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the Socialist

Issue 1196

29 September - 5 October 2022

formerly **Militant**

Tory economic chaos

Cost-of-living crisis

Attacks on workers' rights

STRIKING TOGETHER WE CAN WIN



● **Tories out**

● **Starmer's Labour doesn't represent us**

Join the fight for a new mass workers' party

IRAN – MAHSA AMINI'S DEATH TRIGGERS REVOLUTIONARY YOUTH MOVEMENT >>> p15

NEW PHASE IN UKRAINE WAR >>> p14

BLACK WORKERS AND YOUTH HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO FIGHT BACK >>> p8-9

Strike wave escalates!

The summer strike wave has turned into a hot autumn. On 1 October alone there will be the biggest coordination yet in the 2022 wave of struggle against the cost-of-living crisis, involving around 170,000 workers. The early autumn strikes include:

- CWU in Royal Mail 30 September and 1 October
- RMT, Aslef, TSSA and Unite on the railways on 1 October
- Liverpool dockers are taking two weeks of strike action ending on 3 October; Felixstowe dockers are striking from 27 September to 5 October
- Unison members in universities and UCU members in further education colleges are also striking in weeks of action
- Plus many local strikes of Unite members, NEU members and more

Rail strikes taking on the Tories

RMT continuing the fight

RMT MEMBER IN LONDON

The rail union RMT's disputes with Network Rail, the Train Operating Companies (TOCs) and London Underground (LU) are, in reality, disputes with the government.

The government, through the Department for Transport (DfT), is seeking to break the relatively good pay, pensions and conditions of rail workers. This is to reduce wage costs in the sector, but also as a warning to other workers that they should not expect to avoid pay cuts, in order to protect profits during a period of rampant inflation.

The disputes with Network Rail, the TOCs and LU all now cover the same issues: employment levels, pensions, flexible working and pay. The latest Transport for London (TfL) financial settlement with the DfT has brought pay squarely into that battle, with an agreement to put the DfT in the chair for future pay talks.

The government is demanding real-terms pay cuts of 8%-12% plus attacks on pensions and job cuts. This

is already explicit in the offers made to members on Network Rail and the TOCs.

TfL has now set its stall out too. Senior managers will now receive bonuses for delivering cuts while funding for next year's LUL pay round is set at a level equating to a pay rise of around 1.5%. TfL members still have not had a pay rise for 2022, and can look forward to more of the same.

RMT must continue to fight these attacks, and open up a discussion about how to step up the action. Already the timetables for job cuts and pension attacks have been pushed back by RMT's strike action. It is welcome that Aslef has joined the pay battle on the TOCs. Aslef members on LUL should be demanding their union calls action using their existing ballot mandate against pension and pay cuts.

Generalise

But the situation now demands a step change from the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and its component unions. Never has there been

a more pressing need for the TUC to coordinate action, which would be a step towards a 24-hour general strike against a national governmental campaign of pay cuts. This could be done by every union coordinating action on its own pay issues. If the TUC will not act then a coalition of the willing is urgently needed.

If the Tories press ahead with their declared intention to clamp down even more viciously on the ability of workers to strike, that must be met with determined action by the whole trade union movement, with 24-hour general strike action.

The Tories are in crisis. Never before has a prime minister taken office with as little support as Liz Truss. Fewer people voted for her than the RMT has members! Less than a third of her own MPs backed her. The Tory government will continue to try to make working-class people pay for the crisis of British capitalism.

But the trade union movement united could force the government from power and ensure that the costs of the inflation crisis are not borne by working people.

Aslef - 'summer turning into a winter of discontent'

ASLEF MEMBER IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

With inflation continuing to spiral into double figures, the greed of energy companies profiteering during the worst cost-of-living crisis in a generation, this summer is truly turning into a winter of discontent for workers and working-class communities.

That's why it's inspiring to see Aslef, RMT and other unions keeping up the momentum of this surging strike wave.

The Train Operating Companies (TOCs) and Freight Operating Companies (FOCs) have had their snouts in the trough for too long. Since making deals with the government on the back of Covid, the bosses have been trying to sell off our collective bargaining in exchange for receiving their baseline recovery profit off the government.

We know the money is there,

instead of being siphoned off in dividends to shareholders it should be used to uplift key workers. The Tories always bang on about having a 'high-skilled high-paying economy' but that seems only to mean the fat cats and bankers! This is the case for Aslef members who have had a real-terms pay cut for the past three years.

We should be proud to see strong picket lines across the country and the potential of our collective power as we withdraw our labour from twelve companies on 1 October: Avanti West Coast, Chiltern Railways, Cross Country, Greater Anglia, Great Western Railway, Hull Trains, LNER, London Overground, Northern Trains, Southeastern, TransPennine Express and West Midlands Trains. East Midlands Railway will join on 5 October.

Between Aslef, RMT, TSSA and Unite on the railways, CWU and

Liverpool and Felixstowe dockers, 1 October is going to be a great display of working-class power, with collectively over 170,000 workers all striking on the same day especially just before the Tory conference.

Joint action is not just an act of industrial solidarity - coordinating further strikes will be a practical necessity to limit the employers' ability to try to strike-break, and will help to mobilise the wider workforce if our dispute is to be stretched out.

Our union must join the calls on the TUC to coordinate strike action across private and public sectors so we can all strike together - especially to defend the right to strike against any new anti-trade union measures.

We must also demand the renationalisation of our railways and public utilities to be ran for the public good, not private profit.

We say:

- All strike together for a real pay rise! The Trades Union Congress (TUC) must step up and organise to coordinate action
- If the Tories try to implement their new anti-trade union plans, they must be met with a 24-hour general strike
- The TUC should launch an appeal to build a massive strike fund to assist those unions on the front line
- Kick out the Tories
- Starmer's New Labour doesn't speak for us: fight for a new working-class party
- Nationalise rail, mail, energy and utilities under democratic working-class control and management, with compensation only on the basis of proven need
- Take the wealth off the super-rich. For a socialist alternative to capitalism's poverty and crisis

The National Shop Stewards Network is holding a pre-congress Action Summit on Sunday 16 October in Brighton, just before the re-convened TUC congress. It is an opportunity for strikers and those preparing for action to come together and discuss how to step up the fight.

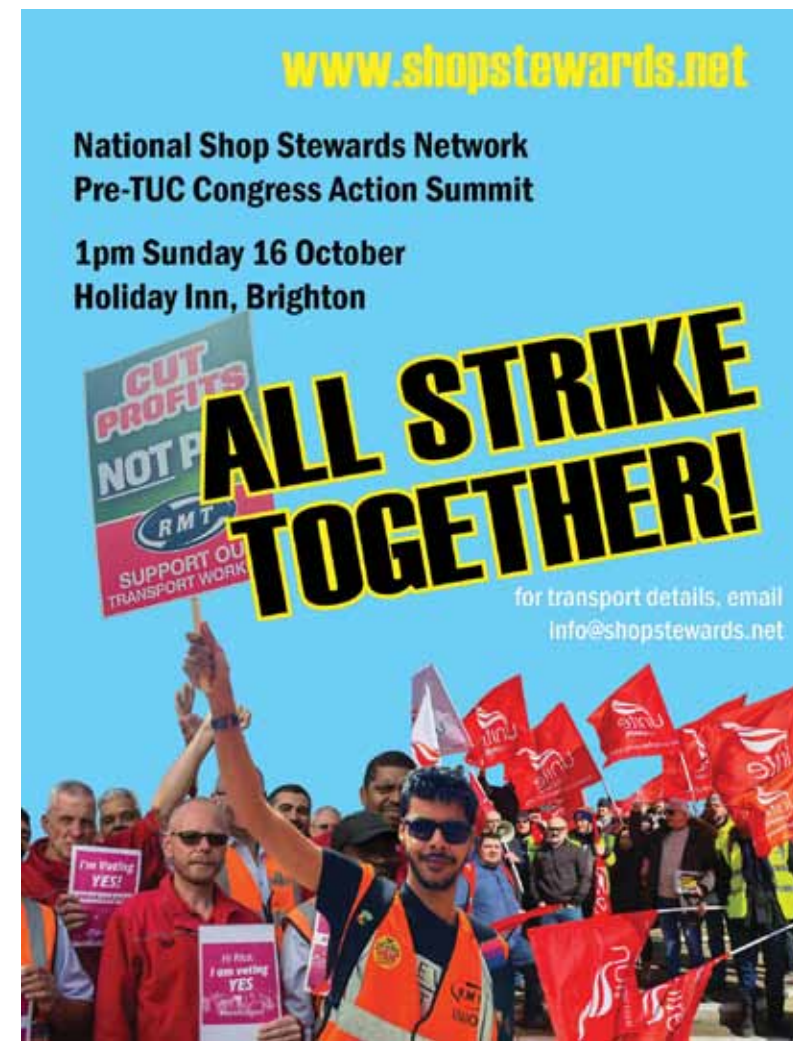


PHOTO: PAUL TOOLEY/OKONKWO

Dockers strike in Liverpool and Felixstowe

Port of Liverpool strike: "From essential workers to militant dockers"

ALEX SMITH
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Senior Unite shop steward at the Port of Liverpool, John Lynch, sums up the bosses' attitude towards his striking members in one sentence: "We are key essential workers one minute, the next we are militant dockers."

The current Liverpool dockers strike - the first since the long-running 1995-98 dispute - follows a ballot turnout of over 90% and a vote for strike action close to 100%. As a result, dockers and crane safety engineers at the Port of Liverpool will be out on strike until 3 October - with other sections of workers at the docks also looking to issue strike ballots, according to John Lynch.

A 7% pay offer made by the company was rejected because it amounted to a considerable pay cut when inflation is taken into account. After enduring years of exploitation and

working through a deadly pandemic, Lynch said his members "are living hand to mouth" and "feel undervalued and underpaid" - especially while the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, which owns the Port of Liverpool, is making tens of millions in profit on the backs of the workers. This sentiment was echoed by Unite General Secretary Sharon Graham when she visited the dockers' picket on 21 September. "We are not going to sit back while employers make millions and millions of pounds and cut your pay - how dare they?" she declared to the assembled pickets.

In contrast, Labour leader Kier Starmer does virtually nothing to support the striking dockers. This has not gone unnoticed by senior shop steward Lynch, who describes the Labour Party as a "mess" and says that if this does not change in the coming period he would be open in future to the idea of "scrapping Labour and starting a new party".

Doreen McNally, wife of a docker sacked in the 1995-98 dispute, and chair of the Women of the Waterfront group set up to generate international solidarity around that dispute, said: "I don't think the working class has any political representation. I think we need people from the rank and file to step forward. We need representation by our peers, not career politicians."

But while the leadership of the Labour Party may have no time for the striking dockers, the organised working class internationally is another matter. Building upon the international links made during the 1995-98 dispute, Lynch reports that he has met with Danish, Swedish, French, and Spanish dockers - with a view to ensuring that any vessels diverted from Liverpool are not worked in those countries.

Dockers at both Liverpool and Felixstowe being on strike simultaneously could cause a massive headache for the capitalist class.



Liverpool dockers show solidarity with Felixstowe DAVE MURRAY

Felixstowe workers generate the profits yet get a pay cut

DAVE MURRAY
EASTERN REGION SOCIALIST PARTY

Felixstowe dockers are returning to the picket line from 27 September till 5 October. They are pushing back against their employer's refusal to meet their claim for a 10% pay rise. The 2,000 Felixstowe dockers process roughly half of all containerised freight coming into the UK. The Felixstowe Dock and Railway company is, therefore, very profitable - as is parent company CK Hutchison, which has fingers in many pies from the high street to transport and utilities infrastructure.

To signal his intransigence, the port's chief executive, Clemence Cheng, is accusing the union of attempting to intimidate strike breakers. He wrote to the local newspaper about it on 22 September.

Of course, the company is unable to substantiate these allegations - as you would expect with the union reporting 82% support for continued action, even as the company attempts to implement the rejected deal, of 7% with an unconsolidated £500. It looks like a desperate attempt to distract from the weakness of his position.

In the financial year 2020, the

company showed its more generous side: paying out £99 million in dividends, but only to its shareholders. The workers who generated those dividends are being offered a real-terms pay cut - and they aren't having it.

The employers are trying to pretend to be indifferent to the effects of the strike. However, local press reports reveal that shippers and hauliers are not so chill. One haulier reports £70,000 in losses during the last strike (Ipswich Star 5/9/22).

A victory for these key workers will strengthen all workers resisting the general attack on our living standards.

Royal Mail ups the ante

CWU fights back - escalation necessary



SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN CWU

We have seen a major escalation of the dispute by Royal Mail.

On 22 September, the Royal Mail CEO met with senior Communication Workers Union (CWU) negotiators.

Instead of seeking meaningful negotiations, as the meeting started it became apparent that the boss was only there to serve notice on the CWU of Royal Mail's intention to withdraw from various national agreements.

With these changes it's clear that Royal Mail are trying to derecognise the CWU as the union which represents the interests of Royal Mail workers. They aim to move from the CWU representing members in negotiation, to only being consulted on any changes.

Withdrawing from agreements

These changes include major attacks on our terms and conditions. Withdrawing from the legal and binding part of the 'Agenda for Growth' will allow them to push ahead with changes without agreement with the CWU.

This could include start times, finishing times, and flexible working, with no set hours on any given day. This will begin on 22 October.

From 21 October they will also introduce trials of new technology without any agreement with the CWU.

The existing attendance procedure will be replaced, so they can fast-track dismissal cases, including issuing warnings automatically and without the right to representation.

The current industrial relation framework is to be replaced, stripping out two levels of representation, taking out a huge layer of experienced CWU officials who currently support the local levels. This is a blatant attack on union organisation.

They have also served 12 months' notice that they will withdraw the agreement whereby members' union subscriptions are taken directly through the pay system.

Serious

These are clearly extremely serious developments. 115,000 CWU members in Royal Mail are on strike on 30 September and 1 October, with the Postal Executive meeting as we go to press.

It is clear an acceleration of strike action is now required.

A call must also be made to the TUC and whole trade union movement to come to the support of the CWU, including financial support.

We need a strike solidarity fund!



40,000 workers in BT will strike again in their battle over pay cuts on four days in October: 6, 10, 20 and 24. The action includes BT Group's 999 emergency call handlers. CWU general secretary Dave Ward said: "This dispute is modern Britain in a nutshell. Lives are at risk because a company's top brass won't listen to workers".

PCS launch strike ballot

KATRINE WILLIAMS
PCS MEMBER

The civil service union PCS national strike ballot on pay and jobs has started. Ballot papers are to be returned no later than 7 November.

Socialist Party members in PCS are working flat out to get members to vote. The Tory anti-union laws require a 50% turnout, so it is vital members vote if the threshold is to be reached.

Socialist Party members are campaigning for a massive 'yes' vote for strike action. This would bring PCS into the field, with other unions already taking action, and those with ballots planned, and put the union in a position to win its demands on pay and jobs.

After years of government pay restrictions, PCS members' wages, in real terms, are worth 20% less than a decade ago. With current RPI inflation at 12.3%, and the huge hike in energy prices, it is impossible to make ends meet.

The cost-of-living crisis is only part of the story of misery endured by PCS members. The Tories have announced a 91,000 cut in civil service jobs. If left unchallenged, this will decimate local services and impose

intolerable work pressures on already overworked staff.

Truss' mini-budget will provide no relief to PCS members. The Resolution Foundation 'think tank' says someone making £1 million will gain £52,000 a year, while someone earning around £20,000 will be £157 better off. So yet more misery for PCS members, while the cap is taken off bankers' bonuses!

We have to fight

The inescapable fact is: if we are to get more than this year's government-imposed pay limit of 2%, we will have to fight for it. We need all members to use their vote and to vote 'yes'. We need the union's leadership to implement, immediately following the ballot, a programme of action to win the union's claim for 10% and to defeat the attack on jobs.

And we need to coordinate our action as much as possible with other unions. The Trades Union Congress (TUC) must take a lead in coordinating the fight on the cost-of-living crisis and opposing the Tories' further anti-union strike restrictions. That's why many PCS members will be joining the pre-TUC congress Action Summit called by the National Shop Stewards Network on Sunday 16 October (see page 3).

Unison members at 16 universities strike for a real pay rise

King's picket MARY FINCH



MARY FINCH
UNISON REP AT KING'S COLLEGE LONDON,
PERSONAL CAPACITY

For the second year running, the Universities and Colleges Employer Association (UCEA) has implemented a below-inflation pay rise - a real-terms pay cut. Last year, it was 1.5%. This year, in a cost-of-living crisis, with RPI inflation over 12%, most university staff received a tiny 3% pay rise.

3% falls far short of Unison's pay claim (RPI plus 2%). That's why we're taking action again. But it is double last year's pay offer, and the highest

increase for years, which shows that strikes get results.

Unison represents professional services staff: everyone from admissions and exams to security and cleaning. Our members are some of the lowest-paid staff, working long, unsocial hours and playing a critical role in keeping campuses open.

We've strengthened the dispute with an additional five universities coming out, compared to the first wave of action earlier this year. September is a critical time for universities as they enrol new students, and often run massive programmes of welcome and freshers' events. We

will cause significantly more disruption for our bosses when we walk out over the next few weeks.

We can strengthen our position even further by linking up with other workers. University teaching staff in the University College Union (UCU) took 18 days of strike action this year, coordinated with Unison at several universities, and they're currently being balloted again.

If we continue to escalate the action, get more universities out on strike, and coordinate our dispute with UCU and other striking workers, we could win a significantly improved pay offer.

Newham school staff fight for their school

On the picket line JAMES IVENS



JAMES IVENS

You'd think a former Ofsted inspector might have learnt a thing or two about how, and how not, to lead a school. Not the new head at Calverton primary in Newham, east London. Three months on the job and already his staff have had to strike.

Bosses want to cut 'dependant leave' from ten days a year to five. Most workers don't need the whole whack each year - but if you have sick parents or a child needing an operation, it's essential. Especially for teaching assistants (TAs) on £27,000 a year or less.

One young TA had to look after a

family member facing a second operation within a year. Management had discretion to grant full pay for a handful more days. They declined.

This fits with what members of the National Education Union (NEU) describe as a bullying management style. The situation isn't helped by the borough's Labour council refusing to lead a struggle for resources and decent conditions in schools.

Louise Cuffaro, Newham NEU secretary and Socialist Party member, has led rallies and discussions on every picket line. Around 40 joined the picket line on the first two strike days, 20 and 21 September, standing together to fight for their school.

Further education college workers: undervalued and starved out - so striking back!

SUZANNE MUNA
UCU MEMBER IN FE IN BRISTOL

Years of real-terms pay cuts, declining staff numbers, and constantly increasing workloads have forced UCU members in 26 further education colleges to take industrial action this week.

Action in Bristol followed the college's most well-attended union meeting ever. Members expressed deep anger at their treatment, noting a 35% real-terms pay cut over the last decade.

Sharply rising inflation makes such a loss unsustainable. It was no surprise that members resoundingly rejected the pay offer of just 2.5% and opted to strike with a 93.6% 'yes' vote.

On the picket line, teachers described constant anxiety over finances, and the toll this is taking on their mental health, as well as the declining quality of life that lost income causes.

A UCU survey recently reported that 70% of its members were considering leaving the profession.

This action is therefore about more than just money. It is about a profession teaching vital life skills, often to young people but also to adults, being undervalued and starved out, while bankers' bonuses are uncapped.

There is plenty of money around. The task for our unions is to make sure it is directed where it is most socially useful.



Arriva buses in North London: the threat of strike brings new offer

LONDON UNITE MEMBER

Unite members at Arriva London North have suspended an all-out indefinite strike that was due to start on 4 October. This expression of serious intent had an impact - at the time of writing, the employers had made a new pay offer which workers will be balloted on.

They had rejected a previous offer by a huge margin, with every garage voting to reject. The strike would have involved 2,000 members across eight depots.

The workers took no notice of ridiculous claims that the money does not exist. Arriva is ultimately owned by Deutsche Bahn which has transferred some £560 million to shareholders. The truth is that there is plenty of money - the problem is that the wrong people have too much of it!

There is a growing number of strikes involving Unite bus workers, and increasingly members are drawing the conclusion that the action that is taken must be action that can win the dispute.

Improved offer accepted by south of England bus strikers

Unite the union reports that strikes against Arriva bus services in Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire have been called off after around 900 workers accepted a 'vastly improved' pay offer.

The workers have accepted a deal which will see drivers' pay lifted by 11.1% in Hertfordshire and by 10.4% in Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

Previously Arriva had been offering pay rises of between four and six per cent.

Tory budget accelerates capitalist crisis and class war

Organise the working-class fightback



WHAT WE THINK

Not only will the Tory budget promote Britain to pole position as the most unequal country in Europe, it will accelerate the existing crises of the cost of living, of the Tory party itself, and British capitalism.

Former US Treasury Secretary Larry Summers said: "I think the UK is behaving a bit like an emerging market, turning itself into a submerging market." And that's how the capitalist finance markets reacted, markets whose freedom to wreak havoc is fully supported by Tory and New Labour ideology, fervently so by the new Truss leadership.

Sterling fell to its lowest value against the dollar since the dollar was created in 1792, and against other currencies. The government's borrowing costs jumped as well. The context is an estimation that the budget measures - including the energy support packages for households and businesses - would involve an extra £411 billion of borrowing over five years. This is not the end of the grim drama.

The so-called mini-budget is an orgy of unbridled redistribution - upwards: from the working class and poorest to the already obscenely wealthy. "You won't like this package if you care more about the poor" was how Mark Littlewood, director of the Thatcherite Institute for Economic Affairs think tank, put it. Quite.

The false claims to 'national unity' and 'levelling up' were killed and buried on 23 September and a declaration of class war was issued. The wealthiest 10% of the population will receive almost half of the gains from the budget - including every cabinet member. The gloves are off.

Kwarteng reduced the top rate of income tax, from 45p to 40p. If it had been in place when BP boss Bernard Looney pocketed his most recent pay deal, it would be worth £215,500 to him. Read across for the bosses of Royal Mail, the train operating companies, privateer port bosses in Felixstowe and Liverpool, and all of the fat cats trying to impose below-inflation pay rises on workers. Not to mention scrapping the cap on bankers' bonuses and all sorts of bungs to billionaires.

'Kwasi's boost for families' read the Daily Mail on Monday 26 September. Some families, yes. Your family, no. Estimates of the net effect of the budget on someone earning £1 million range from a £40,000 a year gain to £55,220. Either way it's more than the £25,971 median average salary in the UK. Millionaires are being given our wages.

This budget and its neo-Thatcherite authors will hasten and deepen the understanding of the rottenness



Kwarteng's 'mini budget' included threats to workers' right to strike CHRIS MCANDREW/SENAN



The false claims to 'national unity' and 'levelling up' were killed and buried on 23 September and a declaration of class war was issued

of capitalism. The urgency of organising and fighting for a socialist alternative based on democratic planning of the economy by the working class will grow.

Strike together

A mass working-class response must be organised to defend living standards and get the Tories out. That starts with real concrete steps to coordinate and escalate the strikes, preparing to defeat the implementation of the new anti-trade union laws headlined by Kwarteng and aimed at preventing strikes at all. The biggest coordinated strikes of this wave taking place on 1 October, backed up with local protests, show what's possible and what needs to be built.

Kwarteng's goal of a consistent level of 2.5% growth is a fantasy given the multiple crises within the capitalist system - which this budget will worsen. But lack of wealth accumulation at the top is not a problem. The FTSE 100 biggest corporations and banks are on track to return record amounts of cash to their shareholders in 2022. Dividend payouts are heading for £85 billion. £46 billion of share buy-backs have already been announced or implemented.

Despite many specific major attacks on the working class in the budget, it's likely the indirect effects of the budget could have an even greater impact on making the poor poorer. Given the reliance on imports in Britain, with manufacturing



A mass working-class response must be organised to defend living standards and get the Tories out

forming only a tenth of the economy, the falling pound will increase the cost of basic foods, clothes, and other essentials. Spending on these things form a higher proportion of working-class household budgets.

With inflation teetering on the edge of 10%, the average household disposable income had already dropped 16.5% in August. The amount of goods bought had fallen by 1.6%. This budget will massively exacerbate this galloping erosion of living standards and the consequent fall in workers' purchasing power, and therefore the problems for British capitalism.

The Bank of England response to the budget has been to raise interest rates - currently at 2.25% - with 6% mooted as necessary to 'restore confidence'. Interest rate rises feed into mortgage payments which could, for example, go from £800 to £1,400 a month. Mortgage companies and banks are already cutting back on what they offer - and the housing market system means rents will rise. Kwarteng raising the stamp duty threshold on house purchases doesn't help workers who can't even get a mortgage.

The cancellation of the 1.25p in the pound rise in National Insurance from 6 November would "save 28 million people an average of £330", according to Kwarteng. Who's going to turn that down? But £330 will quickly disappear without trace in the deepening black hole of October's new

energy bills, mortgage repayments and rent hikes. And the benefits of the NI cut do not fall evenly: the 24% of households where no one earns more than £12,570 a year won't benefit at all from the change. If you earn £20,000, you will save £93 a year, less than £8 a month. Those on £60,000 will save £500 a year more than that.

Those part-time workers, including those with caring responsibilities, claiming Universal Credit will face sanctions - ie non-payment and consequent hunger, inability to pay bills, and suffering - for not working 15 hours a week, up from the current cut-off level of 12. Before these changes, it had been projected that 593,000 people would be sanctioned this financial year. This situation cannot hold.

These multiple crises and the clear perspective for things to deteriorate contain all the ingredients for the already split Tory party to implode. The Economist reports that the Labour Party treasury team has had about 250 meetings with CEOs of major companies, who are now so eager to talk to the opposition that tickets sold out for a business meeting with the shadow cabinet. How many Tory MPs will leave their sinking ship, and when they'll jump, is not yet clear, but the Starmer life boats are at the ready.

Steps towards building a new mass workers' party with a socialist programme that defends working-class interests must be part of the response to this budget.

the Socialist

formerly **Militant**

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

WORKING CLASS STRIKING BACK

CAPITALIST CRISIS

AND THE CASE FOR SOCIALISM

Why we need socialist change to stop climate change

Is a new party for the working class possible? and how can it be built?

How can the strikes win?

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Resist Tory attacks on part-time workers

KELLIE O'GARA
SALISBURY SOCIALIST PARTY

Huge tax benefits for the rich and benefit cuts for the poorest, that was the essence of, new Tory chancellor Kwasi Kwarteng's 'mini budget'. Kwarteng is aiming to hit part-time workers in the pocket, against the backdrop of a cost-of-living crisis, rising energy bills and a recession. Liz Truss' government is hankering to claw back scraps of Universal Credit given to those who work part-time.

The Tory solution given for those who rely on their part-time wages being topped up is to either find more hours or get better paid work. There are echoes of Norman Tebbit's instruction to: "Get on your bike" to find work during Thatcher's mass unemployment of the 1980s.

Until recently, those working over nine hours a week, could claim Universal Credit without being forced to work longer hours. That has now been raised to twelve hours, and will reach 15 in January. Workers will now be forced to attend a fortnightly job centre appointment to prove they are looking for more hours or better pay, or else face a benefit reduction.

The move will unquestionably affect working-class women disproportionately. Women make up the bulk of part-time workers, being more likely to have caring responsibilities for children or elderly relatives, and many would love to be able to afford to work and earn more!

But childcare services in the UK are already under major strain, with a lack of funding and spaces.

Without a serious injection of funding, the system is simply not prepared to meet the demand if more working parents are forced to work longer hours. Without extending free childcare spaces for all ages, many working mothers and single parents are condemned to a life without waged work.



Women make up the bulk of part-time workers, being more likely to have caring responsibilities for children or elderly relatives, and many would love to be able to afford to work and earn more!

Thousands of families are already worse off with both parents working. The cost of childcare is 130% of a wage for a parent of a one-year-old earning minimum wage, according to the Institute for Public Policy Research. Fees have almost doubled for a family with a child under two since 2010.

The situation is unsustainable, and the Tories want to make it worse for part-time and low-income workers. We must fight against these attempts to scapegoat benefit claimants, and get organised to win a minimum wage of £15 an hour as well as free, quality childcare.

Get the Tories out! But who to back at the ballot box?

Come and discuss how to build an independent working-class stand

The Tory 'mini budget' shows more starkly than ever that it is 'us' and 'them'. Tax cuts for the rich, attacks on part-time workers' benefits and an attempt to make it harder for workers to go on strike. The announcement will have driven even more people to draw the conclusion we need to get the Tories out!

The Tories are increasingly unpopular and ridden with divisions (see page 5). And a weak and divided government could collapse at any time, triggering a general election, or be forced to call one itself in a bid for survival.

Thousands on picket lines and attending 'Enough is Enough' rallies are already asking: What do we do at the ballot box? That question will become even more pressing. That is why the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), which the Socialist Party is a constituent part, is hosting a series of public discussion meetings titled: 'Enough is Enough! But what do we do at the ballot box?' To discuss how to build a working-class political alternative to contest the next general election.

Because, as weak and divided as the Tory government is, it is strengthened by the fact that Labour is not, as Sir Keir Starmer said quoting Tony Blair: "the political wing of the British people." If it was,

it would clearly stand on the side of the working-class majority, and Sir Keir would leave his plush Liverpool hotel room to stand with striking dockers down the road. Instead, he does all he can to show the capitalist establishment that he is on their side, not ours.

Starmer's Labour

Nonetheless, in the event of a general election, Starmer's Labour will be seen as a tool with which to oust the hated Tories. But a Starmer-led government wouldn't end the cost-of-living crisis, it wouldn't nationalise public transport, Royal Mail and the utilities, and it wouldn't raise the minimum wage to £15 an hour.

Just a small number of MPs in parliament, prepared to fight on the side of striking workers for these policies, could have a huge effect. An independent working-class coalition at the next general election - organised by even a couple of trade unions like the RMT, CWU or Unite - could realistically expect to win seats. It could include Jeremy Corbyn or other left-wing MPs forced out by Starmer.

Such a group of MPs would act as a powerful pole of attraction to hundreds of thousands of workers and young people, and would be

an important step towards the development of a new mass workers' party.

Socialist Party members fight in the trade unions to win support for steps like these to be taken, but we also take the organisational steps needed now to prepare a working-class electoral stand. That's why we will be building for the TUSC-hosted meetings this autumn.



Tory plan for patients is an underfunded, understaffed NHS

SIOBHAN FRIEL
BIRMINGHAM CENTRAL SOCIALIST PARTY

The NHS is in crisis. Everybody in Britain knows it. When even leaders of Tory councils are saying it, we can assume the situation has reached breaking point. Front and centre in the crisis is the massive funding and staffing gap in social care, which leaves medically fit patients unable to be discharged, as their care needs cannot be met at home. Waiting times for GPs, hospital beds and ambulances are getting longer.

The Tories have been driving it to this point for decades, and they were helped on the way by Tony Blair's New Labour government, which first introduced Private Finance Initiatives.

The new health and social care secretary Thérèse Coffey has launched "Our plan for patients", her 'solution' to the growing crisis. It is supposed to address inadequate social care, which leads to fewer hospital beds, longer waiting times for treatment



How are GP appointments going to increase, and ambulance and hospital wait times decrease, without funding and staffing to make these goals possible?

and emergency care. This would be welcome, except the promised £500 million investment is going to do very little to close the £3.7 billion funding deficit being claimed by Tory councils.

Further measures have been announced promising to reduce GP waiting times to a maximum of two weeks, and to leave in place the cap which requires hospitals to treat patients admitted from A&E within a four-hour window.

What has not been explained, is how any of these measures are going to be achieved! There is nothing to address the shortage of doctors and care staff; nothing to compel care providers to pay their staff an adequate wage to fill staffing gaps, nor to support providers in accessing the funds with which to do so.

How are GP appointments going to increase, and ambulance and hospital wait times decrease, without funding and staffing to make these goals possible, and without any accountability for meeting targets?

Coffey says she will be a "champion" of patients with "relentless focus". But these are just words. In almost the same breath, tax cuts for the rich have been announced with

pride, amid claims of improving services. Like the notion that ordinary people can pay skyrocketing bills without wage increases - the numbers do not add up!

The systematic dismantling of the NHS over years has left it unable to function, and this new plan from Liz Truss' government is grossly inadequate to meet the task of reversing this damage.

The NHS and social care must be brought back into public ownership in its entirety and properly funded by taking the vast wealth off the super-rich. Under the democratic control of doctors, nurses, carers, porters, cleaners and all other workers who keep it running - with input from patients and the wider community - investment could be planned to really improve services.

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BLACK WORKERS AND YOUTH HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO FIGHT BACK

HUGO PIERRE
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

The media repeat the Tory claim that the cabinet under new Tory prime minister Liz Truss is the most diverse there has ever been. It includes Kwasi Kwarteng as chancellor, James Cleverly as foreign secretary and Suella Braverman as home secretary.

But Black workers will not be fooled into believing the Tories will do anything but represent the class interests of the wealthy and powerful: that thin layer of society that aims to exploit us. Truss herself became prime minister in a ballot in which under 150,000 Conservative Party members took part. That is even less than the wealth-owning class, or the '1%', who on average own £3.6 million each.

Under her policies, the Tories have already pledged to cut back on public services, to allow the rich to keep more of their wealth, and attack working-class organisations, especially to curb further the right of trade unionists to take strike action. This so-called 'diverse' cabinet has no plans - or even a desire - to end the discrimination that Black workers face, which keeps us disproportionately in poverty.

There is no doubt that the cabinet will pursue a right-wing agenda both at home and abroad. However, the cabinet members will also be used to attempt to portray a 'success story' of 'what Blacks can achieve in the UK', and of us now living in a 'post-racial society' where the colour of your skin is no longer a barrier.

This is not the first time the Tories have tried to bury racism, which has not outlived its historical legacy. It is still used as a weapon to 'divide and rule' by the British ruling class and their collaborators worldwide. Last year, the former prime minister, Boris Johnson, had a report published by his Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, which concluded that institutional racism claims are 'not borne out' and that the UK should be seen as a 'model for other white-majority countries.'

This report was published following the explosion of Black Lives Matter protests across the UK and worldwide. This mass protest movement was sparked by the murder of George Floyd by a white police officer in the US. This took place at a time when deaths from Covid

among Black workers in the UK were 4.2 times higher than for white workers. This movement of predominantly young people, especially young Black workers, sparked fear in the establishment and memories of riots in the centre of big cities in previous decades.

A whole new generation of Black workers now live in a period of increasing income inequality. And guess what? Black workers are even further behind. A recent ONS survey revealed that if a Black African person is the head of a household then they are four times less likely to have total personal wealth in excess of £500,000.

And on the streets, Black youth still face police harassment and intimidation - Black youth are 19 times more likely to face police 'stop and search'. Recently released figures, following the strip search of Child Q in a Hackney school, show that 58% of boys stripped searched in London were Black. The overwhelming majority of those were aged 16 or 17, even though over half of all searches resulted in no further action.

Class enemy

Far from this Tory leadership being seen as a role model for future success, there is a high level of radicalisation amongst Black workers that will see them for what they are: our class enemy.

There was a glimpse of this in the 2017 general election. The radical election manifesto of Jeremy Corbyn, which was opposed by the majority of Labour MPs, gained the support of large sections of youth. This included often-marginalised Black youth, who campaigned for him with Grime4Corbyn. The Black voter turnout was much higher than in previous elections, as it was for youth. Over 70% of Black voters turned out to support Labour's programme of a decent minimum wage, scrapping university tuition fees and nationalisation of the energy companies and utilities, such as the railways, water companies and Royal Mail.

Trade union action against the cost-of-living crisis is now organising that militancy in workplaces. Unite members formerly employed by private contractor Serco as cooks, domestic assistants and security staff in the Barts Health Trust led the way earlier this year. A predominantly Black workforce took strike action and won both a pay rise and a commitment to being brought back

in-house onto NHS national pay and conditions.

The 2022 summer strike wave has again seen Black workers to the fore - Black workers have turned out on RMT and CWU picket lines during their national strikes. Earlier this year, strikes by Unison members alongside college lecturers in the UCU saw Black workers taking action. At City University in London, where virtually all the security staff are in the union, predominantly Black workers closed down all the

buildings on the campus because they remained locked!

Many of the disputes organised at a local level have involved the active participation of Black workers. There is no doubt that future strike action at a local and national level will increasingly involve and organise more Black workers and other migrant workers.

The cost-of-living crisis is particularly driving low-paid workers into action. But all workers taking this action are starting to see who really runs

society - not the rich bosses or their top managers, but those that work the shifts, deal with the equipment or clean the workplaces. This will further radicalise consciousness. However, that radicalisation is no longer reflected in any of the mainstream political parties. Truss and her cabinet's 'diversity' are a world away from the aspirations of Black workers.

That radicalisation is no longer found in the Labour Party since Corbyn was replaced by Sir Keir Starmer as leader. Despite the urgent need for a programme that could meet the needs of workers and also point the way ahead to a new type of society, Starmer has turned Labour to again into a 'second eleven' to represent big business. His promises when elected as leader to stand by the 2019 election manifesto have been completely ditched.

Nationalisation

A call now for the immediate nationalisation of the energy companies could be part of the solution to the huge hike in gas and electricity bills. Energy company profits are seeing a massive surge. A nationalised and democratically planned energy sector could cancel the price increases, as well as moving to green energy to secure future supply in a sustainable way.

But Starmer's refusal to support the call for a £15-an-hour minimum wage will further distance him from Black workers. The pandemic showed

how Black workers make up a major proportion of frontline workers. Workers in security, care work, cleaning and catering are predominantly on minimum wage. But Starmer does not want to be seen as a threat to business.

Even worse is the situation in local authorities. Councils up and down the country are facing financial ruin. Nearly 30 were reported to be on the brink of implementing Section 114 notices, where new council spending is frozen and political decision making is put in the hands of unelected council officers. Many of these councils will have Black councillors who have 'sat on their hands' as community facilities are savaged or put out to privatisation. Very few have raised a peep to object, and those that have, have faced suspension and expulsion.

These cuts are having a disproportionate impact on Black communities. These same councillors could be leading a fight for Black communities, mobilising them alongside the trade unions to win the resources they need. Instead, councillors such as ex-Birmingham city councillor Paulette Hamilton have attacked their workforce, provoking strike action, and have even been prepared to use the Tory anti-trade union legislation against them. It is no wonder that the Unite union, which organises many of these workers, is now limiting its funding to Labour. Unite also backs no-cuts budgets.

This political vacuum is leading some Black workers to draw a conclusion that they need a new party. There are calls by some to form a new Black party. Unfortunately, some of those backing this demand want a cross-class alliance. While not openly calling for an alliance with Black Tories, such as those in the cabinet, they do support a call for greater links with 'Black-owned businesses.'

This is not a radical demand, and provides no solution to the millions working in low-paid jobs. Black-owned businesses are a tiny proportion of the economy. Black capitalism, even on an international scale, is even less capable of improving the lives of Black workers than capitalism in general is capable of improving the position of white workers!

Under different conditions, the Black Panther Party was formed in the US in the mid-1960s. While there are some common features with the UK now, the enforced segregation of Blacks from whites in large parts of the US, and the economic segregation in the rest, had a big impact on the development of the mass civil rights movement. In contrast, there is not anywhere near the same level of segregation in the UK, even though there are areas where there are high density Black communities.

The mass civil rights movement did have several elements. The Nation of Islam in effect represented that cross-class current, and initially Malcolm X was a very strong

advocate for remaining separate. However, his experiences within the Nation of Islam and its lack of willingness to fight 'by any means necessary' for working-class Blacks, led him to break from them. The civil rights movement itself was propelled in the direction of the trade unions and workers struggles in the US.

The Black Panther Party, while organising Blacks, also attempted to form alliances with radical political parties, both electorally and in other campaigns. One of their leaders, Fred Hampton, made their position clear: "We won't fight racism with racism, we will fight it with solidarity... You don't fight capitalism with no black capitalism, you fight capitalism with socialism."

Trade unions

Crucially though, the trade unions are more integrated now in the UK. The Trades Union Congress (TUC) has agreed an anti-racism task force, to look at all aspects of how the trade unions can improve conditions for Black workers. A fundamental part of that work must be how racism can be eradicated in the trade unions themselves, and how Black workers can play a full role: not just organising Black workers, but throughout the whole trade union movement, at all levels. The best fighters must be at the fore of our movement, and workplace representation is key.

Research shows that Black workers fare better where there

are collective bargaining arrangements with employers, reducing pay inequality and other disparities. But employers will always attempt to take away any gains made in the workplace. Just as the capitalists are intent on a so-called 'modernisation' strategy, which in reality is a 'Forward to the 19th Century strategy', with increasing casualisation, and ripping up decent working conditions such as forcing weekend working with no extra pay.

A bold, fighting strategy by the trade unions will mobilise Black workers. The call by the Socialist Party and the National Shop Stewards Network to unite the struggles and coordinate the action particularly resonates.

But the need for a new workers' party that can organise solidarity for workers in dispute is also now the talk of the picket lines. Workers are rightly disparaging about a party leader, supposedly representing workers, who even went to the lengths of dismissing one of his shadow cabinet members who publicly supported picket lines.

Because of the position the trade unions have and the role they can play, especially those leading militant action, they could call for and take steps towards forming a new workers' party. Because of the crisis in capitalism, and particularly UK capitalism, such a new party would need to call for the nationalisation of rail, mail, energy, water and other parts of the

economy. Some of these demands are already the policy of individual unions such as the RMT and CWU. It would also have to discuss more radical proposals for ending poverty and discrimination, and look at a new type of society based on democratic socialist planning.

If this process towards a new party is protracted, it is entirely possible that Black workers will not wait, and a radical Black party, under the pressures of battles against increasing discrimination, harassment of Black youth and poverty conditions, could develop. Such a party would be a step forward, provided it took a socialist approach. As a successful struggle for socialism would require, however, working together with other sections of the working class, the need for a new workers' party would be posed more sharply than ever.

In those circumstances, the need for such a party to have a federal approach - with different socialist and workers' organisations, including radical Black formations, coming together in common struggle, while having the right to maintain their own identity and programme - would be particularly important in winning Black youth and workers to its banner.

No matter who is in the Tory cabinet, this will not stop a growing anger and an increased determination to fight for change in Black communities across the country, and many will move towards socialist conclusions.

PHOTO: SA/CC

Cost of living - what can students do to fight back?

THEO SHARIEFF
SOCIALIST STUDENTS NATIONAL ORGANISER

The cost-of-living crisis is set to hit students incredibly hard this term. Inflation is affecting all the basic necessities of everyday living, with food, energy bills, and rent all on the increase. Pay for the bosses of the top FTSE 100 companies jumped up by 39% in 2021, but wages for the majority of us stagnated as we face the biggest cost-of-living squeeze since the 1950s.

Students will not be isolated from this. With inflation now running well into double digits, the maintenance loan increase of just 2.3% will leave thousands of students facing hardship and crisis this term.

Even during the summer, one-in-three students were left with just £50 a month to live on after paying rent and bills - to cover food, travel, and all the educational resources students are made to buy at the start of term, including textbooks. 11% of students use food banks, up from 5% at the start of the year.

As the cost-of-living crisis continues to bite, against the background of looming recession, the prospect of students running out of money altogether midway through term and going hungry is very real. The average student maintenance loan falls £439 short every month. The gap was £340 last year.

Student housing failure

Before even paying the first month's rent, however, students will have already encountered the myriad of failures in student housing. With shortages, students at numerous universities have been forced to take accommodation in different cities, after being promised a place would be available for them. Some universities have outrageously written to students to request that they defer their studies for a year.

Even for students who have somewhere to live, there are extortionate rent rises and dodgy landlords offloading bill increases onto their shoulders. Socialist Students says that third-party student accommodation providers should immediately be taken into the ownership and control of the universities, as a step towards introducing rent control, decided on by democratically elected committees involving students.

After years of cuts, unis can't provide basics

All of these issues are a continuation of what students experienced during the Covid pandemic. Then, university managements found themselves unable to provide the very basic necessities for students - including spaces to sit in lecture theatres - after years of doing the bidding of successive Tory and Labour governments in



Socialist Students at freshers

Worcester NICK HART



Leeds IAIN DALTON



Turn to page 12 for reports

overseeing various cuts, and failing to invest properly in our education.

Last year, the Tories announced cuts to funding for arts and humanities courses. This was the latest in a string of moves towards running the sector on a capitalist market model, starting with the introduction of tuition fees by Tony Blair's Labour government in 1998.

Workers are striking back

Despite the myriad of attacks we are facing, the new Liz Truss government is not strong. With the backing of just a third of her own MPs in the Tory leadership race, a record-breaking low, Truss faces a perfect storm of challenges - the cost-of-living crisis, incoming economic recession and above all else, the challenge thrown down by workers taking strike action to fight back against her government's agenda of inflation austerity.

Socialist Students stands in solidarity with unions representing university workers, like the University and College Union (UCU), which are balloting for strike action to fight back against further attacks to courses, jobs, wages and working conditions. Uni support staff in the union Unison are also striking over an insulting pay offer.

This presents a massive opportunity for students to go on the offensive at the same time, and launch a struggle for what we need. Socialist Students demands that university managements pledge to make access to student hardship funds readily available, ensure no price increases on campus canteens and restaurants, keep university spaces such as 24-hour libraries open, do not limit campus lighting or heating, and make no more cuts to jobs or courses.

Representing university management, vice-chancellors have been resolute in carrying through vicious attacks on university workers' wages and conditions, and overseeing the marketisation of higher education. Now, even UUK - the body bringing together vice-chancellors - has called for the replacing of maintenance loans with grants, revealing the extent of the crisis.

What UUK doesn't address is how replacing loans with grants could be won. Socialist Students says that building a mass national student movement, and linking up with workers struggling against attacks to their living standards, could force the Tories to concede.

The money exists in Britain - the sixth richest country on the planet - to fund universities properly, and to provide students with living grants, to cancel all student debt and scrap tuition fees.

Just look at the £170 billion Truss has borrowed to subsidise the profits of the major energy companies. This measure, however, hasn't stopped energy bills doubling on average.



It would have cost a fraction of £170 billion to take the energy companies into democratic public ownership with compensation paid to shareholders only on the basis of proven need, and not to the fat cats. On that basis - running production and distribution of energy on the basis of need instead of profit - our bills could be slashed.

The strike wave has demonstrated to millions of students and young people the potential power of the working class when organised. Many students watching the strike wave could draw confidence from the fightback being waged by workers against the cost-of-living squeeze to launch a fightback of their own.

The industrial fightback is still only in its early stages. The coming weeks could see many more workers joining the strike wave, with civil servants, teachers, lecturers, healthcare and council workers all currently being balloted. Rail, Royal Mail, BT and dock workers are already on strike.

Students need to get organised

But in order to fully capitalise on these opportunities students need to get organised ourselves. This means building democratic and open student organisations, which could provide a mass forum for students to discuss and debate. Discussions could involve trade unions and workers to draw up a list of demands,

outline what funding is needed during the current crisis, and launch a campaign to win back that money from central government.

Student organisations could link up nationally to rebuild a movement to fight for free education. And together with workers on strike, we can build a united struggle for our demands, in addition to the battle against the cost-of-living squeeze.

The absence of student organisations, however, will not prevent struggles among students breaking out, over the cost-of-living crisis and other stark failures of the capitalist system to deliver for young people. Just look in recent years at the explosions of anger around Black Lives Matter, the climate, and sexual harassment and violence on the campuses.

During the pandemic, thousands of students at the University of Manchester marched and protested over the issue of the university's handling of Covid. They succeeded in removing metal fences put up around student accommodation.

We need a new party

But what mass political force exists which would fight for students and young people? Keir Starmer has: "Wiped the slate clean" of Jeremy Corbyn's pledges at the 2017 and 2019 general elections - which included the pledge to scrap tuition fees.

That's why Socialist Students says

students and young people need a new political party. A party which would be able to raise the struggle for free education in parliament, and raise demands for the rights of students, young people, and workers in the council chamber as well. This could include licensing powers councils have to register landlords and force them to take action on the rundown and unsafe living conditions many second and third-year students face.

Young people's experience of capitalism - poverty, crisis and austerity - has led many to search for a socialist alternative to what is happening. Join Socialist Students to help build a movement against the student cost-of-living crisis, for free education, to campaign on campuses, and fight for socialism.

See 'Students feel rising cost of living' on page 12

Join the student fightback: join...

Visit socialiststudents.org.uk/join
or call **020 8988 8761**
or text your name and school, college or uni to **07749 379 010**



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

For local councillors who are committed to opposing austerity and all cuts to local services, jobs, pay and conditions.

For a socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs, including dental and eye care - free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out the private companies! Nationalise the pharmaceutical industry under democratic workers' control and management.

Renationalise privatised utilities - including rail, mail, water, telecoms and power - under democratic workers' control and management.

Free, publicly funded and democratically run, good-quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees and write off student debt, end marketisation, and introduce a living grant. No to academisation. For all schools to be under the genuine democratic control of local education authorities, school staff, parents and student organisations.

The right to a safe secure home for all. For the mass building of genuinely affordable, high-quality, carbon-neutral council housing. For rent controls that cap the level of rent. Fair rent decisions should be made by elected bodies of tenants, housing workers and representatives of trade unions. For cheap low-interest mortgages for home buyers. Nationalise the privately owned large building companies, land banks and estates.

ENVIRONMENT

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

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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

Help fund the fightback!

DONATE TODAY

socialistparty.org.uk/donate



£5,000 needed to reach our fighting fund target



Socialist Party members are campaigning tirelessly to make sure we have the financial resources we need. And donations coming in help make sure we have the money to fund the fight back against the bosses and their political representatives.

This fighting fund quarter closes on Monday 3 October. With one week to go, we still need to raise £5,000 to hit our target.

How can you help us reach it? **Devon Socialist Party member Ryan Hall** says what they've been doing.

"Against a backdrop of a cost-of-living and capitalist crisis, people are looking for an alternative. And

the Socialist Party being out on the streets campaigning and at picket lines with striking workers is attracting people of all ages.

"Devon Socialist Party held a public meeting in Torquay, which attracted over 30 people from the area. They got to hear speakers from RMT and Aslef unions on strike.

"Workers and young people we have met at meetings and on stalls understand the need for us to raise funds to spread our ideas and fight back against the Tories and the bosses. Over £100 was raised from donations at one meeting, and recent stalls have raised nearly £50 for the fighting fund."

Fund the fightback DONATE TODAY

- Visit socialistparty.org.uk/donate or call **020 8988 8777**
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AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q3: JULY-SEPTEMBER 2022	DEADLINE: 3 OCTOBER 2022
South West	2,311	1,800		128%
Eastern	1,245	1,200		104%
Wales	2,272	2,300		99%
East Midlands	1,597	1,850		86%
West Midlands	2,056	2,600		79%
Southern & SE	1,832	2,350		78%
Northern	537	750		72%
London	3,087	4,600		67%
Yorkshire	1,699	2,550		67%
North West	533	1,150	46%	
Other	2,121	3,850	55%	
TOTAL	19,289	25,000		77%



Cost of living – campaigning for action now

'Enough is Enough' rallies

Birmingham

With a long queue forming around the block, there was plenty of time for Socialist Party members to discuss and debate the key political issues with workers and young people waiting to get in: cost of living, surging strike wave, the failure of the Tories, and most keenly, the utter lack of real political opposition to all this. Many people said that they've been inspired by the strikes, but not by Labour leader Keir Starmer.

There was an energetic mood among the crowd, and a very positive reception to socialist ideas. Many stated that they had come along in the hope of some kind of political alternative being in the works with the launch of Enough is Enough. They wanted to buy the Socialist, take our leaflets, and several filled out 'join the Socialist Party' cards.

However, this desire for a political alternative was not met or hinted at by the official speakers. There were

several shouts from the audience of: "General strike now", and "Down with Starmer".

The energy for a political alternative is there. My concern is that some trade union leaders are using Enough is Enough to softly promote support for Labour, and that it'll be a missed opportunity for the unions to launch a new mass party that will stand firm for workers. The chair of the meeting stating that Enough is Enough is "not a political party, as we want to bring people together" confirmed this fear.

KRIS O'SULLIVAN

BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Liverpool

Sheffield Socialist Party member Holly Johnson, a health worker, spoke at the rally in Liverpool. 1.3 million NHS staff have lost 29% pay over the last twelve years. To rousing applause, Holly said we needed to kick out the privateers and bring the health service back into public ownership, alongside rail, energy and Royal Mail. Holly said that coordinating union action will make us strong, but that we need a party to call for the 'Enough is Enough' demands at the ballot box.

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

A number of people at the event had never been to a political rally before, and wondered who to vote for. The strike wave has enthused a whole new layer of people. The debate will continue over the alternative to Keir Starmer's Labour, and the burning need to turn this enthusiasm into building a new mass workers' party.

STEVE ION

LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Coventry TUC protest

The Socialist Party's stall and leaflets proved very popular. We sold one copy after another of our paper, the Socialist. Our stalls were constantly busy, with dozens of signatures to nationalise energy, to scrap hospital parking charges, and for the unions to strike together. Coventry's newer Socialist Party members were among the most enthusiastic leafletting and speaking to protesters.

There was a lot of discussion about the utter failure of Keir Starmer's Labour Party to support the trade unions and striking workers. The Socialist Party makes it clear that we need a new mass workers' party.

Plenty of students and young workers took leaflets advertising our next public meeting. Some told us there and then that they are socialists, and they want to join the fight for socialism. You can find out more about the Socialist Party and the case for socialism at one of our meetings.

ADAM HARMSWORTH

COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Students at freshers - Students feel rising cost of living

● Sussex

A lot of new faces came and spoke to us at our stall. Some wondered what we represent, how we are different from the other groups on campus, and what joining us will bring to them.

When we told them that we are a campaigning group, working to make changes like free education and rent control, many wanted to

join. They told us some of their own experiences with these issues, and how they want to contribute to making a difference.

The cost-of-living crisis is one issue that many students had concerns about. We discussed recent and upcoming strikes happening in the local area, and issues on feminism.

Many students are looking for ways to combat the issues that are becoming more and more visible, and joining a group with a similar

goal. So now we are really excited to see how many people will join us for our first meeting.

INGRID ALMQUIST LIEN

● Nottingham Trent

Over two days, we got over 60 names on our Socialist Students sign-up sheet. And our two Socialist Students meet and greets were very successful. One student who came to the

discussion on the first day, helped out on the second.

One of the main concerns was student accommodation. Two students, who were angry about their living conditions, said that they feel that they're being exploited by their slum landlord.

They were paying £150-a-week each in a shared house of eight. It's cramped, mouldy and hasn't got a functioning hob or oven.

SEAMUS SMYTH

● Derby

30 students signed our petition to make the energy companies pay. One student who is a single mother and works two jobs said that she's anxious about starting her second year as she'll be struggling to find time to work on her studies.

- See 'What can students do to fight back?' on pages 10-11
- socialiststudents.org.uk

Leicester disturbances:

Don't let our community be divided – for unity of working class and young people

LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

The recent violent disturbances between certain sections of the communities in Leicester, and now in Birmingham, are worrying. The high tensions between a minority of members of the Hindu and Muslim communities saw gang attacks and disturbances. These reached a peak when violence broke out in Leicester between rival fans after the India-Pakistan cricket match on Sunday 28 August.

Following that incident the Leicester police brought in measures to extend their power to stop and search, and disperse anyone in the Belgrave, Rushey Mead and Spinney Hill areas. Stop and search is already notorious for its disproportionate use on people of colour.

These provocative measures by the police have further increased tensions in the communities.

With tensions high, on the evening of Saturday 17 September, a 200-strong march took place of people who were widely believed to be Rashitriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteer Organisation – RSS) supporters. These men, who had their faces covered, were chanting abuse as they marched through the community.

The RSS is a far-right Hindu

nationalist paramilitary organisation. It is affiliated with India's right-wing prime minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party. The RSS has been linked to communal violence in India against Muslims. The march entered the Green Lane Road area of Leicester. Green Lane Road in North Evington has a large Muslim population, but there is also a Sikh Gurdwara and a Hindu Temple in the same neighbourhood as well as other ethnic groups.

Although there has been serious disorder and aggression before, the violence on 17 September came from a small number of RSS supporters.

So what is behind this community strife? According to the Leicester Mercury, the city's Labour mayor, Sir Peter Soulsby, who has carried through massive cuts to public services in Leicester, including to the youth service, is "baffled" by the events!

It would be mistaken to think that the India-Pakistan cricket match was the cause of the disturbances. There are many factors, local, national and international that have fed the tensions that have simmered beneath the surface.

International factors that have contributed to the tensions have arisen from the election of Indian prime minister Narendra Modi in 2014, and



TWITTER

again in 2019. Some Leicester leaders, including local Labour politicians, celebrated Modi's victories, despite his party's treatment of Muslims and other minorities in India, as well as vicious attacks on workers' rights and the poor. Violence against minorities in India has increased since Modi became prime minister.



The Socialist Party resolutely defends the right of all to practise their faith, and opposes all oppression based on religion, race, gender and sexuality. We also have no confidence that the police and the right-wing politicians will act in the interests of the community

The protests have involved a small number of people so far, but there is a danger that they could escalate.

Our working-class community has already suffered badly. Leicester had one of the highest Covid-19 infection rates and corresponding death rates in the UK, which is directly linked to the city having some of the poorest areas, chronic overcrowding and the scandal of the sweatshops.

Leicester hit the headlines because of wage rates in the fashion industry of £3.50 to £4.50 an hour. The industry, employing 10,000 workers, kept working during lockdowns in unsafe, unhealthy factories, leading to Leicester being placed in lockdown when the rest of the country wasn't. And companies like Boohoo, McVitie's and Samworth Brothers made massive profits during the pandemic.

As with other cities, the Labour-led council has overseen massive cuts in public spending. Youth services have been slashed, along with social care and other vital services.

Cost of living

Nationally, we are facing the biggest cost-of-living crisis for years along with rising energy costs. The future for young people looks dismal unless there is a coordinated fightback.

The trade union movement is starting to show the way. The summer strikes of major trade unions like the RMT transport workers' union, the CWU postal and BT workers' union, and Unite have demonstrated how powerful ordinary, working-class people can be when they struggle together. The problems of soaring food and energy prices affects all communities and ethnic groups.

But we also need a political voice to fight the cuts in local and national services. Socialist Party member Tessa Warrington is standing for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in a council by-election currently taking place in the North Evington ward of Leicester, where much of the disturbances have taken place.

She is standing on a programme of no cuts, and for the council to take

emergency action against the cost-of-living crisis – like opening up school kitchens in the mornings and weekends for free breakfasts and meals to be offered to all students – using its one billion pound-plus spending power to defend our communities. The council should spend what's needed for the people of Leicester as its only priority – and mobilise a massive campaign for the government to pay if there is any shortfall in meeting the bill!

If elected, Tessa will also fight for a truly independent workers' and community inquiry into the tensions between certain sections of the community, as the only way to rebuild trust and the unity of the working class and young people across different communities.

The Socialist Party resolutely defends the right of all to practise their faith, and opposes all oppression based on religion, race, gender and sexuality.

We also have no confidence that the police and right-wing politicians will act in the interests of the community. The recent killing of Chris Kaba by police in London shows that, once again. The Socialist Party calls for the democratic control of policing by trade unions and communities, including with powers to fire and hire officers.

What is clear from these events is that a political voice is needed for the working class and young people in Leicester, and throughout the UK, as an alternative to the divisive policies of the current capitalist politicians. Standing in the local by-election is a first step to that goal which must be built on as the trade union and community struggle against the cost-of-living crisis unfolds.



Socialist Party members campaigning for Tessa Warrington, standing for TUSC in a council by-election currently taking place in the North Evington ward of Leicester, where much of the disturbances have taken place LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

New phase in the Ukraine war



TONY SAUNOIS
COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL

The desperate, dramatic turn by Russian president Vladimir Putin, announcing the mobilisation of 300,000 reserves, coupled with his renewed threat to use nuclear weapons, indicates the seriousness of what is a new stage in the Ukraine war. He also announced referendums on joining the Russian Federation in four Ukrainian provinces that are partly under Russian occupation, including Donetsk and Luhansk.

Putin's mobilisation announcement initially triggered small but significant protests in many Russian cities, which were brutally repressed. Military call-up papers were handed out to some of the protesters as a punishment and intimidation to deter further protests. According to some reports, in reality up to one million could be drafted. This is the first time the wider population has been called up for the military since the end of World War Two.

This dramatic change in the situation will starkly bring home to the mass of the Russian population the reality of the war, which many have probably tried to blank out from their consciousness - as until now they have been less directly affected by it. The draft is a big gamble for Putin. As it has been enforced, thousands have attempted to flee the country to avoid

Ukrainian forces have had significant advances on the eastern battle front prompting Russian escalation
PHOTO: MODUKRAINE/CC

being drawn into the war. Flights out of Russia have been packed and the cost of tickets has rocketed. Thousands queued at the frontiers with Kazakhstan, Finland and other neighbouring countries, desperate to flee the country. Some countries are opposed to allowing these Russians entry to seek asylum.

The CWI supports the building of mass opposition to the war in Russia and demands the withdrawal of the Russian forces from Ukraine. At the same time we call for those Russians fleeing the draft to be given asylum.

About-turn

Putin's about-turn flows from the significant Ukrainian advances on the eastern battle front of the war, with the apparent routing of Russian forces in the Kharkiv region. In the second week of September, the Ukraine military advanced 8,000 to 9,000 square kilometres. This followed a period of glacial advances by Russian forces of only one to two kilometres at a time. In the south, Ukrainian forces have faced far more determined Russian resistance and their advances have been much slower, with heavy losses.

In war, on occasions the seizure of vast areas can have little significance. In other battles, the seizure of smaller areas can have a major impact. It depends on the strategic significance of the area concerned and what effect it has on the contending

armies involved. The consequences of the offensive in the Kharkiv region were major. It was a big blow to the prestige and standing of the Russian army and Putin's regime, while boosting the confidence of Ukraine's military forces. It also damaged the supply lines for the Russian military forces in the area.

Having punctured the portrayed invincibility of the Russian state, it enraged Putin's embattled regime and has driven it to take drastic measures to try to hit back. It also strengthened the hand of hardline Russian nationalist critics of Putin who support the war but want it prosecuted more determinedly.

After failing in their original objective of taking Kyiv and the whole of Ukraine early in the war, the main war aim of Putin's regime is now strengthening its position in the Donbas eastern provinces and in the southern areas that form a link to Crimea.

However, militarily the draft will not have an immediate effect. It will take months to train and deploy the new forces. According to some reports, the Russian state does not have enough officers to train the existing conscripts and new recruits to the army. Even when deployed, the reluctance to be conscripted and experience of the bloody military conflict will further undermine the morale of many or most of the new Russian forces. As the old British military adage says: one volunteer is worth 100 pressed men! On the other side, Ukraine's military is likely to try to use the coming weeks, prior to the onset of winter, to secure further advances and consolidate what they have already captured.

The four 'referendums' are part of Putin's strategy. The populations of these areas have dramatically dwindled since the start of the war. The outcome of 'referendums' carried out at gun point are a foregone conclusion. It is not genuine self-determination, there has not been a democratic debate and decision making. By incorporating these areas into Russia, Putin will then argue that any attack on them by Ukraine or other forces constitutes an attack on Russia. This could then be used as the

justification to escalate the response militarily to 'defend the motherland' from aggression using 'any means necessary'.

The Ukrainian military victory in the Kharkiv region arose partly from the high morale of the Ukraine forces, mirrored by the low morale of the Russian forces. It revealed that the modern military firepower supplied by the west is beginning to be effective when deployed against older and less effective Russian weaponry.

Ukraine's regime and some of the western imperialist powers want to use that advance as a basis to drive on and eject Russia from the whole of Ukraine, of which it currently occupies about 20%. That is unlikely to result in a fast victory for Ukraine and an end to the war. However, it poses the possibility that unless the situation is reversed, Russia could eventually be faced with defeat and even the collapse of its forces. This would have existential consequences for Putin's mafia regime, which is determining his response.

His regime is conducting a massive propaganda campaign, saying that the western powers are set on attacking and weakening Russia. A layer of the population undoubtedly accepts the draft, however reluctantly, and some see it as a 'patriotic duty'. Previously Putin had avoided calling up reserve forces for fear of it provoking more opposition to the war. Yet now he has taken a big gamble by going down this route, which can lead to big protests and growing opposition to the war. Significantly, it seems that university students have been excluded from the draft.

The continuation of a protracted bloody war, with little prospect of outright victory, will eventually lead to a widespread change in consciousness in the Russian population. Along with the development of massive opposition to Putin's war, there will be growing opposition to the escalating corruption and inequality - manifestations of the rottenness of capitalism in Russia, as well as in Ukraine and internationally. Socialist ideas will inevitably attract interest from workers in Russia, Ukraine and worldwide in the search for a different future.



Putin's escalation of the war and calling up of more men to fight has provoked more protests in Russia PHOTO: SILAR/CC

Along with the development of massive opposition to Putin's war, there will be growing opposition to the escalating rottenness of capitalism in Russia, as well as in Ukraine and around the world

Iran: Mahsa Amini's death triggers revolutionary youth movement



Independent trade unions have supported the protests, while teachers in Kurdistan and bus drivers in Tehran have taken strike action

LUKAS ZÖBELEIN
SOZIALISTISCHE ORGANISATION SOLIDARITÄT
(CWI GERMANY)

Mahsa Amini's death has plunged Iran into turmoil. Protests and clashes have taken place in at least 85 cities and towns. Protests, often led by young women, immediately began after Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman of Kurdish descent had been arrested by the Iranian morality police, the so-called 'Guidance Patrols', for not wearing her hijab properly, was beaten in a police vehicle before being held in custody and dying in hospital three days later.

Mahsa Amini's death was a tipping point. Already there was anger across the country women were arrested after a 'hijab and chastity day' held in July. Then, in mid-August, a presidential decree clamping down on women's dress and stipulating harsher punishments for violating the strict code was announced, a measure that would be enforced by surveillance technology. Protests were beginning and, when pictures of Mahsa Amini lying in a coma and after she had died on 16 September, spread on social media, the situation accelerated.

Since the morality police are particularly there to enforce religious laws such as the observance of the strict dress code for women, it was clear to many women in Iran that they too could have died in Mahsa Amini's place. This initially sparked protests in the Kurdish regions of Iran, which quickly spread throughout the country.

It seems that for the first time since the Green Movement against the election rigging in 2009-10, a broad movement is developing. This underlines the new quality of the situation in Iran. From the beginning, parts of it had an anti-regime character, ranging from reflecting existing public anger at reports of how children of the ruling elite live overseas to chants in a northern city of "death to the oppressor, be it the shah or the supreme leader", to shouts on protests in Tehran of "death to the dictator", "life, liberty and women" and "oh the day when we will be armed."

As is to be expected, the regime is once again reacting to the protests with massive repression and violence. These protests are the largest to sweep the country since those in 2019 against rises in fuel prices when reportedly around 1,500 people were killed in a crackdown on protest. Now the regime is mobilising all its forces in the repressive apparatus - the police, Basji paramilitary militia and the misnamed Revolutionary Guards.

But the reaction of the mainly young and female protesters is different to before. For example, on 21 September, there was a curfew and a massive deployment of police and Basji to the capital city of Tehran.

The regime's move was simply answered by a local movement gathering a day later, bypassing all control measures. Wherever the repressive apparatus manages to break up meetings and demonstrations, new meetings and protests simply form in other localities in the same city. The protests were initially organised mainly through social media platforms and WhatsApp, but this is becoming increasingly difficult as the regime has blocked sites and

massively slowed down and hampered access to and speed of the internet. This shows the need for the movement to organise itself in broad organisations, both involving already existing bodies like the independent trade unions and building new ones so that the protests can be planned and democratically discuss what steps are necessary, and what should replace the regime.

Another development is that the movement has begun to actively defend itself against the police and the Basji. Pictures from different cities show that the demonstrators were armed with clubs and stones, and were able to actively repel attacks by the police and the Basji. This has led to the regime using its henchmen mainly in everyday clothes. But even this is recognised by parts of the movement, and the regime's henchmen are attacked and driven away.

These developments show the need to form bodies that can organise the defence of the movement. This is also underlined by the fact that, for example, in Tehran and other cities, some police stations have been attacked and the police driven out of them. There are reports of individual attacks on the police and Basji, even including a few shootings. However, a collective defence needs to be organised based both on mass struggle and the creation of forces that can

defend the movement.

These questions arise in particular in Oshnavieh in the province of West Azerbaijan, where protesters pushed the state forces out of the city, but they have returned and reports are now that it is now "completely militarised".

The regime's massive use of repressive force, which is expressed in particular by firing on the protests, has so far resulted in up to 100 deaths.

Role of the organised working class

Part of the background to this situation is that since 2017-18, the organised sections of the working class, in particular, have been regularly striking and demonstrating for a minimum wage linked to inflation that is enough to live on, better working conditions, against corruption and for their most basic democratic rights. These include, for example, the right to political and trade union organisation, in other words, the legalisation of their trade unions, and the freedom of all political prisoners.

At this moment the independent trade unions have supported the protests, while teachers in Kurdistan have held a two-day protest strike, and Tehran bus drivers have called for a general strike. Such a step would mark a tremendous step forward

as it could help bring the different strands of the opposition movement together. A 48-hour strike, accompanied by mass demonstrations, would both bring together, and show, the strength of the working class, youth and the oppressed.

Already in recent trade union struggles and May Day events, there have been elements of national coordination, particularly among teachers. There needs to be an association of all independent trade unions, organised locally and nationally, which could be based on the structures of the teachers' union organised throughout Iran and extended to involve the wider movement. A central part of this would be to ensure that leadership bodies are democratically elected and that the representatives can be elected and voted out of office at any time.

The preparation of a 48-hour general strike as the next step could also be used to promote nationwide the establishment of these structures mentioned above and to combine the struggles for equal rights for women with political and economic struggles. Every victory in terms of women's equality also strengthens the working class overall.

Such a campaign would also have the task of warning about the role of the rival imperialist states, especially since foreign capitalist rulers are currently pretending to stand on the side of the movement.

However, they are not really interested in strengthening the movement, but rather in weakening their opponent, i.e. the Iranian regime. This is shown in the fact that the Western imperialists are silent on the position of women in their close ally Saudi Arabia; they have said virtually nothing about the sentencing in August of two Saudi women to 34 and 45 years imprisonment because of Tweets they posted. They want a new Iranian regime which is an ally in the way in which the Shah was prior to the 1979 revolution and, like with the Shah, they would close their eyes to oppression in Iran if it is carried on by one of their friends.

In some of the Iranian workers' struggles of recent years the questions of nationalisation and workers' control of production has been raised. This shows how experience is leading workers not just to oppose the regime but to question the capitalist system upon which it rests. They do not want the regime to be simply replaced by another gang of exploiters, and therefore need to maintain political independence from the Iranian capitalists who have their own reasons to oppose the regime.

To achieve this, workers, youth and the oppressed need their own party that combines the fight for democratic demands, the right to organise and have free elections, economic and social demands, and the ending of oppression. The issues of nationalisation and workers' control over the economy which, for example, the Haft Tappeh workers have raised, would be a significant part of a socialist programme to transform society. A workers' party with such a socialist programme could unite the struggles of all workers, as well as the struggles of other social and ecological movements. It could provide them with a clear path to breaking with oppression and capitalism by establishing a government led by representatives of workers and the oppressed people.

Students of Amir Kabir university protest against Hijab and the ruling theocracy
PHOTO: DARAFSH/CC

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the Socialist

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formerly **Militant**

Get organised

FIGHT FOR £15-AN-HOUR MINIMUM WAGE NOW



REECE WILSON

YOUTH FIGHT FOR JOBS

Prices keep rising. Over two million low-paid workers have been forced to use a food bank this year. A similar number regularly skip meals. A skim through any recent copy of the Socialist will provide reports from people who are struggling through the cost-of-living crisis, and of workers fighting back!

The problems have been going on for decades: real wages have been falling since the 1970s, while profits have been rising. That's money going out of working-class people's pockets and into the profits of the bosses.

The minimum wage has for a long time been enough to just scrape by on, perhaps needing to be topped up with benefits to keep heads above water - now it is not enough to survive on.

The Living Wage foundation has increased its voluntary 'real Living Wage' to £10.90 an hour, and £11.95 an hour in London. This will be welcome news for the 400,000 people whose employers sign up to the scheme, but it will not go far enough. And it won't help the 4.8 million workers whose employers haven't signed up, and who earn even less!

We can't rely on goodwill gestures from profit-driven bosses. A decent wage needs to be fought for. The Trades Union Congress (TUC) has announced its 'Fight for £15 campaign', which it says is a "path towards £15 an hour". This is welcome, but we can't afford to wait till the end of the path! The crisis is now. We need £15 an hour now.

The last few months of strikes have shown a new generation of workers their collective power. The trade union movement has taken steps forward by demanding a 'real' real living wage". Civil service union PCS and others are demanding a minimum wage of £15 an hour. Now it's got to be fought for.

Public sector unions have put forward motions to the TUC Congress, starting on 18 October, to coordinate strikes. Low-paid workers not yet organised in trade unions can be inspired to fight back too, like the Amazon warehouse workers, walking out to demand a pay rise.

A weak and divided Tory government can be forced to concede reforms. But, as it stands, it faces no real political opposition from Labour. We need a new mass workers' party that actually fights for what we need: a minimum of £15 an hour, now!

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!



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

