to be a direct

transfer of money from services to managers - who will have fewer staff to manage!

A significant number of staff are members of Unison, and will want to resist this proposal.

Initiatives which are likely to be taken include:

- A public petition to the council, demanding that they stop this devastation of library services
- A leaflet explaining the impact the cuts would have on library services as well as staff
- A poster, which we aim to get displayed in hundreds if not thousands of locations across Hackney
- A public meeting hosted by Unison.

Unison members are also being consulted as to whether they are prepared to take strike action, to protect their jobs and the library service.

Hackney is not only a Labour

council, but has a directly elected Mayor, Philip Glanville, who is feted outside of Hackney as being 'progressive'.

He is happy to speak on platforms around London against austerity, but is presiding over job and service cuts in his own borough. We are likely to produce postcards for the public to use to help us put the demand squarely to him that he stops these cuts.

The Socialist Party calls for the council to refuse to pass on Tory cuts - instead, we need a no-cuts needs-based budget, and a fight for funding from the government.

The campaign should also appeal to the two Labour MPs, Meg Hillier and Diane Abbott. Meg was a Blairite opponent of Jeremy Corbyn, but Diane Abbott was a prominent supporter. Will she come out on the side of the workers fighting the Labour council cuts?

We demand: no staffing cuts and no service cuts in Hackney libraries!

Dockers strike - and learn lessons from past battles

DAVE WALSH
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Liverpool dockers voted for strike action over pay and conditions, with a turnout of over 90% and a vote for action of almost 100%. They embarked on a two-week strike after the Queen's funeral, following a 7% pay offer, which in reality amounts to a considerable pay cut.

It is the first strike action there since the bitter, long-running dispute which lasted 28 months from 1995-98.

John Lynch, one of the senior stewards, reported to Liverpool Trades Council that the dockers are bitter and angry after years of exploitation. That is especially after working through the pandemic, during which time shareholders received huge dividends and bosses got massive bonuses, while workers have had a rate of inflation.

During the 1990s dispute, Tony Blair's New Labour won the general election. That government had

a 'golden share' in the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, but refused to use it to support the dockers, who had been ruthlessly sacked by employers hell-bent on breaking the union.

The dockers were also let down by Blair's close ally Bill Morris, now a Lord, then leader of the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU - now part of Unite the Union), who failed to organise any industrial support. But the dockers themselves built up tremendous international support, which helped sustain their strike for so long.

International support

Those international links still remain, and leading stewards from the original dispute, like Tony Nelson and Terry Teague, have been working closely with the current strike leaders to contact union comrades from around the world. The International Dockers Committee and the International Transport Federation are both committed to not moving goods coming from or going to Liverpool.

At the same trades council



Liverpool dockers on 20 September PHOTOS: ALEX SMITH

meeting where John reported on the dock dispute, we also heard reports from strike leaders in civil service union PCS, about the dispute of workers in the contact centre for DBS criminal record checks, and the CWU about the BT, Openreach and Royal Mail strikes. They all made a call on the Trades Union Congress to

coordinate these and other actions to maximise their impact.

In 1995, the Liverpool dockers were left isolated by a Labour government and poor trade union leaders. In contrast to this, John reported that they were receiving tremendous support from Unite general secretary Sharon Graham, and are feeling far

from isolated following Unite's many victories under her leadership.

- Dock workers at Felixstowe are striking again from 27 September, coinciding with the Liverpool strike. This action follows a two-week strike in August against the same inadequate pay offer.

CAPITALIST CRISIS AND RISING TIDE OF CLASS STRUGGLE

On 17 and 18 September the Socialist Party national committee met to discuss the political situation and our priorities for the autumn. Here we outline the main themes from the first discussion on perspectives for Britain.

The national committee was meeting at the end of a summer dominated by a rising tide of class struggle, a developing economic crisis, and an extremely weak Tory government. These are the most important features of the current situation, but they were momentarily obscured by the Queen's death and funeral.

The capitalist elite consciously attempted to use the period of mourning for the Queen to create a mood of 'national unity' and to bolster support for King Charles, in the hope he can play the same role as his mother in defending the interests of British capitalism. However, their efforts have only had an extremely limited and ephemeral effect, which is already fading.

It is true that, over the recent decades of austerity and pay-restraint, the monarchy has maintained higher levels of support than many other capitalist institutions. For example, whereas only 20% of people have trust in capitalist politicians, 30% in parliament, and 37% in the Metropolitan Police, around 55% of people continue to think that it is 'quite' or 'very' important for Britain to have a monarchy. Nonetheless, the 300,000 who came to London for the lying in state was less than half the numbers predicted, and has been dwarfed by numerous demonstrations in recent decades - like the 750,000 trade unionists who marched against austerity in 2011.

While, at this stage, the majority still view monarchy as an "innocent and decorative institution", as Leon Trotsky described the outlook of the working-class in the 1920s, the depth of support for the monarchy has been hollowed out. It is lower today, for example, than the 85% who thought it was important to have a monarchy in 1983, and for the first time in 2021 the numbers who wanted the monarchy to be abolished reached 25%, 31% among the young.

A big element in the continued levels of support for the monarchy has been the relative popularity of the Queen who, during her long reign, largely managed to maintain the illusion that she was 'above' politics, and was associated with growth in working and middle-class living standards in the first decades of her reign.

The capitalist class are worried that, in an era of increasing turmoil, Charles will be a far less effective bulwark of support for their system. In 2021 only 32% of people thought he would make a 'good king'. Inevitably that has been temporarily boosted in the last week, but events are likely to undermine his popularity once more.

While the mainstream media in

Britain has had wall-to-wall positive coverage of the Royal Family, the serious press internationally have been focused on the scale of the crisis in Britain. The New York Times bleakly reported that Britons "are unsure of their nation's identity, its economic and social wellbeing, or even its role in the world. It almost seems as if London Bridge is down. In just the two months since Mr Johnson announced he would step down, inflation has soared, a recession looms and household energy bills have almost doubled... It all feeds into a sense of uncertainty and insecurity, which was already there because of Brexit and then Covid, and now a new, very inexperienced prime minister. The Queen was the rock, and now the rock is removed."

Cost-of-living fightback

While the current pomp might marginally and momentarily distract the mass of the population from the cost-of-living crisis, the end of the Queen's reign will turn out to be one more element that undermines the institutions of British capitalism. And it is already clear that the fight against the cost of living squeeze will not be delayed for long. On 1 October we will see the biggest step towards coordinated strike action so far, with CWU workers at Royal Mail, RMT and Aslef on national rail, plus Felixstowe and Liverpool Docks, all on strike.

The TUC Congress, with motions from six national unions calling for coordinated action, has been re-scheduled for 18-20 October and the National Shop Stewards Network will be rallying on its eve - Sunday 16 October - to demand that coordinated action is made into a reality. The TUC lobby of parliament has also been re-scheduled for 2 November. Turning it into a mass midweek march on parliament, to show Truss and her cronies that the working class is fighting back, would be an important step towards the coordinated action that is needed.

However, while it is clear that working-class struggles are on the rise, they are still a long way from fully expressing the depth of anger at the biggest fall in living standards that has taken place at any point in the Queen's reign. One factor is the effect of the 2016 anti-trade union legislation, which has created huge bureaucratic obstacles to taking legal national strike action. With no counter-arguments prepared in advance by the trade union leadership, generally there is not the confidence to ignore the cumbersome process of campaigning to win and get the necessary turnouts in national ballots.

However, the CWU and RMT have already shown that it is possible to smash through the legal turnout obstacles. The 97.1% yes vote for strike action in Royal Mail means that the 100,000 or so postal workers who voted to strike is greater than the 81,000 ageing Tory party members who elected the new prime minister!

In a number of unions, including civil service union PCS and the National Education Union (NEU), Socialist Party members have been



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No capitalist government would be able to find a way out of the intractable problems facing the British economy, which flow from the long-term decline of British capitalism

42% of low-paid workers report missing meals because they cannot afford to eat

campaigning for many months for a national lead to build for strike action, which would have enabled earlier ballots. However, only now, under pressure from below, are their leaderships moving to ballot, meaning that legal coordinated strike action involving the big majority of unions balloting will not be viable before the late autumn at the earliest.

Nonetheless, the pressure from below for both national and coordinated action is growing. One indication was the recent consultative ballot in the 55,000-strong Scottish teachers' union, the EIS. In a very short, two-week ballot, 91% voted for strike action, on a 78% turnout. While, at this stage, the level of generalised strike action still falls well short of the public sector strikes of 2011, the level of anger and determination of the current action, including the number of indefinite strikes, show that the potential is there for far broader and more deep-rooted action than a decade ago.

It is the current dramatic fall in living standards that is the immediate cause of the strike wave; but it comes on top of decades of pay restraint,

making Britain one of the most unequal countries in the world. Whereas the richest 10% are the fifth richest in the world, average earners are only 12th richest, and the bottom 10% are languishing at 15th, with lower living standards than Slovenia, and only marginally higher than Poland. As pay has fallen in real terms in the last few months, 42% of low-paid workers report missing meals because they cannot afford to eat enough.

Economy

Given the state of Britain's economy, this brutal squeeze on living standards is set to continue and, whatever the short-term developments, will result in increased class struggle in the next period. Worldwide capitalism is heading into recession, with the World Bank predicting the steepest, and most synchronised, slowdown since 1970. All the major blocs - the EU, China and the US - are slowing sharply as central banks raise interest rates to try and drive inflation down.

The World Bank does not predict, however, inflation being successfully squeezed out, expecting it to remain

around 5% globally throughout 2023. Stagflation, and a new era of debt crises - particularly for the neocolonial world - are therefore what lie ahead for capitalism worldwide.

Within that, the specific crisis of British capitalism, and of its historic political party - the Tories - is particularly acute. It's true that the predictions for Britain's peak inflation has come down slightly, from 14.8% to 10.8%, in part because of the scale of Truss's state intervention into the energy market, but it remains the highest in the G10 advanced capitalist countries. What is more, it can rise servicing, even if world energy prices come down a bit, as a result of the slide in sterling.

Sterling fell to its lowest level since 1985 as the markets absorbed the grim economic news coming out of Britain. In August alone, the amount of goods bought in the UK fell by 1.6%, while the companies in administration rose by 43%. The decline in sterling is likely to dramatically aggravate the problem which triggered that fall. With the lowest proportion of the economy based on manufacturing of

any G7 country, at just 10%, the big majority of 'goods bought' are imports, which will now again become more expensive.

This squeeze affects the working class and poor the most, but will also hurt the middle class, including small business owners. It will also lead to a further real-terms cut to council and public sector budgets. Meanwhile, rising inflation is increasing the cost of government debt. The national debt is now around 100% of GDP, which is still slightly lower than France or Spain, but in Britain a quarter of it is 'index-linked', meaning the cost of servicing it goes up with inflation.

No capitalist government would be able to find a way out of the intractable problems facing the British economy, which flow from the long-term decline of British capitalism. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that the serious representatives of the ruling elite have got their head in the hands in despair about what Truss looks set to do.

In response to Truss's victory, Deutsche Bank wrote a report outlining the dangers called 'Crunch time for sterling'. Given that Britain's

current account deficit requires constant inflows of capital, they warned that a "large, unfunded and untargeted package of tax cuts and spending pledges could alarm global markets. It could lead to foreign investors refusing to fund the UK external deficit by buying government debt, as investor confidence cannot be taken for granted." They concluded that a 1970s-style balance of payments crisis, when the government was forced to go cap-in-hand to the IMF was on the agenda.

It is against that background that the very weak Truss government is operating. She was forced into an immediate, huge U-turn over energy bills: if she had not acted her government would have been forced out in short order. Even with the measures she has taken, energy bills will be completely unaffordable for millions.

However, her strident 'ideological' opposition to making the owners of the big corporations and the rich pay for anything, means that she has refused to offset the £100 billion plus cost of capping energy bills by even a token tax on the huge profits of the energy companies. The only other announcement made by her government so far is to lift the cap on bankers' bonuses!

She also appears to be set on announcing cuts to national insurance and corporation tax. These measures make no sense beyond pleasing her extremely narrow support base of 81,000 Tory party members and less than a third of Tory MPs. Her government's blatant defence of increasing inequality will dramatically fuel class struggle. At the same time, her cavalier discounting of the real dangers facing British capitalism could speed up the markets turning on Britain as a 'basket-case'.

General election

It is not possible to give an exact timetable of how quickly this government will melt down, but it would be a big mistake for Truss to conclude that it's within her gift to determine that the election will not be until 2024. It is not the most likely prospect that the two-thirds of Tory MPs who did not back Truss will continue propping up her government if it presides over a plunging currency and surging class struggle. There is every chance that some will instead put the interests of their class - the capitalist elite - before their disintegrating party, and break with Truss. Starmer's New Labour has over the last two weeks led the charge to try and bolster the institutions of capitalism and create a false sense of 'national unity', and is ready and willing to welcome Tory defectors.

Does the extreme weakness of this Tory government mean that it will be forced to make concessions to the strike wave that is developing? In this period of growing struggle, the bosses and governments can be forced to make concessions. In Spain, for example, the unions have forced a third of collective wage agreements to be automatically linked to inflation, something that seemed utopian not long ago. It is certainly possible that the strikes can win victories, and beyond

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Current events are beginning to show them that the working class could be a force capable of leading a successful struggle for a socialist society

that inflict a decisive defeat on the Tories, forcing them out of office.

However, from the point of view of the capitalist class there is a view to digging in and trying to face the strike movement down. After all, concessions to one group of workers, even if they are crumbs compared to what is needed, would only give confidence to others to fight. If Truss attempts to 'dig in', escalating action will be required, but would be able to defeat this crumbling Tory government.

If the government is short-sighted enough to try and introduce the new anti-union legislation Truss promised in her election campaign, it will prove a major miscalculation. This is not taking place against the background of very few strikes, as in 2016, but when the unions are being forced to fight. Already, with the sit-ins of Amazon workers, we have seen that a new generation will sometimes take action without a thought to anti-union laws.

If new laws are threatened, the TUC should respond by calling a 24-hour warning strike - going beyond coordinating existing ballots and mobilising the whole trade union movement out on a specific day. Given the increasing tempo of the struggle, if the TUC leadership does not act the prospect would be posed of such a strike developing from below in response to the government attempting to act against a strike, as happened in 1972 to free five dockers jailed under the Industrial Relations Act.

Starmer

Against the background of this tumult, there is every possibility that a Starmer-led government could be thrust into power as a result of Tory meltdown. However, while there is growing desperation to get rid of the Tories, there is also a widespread feeling that Labour is no longer a workers' party, and that Starmer stands up for the elite, for the few rather than the many. If any authoritative section of the trade union movement was to launch a new workers' party, it would quickly gain significant support.

The Socialist Party has a vital role to play in campaigning for every possible step towards such a party being formed. Our most important task, however, is to win a new generation to the Socialist Party. The crisis of capitalism over the last decade has led many to begin to look towards socialist ideas. Current events are beginning to show them that the working class could be a force capable of leading a successful struggle for a socialist society.

Join the fightback

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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

Bin strikes step up against Newham's Labour council

JAMES IVENS
LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Bin workers in Newham, east London, were up for the fight at the start of their latest two-week strike over pay on 20 September.

The Labour mayor claimed that the council doesn't have the extra £1 million needed to pay the refuse workers. Yet the council increased its 'usable' reserves to £616 million during the pandemic!

Socialist Party members have consistently argued that the council should use these reserves, and launch a big campaign, with the unions and communities in Newham, to win extra funds from this totally divided, weak Tory government.

The action is solid. Only a small fraction of the usual number of wagons is leaving the depot, staffed mainly by agency workers.

Some have had threats to their jobs held over them by thuggish management. Others are untrained and barely capable of the job, making them ineffective at breaking the strike.

The bulk of both drivers and loaders, agency or directly employed, are standing strong. There's a mood for coordinating with other strikes, and

disdain for the borough's Labour mayor and council.

The Labour council has offered a pay increase of £950 – but only if the loaders and drivers work every bank holiday. Unite the Union accuses the Labour mayor Rokhsana Fiaz of making "preposterous" claims, and has exposed that in reality the offer is zero percent on basic pay.

One striking driver said: "The mayor says we'll get 17.9% more, but that's only if you work all the overtime. That's not what a pay rise is. A pay rise is when you do your normal hours and have more in your pay packet at the end of it. We don't have that."

A striking loader said: "We walk ten, twelve miles a day. I put my heart and soul into it, I work through my breaks, not for the supervisors, but because I don't want to spend another minute having to do it. But when we work hard and finish early all we get is more work for no extra pay."

"We work in all weathers, we worked through Covid, we have to deal with all sorts - nappies squirting out, maggots frothing out the top of the bins. We're not asking for much. They think we're all stupid and uneducated, but they didn't want to be exposed about all that money they have in reserve!"

Newham bin picket 20 September PHOTO: JAMES IVENS



Uni workers strike over pay



Thousands of university staff in Unison including cleaners, administrators, library, catering and security workers are striking in a dispute over pay. At Winchester Uni, pickets were in good spirits having smashed the ballot threshold and the Socialist Party was out in force with pickets around the campus. Pickets were angry at the measly imposed pay rise

saying: "I've got less in my pay packet than before." Pickets were lifted by the strikes of RMT and CWU members. "The university here has spent millions on a new building then say there is no money for staff. We hope our stand will encourage others members to reach the threshold and join the strike alongside UCU as well."

Scottish council workers' strikes secure concessions on pay - but more can be won



Joint trade rally in Glasgow PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND

JIM MCFARLANE
UNISON NEC (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Scottish council workers have received a fifth pay offer for 2022/23 from the employers. This follows strike action of waste workers across a majority of Scotland's councils, which brought bin services to a halt across 21 councils.

Day after day, the news bulletins were dominated by pictures of rubbish piling up in towns and cities across Scotland. Despite this, the public support was overwhelming, with social media and news websites full of supportive comments.

An escalation in the action was planned, with bin workers taking further strike action, and thousands of workers in schools and nurseries also preparing to strike.

Faced with a growing strike wave across local government and mass public support, the council employers, CoSLA, and the Scottish government were forced into a series of retreats.

At the start of 2022, the joint unions – Unison, Unite and GMB – tabled a pay claim for a £3,000 uplift, and over the summer balloted workers in waste services and schools and nurseries for action.

CoSLA's pay offer was initially a derisory 2%. This was increased to 3.5%, and, as the selective action ballots were coming in from all three unions, the offer was increased again to 5%.

During this wave of strike action, CoSLA and the Scottish government retreated again.

The 5% offer was to be supplemented by "one-off cost-of-living" payments – described by CoSLA as being at the "absolute extremes of affordability". The SNP deputy first minister, John Swinney, railed that "the government cannot offer any

more money."

All three unions rejected the proposed deal and agreed the planned strikes would go ahead. Swinney was then bumped and first minister Nicola Sturgeon agreed to meet with the employers and the unions. Arising from these talks, a new proposed deal emerged on Friday 2 September.

The new offer will see full-time council workers gain a £2,000 rise for those earning up to £20,500, and a £1,925 increase for those on up to £39,000. This is to be fully consolidated into pay for 2022/23 and beyond.

For bin workers on around £20,000 that's a 10% rise. For workers on £25,000 it's around 8%, and just under 7% for those on £30,000.

Half of Scotland's 250,000 local government workers earn less than £25,000.

CoSLA and the Scottish government have been forced to concede much more than they had planned. All of it a result of the preparedness of workers to take strike action. All council workers will also get an extra one day in annual leave.

However, the view of Socialist Party Scotland members in the council unions and many union activists who we work with is that there was more to be won.

Action was due to escalate, including the shutting down of hundreds of schools and nurseries. 19 of Scotland's councils were also going to see more strikes in waste and recycling.

Moreover, thousands of other council workers were likely to join the action in October, after the re-ballots of those branches that did not quite reach the 50% turnout over the summer.

We therefore argued, at the Scottish Unison local government committee, for example, for the strikes to continue, and to use that as a platform to win further concessions on pay.

As it is, all three unions will now

consult their membership on the offer. Unison, Unite and the GMB leaderships are arguing for acceptance.

Our view is that the offer is not yet good enough, at levels that are below current inflation. It is still £1,000 less than the joint unions' pay claim.

The need for a fighting, socialist leadership of the trade union movement to match the determination of the membership to struggle has been underlined by this dispute.

Against the backdrop of a spiralling cost-of-living crisis, the appetite to struggle will only grow. Indeed, all unions saw a surge in recruitment in waste services and schools and nurseries as a result of the strike ballots and strikes.

Union activists should call for rejection and for the action to continue. If that position is not won, it is only a few months until new talks open up on next year's pay deal. With the cost-of-living crisis set to worsen, a return to strike action over pay seems inevitable.

The Scottish government made a statement the day after it announced its legislative programme, which effectively blamed soaring inflation for £500 million in cuts to this year's budget. In the statement it pointed to public sector pay rises, as well as the costs of running government departments.

Teachers and NHS workers are also preparing to fight on pay. The Scottish government says workers deserve these pay rises, but it is cutting budgets elsewhere to pay for them.

That is why coordinated strike action by all unions planning action is essential, and must be combined with fighting against cuts to funding. We will do all we can to build a leadership locally and nationally that can face up to the need to build mass coordinated strike action in the months ahead.

Students – grants or cost-of-living crisis

ZAKK BROWN
MANCHESTER SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Universities UK – representing vice-chancellors – has called for student maintenance grants to be reintroduced to alleviate the cost-of-living crisis that we face. Our rent and bills are rising, but inadequate maintenance loans have failed to rise alongside this. Socialist Students says that maintenance grants are a solid alternative to higher loan repayments, and are fairer to working-class students.

VC pay

Where could the money come from? Are university vice-chancellors willing to part with their salaries, reaching above £250,000 a year, to aid the students who pay their wages? Not likely.

Socialist Students says take the wealth from the super-rich to not just fund student grants, but a 100% publicly owned education system. This would mean higher wages for staff, rent control, better university facilities, proper funding in subjects like the arts, and free tuition. No more punishing students from lower-income families with longer and harsher loan repayments, simply because

they couldn't afford to pay up front for an education.

NUS

How can students fight for this? Currently the only thing that the National Union of Students (NUS) is organising to demand action on the student cost-of-living crisis is a letter to the Tory education secretary. It doesn't even call for maintenance grants! A letter to a Tory minister simply isn't enough.

A mass movement of students, linking up with workers striking for a pay rise this autumn, like the University and College Union (UCU) balloting for action, can win maintenance grants that actually cover the cost of living. This is the movement Socialist Students is fighting to build.

MEGAPHONE

The magazine of Socialist Students

2022 issue includes...

- How can students join the growing strike wave?

Available at socialiststudents.org.uk and at freshers' fairs - £2



Students put in accommodation over 30 miles from uni

TOM GREEN
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Many first-year students have been told that they cannot be provided accommodation in halls because they are filled to capacity. Students have accepted offers from these universities with the assurance that places in halls would be available to them.

Some students studying in Manchester have been forced to take residence in Liverpool or Huddersfield, both over 30 miles away. All while universities, which are facing unprecedented mental-health crises, consistently claim to be ensuring student wellbeing.

Nowhere to go

This is part of an ongoing housing crisis. Not only do students face the soaring cost of living, unsafe places to live, and extortionate rent, but many are also left without a place to live at all.

Universities have continued to sell their accommodation stock to private providers like Unite Students, leaving students open to exploitation from external companies. After living in halls, students are then in housing from cowboy landlords and exploitative letting agencies.

University managements are consistently pushing to increase student cohorts each year, without regard for capacity of accommodation. Increasing student numbers means more profit for universities, most of which will be used to line the pockets of management and investors.

Tuition fees

University vice-chancellors don't want to spend the money made from tuition fees on pay rises for striking lecturers or university staff, but instead towards vanity projects and flashy new buildings to attract investment.

To solve the student housing crisis, universities must first bring all halls back in-house. Universities have the ability to provide affordable and safe student housing, but instead choose to wash their hands of this responsibility. Rent control must also be implemented to ensure students, most of whom are first-time renters, are not ripped-off or exploited by greedy landlords in private accommodation.

Join the student fightback
JOIN socialist students
socialiststudents.org.uk/join

Angry about bankers' bonuses? Give us funds to fight back



BERKAY KARTAV
SOUTH LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

While the Tory government lifts the ban on bankers' bonuses, it is ordinary working-class people who suffer from the cost-of-living crisis. The Socialist Party says we won't pay for the failings of this rotten capitalist system.

That is why Socialist Party branches have been campaigning tirelessly this quarter to make sure we have the resources we need in a period where working-class people are fighting back.

Local Socialist Party campaign stalls around the country have raised thousands of pounds. Recently, there has been even more financial support for our socialist ideas, as ordinary people search for an alternative to what is going on.

And on our stalls supporting the strike wave for a pay rise, and calling for nationalisation to seize energy profits to reduce bills, we have met people who have gone on to join the

Socialist Party. The same has happened on the picket lines too.

With less than two weeks left until the end of this 'fighting fund' quarter, we still need a final push to reach our target. Can you make a donation to help us do so? Can you ask workmates, friends and family to do the same? Can you help with a local Socialist Party campaign stall this Saturday?

The Socialist Party is organising other events to raise funds. A clothes party organised by Hackney branch raised £80. And South London is throwing a book swap.

Socialist Party meetings, discussing socialist ideas to fight the cost-of-living crisis, will be another opportunity. Let's get out there to make sure we have the money to help us fight back against the bosses and their political representatives.

Help fund the fightback
DONATE
socialistparty.org.uk/donate

the Socialist

formerly **Militant**

Issue 1195
22-28 September 2022

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

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

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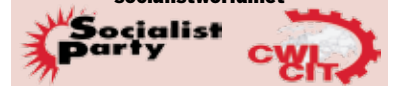
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."
Karl Marx



SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q3: JULY-SEPTEMBER 2020	DEADLINE: 3 OCTOBER 2022
South West	2,080	1,800		116%
East Midlands	1,413	1,850		76%
Wales	1,743	2,300		76%
Southern & SE	1,755	2,350		75%
West Midlands	1,843	2,600		71%
Northern	437	750		58%
London	2,529	4,600		55%
Yorkshire	1,311	2,550		51%
North West	524	1,150		46%
Eastern	480	1,200		40%
Other	1,931	3,850		50%
TOTAL	16,046	25,000		64%



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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- Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join
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Sheffield – workers' anger is rising

NOAH EDEN
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

In Sheffield, we have been doing more campaign stalls to spread the message of the Socialist Party. We have done stalls on five of the last seven days, including three stalls up and running on Saturday 17 September.

One thing could not be clearer: the public agree with the need to fight back against the government and to fight for workers' rights. They also realise that neither Labour nor the Tories can deliver that change.

The temporary postponement of the RMT and CWU strikes has not weakened the support for their causes nor the momentum they are building. Plenty of people are still signing our petitions in support of those

strikes, raising the need to strike together and a general strike.

In the last week, 50 people bought a Socialist paper from us on the streets in Sheffield, to read a socialist perspective on the current situation, rather than just buying into the capitalist media's attacks on striking workers. And they've donated £150 to us too.

It's been great to get out and chat to people, putting forward the need for socialist change, and meeting people interested in finding out more about the Socialist Party, many of whom have actually joined the Sheffield branch. People are clearly fed up with our current system, and we need a genuine alternative to Keir Starmer's Labour and the capitalist system.

Come to a Socialist Party meeting near you

The Socialist Party has regular meetings in towns and cities across the country. If you would like to participate:

- Go to socialistparty.org.uk
- Or text 07761 818206 with your name and postcode.

Theatre review: The P Word

“A realistic portrayal of the life and struggle of those facing such oppression”

TONY SAUNOIS

Told through the eyes of two young, gay, Pakistani men, Zafar, an asylum seeker from Pakistan, and Bilal (or Billy as he prefers to be known) from London, this is a hard-hitting, dynamic play that strikes out at oppression and discrimination.

Homophobia, racism, the horrific plight of asylum seekers in the UK, and a not-so-subtle warning against judging people by appearance and personal relationships, are all portrayed in brutal honesty. It ends not in a Bollywood ‘happy every after’ conclusion but in a moving and dynamic call to action to fight back.

Zafar is reliving, through his memories, the horrors he endured in Pakistan while fighting for asylum in Britain. His father in Pakistan owns a factory and has connections with the military. The love of his life was Haroon. His father discovers their relationship and has Haroon murdered, and his son arrested and tortured by the police. A tragedy that is all too real in Pakistan and other countries.

Zafar manages to flee Pakistan with the help of his mother, and comes to the UK seeking asylum. When he calls her from London his hopes are dashed as she says she has no son and knows nobody called Zafar. “Please don’t call here again” are the last words he is to hear from her. He fled Pakistan rapidly using his brother’s passport without even “a single picture of him” (Haroon), and no other belongings - a fate which torments many who flee repression, war, and other horrors.

In London he is subjected to

vicious racism and homophobia by the immigration authorities who refuse to believe he is gay - an all too familiar reality faced by many LGBTQ+ people seeking asylum.

Zafar eventually meets Billy, an openly gay young Pakistani who lives in London, at the London gay pride in Soho. They are from two different worlds. Billy has virtually no contact with his family as he is gay and has turned his back on Pakistani culture, refusing to visit there since he was very young. On one level he is enjoying living his gay life through Grindr and casual hook-ups which he is increasingly finding unsatisfying. The angst he feels at constantly waiting for replies to texts from someone he met on Grindr, hoping for something more, is very inventively acted out.

When Billy and Zafar meet, Billy is initially hostile and rejects him. Zafar, shocked by the open London culture, feels an alienation or confusion at his new surroundings. The play has good humour in confronting all the discrimination and prejudice. Zafar comments that one thing he cannot understand about Britain is that “nobody speaks English”, using phrases like “innit bruv” and “that’s banging.”

Following a wild drunken encounter, on Billy’s part, at London gay pride, a friendship and bond eventually grows. Zafar, haunted by the threat of being deported back to Pakistan as his application is turned down, is initially embarrassed to reveal his real status to Billy. Eventually he does by expressing his fear of being deported back or “even to

Rwanda.” Billy naively says: “You’re in Britain now. They wouldn’t send a gay person back to be harmed”. Zafar hits back: “I’m not in your Britain. I’m in another Britain.” Billy appears later a bit taken aback as he encounters his own discrimination as he is turned down for a promotion at work for racist reasons.

Here he receives support from a colleague at work he has ridiculed, ‘Fat Jason’. Jason turns out to be gay with a partner who is a Pakistani lawyer, Javid. His help becomes invaluable in helping Zafar. Billy is far from a perfect character but what is portrayed is his capacity to learn and change as life experiences burn down on him.

Zafar is arrested and put on a plane to be deported back. Here Billy, who has begun reembracing some Pakistani culture through Zafar, makes a stand. On the plane he protests and enlists the support of other passengers. Zafar is finally removed from the plane. A happy Bollywood ending? No, here we are taken to a finale of the brutal reality of all those who have been deported from many countries - some back to their deaths or horrific situations. This is done in a powerful imaginative way - which it is better to see at a performance!

This short play, one-and-a-half hours, is an emotional rollercoaster, captivating, moving but also a realistic portrayal of the life and struggle of those facing such oppression. This is not to be missed.

● *The P Word* by Waleed Akhtar is at the Bush Theatre, London until 22 October



The P Word PHOTO: BUSH THEATRE

More protests against the racist police killing of Chris Kaba



Protesting at New Scotland Yard London 17 September PHOTO: LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

WENDY CHARLTON

CAMDEN AND HARINGEY SOCIALIST PARTY

A national day of action against the killing of Chris Kaba took place on 17 September including a protest in front of New Scotland Yard, the Metropolitan Police Headquarters in central London.

Chris was killed on 5 September in south London after a single shot was fired by a police officer as police tried to stop the vehicle he was driving; an automatic number plate recognition camera indicated that this car was linked to a firearm incident in previous days. The car wasn’t registered to Chris, who was unarmed.

An atmosphere of powerful emotion could be felt among the 2,000 people attending and showing their solidarity.

Jefferson Bosela, Chris’s cousin, had called for nationwide action, and the protest was one of many happening across the UK. The family have accused the police of racism and have demanded answers: did officers know that it was Chris in the car or were they simply following a suspect vehicle? They have demanded that the suspended officer be interviewed

under caution without delay and the family kept informed.

One speaker said: “Police continue to go into our communities and terrorise our people over and over again. Are we going to continue to let these things happen with no accountability?”

Protests also took place in Brighton, Oxford, Southampton, Coventry, Leamington Spa, Manchester, Taunton and Cardiff.

An inquest into Chris Kaba’s death will be held on 4 October.

Socialist Party members joined the protests and called for:

- Independent workers’ and community inquiries into police violence
- End police brutality. Demilitarisation of the police - stop the use of horses, tear gas and rubber bullets. Abolish the Territorial Support Group (TSG) and all similar paramilitary units
- Democratic control of policing by trade unions and communities, including with powers to fire and hire officers
- Build a mass movement to smash racism. Build a socialist alternative to inequality and division

SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

September issue includes...

- General strike: Back on the agenda for Britain?
- COP27: Preparing for a doomed summit
- National rights: Debating the national question on the left

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FIGHT BACK AGAINST STUDENT COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS



JOSH ASKER

THEO SHARIEFF
SOCIALIST STUDENTS NATIONAL ORGANISER

Starting university is a big step. But with millions of workers unable to heat their homes this winter, students have a cost-of-living crisis of our own.

Prices everywhere are going up - from food, to travel, to the cost of a night out - eroding the value of students' already small maintenance loans, which

didn't get them through the term anyway.

Landlords are using the crisis to further cash in. Earlier this month, university accommodation provider UniHomes emailed students to renegotiate on agreements to include bills in rent. UniHomes has protected its profits and thrown students into crisis.

Student rent in the private sector accounts on average for 74% of the maximum maintenance loan - which rises to 97% in cities including

Bath, Bristol and Manchester! Socialist Students says that third-party accommodation providers should be brought under the ownership and control of our universities, as a step toward introducing democratically set rent controls.

Our campuses face further squeezes to finances as bills and expenses increase, threatening to give a new impetus to management and government cuts to courses and jobs on campus.

That's why Socialist Students is

out all across the country at freshers' fairs, discussing with students about how we can get organised to demand action on the cost of living. Workers taking strike action have shown the way forward, and what can be achieved through collective action when organised.

We say students need to get organised as well. Socialist Students wants to build a movement to win the funding our campuses need, to introduce inflation-proofed living grants for students in place of loans,

and to scrap tuition fees and student debt. And we want to help students get organised to link up with workers in struggle.

Let's make the super-rich pay for the cost-of-living crisis - starting with taking the energy companies into democratic public ownership, to run them on the basis of need, not profit. Join Socialist Students.

- **Grants or cost-of-living crisis - page 9**
- **Students put in accommodation over 30 miles from uni - page 9**

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



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