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the Socialist

Issue 1197

6-12 October 2022

formerly **Militant**

TORIES

OUT

STRIKE TOGETHER

BUILD A NEW MASS WORKERS' PARTY

FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM

Liz Truss' brutal, pro-rich, anti-working class Tory government is on the rocks before it's even set sail. She hasn't got the support of the majority of working-class people who are struggling with the cost-of-living nightmare. She hasn't even got the backing of her own MPs.

Forced to make one of the fastest and biggest political U-turns in history - dropping the massive tax boost for the richest in society while the rest of us can't make ends meet - this is a weak, crisis-ridden government that could collapse at any time. But working-class people need to organise to make sure that happens.

The tens of thousands of workers who took strike action together on 1 October, and the tens of thousands more balloting for action on pay, will be taking confidence from the Tory party's meltdown (see pages 4-5). Now is the time to intensify coordination of the strikes and maximise the collective power of working-class people.

As a next step, the Trades Union Congress should turn its 2 November lobby of

parliament into a united day of strike action, with a national demonstration. A well-publicised and organised demo, demanding inflation-proofed wage rises; a minimum wage of £15 an hour; nationalisation of the energy companies, rail and mail, and Tories out, would attract massive support - not just from strikers but from everyone who wants to fight back against low pay, poverty benefits, rampant inflation and profit-greedy bosses.

With such an enfeebled Tory government, the next general election could be much less than two years away. But Keir Starmer, and Labour's shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves, are already making it quite clear that they will not find the money to finance public services and the pay and benefit rises we need. The

Socialist Party's call for a new mass workers' party has never been more urgent.

A step towards this would be to make sure that at the next election we have workers' candidates standing that will fight for what we need, and not to defend the interests of the bosses and the super-rich, as all the main parties do. This is what the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition - the electoral coalition that the Socialist Party is part of - is campaigning for.

Even a few workers' MPs in the next parliament could be the political focus for a working-class fightback and for building the mass socialist political alternative needed to a rotten capitalist system that puts profits before people. Join us in that fight.

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH: COMBATting POLICE RACISM >>> p13

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

Tory measures escalate British capitalism's chronic crisis



Faced with the chronically sick, deteriorating British economy, the Tories in government have swung from one path of crisis to another. Having failed over and over again to come up with policies that could improve the health of the capitalist system they represent, today they can barely think ahead beyond their chance of winning the next general election.

Chancellor Kwasi Kwarteng declared in his speech to Tory party conference that the "new approach" being adopted by himself and prime minister Liz Truss is necessary to avoid "slow, managed decline". But their approach is neither new nor a way of stopping economic decline, and a massive backlash from the working class against the vicious cuts and increased inequality planned by their callous government will hasten its end.

Their 'strategy' is to try to force economic growth through handing yet more wealth to the richest in society while taking a sledgehammer to the living standards of workers and those who rely on benefits. This, at a time when a vast number of people are already struggling to get by and can see only hardship ahead.

Mini-budget

The mini-budget of Kwarteng and Truss caused a wave of shock and incredulity, the more so as it triggered a rapid economic crisis that impacted on interest rates. Tory MPs were already hugely divided before it, and now are in even greater turmoil, not least because their party has plummeted in the opinion polls.

Among them, Michael Gove placed himself as an early leader of an offensive against Truss, accusing her of turning against the 'one nation' conservatism that he claims the Tories stand for. But the party has no unified policy and is, in essence, several parties in one, with many fault-lines within the wings and crossovers between them.

The election of Truss by the dwindling party membership, now within just a few weeks viewed as an unacceptably reckless leader, is in itself an outcome of the Tory party's fissures and decline. Reports in the media indicate that the party's MPs, officials and other senior figures are already intensively plotting how they can remove her as soon as possible and even whether they can prevent the party membership from having any involvement in a new leadership election. A number of them are also discussing plans with Starmer's

Labour group to try to vote down some of her measures in parliament, or even to desert the sinking ship entirely and join Labour instead.

On their part, Truss and those around her clearly entered very intentionally into the policy battle they have started, and with some awareness of the consequences. They had sacked the most senior civil servant in the Treasury and refused to allow an early assessment by the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) of the budget, knowing they would be obstacles. They even excluded some members of their own government cabinet from decisions on aspects of the budget, including the ditching of the 45% income tax rate on the highest earners. On that issue they shamelessly carried out an early U-turn at the start of Tory party conference, under pressure of Tories who felt compelled to echo the wave of outrage across the country over the tax gains for the rich. That anger had been added to by news that a few hours after announcing those gifts - most of which remain unreversed - Kwarteng had been lauded at a champagne bash for wealthy Tory donors, including hedge fund managers who made fat profits from the slide in sterling post mini-budget.



The Tory aim of stimulating economic growth, avoiding a downturn and securing a 'trickle down' of wealth is totally fanciful

The new Tory leadership's ruthless policies should come as no surprise to anyone who has looked at the ultra-free market ideology of the think-tanks which Truss bases them on, such as the Institute of Economic Affairs. She, and those around her, plan a full-scale onslaught on public services, as shown already by their demand to government departments to find more cuts - at a time when due to inflation they need extra funding to simply maintain services and real pay levels. They also want a bonfire of regulations - including on workers' and trade union rights, and on planning laws - to maximise the freedom of big business to exploit workers and the environment.

Their declared aim of stimulating economic growth, avoiding a downturn and securing a 'trickle down' of wealth is totally fanciful. The economy has already been collapsing towards recession and the budget's measures have only speeded up that path.

Forecasts of interest rates rising to 6% show the devastating impact that this fast-approaching recession will have, especially for people with mortgages and other debt. For many

working-class people the terrible prospect of hunger and lack of heating, due to food and energy cost inflation, has now been added to by the possibility of becoming homeless.

The budget also triggered a ratcheting up of government debt repayments, which were already at the highest-ever recorded level before this new hit. Financial institutions that lend to the government are demanding a higher rate of return in exchange for what they see as a riskier investment, with the result that long-term borrowing costs have gone higher than those in Portugal and Spain.

Ruling classes across the world looked on in astonishment and alarm at this, and at the pound plunging for a day to its lowest ever level against the dollar, fearing the repercussions on the unstable world economy. Reflecting that concern, the IMF pitched in with criticism of Truss for trying to stimulate demand by cutting taxes at a time when inflation is high, and even disapproved of the boost to inequality in her measures - gross hypocrisy for an organisation that has imposed austerity on many populations across the globe.

Certainly, as the Socialist Party has explained many times, while capitalism everywhere in the world is rotten and in decline, British capitalism has developed an even more acute crisis than other developed economies. The policies of its governments over decades have led to deindustrialisation, lower productivity and investment compared with competitor economies, and the second largest current account deficit in the world. A factor in this performance is the arrogance, complacency and stage in history of a ruling class that was the first to bring in the capitalist system, and that once directly exploited the people and natural resources of a quarter of the world's land.

Following Kwarteng's budget, the reaction of the finance markets that led to the startling descent of massive pension funds towards collapse was as much due to finance capitalists' fears of what the budget indicated about this Tory government's unreliability, and, fundamentally, the state of the British economy, as to particular parts of the budget itself.

Pension funds

The ruin of those pension funds was headed off by the emergency injection of £65 billion into government bonds by the Bank of England, but that intervention will only have a temporary effect, and it has solved none of the underlying problems in the economy, which will inevitably be expressed in further ways in the course of developments and events to come. Karl Marx explained in the 19th century that the capitalist system contains contradictions that can never be fully and lastingly overcome, which is as true today as it was then.

Rail workers sent the right message to the Tory party conference - with



its misjudged slogan "Getting Britain moving" - by stopping movement on the rail network on the day before the conference and on the last day of it. The present strike wave, spearheaded by the rail unions, CWU, Unite, UCU and others, has been building in momentum, with more strike ballots to come. The TUC needs to play a central role in building coordinated action when it meets this month - a vital issue which the National Shop Stewards Network will be discussing at its pre-TUC meeting on 16 October.

Nothing less is acceptable than a complete protection of living standards, and the raising of them for the lowest-paid workers and those on benefits. These basic needs can be met for the widest possible layer of workers through building the fight for them across the entire trade union movement. The TUC congress should also send a clear message to Truss that the enactment of any further anti-union restrictions, which could be announced as early as next week, would be met by a 24-hour general strike.

Steps forward on a political front, towards a new mass workers' party, are also crucial. At the present stage, the campaign of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) for workers to stand as anti-austerity candidates in the next local and general elections will help create building blocks towards that.

Labour Party

The Labour Party has been benefiting significantly in the polls from the government crisis, as its Blairite leaders reject the worst excesses of the Truss government and make speeches intended to raise hopes that they can defeat the cost-of-living crisis and "raise living standards for everyone, not just a privileged few", as Keir Starmer said at Labour's conference.

But his speech was also littered with get-out clauses, such as "not being able to do things as quickly as we might like" and a reference to "difficult choices, particularly when managing the country's finances", not to mention the loaded words: "I would love to stand here and say Labour will fix everything. But... the rescue will be harder than ever."

He had already discarded Corbyn's left manifesto policies and sidelined or removed those who promoted them, and he and the others around him say nothing about challenging capitalist interests: they are not even willing to support workers taking strike action to defend their living standards. Rather, Starmer has assured the ruling class that their interests will be safe in his hands and he will act "responsibly" on public spending and control the economy in the "national interest" - with those two words in reality meaning the interests of British capitalism.

Most in the capitalist class no doubt now view Starmer's Labour as potentially better for their interests than the Johnson and Truss governments, which have undermined both the economy and the standing

of British capitalism in the international arena.

However, if Starmer comes to lead the next government, no matter how much he ingratiates himself with big business, while at the same time trying to present a softer face of capitalism, he won't be able to control the economy and end "this endless cycle of crisis" as he deludedly pledged in his conference speech. Cycles of crisis are part and parcel of the profit-based market capitalist system. And accepting that system - as he does - means abiding by capitalist interests, including those of the finance markets.

Truss's government has experienced the wrath of those markets, which are not a mystical, non-human force, but rather are driven by the actions of super-wealthy speculators and managers of financial institutions across the world. In the case of her budget, their concerns were mainly over the effect that the tax cuts could have on keeping inflation high, and the consequence of the tax cuts in further increasing government debt without a declared plan for mitigating it.



The TUC congress should also send a clear message to Truss that the enactment of any further anti-union restrictions would be met by a 24-hour general strike

If a future workers' government tries to maintain a capitalist economy, those markets would be far more venomous. They would want to destroy that government to prevent it from taking measures against their parasitic leeching of vast sums of money into the pockets of a tiny minority.

Corbyn's general election manifestos fell a long way short of a socialist transformation, but nevertheless were ridiculed and derided by capitalist economists and politicians for pledging a modest reduction in inequality along with some increased borrowing - for investment purposes only - of a much lower amount than Truss and Kwarteng have declared.

This all backs up the need for the workers' movement to be politically armed with a socialist programme that includes taking decisive measures against capitalist ownership and control. That means the taking into public ownership of the top companies that control the economy, including the banks and finance institutions, and bringing in democratically decided socialist planning. Only on that basis can the interests of the overwhelming majority in society be really defended and advanced, and the cycles of capitalist crisis ended for ever.

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Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

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Felixstowe port bosses dig in – but so do the dockers, fighting for decent pay and conditions

DAVE MURRAY
EASTERN REGION SOCIALIST PARTY

At the time of writing, it looks like the Felixstowe dockers' strike will go to a third round. Faced with a second eight-day strike from 27 September to 5 October, the company has decided to attempt to stonewall its workers, sticking with its below-inflation offer of 7% plus a tip of £500.

The port, which handles roughly half of all of the UK's containerised imports, claims to have been able to redirect traffic elsewhere. The UK's highly repressive union laws help them in this, as the union is compelled to give advance notice of its actions.

This does not mean that the port is unaffected – the redirections will cost money – but it does enable them

to try to minimise disruption to their customers.

As well as slashing their workers' spending power, the company is seeking to transfer engineers from the hourly paid workforce onto new terms and conditions as salaried staff.

This is an attempt to divide the workforce, as well as save on overtime pay. It shows that the company has some kind of forward plan to squeeze the workforce even more in the future.

The company has attempted to intimidate strikers by suspending a number of union members for social media and picket line activity related to the strike. This is an extension of their policy of hyper-vigilance when it comes to disciplining longstanding workers who are on better pay and conditions.

With the Tory government planning to set minimum service levels for strikes in key sectors, this dispute is an example of where such new laws would be applied. As in the past, an attack on dock workers should be seen as an attack on the whole working class.



DAVE MURRAY

Southampton dockers restore militant traditions



Liverpool dockers NEIL DUNNE

NICK CHAFFEY
SOUTHERN AND SOUTH EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

A delegation of Southampton dockers visited the Liverpool picket line last week to give their support to the strike action.

Restoring the effective militant traditions of the past, they are refusing to handle cargo in Southampton diverted from Liverpool during the strike.

Labour leader Keir Starmer refused to stand on the Liverpool picket line when he was in the city for the Labour Party conference. But the solidarity shown to the dockers in

Liverpool, and the action being taken in Felixstowe, show the enormous power of coordinated action to challenge the greed of the bosses, who are making massive profits at the expense of workers' pay.

It's a tremendous sign of the new period we are in and the potential to show a way out of this cost-of-living crisis.

We must ensure that this fight has a powerful political voice to match this industrial muscle.

As it isn't going to be Labour may be it's time for another tradition to be restored: dockers' candidates in the next general election.

Workers strike in further and higher education



Socialist Students support Unison strikers at Leeds LEEDS SP

UCU members in 26 further education colleges and Unison members in 16 universities are taking part in weeks of strike action.

Pickets at Leeds University told us that Unison has had massive growth there since the previous round of strike action, with the branch now having over 1,500 members. One speaker at the rally reported how there was only two members of Unison in her team at the beginning of the year, now everyone is a member. Now admissions for their department grind to a halt when they call strike action.

A striker agreed with the demands in the Socialist, saying: 'Yes, we need

a new party'. They had joined Labour under Jeremy Corbyn, but now took away a dozen Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition leaflets to pass on to friends who had left Labour under Keir Starmer.

IAIN DALTON
LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Party members joined a very lively picket at the University of Bristol. Unison members were on strike after being offered a measly 3% pay increase which, in real-terms, amounts to almost a 7% pay cut. One library worker I spoke to said that, while the official dispute was over pay, it was also about a lack of respect showed to staff by university management.

The picket line was followed by



UCU strikers in Bristol BRISTOL SP

a rally outside the new vice-chancellor's office. They earn almost £300,000 a year – over ten times the amount earned by the average university worker! Socialist Party member Roger Thomas brought solidarity from Bristol Trades Council, putting forward a strategy of coordinated strike action. This was extremely well-received by the audience and reflects the mood of most of the pickets I spoke to.

AMY SAGE
BRISTOL SOCIALIST PARTY

The management of Carlisle FE College expected 'minimal disruption' from a handful of staff on strike. But they got a shock when they saw over 30 lecturers on the picket line on the first day, supported by members of

the RMT and Unite Community. All the construction teachers were out, and most apprentices from these and other courses were told not to come in. There were twelve English and Maths lecturers on the picket line. These are the courses that bring the college most money. The vice-principal was left in the library desperately trying to teach both subjects!

Pickets handed out leaflets to the students explaining why they were striking – having lost 35% of real pay and 24,000 jobs since 2009 – which led to some students joining their teachers to give them their support for a 10% pay rise. Some took leaflets to hand out inside and many sported stickers in support.

BRENT KENNEDY
CARLISLE SOCIALIST PARTY

RMT members in energy company on strike over pay

DAVE WALSH
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Workers at Orsted Energy, a multinational sustainable energy company, have walked out in the first of two 48-hour strikes after receiving a derisory 3.5% pay offer from the Danish company. In April this year, it reported profits of £664 million.

The 96 nationwide RMT union members are also angry that management walked away from talks to sign a collective bargaining agreement with Prospect union, despite the fact that it has no members there.

I visited the picket line at the Birkhead site where 19 highly skilled technicians are employed in the off-shore windfarm energy sector. They work on two crew boats which sail from Seacombe to the Burbo Bank every day to carry out vital maintenance work on the turbines.

They are not just angry with their employers but with the whole privatised energy sector which exploits workers and customers alike, and profits from their misery.

RMT members at Orsted Energy have also voted overwhelmingly for industrial action over the victimisation of a fellow worker at the Barrow-in-Furness site.

Royal Mail and rail out together

It's good we're out at the same time. It's about time – we need even more unions to strike together!"

These words of an RMT rail striker in Chingford, North London, summed up the feeling of thousands of workers on Saturday 1 October, which saw the biggest coordination of strike action so far this year: a national strike of members of the CWU in Royal Mail on 30 September and 1 October, and a national rail stoppage by members of RMT, Aslef, TSSA and Unite on 1 October.

Dockers in Unite the Union in Liverpool and Felixstowe, members of the University and College Union (UCU) in 26 further education colleges and of Unison in 16 universities are also involved in weeks of action.

Thousands also turned out in protests around the country, many under the banner of 'Enough is Enough', inspired by the strikes and looking for a way forward – not

just to end the cost-of-living crisis but to end the Tory government too. (See protest reports p6)

It couldn't be clearer that workers organised in trade unions have tremendous potential power, and the trade union leaders have authority. They need to use this to build a movement that can win a real pay rise, boot out the Tories and build for a political alternative that acts in the interests of working-class people. (See what we think p2-3)

• The strike wave continues with an Aslef strike on Wednesday 5 October, CWU members in BT on Thursday 6 October, and an RMT strike on Saturday 8 October. A further three days of BT strikes are planned on 10, 20 and 24 October.

• The ratcheting up of attacks by Royal Mail bosses reported in last week's Socialist ('Royal Mail ups the ante' at socialistparty.org.uk) has been met by CWU with a plan of 19 further days of strike action running into December, starting on 13 October.



Leicester

Staines

ALL PHOTOS: SP MEMBERS



Stoke

Swansea

Solidarity and support

Adam Alarakhia, senior CWU representative in Leicester, spoke to Socialist Party members:

"The main reason for our dispute is the changes in our terms and conditions. We want to discuss and be part of the change, but in a way that doesn't impact people's jobs and terms and conditions.

"Agency workers, the majority of them with Manpower, are being sent in to try to break the strike. Manpower made a statement nationally saying that it did not intend to break the strike or expect anyone to cross the picket line. But when the agency staff come through, and we politely speak to them, they tell us that the agency specifically said that if they don't go in there will be no future work for them.

"I'm quite humbled with the support we are getting from yourselves and various organisations. After days of strike action, we are still getting 50 to 60 people on the picket line."

A Swansea postie said to Alec Thraves: "You can tell things are hotting up because of the number of ballot papers I've been delivering the past few months!"

Lee Hawksbee and Roy Wills report from the rail picket at Walthamstow

Serious

Dave Reid reports that the CWU picket line in Cwmbran, Wales was in serious mood after meeting to discuss the union's response to the bosses' aggression: "We'll be out all the way to Xmas".

CWU pickets at Church Hill, Walthamstow, north east London, were thinking ahead to a long battle if necessary. They told Paula Mitchell: "We should go out for five solid days, so there's more impact". Strikers thought the Socialist Party's call for the TUC to launch a massive strike fund to support workers on the front line was very important.

All strike together

At Birch Park, York, strikers told Roger Cleverly that they thought the TUC needs to step up and coordinate between unions.

At West Park Delivery Office in Plymouth, one CWU picket said to Duncan Moore: "Thompson [Royal Mail boss] has to go". Another said: "This government has to go; we've got to bring them down." Other pickets were talking about the Unite dockworkers' action in Liverpool and Southampton: "We should all walk out at the same time".

Tom Baldwin met a picket in

The National Shop Stewards Network pre-TUC congress Action Summit on Sunday 16 October in Brighton – a hybrid event – couldn't be at a more important time. Socialist Party members will be there alongside other workers, strikers and young people, to keep the pressure up on the TUC to act. All strike together! If the Tories attempt to implement their new anti-trade union plans, they should be met with a 24-hour general strike.

www.shopstewards.net

National Shop Stewards Network
Pre-TUC Congress Action Summit

1pm Sunday 16 October Zoom ID 885 2926 9348
Holiday Inn, Brighton

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ALL STRIKE TOGETHER!

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Bristol who had always voted Tory in the past. But now on strike, she thought every worker should strike for two or three days and totally shut the country down!

Strikers at Quinton in Birmingham agreed. They told Nick Hart: "It's time the whole country stood up. Bosses at Royal Mail and everywhere else are looking at what P&O did and wondering if they can get away with it."

Nationalise

At Shirley, Southampton, a CWU picket told Nick Chaffey: "We should renationalise the mail. Making a loss? They're after the cream. We're solid here and standing firm."

In Great Malvern, CWU pickets talked with Pete McNally about the abilities or otherwise of managers and supervisors who know about targets but not very much about how the organisation they work in really works. It's the workers themselves who know.

Our own political voice

Sam Morden visited one of the CWU picket lines on the Team Valley Industrial Estate in Gateshead which had a 48-hour rolling picket, with a shift pattern of its own. No workers

crossed. Discussions included the strikers' lack of confidence in the Labour Party.

Elaine Brunskill reports that on all the CWU picket lines at Chester le Street, Gateshead Central and Blaydon the Socialist Party was thanked for the solidarity for their strike action. Our strike bulletin went down extremely well, and inspired a lot of discussion on what needs to be done.

One of the strikers mentioned 'Enough is Enough' and commented: "Surely Dave Ward, Mick Lynch and others are looking towards turning this into a political party".

Aslef and RMT members stood side by side on the Chingford rail picket line, reports Lily Douglas. They also sent a delegation round the corner to the CWU picket line and arranged a joint photo. Strikers remembered Socialist Party members from previous visits and wanted to discuss with us what needs to happen next.

Strikers talked about Jeremy Corbyn and Labour MPs who supported him like Sam Tarry, who the right-wing in the party are trying to get deselected as MP candidates. When we said 'They should stand anyway' the strikers agreed

Thousands join 1 October demos in solidarity with striking workers

Bristol

Around 2,000 people marched under the Enough is Enough banner in solidarity with the unions taking strike action, and in opposition to the energy price rises and corporate greed.

The march made its way to protest outside the offices of Ovo Energy, who's millionaire CEO suggested we all wear jumpers to keep our energy costs down! It visited the RMT and Aslef picket line at Temple Meads station where speakers included President of Bristol Trades Council and Socialist Party member Sheila Caffrey. The march finished at the nearby Postal Delivery Office, linking up with the CWU pickets.

Earlier in the week, Unison workers at Bristol University had taken three days of strike action, and UCU members at City of Bristol college were on strike too - both solid and determined to win.

One thing clearly on everyone's mind is the need to link the strikes, and the realisation that coordinated workers' action could bring the government down. Speaking on the march, Sheila described the Tory budget as "a declaration of war on the working class". In response to the marchers chanting "the unions united will never be defeated". She demanded that the TUC Congress be used as a "council of war" to coordinate the strikes, and that it should change its 2 November lobby of parliament into a massive midweek demo, to flood the streets of London with striking trade unionists.

ROGER THOMAS
BRISTOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Leeds

Several hundred people gathered outside Leeds train station for the Enough is Enough rally. The group stood in solidarity with the RMT and Aslef strikers.

The crowd marched to the British Gas offices. There a number of protesters ceremonially burned their energy bills.

We moved on to the Royal Mail picket line in Hunslet, our final destination. Mention of the Tories was met with clear anger, especially as the current prime minister hails from Leeds.

What struck me throughout the march, was that I didn't hear the word 'nationalise' from any platform speakers. It felt like some speakers, like local Labour MP Richard Burgon, see the movement as a release valve for workers' anger, or they hope that it will apply some pressure to Labour to shift left.

Socialist Party members attending argued that all utilities should be nationalised, and run under the democratic control of workers. And that we need a new mass party that fights for it.

PAUL THOMAS
LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

Enough is Enough: But what do we do at the ballot box?

**TUSC
AGAINST
CUTS**

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition invites you to join its series of public discussions. A list of events can be found at tusc.org.uk/events



Socialist Party member Jean Thrope speaking in Nottingham
PAUL TOOLEY-OKONKWO



Kings Cross, London
PAULA MITCHELL



Socialist Party campaign stall at the event in Plymouth
DUNCAN MOORE



Bristol protest
ROGER THOMAS



Birmingham Socialist Party members preparing for the demo
NICK HART

London

Over 10,000 people gathered at Kings Cross station in London. Speakers included trade union leaders from RMT, CWU, NEU and Equuity, and ex-Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn. The speeches voiced the anger and fear being experienced by millions who face difficult decisions this winter on whether to heat their homes or feed their families. A mention of socialism during Jeremy's speech drew cheers from the crowd.

Socialist Party members attending the event met lots of people interested in learning more about what we stand for and how to get involved. It was clear to all in attendance that the public mood has shifted, and that there is an urgent need for a new mass workers' party.

JUNE ANGLUS
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Sheffield

Approximately 2,000 people gathered for the march and demonstration in Sheffield. 20 Socialist Party members attended, meeting seven more people interested in joining while we were there. It seemed like there were many people on their first-ever demonstration, and the atmosphere was impressive - a real sense of solidarity with the 200,000 workers on strike that day, and clear anger towards the Tories.

Unfortunately, I was refused the opportunity to speak representing NHS workers. The vice chair of Sheffield Trades Council, a Socialist Workers Party (SWP) member, said it was to prioritise speakers from the striking unions, the People's Assembly and trades council. As it transpired, however, there was room for SWP speakers from a climate campaign and Stand Up To Racism!

The rally missed a great opportunity to provide clear steps of action for the anticipating crowd to take. There was no mention of coordinated action, the need for a new worker's party, or socialism.

It is clear there is growing support for this campaign and it's demands, suggesting that there is a growing layer of people that have actually had enough, and many are looking for a political alternative

HOLLY JOHNSTON
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY AND GMB REP IN NHS

Hull

More than 500 trade unionists and community activists rallied in Queens Gardens and marched to the St Peters Street CWU picket line in Hull. Speaker after speaker condemned Truss and the Tories.

Joyce Marshall, speaking on behalf of the Unity Shop (Hull Trades Council food bank), probably got the loudest cheers when she spoke from the heart about the poverty conditions facing ordinary people.

Matt Whale, a nurse and Socialist Party member, made the case for socialism as the answer to the crisis we face. There was clear determination from the crowd to kick the Tories out, but correct doubts about whether Starmer's Labour has the policies or will to really tackle the crisis.

The Socialist Party sold 75 copies of the Socialist and raised nearly for £40 our fighting fund, by campaigning for socialist policies and a new mass party that fights for them.

MICK WHALE
HULL SOCIALIST PARTY AND NATIONAL EDUCATION UNION MEMBER

Rent and mortgage costs spiral

We need rent control and council homes now

JACK JEFFREY
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

The mini-budget calamity has accelerated the already developing economic crisis in Britain. Prices for food, energy and fuel keep rising, and now mortgage repayments can be added to the long list. Looking to maximise their income, landlords are expected to ratchet up rent increases too.

The UK's housing market, kept going by historically low interest rates since the 2008 financial crash, has seen property prices rise by over 200% in the last ten years. According to research by Nationwide, last month mortgages already took up 30% of homeowners' income in the UK, with this rising to a massive 50% for homeowners in London. This was based on a market where last year it was possible to get mortgage rates around 1%. This year they have already tripled to over 3% and are predicted to reach 6% in 2023!

Mortgage hikes

An increase from 2% to a 6% rate on a £200k mortgage with a 25-year repayment plan will increase payments by around £400 a month. This will price even more people out of buying a home and force many to sell. Analysts at Credit Suisse expect a 10-15%



JAMES EMMANS/ODD

Fight to extend pensions to meet rising cost of living

CLARE WILKINS
NOTTINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

The Bank of England has been forced to buy £65 billion in government bonds to save pension funds from collapse, and that figure could rise further.

The government's 'fiscal statement' contained huge tax cuts for the rich, and even after U-turns, the Tories will still seek to pay for the remaining tax cuts by cutting public spending. The fight starts now against yet another round of austerity.

Pensioners will be concerned that their income will be on the chopping block. The chancellor has said that he is "currently committed" to reinstating the pensions triple lock, but did not guarantee it.

The triple lock secured a minimum increase in the state pension of the highest of: inflation, average earnings, or 2.5%. It was suspended last year, the government cynically arguing that pensioners were costing younger workers too much money.

20% of pensioners lived in absolute poverty in 2019-21, and 200,000 more pensioners went into poverty in 2021 alone, according to the Rowntree



PAUL MATTHEWSON

Foundation. A real-terms cut to state pensions would plunge even more into poverty.

The state pension age is set to go up from 66 to 68. Many women who geared their lives to retire at 60 and get their state pension are facing significant hardship or forced to remain in work.

To qualify for a full state pension, you need to have paid National Insurance contributions for 35 years. The new state pension is just £185.15 per week, and older pensioners get

£141.85. Many pensioners receive less than a quarter of what they earned at work.

Low-paid work means low income in retirement. The situation will only get worse for future pensioners unless we unite and fight for better pay and conditions, decent benefits and retirement pensions, a lower retirement age and a decent retirement for all.

Clare is East Midlands National Pensioners' Convention Secretary, writing in a personal capacity

Benefits need an immediate rise, and increase in line with future price rises

"There's already that palpable sense of rebellion", was how a BBC reporter described the atmosphere at Tory party conference. The Liz Truss government has made it clear that it is prepared to put more money into the pockets of the super-rich, but at the time of writing Truss has refused to rule out real-terms benefit cuts.

She has a long history of advocating cutting the government's benefits bill, but the question is: Will she get away with it? Even cabinet ministers are contradicting her in interviews.

With costs rising and increasing numbers facing a winter of hunger and cold, even some Tories are opposed to a real-terms cut in Universal Credit. Or rather, they are scared of the prospect of their re-election hopes getting slimmer if six million claimants see their incomes squeezed further.

Survival on Universal Credit is already a struggle, made worse by the benefits cap, also frozen despite inflation, and by the plans to force part-time workers to take on more hours.

40% of Universal Credit claimants are already in work, either so

fall in house prices over the next 18 months.

Interest rate rises "are likely to leave landlords with little choice but to pass on at least some of the costs" to tenants, according to the National Residential Landlords Association. With rents already over 12% higher than in June 2020, and with tenants having scant legal protection, many will struggle to afford to stay in their homes.

Rent control

The Scottish government has announced a planned temporary rent freeze and moratorium on evictions. This is a start, and could be emulated by willing Labour councils and the Labour-run Welsh government. But a temporary freeze at unaffordable levels is not enough. We need a permanent reduction in rents to a level democratically determined by elected representatives from working-class communities and trade unions.

The argument will be made by some, including buy-to-let landlords and developers, that rent controls will disincentivise investment, restricting supply and driving up prices. But a mass council house building programme, employing thousands of workers on trade union rates of pay, would boost supply and provide good-quality affordable homes.

The chaos of the capitalist market continues to mean disaster for the working-class and middle-class majority, including the threat of home repossession and eviction. Only by treating decent housing as a right available to all, and not a commodity to be speculated on, can we resolve the housing crisis in the UK.

low-paid that benefits are needed to survive or unable to work full-time due to childcare availability and costs, or other caring responsibilities.

Rather than forcing people into deeper financial difficulties, a minimum wage of £15 an hour, free childcare and social care services to meet need, would mean hundreds of thousands of workers would no longer need benefits.

The Socialist Party fights to scrap the benefits cap and for an immediate permanent uplift in benefits, with regular rises to keep pace with the rising cost of living.

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

editors@socialistparty.org.uk

or, if you're not online, write to the Socialist Inbox, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT

GLOBAL ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CRISES: IS FASCISM ON THE MARCH?

TOM BALDWIN
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Capitalism is beset by a multi-sided crisis. There are extreme weaknesses in the economy, rapidly falling living standards, and social and environmental crises. It is almost impossible to build stable political formations on these unstable foundations. As the status quo is incapable of offering any kind of prosperity to a majority then what has long been considered the centre ground of politics is failing to hold.

We've seen the rise of parties and movements of the left such as those around Bernie Sanders in the US and Jean-Luc Mélenchon in France. But where left forces have failed to offer an organised political alternative there has also been a rise of forces on the right, some of which have come to power, such as Donald Trump in the US, Bolsonaro in Brazil and Giorgia Meloni's Brothers of Italy.

The capitalists are aware of the dwindling faith in the institutions of their system, including the social base of many political parties. As working-class struggle grows in many countries, and in anticipation of greater clashes to come, in many countries the capitalist classes have increased the strength of the state and authoritarian powers available to them.

As sections of the capitalist class look to the right and to authoritarianism to defend themselves, the workers' movement needs to consider what forms this reaction is likely to take and how best to fight against it. That includes considering whether fascism could take power and, indeed, whether any of the right-wing governments around the world are themselves fascist.

The capitalist journal *The Economist*, recently carried an article claiming Putin's regime in Russia represented a form of fascism. Similar claims have been made from various quarters about the likes of Donald Trump and Giorgia Meloni. Jo Grady, general secretary of the University and College Union (UCU), has described the Conservative government here as fascist.

All of these, and other right-wing political forces, have often been willing to take a page from the fascist playbook. They take an authoritarian approach: Jo Grady's tweets about Tory 'fascism' related to their draconian police, crime, sentencing and courts bill, which hugely restricts the right to protest.

They have deployed divisive politics like racism and homophobia: Trump used anti-Mexican rhetoric at many election rallies, and Putin implemented a law banning 'gay propaganda'. Often they wrap themselves in patriotism, religion or 'traditional values'. They are defenders of capitalism but can make criticisms of elites to try and win popular support.

The populist-right and far-right take different forms around the world and do share these features with classical fascism. But these methods can also be deployed to a greater or lesser extent by all shades of capitalist politicians.

US President Joe Biden, supposedly the liberal antidote to Trump's right-wing authoritarianism, has brought in a 10% increase in federal funding for police. French president Emmanuel Macron drew much of his second-round support in the last two elections by not being the far-right Marine Le Pen. He has signed emergency powers into law, bulking up the power of the state.

In Britain's EU referendum, the main Leave campaign was dominated by right-wing, anti-immigrant views. But the Remain side, representing the interests of most of the capitalist class, and styling itself as more liberal, also appealed to some of the more reactionary views on immigration. It claimed, for example, that a vote to leave would mean migrant camps moving from Calais to Britain. Under the leadership of Ed Milliband, Labour famously branded mugs and even a giant monolith with the slogan: 'Controls on immigration.'

Capitalist crisis

To take these features as a complete definition of fascism is to look only at a surface impression. The Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky made a far more scientific analysis, mostly writing about the rise of the Nazis in Germany. He described them as a movement of the petit-bourgeois masses, resulting from the capitalist crisis.

He wrote that "the chaotic post-war years [post-First World War] hit the craftsmen, shopkeepers and office workers no less than the working class. The agricultural crisis devastated the farmers. The pauperisation of the middle layers of society... devalued all belief in parliamentary democracy... [they] rose up against all old parties which had betrayed them. The deep frustrations of the small property owners... demanded the restoration of order with an iron fist."

Fascism promised to defend this middle layer from threats from above and below. From the big corporations on the one hand, who were squeezing out smaller proprietors. And from the working class and the prospect of socialist revolution on the other, which they feared would confiscate their property.

The violence of the fascists, however, was primarily directed against the organisations of the working class, as well as all those they considered inferior.

Trotsky wrote that "fascism is not just a system of repression, acts of violence, police terror. Fascism is a particular form of state system, based on the extermination of the elements of workers' democracy within capitalist society. The task of fascism is not just to smash the leadership of the workers' movement, but to atomise the entire working class, and maintain it in this atomised state. To achieve this aim the physical extermination of the revolutionary layers of working class is not enough. It aims to destroy all independent and voluntary workers' organisations, to annihilate all its points of support, and to wipe out the political and physical structures."

In order to achieve this, fascism



Clockwise from above: Fighting fascism; Donald Trump; Jair Bolsonaro
PHOTOS: MARY FINCH/PUBLIC DOMAIN/ISAC NOBREGA-CC



did not just use the forces of the state, increasing the authority of the police and military. Even prior to coming to power it built a semi-mass movement, including detachments of street fighting thugs - the Brownshirts in the case of the Nazis and the Blackshirt 'squadrismi' in Italy. These pursued a campaign of terror against the workers' movement, breaking up meetings, and smashing up the offices, and printing presses of unions and workers' parties.

It is this force, and the social basis on which it rested, which are the hallmarks of fascism compared to other forms of reaction.

None of the various shades of right and far-right populists which are in power in parts of the world fully fit this

description of fascism. They have not mobilised this kind of movement, and there is nowhere that one is threatening to take power at this moment.

Even some parties with fascist roots have tried to distance themselves from this past and no longer have paramilitary forces. These include the National Rally (formerly National Front) of Marine Le Pen, who came second in this year's presidential election in France, and the Brothers of Italy, which emerged from the fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI). The *Economist*, which decried Putin as fascist, said there was "good reason to believe" their leader Giorgia Meloni's claim to have "handed fascism over to history".

The current situation is not identical

to the one in which classical fascism came to power. In the advanced capitalist countries its social base is no longer the same force that it was. The layer of small shopkeepers and producers has been decimated by monopolisation - the concentration of wealth in the biggest businesses.

Fascism was only able to succeed in Italy and Germany after failed attempts by the working class to take power themselves. Revolutionary movements had ebbed and were not so easily able to bring the middle layers of society behind them. But the capitalist class still felt threatened by the possibility of revolution, as embodied by the existence of the Soviet Union.

The Nazis could only come to power once significant sections of the big business class began to back and to bankroll them. Fascism was a last roll of the dice for them to protect capitalism. But that came at a great cost to the capitalists, who lost direct control of their state.

Having learnt these lessons, they would be very cautious about resorting to fascist rule again. They've also been uneasy about right populists, capitalist politicians from outside the mainstream political trends.

Things can change very fast in this unstable world and old certainties can quickly crumble. While there is no immediate threat of fascist rule, fascism is still something the working-class movement must have an understanding of and be vigilant against.

Even small fascist forces still pose a danger and can potentially grow in number and confidence. The ruling class has been willing to use fascists as an auxiliary to the forces of the state, in order to disrupt movements against them.

Donald Trump neither came to power nor governed as a fascist, but he clearly emboldened fascist groups in the US. In a debate in the 2020 presidential election he told the Proud Boys to stand down and stand by, adding "someone's got to do something about anti-fa."

In January last year the Capitol building was stormed by a rag-tag group of around 2,000 of his supporters, with organised and open fascists in their midst. This showed the growth in confidence, but also the limitations of fascist organisations in the US at the time. While not a mass movement, these groups are armed and clearly dangerous.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi pursues a right-wing, Hindu nationalist agenda. He has lent on the paramilitary Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, the 'National Volunteer Organisation') which has a few million members and carries out attacks against Muslims and other religious minorities. This violence has spilled over into Britain with the RSS linked to the stoking of communal tensions in Leicester.

Saying that right-populist leaders in the mould of Trump could not be accurately described as fascist is not to ignore the threat they pose. Their divisive politics and anti-working class policies mean they must be countered. There is also the potential for

the situation to get worse. The prospect has been raised of Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro attempting to cling to power after the election there. That is potentially far more serious than the farcical attempt by Trump supporters. It would mean a military coup, primarily coming from within the existing state forces.

Using the word fascist as an insult or by-word for any right-wing or authoritarian politician is not useful, however. A clear analysis and accurate description of the nature of reaction and the right is important in understanding what the threat is and how to protect against it.

If it is a case of more authoritarian laws or attacks on things like abortion rights, then a movement which may include protests, strikes or direct action to make the laws unworkable might be enough to resist that.

If the threat we face is physical attacks on the working class and its organisations, then we need to be prepared to meet that with physical force and to defend ourselves. Even small fascist forces should be blocked when they attempt to rally, their attempts to build must be cut across from the outset. Counter-protests should be well stewarded to prevent the risk of attack.

If the threat we faced was one of imminent dictatorship then we would need to appeal to the rank-and-file of the armed forces to refuse their orders. The workers' movement would need to be ready to organise in the underground, under the conditions of dictatorial rule. It would also need to arm workers, to create democratically organised workers' militias for self-defence. And to build a revolutionary movement of general strike action and armed force to bring down the dictatorship.

United fronts

Trotsky, in "The struggle against fascism in Germany", called for united fronts of the mass workers' organisations against fascism. He was writing in the context of the threat of fascist takeover, but that approach is still very useful.

It recognises the difference between the fascists and other capitalist forces. But also, that even the most liberal capitalists are capitalists first and democrats second; that the working class cannot ally itself with the capitalists to defeat fascism which is a consequence of the crisis of the system they support.

The united front means an alliance of only the working class. The revolutionary left works with other trends within the workers' movement to block the fascist right. However, at the same time it maintains its political independence. It is summed up with the phrase 'strike together, march apart'.

In whatever guise the right exists today we need to confront them. In the case of fascist forces that can be both physical and political. But in every case it means fighting to build a working-class political force - in most countries in the form of new mass workers' parties - with a socialist programme that can provide an alternative, not only to the right but to the capitalist system that gives rise to it.

Socialist Students – backing workers’ strikes

Leeds

Socialist Students organised campaign stalls for three days, visited the picket lines of striking workers in Unison union, and hosted our first meeting of term.

Our petition to show support for the Unison strike proved popular among students, as did our call to kick the shambolic Liz Truss government out of power. We raised £45 for our own campaigning, and £40 for the Unison strike fund.

At our meeting, Sheffield Socialist Students member Noah Eden gave a rousing introduction on the ideas of socialism and the issues facing us. Lots of brilliant questions came up from the floor, many from people attending their first political meeting: what about the mental health crisis under capitalism? And against huge companies like Amazon and British Gas, how can ordinary people fight back and win?

Our success at freshers’ week shows that socialist solutions to the crises of capitalism are becoming more attractive to young people. Our next meeting will be on what the working class can do to fight back against the cost-of-living crisis. And we are organising more student visits to picket lines to show our solidarity.

OISIN DUNCAN



Nottingham Socialist Students making placards for the strikes GARY FREEMAN

Birmingham

We invited new members to the CWU and RMT strikes and the protest at the Tory conference. For most of them, it was their first time attending a picket.

It was a very positive experience, they learned about the workers’ struggle firsthand. So far, many students have only seen this strike wave from the sidelines.

The students gave our leaflets to striking workers, and asked them about buying the Socialist paper. These might seem like small actions, but for many students, it is their first

time feeling they are making a active contribution to fixing the issues of today, and the beginning of their commitment towards campaigning for socialist change.

LUIS BERTOLIN
UCU MEMBER

Southampton

For five hours at the freshers fair, we had a continuous stream of students discussing the unfolding crisis. The Tory society stood opposite us, glum faced and largely ignored.

We asked students if they were worried about money, one joked: “I’m having to save up for my Pot Noodles, they’re £1.45 FFS!”

Many were attracted by our ‘£15-an-hour’ poster, and talked about the strikes. Many agreed Keir Starmer and Labour offered no alternative and no hope.

At our first meeting the discussion was wide-ranging and internationalist. Chinese students joined the discussion, outlining the crisis and inequality there, and supporting the need for real democratic socialism.

Next we’re holding a Socialist

Students campaign stall, and visiting the local RMT pickets.

NICK CHAFFEY

King’s College London

Many working-class students work 35 to 40 hours a week to pay their bills. Some students take out the entire weekend to work.

Socialist Students always plays a role of educating, organising and fighting on student demands, such as:

- Cheap, good-quality accommodation
- Scrap tuition fees and student debt
- Kick private companies out of education, instead it should be publicly funded
- Provide living grants to students

And lots of students agreed with us. The freshers’ fair acquired special significance due to the cost-of-living crisis and strike wave. We also campaigned among students to build solidarity for the UCU and Unison strikes, emphasising the shared suffering of students and staff.

ARUN

Join the student fightback

JOIN socialist students

socialiststudents.org.uk/join

Why I joined the Socialist Party

Thatcherism killed the family business

MARK DIXEY
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

My dad had a painting and decorating business. He read the Daily Express and supported Thatcher. He never understood how neoliberalism killed the family business by cash-starving the schools and hospitals we worked for, and shutting the local colliery.

I couldn’t understand how depriving people of their prosperity was supposed to protect it. Neither did I understand why allowing people to live in peace, comfort and security was no longer the first role of government.

I hated the deliberate policy of generating unemployment, and then calling the unemployed ‘lazy scroungers’. So, I read some books.

Later, I joined the Labour Party and worked in Bolsover as a councillor and party activist. I left Labour when Jonathan Ainsworth declared that the party had no values anymore.

There is no democratic choice when the opposition proposes no

real alternative – when they cease to be a threat to the agents of inequality and injustice, and they too represent the rich capitalists.

I knew that Thatcherism did little more than enrich the powerful at our expense. A system that prioritises short-term profit over the survival of the species clearly cannot sustain. You cannot tinker with such a system, it desperately needs to go.

Though I was ready to give up on political activism, my wife took me to a Socialist Party meeting. I found a friendly, committed group who believe, as I do, in social justice and a functioning democracy.

It wasn’t an epiphany. They shared values that I had held all my life.

I remember thinking I was getting the support I needed to ‘come out’ as a socialist. I joined the following week.

Do you agree?

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

socialistparty.org.uk/join

Tories’ class war brings protesters to party conference



Birmingham Socialist Party at the protest LEN SHAIL

After a fortnight of the Tories ramping up their undisguised class war, over 1,000 people demonstrated outside the opening of their annual conference in Birmingham. The already fiery mood was stoked further, thanks to cartoon Tory MPs Jacob Rees-Mogg and Michael Fabricant walking directly past the protest en route to the conference venue, in an attempt to generate headlines and provoke a reaction from the crowd.

Many on the protest were enthused by speeches given by trade union leaders, including the RMT’s Mick Lynch. But at the same time, protesters were left wondering what could be done beyond further demonstrations and appeals to Labour leader Keir Starmer and SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon to ‘deliver’.

Searching for a strategy to beat back the bosses’ onslaught was reflected in the keen response to Socialist Party members on the demonstration. We were raising the need for coordinated strike action, community campaigns and a political fightback against attempts to make workers pay for the crisis. On the day, 35 people expressed an interest in joining the Socialist Party.

NICK HART

BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY



Swansea RMT strike ALEC THRAVES

Fighting fund target smashed – £6,000 raised in one week!

CHRIS NEWBY
SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND ORGANISER

Congratulations to all readers of the Socialist for their brilliant work in making sure we reached our £25,000 fighting fund target. This was made possible by nearly £6,000 being raised in the last week alone.

Our readers did all they could to raise money for the Socialist Party including many different fundraising events. But the main amount came through the many donations from workers and members of the public on picket lines, our campaign stalls, rallies and meetings.

There is a rising tide of support for striking workers fighting back against the cost-of-living crisis. Socialist Party members have been visiting striking workers, holding regular stalls in support of workers fighting for a decent pay rise and against the cost-of-living crisis, and taking part in protests.

Our demands – renationalisation of the energy companies, railways and Royal Mail – have gone down

extremely well, as has the call to link the strikes together. But what really strikes a chord is the demand for a new party that will fight for working-class people, including supporting workers in struggle.

How we raise funds in Dorset

KELLIE O’GARA
SALISBURY SOCIALIST PARTY

The fighting fund is a core part of what the Socialist Party does. Without it, we are silent. Every donation helps produce the newspaper you’re reading, the material we use, hires venues, and so much more.

A proportion of the fighting fund also goes to areas who have hit their target to buy equipment such as printers, megaphones and anything else that can be used to let people know that we are here, we are fighting, and to encourage more people to join and support the Socialist Party.

Unlike the main capitalist parties,

we do not get millions in funding from rich donors and Russian oligarchs. Every penny we have comes from members and supporters of our party. Consequently, we have to work harder to make every penny that we can.

Each quarter, every region is given a target to aim for in raising funds, to continue and drive our fight towards a better, fairer world and begin the path to socialism. This quarter, my own region, South West England, has smashed its target.

Salisbury branch has a target of £150. We managed to raise £248.98!

Most of those donations have come from Socialist Party campaign stalls. Essentially, these are funds coming in from outside of the party, people on the streets who support our work. But you don’t get if you don’t ask.

Have your card machine on hand in case they have no cash. We recently started using a ‘float’, a bag of change for when people only have banknotes with them. This helps those who want to contribute from walking away without donating.

Sheila Caffrey told me about the games night that Gloucestershire Socialist Party ran to raise funds. “We got together in someone’s house, had some drinks and snacks and played some games. A good chance to chat and socialise, and everyone put in a donation”. The branch made £65 that night.

The more stalls we hold, the more donations we ask for, the more that our own members can donate, the more we can achieve together to bring about socialist change.

Help fund the fightback

DONATE

socialistparty.org.uk/donate

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q3: JULY-SEPTEMBER 2022	FINAL CHART
South West	2,356	1,800		131%
Northern	981	750		131%
Eastern	1,501	1,200		125%
Wales	2,691	2,300		117%
East Midlands	2,091	1,850		113%
London	5,107	4,600		111%
Southern & SE	2,450	2,350		104%
West Midlands	2,499	2,600		96%
Yorkshire	2,134	2,550	84%	
North West	717	1,150	62%	
Other	2,606	3,850	68%	
TOTAL	25,133	25,000		101%

Surrey – People’s Budget and strike solidarity



Staines RMT strike PAUL COUCHMAN

PAUL COUCHMAN
STAINES SOCIALIST PARTY

Save Our Services in Surrey (SOSIS) held a People’s Budget conference – with representatives from eight unions – on the morning of 24 September. We devoted the afternoon to a strike rally.

The campaign has received lots of submissions to go in our People’s Budget. Our conference debated those submissions, ready to go in our manifesto for any elections in Surrey. And the unions and members in the Save Our Services campaign will be able to check our People’s Budget too.

There was unanimous support that this was a no-cuts, needs-led budget. Our candidates and councillors will vote and campaign for these policies, regardless of council budget constraints. Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates will support the manifesto, and you should consider standing with us.

Save Our Services argues for prudential borrowing and the use of reserves to start implementing this manifesto immediately, while building our campaign among workers and residents to force the government to bridge any shortfall.

The agreed budget includes

reversing all cuts, ending privatisation, bringing essential services back into council hands, building council houses, protecting the green belt, supporting council trade unions and other unions in struggle and much, much more.

In the afternoon, Helen Couchman – Unison national convener for Dimensions charity, and a member of the Socialist Party – chaired the strike rally.

Luke Elgar, Communication Workers Union (CWU) executive, said this was a fight to the end against a vicious, profit-hungry Royal Mail employer, determined to transform into just another Amazon-type delivery company.

I spoke from Surrey Unison to say how the tide is turning in favour of workers making a stand. For the first time ever, Unison is part of a motion to the Trades Union Congress (TUC) calling for coordinated strike action.

Tamsin Honeybourne, National Education Union (NEU), and Sade Afolabi, teachers’ union NASUWT, spoke about their national industrial action ballots. Stuart Fegan, GMB, told us two weeks of strike action at Amey Waste Management company resulted in a vastly improved pay offer.

Rob Williams, National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN), said that the government has shown that it can spend money when it is forced to, so we all need to strike together.

Closing the day, I said: “Workers have two main arenas in which they will fight back – the industrial (through their trade unions and industrial action) and the political (at the ballot box). This event offers the working class of Surrey the opportunity and the means to do both.”

We asked everyone to attend the NSSN pre-TUC Action Summit on Sunday 16 October in Brighton and on Zoom. We will look at a cost-of-living protest in the new Chancellor’s constituency of Spelthorne in Surrey – watch this space.

Cape must pay for asbestos deaths

ALISTAIR TICE
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

Mesothelioma is a killer lung disease, a cancer only caused by exposure to asbestos. Cape is a company that manufactured asbestos products between 1958 and the 1970s. Cape knowingly covered up the dangers, and did not and socialise, and everyone put in a donation”. The branch made £65 that night.

The more stalls we hold, the more donations we ask for, the more that our own members can donate, the more we can achieve together to bring about socialist change.

Help fund the fightback

DONATE

socialistparty.org.uk/donate

So, on 30 September, 50 supporters of the ‘Cape Must Pay’ campaign descended on the offices in Thurmsoe, south Yorkshire, of Altrad, now the parent company of Cape. Lawyers, researchers, nurses and especially relations gave heartrending examples of the pain and suffering caused by this fatal disease.

We marched into the offices, demanding to speak to a company boss. But despite this being its registered office, we were informed that the CEO resides in Montpellier.

However, the noisy invasive protest and associated bad publicity will undoubtedly have been heard in France, and the Forum’s campaign for compensation will continue until justice is gained for all Cape’s Mesothelioma victims.

Lack of leadership means Unison local government workers accept pay offer

MARK EVANS, ANGIE WALLER, HUGO PIERRE
UNISON LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICE GROUP
EXECUTIVE, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Many trade unions have been and will be taking industrial action this autumn. However, based on the outcome of the pay consultation ballot, Unison local government workers will not be joining them in a national strike this year. The vote was 63.5% to accept and 36.5% to reject.

This result poses the question: are Unison members less militant than RMT and Aslef rail workers, CWU telecoms and postal workers, and other trade union members taking strike action over pay? Is it the case that Unison members are better off, and do not need pay awards matching inflation?

The answer is there is little difference between Unison and other trade union members that have been striking for better pay and to protect terms and conditions. Unison local government members have suffered on average a 27% cut in the value of our pay since 2010. Before the cost-of-living crisis hit us, over 60% of our local government members were struggling to pay their bills. We are all working harder for less, so our members desperately need an actual pay rise.

So why did members vote to accept a pay award that represents another pay cut for all, and for many a significant drop in the value of our pay?

Firstly, the pay claim was set far too low, and Unison Socialist Party members stated this at the time. The claim was for £2,000 or matching inflation, whichever was higher.

The offer from the employers was for £1,925. It should be noted that this was a significant improvement on pay offers in previous years, and amounted to just over 10% for the

very lowest paid. But for those further up the pay scale, this in percentage terms amounted to less and less. So, another significant pay cut for many.

The other problem is the pay offer is not fully funded. We could now see councils coming for job cuts to cover the cost of the pay deal, leaving branches to be picked off one by one with no national fight.

The significant difference between the striking unions and Unison in local government is leadership. The rail and CWU leaderships recommended action and their members had confidence in their trade union leadership to lead and organise strike action.

In the case of Unison's reps on the National Joint Council, which has responsibility for pay, they decided not to make a recommendation regarding the final offer from the employer on whether to accept or reject. Most local government branches followed this lead and did not make a recommendation. We think that members concluded from this that their branch and Unison did not want to fight on pay. Little wonder then that they voted to take what was on offer, even if for most, if not all members, they would be worse off as a result!

There is clear proof that this was the case. Where branches - invariably with Socialist Party members or other lefts in their leaderships - recommended rejection of the pay offer and campaigned for it, they achieved significant majorities to reject, the mirror opposite of branches that did not make a recommendation.

How otherwise can it be explained that Blaenau Gwent voted 82% to accept, that Swansea branch voted 74% to accept, but Carmarthenshire County branch voted 82% to reject and Cardiff 63% to reject? How was it that branches like Knowsley and Hounslow, led by Socialist



Local government workers' strike for pay PHOTO: ROGER BLACKWELL

Party members, secured high turnouts (73% and 50%) with reject votes of 83% and 93%?

It is because the latter campaigned to reject. These are branches which have tenaciously fought cuts and mobilised members to defend their interests. Members have the confidence and trust in the leadership of these branches, built through taking action and being honest with members, informing them of the need to take strike action to win pay increases.

The water is not different in Carmarthenshire, Knowsley or Hounslow to the branches that voted to accept. Where resolute and determined leadership is given, members in Unison will be prepared to take action. If the branches that recommended rejection and campaigned for this had been repeated across the union, we would now be preparing to ballot for taking strike action.

It is true that there is an understandable feeling amongst some members of resignation that Unison will never take action over pay, because of previous failures to take action or sustain it under the leadership of the right wing. Christine McAnea, general secretary of Unison, has spoken of the need for branches to be strike-ready, but before and during this ballot there was little help for local government branches in this regard.

For the last year, for the first time in Unison's history, we have a left-led national executive (NEC), led by the 'Time for Real Change' group. However, they themselves failed to call on members to reject the offer! This group, led by Labour Party lefts, the Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Alternative, have been tested and found wanting.

We are now waiting on the outcome of the Unite and GMB consultative ballots. If two unions accept the offer, it will be imposed. Given that Unison has 348,000 members covered by the pay deal, way more than any other union, its national leadership had the duty to give a clear lead - and failed.

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Probation workers accept real-terms pay cut following absence of union lead

UNISON MEMBER IN THE NATIONAL PROBATION SERVICE

Probation workers across the three main sector unions (Unison, Napo and GMB) have voted to accept the three-year pay deal which, in real terms, amounts to a significant pay cut.

This comes on top of over a decade of below-inflation pay rises - since 2010, pay for probation staff has risen by just 1% while the cost of living has increased by over 40% across the same time period.

However, while the ballot returned an overall 'yes' vote, over a third of members in my union Unison, and a similar number in Napo,

voted to reject the offer, indicating a willingness to take industrial action. This result, while disappointing, shows what could have been achieved had the unions recommended a reject vote, and built a joint campaign to demand the real pay rise we deserve.

But, like many of the current industrial disputes, this is not just about pay. The probation service is still recovering from the disastrous effects of privatisation which has resulted in severe staffing shortages, often unmanageable workloads and high levels of staff stress.

While a decent pay rise would of course not immediately solve all of these problems, for probation

workers who deal daily with high risk, challenging people often with complex needs, such a pay offer would at least reflect the level of respect we deserve. However, as one of my colleagues said: "We are struggling to attract new staff to the profession because we are not treated like professionals."

It is clear from this result that action is desperately needed to put pressure on the Unison leadership to stand up and be prepared to fight for its members in probation. Unison workers in other sectors such as adult care and universities are taking industrial action right now over pay - probation workers will rightly be asking 'why not us?'



PHOTO: PAUL MATTHESSON

Black History Month

Combatting police racism

DEJI OLAYINKA

SOUTH WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The murder of Chris Kaba by the police was the latest in a long list of tragic cases exposing the many problems in policing, including police racism. The movement of Black Lives Matter was sparked by the killing of George Floyd in the US.

Immediately after each of these dreadful events, the capitalist media works hard to sell the idea that the police actions were justified in some way or an isolated incident. Yet the structural and systematic roots of the issues are clear to see.

Following the murder of Stephen Lawrence, where police racism prevented his murderer from facing justice, the McPherson inquiry found the police to be “institutionally racist”. Similarly, after the violent murder of Sarah Everard by a police officer, the Charing Cross inquiry discovered several cases of “bullying, misogyny, discrimination and sexual harassment”, and the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) admitted “these incidents are not isolated or simply the behaviour of a few bad apples”. The rot in the police comes from the roots and these consequences are inevitable, as it’s been designed to maintain an oppressive system.



After each dreadful event, the capitalist media works hard to sell the idea that the police action was justified or an isolated incident. Yet the structural and systematic roots are clear.

The London Metropolitan Police, the original police force, was created in 1829 by Robert Peel - then Tory home secretary - to quell riots and put down the strikes of the organised industrial working class.

Peel had developed the ideas behind policing while fighting the insurrections and political uprisings of Irish people against the colonial rule of the British elite. But the roots of the system go back further, to slave patrols run in colonies from the early 1700s.

While much has changed since then, the strong link between capitalism, imperialism, racism and policing have continued. In fact, the EU’s first uniformed police force was established to police borders, and today some of the most violent forms of policing occur at borders, as seen when Spanish police recently killed 23 migrants at the Morocco border.

Today’s police are still used by the capitalist state, to oppress, protect



the property of the capitalist class and maintain their desired societal order.

In response to police brutality there have been calls to reform the police, with one of the main methods being through sensitivity and de-escalation training. However, the capitalist state needs the police to defend its system. No matter the training, in the end they rely on police to attack protestors and strikers, as seen in the 1980s miners’ strike.

Similarly, there have been calls to have more Black police to reduce racism. However, as we’ve seen with the recent Tory cabinet, simply being

Black or Brown doesn’t guarantee an anti-racist approach.

Hold account

Police bodycams have also been suggested as a solution. But the police still batter unarmed civilians while wearing bodycams. Even when the footage is released and reaches the news or goes viral, the victims don’t get justice.

Recording the crimes of the police isn’t enough. What matters is if the victims and the community have the power to hold the police accountable for their actions. What’s needed is a justice system that works for ordinary

working people, and for that we need democratic control of the police.

Socialists should fight for reforms that improve the situation but also understand that under capitalism the ‘war on drugs’, the ‘war on terror’ and the ‘war on crime’ will still continue to be fought on a layer of people perpetually labelled as potential criminals, including the poor, the young, the Muslim and the darker skinned. As Alex Vitale wrote in the *End Of Policing*, “A kinder, gentler, and more diverse war on the poor is still a war on the poor”.

When faced with a systematically racist, classist and brutal policing

and justice system, it’s no wonder that there have been calls for police abolition! It is understandable that such a demand is raised - for a layer of young people it seems to only make sense to get rid of the harmful policing system that does not protect us. However, an overwhelming majority of people think that a force is needed to prevent crimes that harm working-class people such as murder, theft and rape.

What we need is democratic workers’ control of the police, managed by bodies made up of representatives of the working class, elected from community groups and trade unions. So that the police are accountable, and actions are immediately taken if any code of conduct is broken. These elected committees would be responsible for day-to-day policing policies, and ensure a genuinely independent complaints procedure.



Today’s police are still used by the capitalist state, to oppress, protect the property of the capitalist class and maintain their desired societal order.

Socialists fight to immediately end stop and search, demilitarise the police and abolish the Territorial Support Group, Special Branch, and other similar units. We also demand the end of police spying, which has mainly been carried out on left-wing, anti-racist and Black justice campaigns and activists, as exposed in the Spy Cops scandal. And any personal records kept by the police not connected with criminal investigations must be destroyed.

Socialist democratic planning of the economy would enable the living standards of the majority in society to improve, and so dramatically reduce the breeding ground for most crime.

Crime prevention would move beyond policing. A mass council house building campaign would be used to address homelessness, a fully funded NHS could be the first driving point to prevent drug misuse. It could begin to eradicate youth crime by reinstating youth clubs, social services, and libraries, alongside guaranteeing youth a future through free higher education and training, with decent jobs guaranteed.

Under socialism, through the removal of profit-driven class society, we could have a restorative justice system that focuses on rehabilitating offenders and reintegrating them into society. A socialist society, based on equality and cooperation, would lay the basis for a way of organising society that can keep people safe and that is democratically controlled, without racism, sexism, LGBTQ+ phobia and class oppression.



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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CHRISTINE THOMAS

As predicted, the right-wing coalition of Brothers of Italy (FdI), Lega, and Forza Italia won the general election in Italy – with 44% of the vote. The ‘post-fascist’ FdI, led by Giorgia Meloni, was the biggest party with 26%, up from the 4% it got in 2018, and she is now likely to become prime minister.

This victory does not, however, represent a new ‘March on Rome’, when fascist Mussolini came to power in Italy almost exactly 100 years ago. There are fascists in the FdI – one was suspended during the election campaign for calling Adolf Hitler a “great statesman” – and the FdI has its roots in the fascist MSI, but it is a right-wing nationalist party, not a fascist one.

Nor has there been a massive shift to the right electorally. The right-wing coalition took just 7% more of the vote than in 2018. Instead, there has been a re-arranging of the deck-chairs within the coalition. Salvini’s right-wing populist Lega was routed, with almost half of its ex-voters going over to Meloni – the Lega got just 9% this time – including in its former strongholds in the north.

With only 63% of the electorate bothering to vote, a big drop from nearly 73% in 2018, in a country that traditionally had very high turn-outs, there was clearly little enthusiasm for anything on offer. The FdI benefited from being the only party that remained outside of Mario Draghi’s ‘national unity’ government, and was seen widely as the ‘last resort’ – the only main party that hasn’t yet been tested and failed.

The Democratic Party, which long ago ditched its left-wing legacy from the Communist Party, becoming completely pro-capitalist, could only manage 19% of the vote. The populist Five Star Movement, the biggest party in 2018, saw its score halve to 15%. Its vote did hold up in parts of the South as it tried to present a more left face on economic and social issues, in particular defending its ‘citizens’ income’ – an unemployment benefit that is too low but still important for the poorest sections of society, and which Meloni has said she will scrap.

In reality, there was no credible left-wing opposition in these elections. The small *Unione Popolare*, which grandiosely claimed that it could emulate Mélenchon’s *Nupes* in France, remained well below the 3% threshold necessary to get representation, on 1.4%.

A government of crisis from the outset

Given the dire economic background, this will be a government of crisis from the outset. No Italian government has lasted more than 18 months in the last three decades, and this one is unlikely to do any better.

While the coalition parties are in agreement on attacking immigrants and defending ‘family values’ against the ‘LGBT lobby’, and curbing the ‘globalist left’ – which they define as including the trade unions – there are deep divisions over Ukraine, with Salvini opposing sanctions and Meloni supporting them, and on the budget. Salvini has called for €30 billion to help with the cost-of-living and energy crisis, while Meloni is urging ‘fiscal discipline’. She complained

Hard right wins general election in Italy



Italian right wing politicians Giorgia Meloni, Silvio Berlusconi and Matteo Salvini PHOTOS: WIKIPEDIA, RADIO ALFA, RICARDO STUCKERT/ALL CC

during the election that Salvini spent more time arguing with her than with the opposition.

There is no doubt that a Meloni government will attempt to crack down even harder on immigration, creating a hostile climate for those in the country, which has already led to immigrants being attacked and killed. While Meloni has said that she won’t overturn the 1978 abortion law, it is likely that further restrictions will be introduced to make it more difficult to get an abortion, as has already happened in the Marche region, which the FdI controls. Similarly, she probably won’t seek to reverse

the legalisation of civil unions for same-sex couples, but attacks on ‘gender ideology’ in schools – i.e. non-discriminatory sex and relationship education – will intensify, making it more difficult for LG-BTQ+ young people to express or feel confident about their sexuality or identity, and other discrimination will remain.

Working-class and sections of middle-class Italians are desperately looking for relief to the cost-of-living nightmare. But they are not likely to find it from a Meloni-led government. She has promised to introduce both tax cuts and higher spending on pensions and families.

But with the second highest public debt in the world, at 150% of GDP, and an economy that has barely grown over the last 20 years, any attempt to do both could provoke the wrath of the financial markets – as Tory Prime Minister Truss in Britain has very quickly discovered. A re-run of the 2010-11 Euro crisis is entirely possible, with Italy rather than Greece at the centre this time.



Given the dire economic background, this will be a government of crisis from the outset. No Italian government has lasted more than 18 months in the last three decades, and this one is unlikely to do any better

In order for Italy to receive the rest of the €200 billion in Covid recovery money, the EU is demanding deregulation, privatisation, and more ‘competition’ in the public sector. To benefit from the EU’s new bond-buying scheme even more ‘conditions’ would be insisted on.

Any attempt to introduce these anti-working class measures would provoke resistance from the trade unions, under pressure from workers already suffering from the cost-of-living crisis. In that situation, will Meloni refuse to implement the ‘reforms’ that are being demanded, leading to a ‘crisis of confidence’ in the markets, or cave in to the EU, risking a bigger backlash from the workers’ movement?

It’s urgent that the trade union and workers’ organisations, the women’s, LGBTQ+, immigrants’ rights and other social movements organise now to resist the attacks on their rights and living standards that are on the way.

This should include coming together to discuss how to build a left-wing political alternative, with the organisations of the working-class at its core. This can lay the basis for a future workers’ government and, learning the lessons of Syriza in Greece, with a fighting socialist programme that challenges the crisis-ridden capitalism system.



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the Socialist

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NATIONALISE ENERGY TO SLASH OUR BILLS

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

Energy bills rose dramatically for the second time this year on 1 October, deepening the fear in poorer households about how to make ends meet. Prices for everything keep rising while wages, benefits and pensions stagnate.

In advance of the rise, poverty charities and Martin Lewis the 'money-saving expert' had been frantically telling people to submit meter readings in time. There were electronic 'queues' on the utility companies' websites.

The energy price cap means an average typical household is expected to pay £2,500 a year. In August 2021, the average bill was half that at £1,277. The Tories congratulate themselves for throwing billions of pounds at the greedy energy giants, maintaining their profits and still leaving households £1,200 a year worse off.

The goal is wide open for a party to put forward a bold energy policy to slash bills and make the energy giants pay. Polls have shown that even two-thirds of Tory voters support energy nationalisation.

But Labour leader Keir Starmer has ignored last year's Labour Party conference decision to back nationalisation of the energy industry.

GB Energy

Instead, he told Labour's conference a government led by him would create just one new nationalised energy company - 'GB Energy'. But one patriotic-sounding public company competing in a private market will do nothing to help the millions facing fuel poverty. Unfortunately, this is the best we can expect from Starmer's pro-capitalist Labour Party.

Energy must be nationalised entirely to bring our bills down and end fuel poverty, with no compensation to the existing fat-cat owners. A socialist energy system under democratic workers' control and management, could properly invest in the energy sector to secure a cheap, reliable, green energy supply. We need a new mass working-class party that fights for that, and other socialist policies to end the cost-of-living crisis.

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



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