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Support the strikes

ORGANISE TO KICK THE TORIES OUT

Build a new mass workers' party

HELEN PATTISON
LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY SECRETARY

The cracks continue to grow in Liz Truss' weak Tory government. But the divisions in the Tory party aren't new, and they have been brought to the surface now only in part by Truss' naked pro-rich policies. Another reason the cracks are growing is the huge anger of working-class people and the rising strike wave against the cost-of-living crisis.

Ever since Theresa May's general election campaign back in 2017 when she uttered that she would lead a "strong and stable" government, we have known the Tories could only offer the opposite - weak and divided governments which attack our living conditions. With different leaders, the Tories have continued to limp on.

It is vital to build a movement capable of forcing them out of power. The growing wave of struggle offers that possibility. On top of the hundreds of thousands who have already taken co-ordinated action on the railways, in Royal Mail and in BT, there are many more being balloted by their unions and who could be taking action this year.

There are all the students suffering from sky-high rents, under the pressure of growing debts and attempting to juggle full-time work and full-time education. There are all the people making the difficult decisions of which bill to pay, forced to use foodbanks or skipping meals.

The huge power of coordinated strike action has been shown in recent weeks, as has the huge support and solidarity from ordinary people. It shows the potential to build a mass movement to get rid of this rotten government and win a real pay rise and more for workers.

But getting rid of the Tories raises another question: What force in parliament fights for the interests of the working-class majority? It isn't Keir Starmer's Labour Party, which has been clear that it will impose austerity on public services and oppose inflation-proof pay rises.

The current strikes won't be resolved by an incoming Starmer government. We need a new political voice that fights in workers' interests against the bosses.

A new mass workers' party could unite the current industrial, student and community campaigns into a political force for all working-class people.

Join us in that fight.

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As the strike wave escalates and the Tories' crisis deepens Trade union movement must prepare for a serious fight with the Tories

ROB WILLIAMS

SOCIALIST PARTY WORKPLACE AND TRADE UNION
NATIONAL ORGANISER

“These are stormy days... I'm determined to get Britain moving, to get us through the tempest...” This is how Liz Truss attempted to rally her Tory troops, or at least those who are still inside, at the Conservative Party conference.

In her maiden - and possibly final - conference speech as Tory leader, Truss would undoubtedly have loved to summon up her inner-Thatcher, who famously declared: “U-turn if you want to, the lady's not for turning.” But instead, she had to gloss over her retreat on the 45p high-earner tax rate, although in media interviews she has insisted that her aim of reducing tax for the rich remains.

There is a storm raging. It has already partly blown Truss off course, but threatens to shipwreck her dysfunctional government.

So when the trade unions meet in Brighton on 18 October at the rescheduled congress of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), postponed because of the death of the Queen, how this Tory government can be forced out is now on the agenda - not just for congress delegates but for the whole union movement and working class.

Vital moment

Even though it was a mistake to postpone the TUC congress, in some respects the delay has meant that its timing is at an even more vital moment. The original date would have been just days into Truss' term of office, just after her announcement of the huge intervention to attempt to cap energy price rises. That decision was itself a reaction to the massive anger against the severe cost-of-living crisis facing workers.

Truss clearly hoped that this move, allied with her appearing 'prime ministerial' during the period of mourning for the Queen, would give her a breathing space and a platform to launch her premiership.

But that has proved to be exceptionally short-lived. The scale of the crisis facing working-class people, and a growing layer of the middle class, does not allow for any significant period of social peace at this stage. This is due to the capitalist crisis, both on a global scale and with the longstanding weaknesses of British capitalism.

This is the basis of the crisis of political representation for the ruling class, which has seen the Tories forced to move on to their fourth prime minister in six years. But the reckless actions of Truss' government have undoubtedly caused a plunge into further instability.

The strike wave has escalated further in the last few weeks. Saturday 1 October saw over 170,000 workers take action in the single biggest strike day so far this year, as Royal Mail

workers were joined by railworkers and dockers. Localised action is continuing to build, and public sector unions are starting strike ballots.

The National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) had again organised its pre-TUC congress rally and lobby, with hundreds of union members, reps and activists intending to attend. This had to be postponed because of the delay of the TUC congress itself. (For details, see back page.)

NSSN action summit

The NSSN rally and lobby always takes place before congress, but the rescheduled event is now billed as an action summit, to allow as much debate and discussion as possible on what strategy needs to be hammered out at the TUC.

The NSSN has been calling for the unions to coordinate action across all sectors in mass joint action. Eleven years ago, 29 public sector unions came together at the TUC congress to do precisely that, leading to what was effectively a 24-hour public sector general strike of two million workers



The scale of the crisis does not allow for social peace

against the Tory-Lib Dem coalition government's attack on pensions.

The impact could be even greater now, given the generalised anger of all workers against the devastating rise in prices and squeeze on incomes. And this fury is spreading beyond the normal forces as the crisis bites. There is widespread support for the strikes, despite the best efforts of the right-wing media. Even half of Tory voters support the renationalisation of the energy companies.

This also includes wider layers forced into struggle. The barristers took indefinite action in their dispute and have gained major concessions. It is also notable that the industrial action ballots in the NHS include the Royal College of Midwives, and, for the first time in England, Scotland and Wales, the Royal College of Nurses, traditionally the non-strike union for nurses. Junior doctors are also moving to ballot.

Mid week demo

The TUC's planned lobby of parliament has also been moved and is now taking place on Wednesday 2 November. It is at an even more important time, as Truss' government is reeling.

Therefore, this can't be a modest, staid exercise of lobbying MPs, but must be turned into a mass midweek 'Tories Out' demonstration. This could appeal to all those suffering under the cost-of-living squeeze, including young unorganised workers in low-paid jobs, such as those who stopped work in Amazon this summer over the 35p pay 'rise' insult.

And it would also get an echo from students facing a catastrophic situation in further and higher education.

To realise the potential to mobilise a mass demo and militant mass action, a bold programme is needed, that includes: inflation-proofed pay rises, pensions and benefits; a £15-an-hour minimum wage with no exemptions; rent caps and a mass programme of council house building and of home insulation; nationalisation of energy, water, rail, mail, and the banks under democratic working-class control; and a socialist alternative to capitalist exploitation and poverty.

Anti-union laws

Truss and her chancellor Kwarteng have threatened further anti-union measures, possibly to be announced in the week before the TUC. But this wouldn't be from a position of strength. Rather, it would be a desperate attempt to play to the Tory right. However, it would be utterly wrong for the TUC and the unions to repeat their sorry excuse for a fight when Cameron introduced his Trade Union Act in 2015-16. This time, any attempt to implement even more restrictions must be met with decisive and prepared action, on the scale of a 24-hour general strike.

Strike fund

In the same vein, the TUC and the unions must coordinate the launch of a public strike fund to support the crucial national action of the railworkers, workers in Royal Mail and BT, and other workers moving towards action on a national scale. As well as the finance it would undoubtedly raise, it would in itself be another act of mobilising support in working-class communities and of upping the ante against the employers and the Tory government.

The tide is turning, and the opportunity exists to finish off the Tories. They could be forced to call a general election. While Starmer would be the immediate beneficiary of the anti-Tory mood, his refusal to support the strikes is not accidental but is one of the clear signs - along with major companies holding stalls at the conference, including Royal Mail - to the capitalist establishment that his New Labour is safe for big business.

Political voice

The unions are increasingly seen as the leading representatives of the working class and all those who want to fight back. It is why the strike solidarity protests and 'Enough Is Enough' rallies have been so well attended. But this must extend to the political plane as well as the industrial.

A new political formation that stood for workers on a socialist programme right now, would be well-placed, should a Starmer government inherit the stormy waters of crisis-ridden capitalism, to give a political lead to the working-class fight that will be necessary and inevitable.

National strike wave continued last week: Aslef and RMT rail strikes, CWU strike in BT



Aslef members were on strike on Wednesday 5 October NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY



CWU members in BT are taking four days of national strike action on 6, 10, 20 and 24 October LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY



RMT members took their eighth day of national strike action on the railways on 8 October SALISBURY SP

For strike reports, see page 5



Workers march against austerity, 2011 WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

Austerity deaths top 300,000

Resist the next round of cuts

SCOTT HUNTER
SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Among the greatest criminals in history shall surely be remembered the architects of austerity in Britain.

334,327 excess deaths in England, Wales and Scotland have been linked to the UK government's pursuit of austerity policies - cuts to public services and benefits - in the period 2012-19, a new study, published in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, has found.

This figure does not include the over 130,000 excess deaths due to Covid-19, according to the Office for National Statistics, a figure that is still rising.

If a foreign dictator had murdered some half a million and counting of their own people over a ten-year period, there would rightly be outcry from our politicians. But we, the people of Britain, are being murdered by

our capitalist government. Instead of the gun or the baton, UK governments have chosen the slow weapon of poverty.

The Truss government now looks to implement a new round of austerity, to pay for tax cuts to the rich, and the energy bailout to maintain energy companies' profits. Further austerity will compound what has gone before. At a time of rampant inflation and escalating fuel prices, it could kill another 300,000 and more in the years to come.

Only 11% of people think Liz Truss is doing well in her new job as prime minister, and the Tories are tumbling in the polls. Labour leader Keir Starmer is no doubt dreaming of himself as the next prime minister. It is telling that the Labour Party is not committed to an anti-austerity programme.

Starmer refuses to oppose austerity because he knows that, unless it took on the bosses, a future Labour

government would attack workers and implement austerity itself.

But it doesn't have to be this way. We have already seen a rise in trade union membership and the ongoing strike wave. Workers are taking strike action to defend terms and conditions and to secure a pay rise. Many have won.

As well as decent pay and conditions at work, we also need a robust and publicly owned health service, safe and secure social housing, affordable public transport and much more. Pressure can be applied to stop and reverse cuts to our services. But the working class needs its own party that fights for a political alternative to pay cuts and austerity.

The Socialist Party calls on the trade union leaders to take the initiative by supporting and standing candidates independently of Labour who fight for the working class, as a step towards the development of a new mass workers' party.

What tax cuts?

For every £1 of tax cuts for households, £2 will be taken away. Liz Truss and Kwasi Kwarteng have performed a dramatic U-turn on their plans to abolish the top rate of income tax. The majority of tax cuts announced remain, including scrapping a planned increase in corporation tax.

On the surface, the Tories' tax cuts do include cuts for workers too. But all is not as it seems. If you do get even a small pay rise, you could find yourself in a different tax bracket, and taking home less anyway.

The tax thresholds have been frozen for four years. By 2025-26, basic rate tax payers will be paying

an extra £500 a year and will have grown by 1.4 million in number, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

The threshold freeze has been labelled a "stealth tax". But there is nothing stealth about the Tories' intention to make the working class pay. Time to get organised and fight back!

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



Power cuts planned while energy profits still soar



Gas power plants could be without fuel this winter NURANDI RAVSANJANI, GUSMA/CC

PIRIYASHA
BIRMINGHAM CENTRAL SOCIALIST PARTY

The National Grid, the UK's largest utility corporation, has indicated that homes in the UK can expect scheduled three hours power cuts to save energy for heating, during peak usage time of the day this winter.

A reduction in supply of gas from Russia to Europe could mean gas shortages and power cuts, while energy companies' profits soar. Working-class households will feel the brunt, already hit hard by price rises.

Many are having to make a choice as to whether to turn on the heating or feed children; now there's the additional burden of stress from the risk of power cuts.

The Tories have announced their intention to reopen the 'Rough' gas offshore storage facility. The facility allows for the storage of gas for up to ten days in case of emergencies. It had been made redundant in 2017. After privatisation, profiteering bosses had refused to invest to keep it running, not seeing sufficient profit.

In 2010, a report from the energy and climate change select committee recommended that the government should double its gas storage capacity, but it was simply ignored. Capitalism is an inefficient economic system that prioritises the profits that can be made now, with no thought for the future.

Since Thatcher's privatisation of energy companies in the 1980s, the

top energy companies have made over \$2 trillion in profits. The industry has been stripped to extract maximum profit.

As winter nears, industry bodies are encouraging consumers to sign up to energy-saving schemes, to prevent a surge in demand. I wonder if the huge electric billboards, or commercial businesses that leave their lights on all night as advertising, will be asked to turn off?

In an economic system, capitalism, which prioritises profits over the climate and people, the elite will only invest their huge wealth if they can find a profit. The plans to resume fracking and extract more gas from the North Sea will not solve gas shortages this winter - the consequence will be more environmental destruction.

We need investment in renewable energy, like wind and solar. But to achieve that on the scale needed, and for it to be democratically planned in our interests, the huge resources of the energy companies need to be in the hands of the working class. Therefore the energy companies need to be nationalised, with compensation only on the basis of proven need.

These are the steps needed to ensure sustainable, affordable, and sufficient energy for the future.



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NEU indicative ballot:

Teachers and support staff want a serious fight on pay and funding

SHEILA CAFFEY
NEU EXECUTIVE MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Before the National Education Union (NEU) indicative ballot on pay for school support staff and teachers has even closed, we are over the anti-trade union thresholds, and have a clear mandate of over 79% for strike action. Our sixth-form ballot has already closed, with a 77% turnout and an 85% call for strike.

Education staff have had enough. We've suffered cuts on cuts: to jobs like libraries and special educational needs, to our curriculum, to our professional development, and to our pay. The Tory government has made quite clear its disdain towards an education system that supports, nurtures and teaches children and young people, and instead sees it as a political football to kick, time and time again.

So, we're going to strike back! At the last national executive meeting, it was decided we will move to a formal ballot as soon as possible. However, as that must be sent by post, the postal workers' phenomenal action through November may make this difficult. Of course, we are in solidarity with their union, the CWU!

For this reason, it was agreed to extend the ballot period until January for school support staff and teachers. Obviously, a delay in taking action is not great, but neither would be lost or delayed papers that led to a lost ballot. The five Socialist Party members on the executive have been arguing for a ballot and a timetable of action for some months, which, had this not been rejected previously by the NEU Left leadership of the union, would have enabled strike action to take place much earlier. However, in the current circumstances, it was

a tough call, but the Socialist Party members on the executive voted for this extension.

The sixth-form ballot will be much shorter, as it can start in October. This will mean they will be able to begin their action at the start of December.

Campaign

Socialist Party executive members also put forward the call for continual local and national events throughout the ballot period to keep members motivated and feeling part of the campaign. This could include street stalls, Zoom calls led by the general secretaries, and local rallies and events that would explain our campaign to the communities we teach. This was agreed. It was also agreed to unite action with other unions as much as possible.

Disappointingly, what wasn't agreed, was a clear calendar for action. Members need to know this is not going to be just a one-day protest action, as we've done before. We are in a serious fight. They also need to be able to budget for loss of earnings at the end of a long winter of through-the-roof bills.

Our motion called for starting with one day, then two days and then three days. We suggested starting on the last couple of days of January, with the other dates spaced before and after half-term. Others on the executive were very quick to shut this down. Time and time again, the current leadership has voted against a calendar of action that would set out an intention to fight. This is disappointing, as we hoped this time it might be different. We will continue to build from below amongst the membership to keep the pressure on to ensure we have a fight that can win!

Usdaw members need a fighting leadership



Scott (right) on Sainsbury's picket line in 2019, alongside fellow Socialist Party member and former Usdaw president Amy Murphy (left) LONDON SP

SCOTT JONES
USDAW GENERAL SECRETARY CANDIDATE AND
SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

The shop and distribution workers' union Usdaw has not had a contested general secretary election since 2008. I am seeking nominations in the current election as a rank-and-file candidate because a debate is needed about the direction of the union, and members need a say.

Shop and distribution workers need the pay our key-worker status deserves. Pay offers like the recent 2% in Morrisons are just not good enough. Contrast that with Tesco distribution, where last year's threatened strike action saw Tesco bosses concede higher pay, and agree inflation-busting pay rises in depots which have had negotiations this year. We need to fight for better deals to beat the cost-of-living crisis and win new members to the union - vital given that we have 50,000 fewer members than Usdaw had five years ago.

We need a fighting union that takes on the bosses and joins the trade union fightback and strike wave. Taking strike action in sectors like retail, where there is a limited tradition of strikes, is not easy. But through campaigning, including mass meetings and protests, as well as coordinating pay fights with other unions, our membership could be mobilised to win strike ballots. This would strengthen our position in negotiations, rather than fighting with one hand tied behind our back.

We need a workers' general secretary on a worker's wage, and a democratic union in touch with the members. If we are to harness the potential power we have as a union of over 350,000 members, then we must seek to involve as many of our

members as possible in our activities, whether that be as a rep, in their local branch, or beyond.

This would include ending the reorganisation of branches over the heads of the activists that keep branches functioning. We must restore Tesco members' right to vote on pay deals - a decision the union's members have twice taken at the annual delegate meeting, but that the leadership of the union has failed to carry out.

Political voice

Usdaw members also need a strong political voice. Since Keir Starmer became leader of the Labour Party, he has systematically ditched policies supported by Usdaw members and trade unionists, including renationalisation of rail, mail and utilities, and has refused to give his support to the RMT and CWU strikes. He stayed away from dock workers picketing a mere spitting distance from Labour's conference in Liverpool.

Disgracefully, our current general secretary has attacked other trade union leaders like Unite's Sharon Graham for criticising Starmer's lack of support for working-class people. Trade unions should fund and support politicians who support our campaigns, up to and including strike action. Where they refuse to do so, we should support trade unionist and socialist candidates prepared to back us 100%.

By seeking nominations and getting on the ballot, we can have a discussion and fight to win these things, and win a member-led union.

● Nominations close 14 November
● See [Scott for Usdaw GS on Facebook](#), [@ScottFrankJones on twitter](#), and [email usdawactivist@gmail.com](#) for more information including how to nominate



We need a fighting union that takes on the bosses and joins the trade union fightback and strike wave

CWU members solid as Royal Mail strike escalates

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN CWU

The Communication Workers Union (CWU) has announced a series of 19 days of strike action within the Royal Mail group, escalating the action. This covers the period from October until the first week in December, which is a key period for Royal Mail. It includes key posting dates around 'Black Friday' and 'Cyber Monday'. It will, without doubt, send a warning shot across the bows of the board of directors and key shareholders.

This action will be a mixture of all-out national action and functional action, where no member should be on strike for more than nine days. This will have the impact of maximum disruption to the bosses, while minimising the impact on our members.

This has led to talks, starting Monday 10 October, but both sides admit there is a huge gulf in each other's positions and are dampening down the hopes of a quick agreement being reached.

The mood among the membership is solid. Members and officials of the CWU both state that they have never seen such a mood on the picket lines and in the workplace.

At the same time, we have also seen the hardening of management's stance. They served a series

of notices on the union, threatening to withdraw from a whole raft of national agreements, with a threat of more to come.

The CWU's motion was passed at Labour Party conference calling for renationalisation of Royal Mail, but very few CWU activists expect to see this in the Labour Party manifesto. Many members are calling for the CWU to stop funding Starmer's Labour Party, and some are calling for a new workers' party. Some members look at the enthusiasm at Enough is Enough rallies and say this shows that there is a mood for an alternative. Our union should approach other unions and open up a discussion about serious steps towards a new party.

Members should take confidence



Erdington BIRMINGHAM SP

from the most divided Tory party conference in many years. Truss' leadership could be on the brink of falling at any point. Any attempts at implementing more anti-trade union laws should be met with a 24-hour general strike. The CWU should lead the call for this.

The TUC congress takes place from 18 October, and should be a council of war to tackle the generalised attacks on terms and conditions, inflation, and to increase pay.

More and more unions are going into action. The CWU should publicly launch a strike fund, and the TUC should coordinate a mass appeal for funds, which would really up the ante against the bosses and the Tories and mobilise working-class support for workers taking action.

Strive wave reports



Horefield, Bristol TOM BALDWIN

Socialist Party members have continued to visit picket lines of national and local strikes over the last week, to bring our solidarity and discuss the way forward. Here, members report from some of the hundreds of picket lines they have visited.

● Aslef strike lifting spirits

The strike picket on 6 October outside Newcastle Central Station included Aslef workers from all around the area. The friendly mood and atmosphere weren't at all dampened by the unrelenting rain - the workers eagerly took

our strike wave bulletins and TUSC leaflets as they talked to us. In our discussions with the strikers, they reflected on the positive mood of the previous Saturday, when an Enough is Enough protest went along to the picket line at the station. They recognise that their role as strikers is lifting the eyes, consciousness and spirits of other workers.

SAM MORDEEN
SOUTH TYNE AND WEAR SOCIALIST PARTY

● BT strikers welcoming support

Even as the CWU BT Openreach strikers were gathering in South Shields, before they'd set up banners and flags, passing vehicles were tooting their horns in support. Socialist Party members were welcomed to join the picket line and thanked for going along so regularly. One of the strikers commented that when she'd first seen us at one of their earlier pickets she'd never heard of us, so she looked us up online, and was impressed with what she saw.

ELAINE BRUNSKILL
NORTHERN REGION SOCIALIST PARTY

● Further education workers joining the strike wave

Lecturers at South and City College in Birmingham joined the growing strike wave on Thursday 6 and Friday 7 October. This was part of a rolling schedule of strikes at colleges across England against below-inflation pay offers from their respective managements.

Socialist Party members heard

BT workers strike against 'morally corrupt' bosses and government

40,000 CWU members in BT and Openreach, and 999 are taking four days of strike action during October, against the imposition of a pay cut. The first national action in 35 years in BT is happening because, in the teeth of a historic cost-of-living crisis, bosses have ignored all the normal procedures for negotiating pay and imposed a flat rate 'rise' of £1,500.

The bosses claim this equates to an 8% rise for the lowest paid. That, in itself, would be a pay cut. But the CWU has calculated that, in reality, it is more like 5%, since the £1,500 is not all new money: up to two-thirds has been paid out already! For the majority of CWU members, the pay offer is around 3-4%.

Strikers on the picket line are discussing what next steps might be necessary if the BT bosses do not enter serious negotiations. The strike is also leading workers to discuss wider political issues.

Bill, CWU shop steward on BT Openreach picket line, spoke to Heather Rawling

"This is the fifth day members have now been on strike. We're pretty

strong. Just look around the picket line.

"I think the unions should all be joining together as one - put all those supposedly in power in their place. This is what society needs, not what politicians or business want.

"Our new so-called prime minister says 'growth, growth, growth'. But at who's cost? It's not them at the top because they are 'growing, growing, growing' - away from us! They're getting more and more wealthy - disgustingly wealthy. How much money can one individual spend or need?"

"And it's not tricking down. That is never going to happen. They can use these sound bites like 'trickle down'. It means nothing to the average individual. As long as you've got people using food banks, it is morally indefensible. In big business and government, they're just morally bereft and corrupt."

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how University and College Union (UCU) members have been forced to take strike action after twelve years with no annual pay award. Lecturers have had to work second jobs in pubs, raid their savings each month and take mortgage holidays, just to cover the essentials. This is despite the college group, which spans eight sites, increasing its reserves to £13 million in that time! The principal awards himself regular pay increases.

Staff are becoming demoralised and leaving the college, which, following previous union campaigns, at one time offered one of the best further education contracts in the region.

There was strong support from students and passers-by, who, like workers everywhere, recognise the need to fight back against the driving down of living standards all working-class people are experiencing.

NICK HART
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

● RMT strikers want the Tories out

Members of the Socialist Party in Newcastle visited the pickets lines of the RMT strike on 8 October. The strikers' mood was good, despite the cold. They were supported by many

people, including passing taxi drivers and bus drivers who honked in support.

Talking to the strikers was enlightening. They want the Tories out of government but don't necessarily support the Labour Party as they believe that they are not a working people's party anymore. They are right, and this highlights the need for a new working people's party. It seems to me that strikers are becoming more disenfranchised with the current political system. People are calling for socialist policies without necessarily knowing what socialism is. Now is the time to push!

KASIAH COLE WATSON-BLAIR
NEWCASTLE SOCIALIST PARTY



Aslef, Nottingham GARY FREEMAN

Cost-of-living crisis: Women at the sharp end

Unite to fight for an alternative to poverty and inequality

BEA GARDNER
ENFIELD AND LEA VALLEY SOCIALIST PARTY

How will we afford to keep the heating on? This is a question facing thousands of working-class households this winter, even after the government's colossal energy bosses bailout.

The poorer you are, the hardest you are hit by rising costs. Real inflation is far higher for the working class than it is for those with bigger incomes because we spend a much higher proportion of our income on energy, rent and food.

Once again, capitalist crisis exposes the inequalities of the system.

For women the cost-of-living crisis is felt especially sharply. Almost half of women are finding financial pressures so stressful that they are losing sleep, according to a survey by Mintago.

Women are more likely to be the member of the household opening the bills, and counting the pennies at the checkout. Pervasive gender discrimination means women continue to be paid less than men, including for equivalent work.

The disproportionate impact of rising costs faced by women will drive increasing numbers to fight back. Tens of thousands have already joined the growing strike wave, and millions more could do too as public sector unions - which have a majority women membership - vote to strike over pay.

Because of the pre-existing gender inequality that is reproduced by capitalist societies, women typically have lower incomes and greater responsibilities for managing household finances.

Women are more likely to be in some of the lowest-paid jobs because work which is traditionally viewed as 'women's work', such as care work and cleaning, is not valued in the capitalist system.

Research by the living wage foundation found over 60% of jobs below the living wage were carried out by women. 35% of low-paid women already regularly skip meals to save costs.

For the millions of women in receipt of Universal Credit, their income is further squeezed by the real-terms cut this winter. Claimants have to wait until April for a still-below-inflation rise. What is needed is an immediate uplift, with future rises linked to the current cost of living.

Women carry out a greater share of unpaid work in the home, including caring responsibilities, restricting the amount of paid work we can do. And making us more vulnerable to the Tories attacks on part-time workers' benefits.

This combination of factors; women being more likely to work part time, in lower-paid jobs plus taking time out of work to support the family means the income gap between men and women in retirement is around 38% - a difference of around £7,500 a year. A quarter of women pensioners live in poverty.



PHOTO: WILLIAM FORTUNATO/CC

35%
of low-paid women already skip meals to save costs

Women in receipt of maternity payments are having to rapidly recalculate to see if it is possible to stretch meagre maternity pay to cover the rising costs, with some returning earlier to work than planned. The average period of maternity leave is 39 weeks. For those coming to the end of this, RPI inflation was 6.3% when their baby was born and three times less than this when their baby was conceived!

Yet extortionate childcare costs - the second highest in the world - mean there is no guarantee a return to work will ease financial pressures either. The largely privatised childcare sector doesn't cater for shift working, night-time or weekend work and many businesses no longer provide any in-house creche facilities. The need for free, quality, universal childcare is more acute than ever.

Other research reveals the strain financial pressures are taking on relationships. 55% of couples in one survey stated their relationship is already 'on the rocks' as a direct result of the cost-of-living crisis.

However, being single brings even greater financial pressure. According to the charity Shelter, in the last ten years the number of women in England who are homeless and living in temporary accommodation has increased by 88%. Many of these are women fleeing domestic abuse and are unable to secure a refuge place due to chronic underfunding and cuts to these services.

Rising costs could cost women their lives. Women's Aid estimates three in four women that have financial ties with an abusive partner have found financial costs have prevented them from leaving or made it harder for them to leave.

The cost-of-living crisis has intensified the existing financial pressures facing working-class, and increasing numbers of middle-class women.

A decade of capitalist austerity introduced after the 2008 financial crisis disproportionately impacted women. Services women relied on for support, and which overwhelmingly employed women, were closed.

Schemes like the crisis support grant, which previously provided some relief, were either abolished or

passed on to cash-strapped councils to manage at a reduced level.

Rather than put up resistance to Tory austerity, Labour councils implemented it on their behalf.

Faced with the crisis today, councils prepared to use their borrowing capacity and reserves could carry out measures to support households through the cost-of-living crisis now.

Setting such legal, no-cuts budgets is a policy backed by the trade union Unite.

Local councils could use their powers to support families with a range of measures, including help with food and energy costs. They could also ensure a pay raise for council workers and provide subsidised childcare.

The Tories have already shown that under pressure they will fork out billions to save the energy companies, and dish out tax cuts to the rich. Faced with a mass campaign they could be forced to cough up to fund local council services.

But we urgently need a political alternative - a new mass working-class party that is prepared to take a fighting stand to end the cost-of-living crisis. Potentially millions of workers could take strike action this winter, the majority of them women.

If a section of the trade union leaders at the forefront of these struggles launched a new formation to challenge at a general election, it could win seats and fight for socialist policies that would transform working-class women's lives.

To permanently end poverty, inequality and sexism, we need to end the capitalist system that perpetuates it. That means fighting for the socialist transformation of society. It's the working class, including working-class women, who have the power to bring about that change. Join the Socialist Party to fight for it.



To permanently end poverty, inequality and sexism, we need to end capitalism



PHOTO: TOMMY DOYLE/CC

TUSC prepares for 2023 cost-of-living crisis local elections

The October meeting of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) All-Britain Steering Committee agreed a draft core policy platform for TUSC candidates in the local council elections that will take place in May 2023. With the Tories imploding before our eyes, attention has been focused on preparing for the next general election. A series of TUSC-hosted meetings is being held this autumn under the heading, 'Enough is Enough! But what do we do at the ballot box?', to provide local forums to discuss how a working-class alternative can be put in place for a general election (see tusc.org.uk).

But while a general election possibly may not be called until 2024, over 7,900 local councillors will definitely face election in six months time. And with local authorities responsible for over one-fifth of all spending on public services, these contests provide an important arena in which to fight for the socialist policies needed to meet the cost-of-living crisis. That is the theme of the draft core policy platform agreed by the TUSC steering committee (see below), which will now go out for discussion within the different component parts of TUSC, (which includes the Socialist Party) before next year's TUSC conference on 4 February.



Campaigning for TUSC in a recent Oxford by election OXFORD SP

TUSC draft platform:

Vote for a socialist response to the cost-of-living crisis!

The poverty and suffering threatened by the cost-of-living crisis is not inevitable. Alongside industrial struggle, local government has the potential to be part of the working-class fightback against the Tories and the bosses trying to make us pay for the crisis and the chaos.

The 2023 council elections provide an opportunity to challenge those candidates from the establishment parties who claim there is nothing that can be done in the face of the historic erosion of our living standards. Councils, in fact, retain both significant powers and resources that can be used to make an immediate difference to peoples' lives, as well as the ability to lead a campaign for central government funding.

Councils' powers

Local councils still own municipal buildings that could be opened up to run community services in warm spaces such as youth clubs, social spaces for older people, crèches, and so on. They could introduce free school breakfasts now - and not stop there, as whole families are going hungry. School kitchens could provide breakfast, lunch and an evening meal, and councils could link up with food banks to fund and democratically organise food distribution. Councils could begin now a mass programme of home insulation to reduce energy costs. And they have powers to award grants to those unable to pay sky-high bills.

Inflation is certainly hitting local government finances but councils still have borrowing powers and reserves which can be mobilised for an emergency programme of measures to stop inflation austerity leading to poverty, cold and homelessness - if the will to fight the government was there.

And bold measures by councils would give enormous confidence to workers, many already fighting back in the workplace, to participate in a mass campaign for government funding if councils organised it.

Most current councillors,

however, including unfortunately the majority of Labour's 6,000 or so local representatives, would say they cannot use their legal authority to act without first getting funding guarantees from the government. They will say that the impact of inflation and the new round of austerity leave them with no choice but to cut. But they do have a choice.

Available funds

Although the Tories have made deep cuts to councils since 2010, they still account for over one-fifth of all spending on public services, and retain responsibilities for adult social care, housing, education support, transport, recycling and rubbish collection, libraries and many other services. That's a powerful position from which to organise a fightback. Councils should first spend what's needed - and then organise a campaign to demand the money back from the government if there is any shortfall in meeting the bills.

The U-turns made by the Tory governments under both Johnson and Truss, spending billions when the pressure is on them, show that if just a handful of councils used the powers they have to refuse to implement any more cuts and spend what is necessary instead, the Tories could be forced to pay up.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is an inclusive umbrella, not an exclusive one, with its banner available to be used on the ballot paper by every working-class fighter prepared to stand up to the capitalist establishment politicians at election time. Every trade unionist, anti-cuts campaigner, community and campus activist and socialists from any party or none who want to see an alternative to austerity politicians can become a TUSC candidate. But as a minimum commitment voters should know that any councillor elected under the TUSC banner will:

- **Oppose all cuts and closures to council services, jobs, pay and conditions. We reject the claim that 'some cuts' are necessary to our services or that the Covid crisis and inflation austerity are a reason for attacks on working-class people's living standards**
- **Support all workers' struggles against government policies making ordinary people pay for the crisis, and for inflation-proof pay rises - no to 'fire and rehire'**
- **Fight for united working-class struggle against racism, sexism and all forms of oppression**
- **Use councils' powers to begin a mass building programme of eco-friendly affordable council homes to tackle the housing crisis**
- **Oppose fracking and fight for local climate emergency plans, based on genuine democratic debate, that create new employment, reduce emissions and improve air quality and the local environment, while protecting the jobs, pay and conditions of all workers**
- **Reject council tax, rent and service charge increases for working-class people to make up for cuts in central funding; support a redistributive revenue-raising system to finance local council services, and demand central government restores the cuts in funding it has imposed**
- **Vote against the privatisation of council jobs and services, or the transfer of existing council services to social enterprises or 'arms-length' management organisations which are the first steps to their privatisation**
- **Use all the legal powers available to councils to oppose both the cuts and government policies which centrally impose the transfer of public services to private bodies. This includes using whatever powers councils retain to refer local NHS decisions, and to initiate referenda and organise public commissions and consultations in campaigns to defend public services**
- **Refuse to cooperate with commissioners sent by central government to attempt to impose cuts on local services**
- **Vote for councils to refuse to implement austerity. TUSC councillors will support councils which in the first instance use their reserves and prudential borrowing powers to avoid making cuts. But we argue that the best way to mobilise the mass campaign that is necessary to defend and improve council services is to set a budget that meets the needs of the local community and demand that government funding makes up the shortfall**



Upon election TUSC councillors would at the first opportunity put forward for a vote in the council chamber the following immediate emergency measures to mobilise council powers and resources into action against cost-of-living suffering:

No one to be cold

Top up the Tory's miserly Household Support Fund to provide grants for those unable to pay their bills; an emergency programme of home insulation; extend the opening of public buildings, including libraries, to provide staffed warm spaces and youth facilities.

No one to be hungry

Fund kitchens in schools and other services to introduce free breakfasts, lunches and evening meals; expand food banks and distribution of safe food 'waste' under democratic council control; fund public provision of high quality free care, including childcare, to prevent care cost-related hunger.

No one to be homeless

Use council licencing powers to cap rents, including for students, and ban evictions of those who fall into cost-of-living-related arrears; use compulsory-purchase orders to take over empty homes to house working-class families and young people in housing need; for an emergency shared-ownership programme to support struggling mortgage-holders; expand specialist domestic violence refuges and services.

THEME	SATURDAY 11.30AM-1.30PM	SATURDAY 2.30-4.30PM	SUNDAY 11AM-1PM	SUNDAY 2-4PM
2022 STRIKE WAVE		THE 1926 GENERAL STRIKE - LESSONS FOR TODAY	ARE WE HEADING FOR A GENERAL STRIKE?	MARXISTS AND THE TRADE UNIONS
POLITICAL VOICE FOR WORKERS	LESSONS FROM THE CORBYN EXPERIENCE	IS 'ENOUGH IS ENOUGH' ENOUGH?	WHAT WAS BLAIRISM?	CAN YOU FIGHT THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN ELECTIONS?
HOW DO WE CHANGE THE WORLD?		REVOLUTIONARY DEMANDS IN THE 21ST CENTURY	CAN A SUSTAINABLE SOCIALIST PLANNED ECONOMY COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE	IRAN - CAN THE PROTESTS DELIVER AN IRANIAN REVOLUTION?
TROTSKYISM		THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION - WHAT REALLY HAPPENED?	WHAT WAS THE USSR? THE 'STATE CAPITALIST THEORY' REVISITED	WHAT'S THE ROLE OF A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY?
BRITAIN AND IRELAND	CAPITALISM AND THE CROWN	A SPECIAL CRISIS OF BRITISH CAPITALISM & TORY PARTY DISINTEGRATION	IRELAND 1921 - A MARXIST VIEWPOINT ON THE MAKING OF A DIVIDED ISLAND	SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL QUESTION
WORKING CLASS FIGHTING BACK		RACISM AND THE POLICE	WHY ARE THE TORIES OBSESSED WITH ATTACKING TRANS RIGHTS?	GIG ECONOMY - HOW WORKERS ARE FIGHTING BACK
IDEAS TO RESIST	FASCISM AND RIGHT-WING POPULISM	ENERGY BILL CRISIS AND THE POLL TAX EXPERIENCE	STUDENTS, ANTI-SEMITISM AND SOCIALISM - WHAT'S GOING ON ON CAMPUS?	NATIONALISATION AND WORKERS' POWER
INTRODUCTION TO MARXISM	CRYPTOCURRENCIES- WHAT DO MARXISTS SAY?	MARXIST ECONOMICS - WHAT IS INFLATION AND WHERE DOES IT FROM?	DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM	HISTORICAL MATERIALISM
STRUGGLE ACROSS THE WORLD	LATIN AMERICA'S 'PINK REVOLUTION' - WHERE IS IT AT?	WHAT WAY FORWARD FOR REVOLUTION IN SRI LANKA?	WORLD RELATIONS AND THE DECLINE OF THE US SUPERPOWER	THE UKRAINE RUSSIA WAR - FIGHTING FOR WORKERS' UNITY TO END THE HORROR OF WAR
WOMEN'S LIBERATION & SOCIALISM		ROE VS WADE - THE FIGHT FOR REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS TODAY	WOMEN IN THE TRADE UNIONS - A PROUD HISTORY OF STRUGGLE	HARASSMENT & VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN - WHERE DOES IT COME FROM & HOW TO FIGHT IT



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SOCIALISM 2022

Hosted by the Socialist Party
www.socialistparty.org.uk

Saturday 19 & Sunday 20 November,
 Queen Mary University,
 Mile End Rd, Bethnal Green, London E1 4NS

2022 will go down in history as the year the working class across Britain put strikes back on the agenda. The Tories have declared class war – planning mass redistribution of wealth from the working class and poor to the already obscenely rich. But we are fighting back!

But it isn't just Britain that is wracked by chaos. You could stick a pin in a map of the world and not find anywhere where there is stability for capitalism. Revolutionary movements have erupted in Sri Lanka and ousted a president! Iranian women, youth and workers have taken to the streets. The US working class has begun to organise and mobilise with union drives and strike waves. And that's to name just a few examples that will be discussed in workshops at Socialism 2022.

Socialism 2022 is the event where hundreds of workers, socialists, trade unionists and young people discuss how we can win.

The national strikes have inspired millions. They have given a glimpse of the potential power the working class has, not just to win pay rises and kick out the Tories - but to organise to change society. That means starting to democratically plan society to end the chaos of capitalism. How can the working class step up this fight? Are we heading for a general strike? What is needed to realise workers' potential and how to prepare for that will be major themes of the Socialism 2022 weekend.

A future of more barbaric wars, ever-increasing poverty, deprivation and climate catastrophe - or a struggle for socialist change: that is the choice facing the working class globally. Our lives and our future are not safe in the hands of the capitalist rulers and their system.

In the face of mass workers' action and against a background of disastrous economic and social crisis, the Tory party is in a state of civil war and disintegration. They could be brought down at any moment, and a general election is on the cards. But who trusts Starmer's Labour? What's the alternative? Can we fight the class struggle at the ballot box? Building a workers' political voice will also be a theme of the event.

But the case for socialist change must be fought for. Socialism 2022 is the best place to meet hundreds of others to discuss, debate, listen and learn more about how best we can organise and fightback to change the world along socialist lines.

Includes

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tickets & info:
socialism.org.uk

Programme of workshops can be subject to changes



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Time for socialist change: Working-class action not words



Black Lives Matter protesters, June 2020 JUDY BESHON

ISAI MARIJERLA
SOCIALIST PARTY BLACK AND ASIAN GROUP

Time for Change: Action not words' is one of the themes of this year's Black History Month. Throughout October, Black activists, anti-racist campaigners and socialists highlight the rich history of Black struggle against racism, poverty and inequality.

Socialists have an additional task of explaining the historic role Black and Asian workers have played in fighting against discrimination.

The Socialist Party agrees that what we need now is action – but what actions are needed to end racism?

Historically, there have been waves of anti-racist movements, including the tremendous civil rights movement of the 1950s, 60s and early 70s in the United States, that have changed the lives of Black and Asian people for the better. For example, it is no longer legally acceptable to discriminate against Black people.

Historic workers' struggles

In different periods of history, Black and Asian workers in the UK have been at the forefront of struggle against oppression.

The workers involved in the 1963 Bristol bus boycott didn't expect it, but their struggle became a big turning point that galvanised the whole of the trade union movement to push back the bus company and overturn the 'colour bar', which excluded Black people from employment. It showed how Black and Asian workers' struggle can unite all workers together to bring down racist policies.

The Grunwick dispute from 1976-8,

involving some of the most inspiring trade unionists, overwhelmingly Asian women, still resonates to this day. The workers, who faced with triple oppression because of their class, race and gender, took strike action and won mass support in the trade union movement.

These and other many examples show the power of a united struggle. We workers of all backgrounds, when we come together on a common programme, can force change and push back bosses and the oppressors.

Racism at work

However, wage inequality and other racist discrimination still exists. In a recent study commissioned by the Trade Union Congress, it says that 40% of those who report a racist incident are being ignored. The State of Black Britain report published last month by the Black Equity Organisation, gives more examples of racism experienced in the workplace. For example, over 60% said of respondents they had been passed over for promotion or employment due to their ethnicity.

Racism is one of the tools used by right-wing governments and capitalists to divide the working class. It is deeply inherent in capitalism. Socialists agree with key leaders of the civil rights movement, including Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and Huey P Newton, that you can't have capitalism without racism. In the words of Huey P Newton – we must destroy both racism and capitalism.

2020 was the most recent turning point in the movement against racism. We saw a mass movement of mainly working-class young people

on the streets in the major cities, under the banner of Black Lives Matter, coming out in hundreds of thousands against racial inequality.

There was an understanding amongst a layer that fighting racism means challenging the very system that we are in. Many of the protesters agreed with us when we said that means getting rid of capitalism. And that this is an international struggle. George Floyd was killed by the police in the US, and then two years later we saw the killing of Chris Kaba in south London. Since then, another police officer has been suspended for racism.



Black and Asian working-class people are affected by racism but are also impacted by the class inequality that exists in capitalism

Although racism affects all Black and Asian people, it disproportionately affects working-class people. Why? Black and Asian working-class people are affected by racism, but are also impacted by the class inequality that exists in capitalism.

There is an increasing number of Black people in the long queues for food banks. A recent report shows that people of colour are more likely to live in very high air-pollution areas. The added pollution is affecting

mental wellbeing and physical health. They are also experiencing high rents and low pay. This is on top of the cost-of-living crisis that is pushing working-class families to a breakdown.

Black and Asian capitalists and millionaires do not have to worry about feeding their loved ones, making ends meet, or their health and wellbeing. On these issues, the capitalist system is looking after them.

Mass anti-racist movement

We need a system that looks after us. So when fighting to build a mass movement against racism, we also need to campaign for economic demands that affect Black and Asian workers.

The Socialist Party has produced a Black worker's charter that puts forward a programme and a set of demands that can be fought for to improve the conditions of Black and Asian people in the UK. To combat racism in the workplace, we call for a fair reporting system, free from judgement, so that any type of racial abuse, verbal or physical, can be immediately reported and acted on. This process should be overseen by elected shop stewards and trade unions. We also call for the trade unions to oversee the recruitment and promotion process. We demand job security and an end to the race pay gap.

Amongst other demands, we also campaign for the right to protest, to end stop and search, for more mental health services and refugee centres, and free school meals for all our children.

The capitalists are already gearing

up for us to pay for their new economic crisis. As has been shown throughout the years of austerity and Covid, as the rich have got much richer while we have lost jobs, pay and services, the capitalist system is incapable of providing stable decent living standards for working-class people.

Socialist transformation

That's why as well as campaigning for all the reforms we can get, the Socialist Party also puts forward a programme for the socialist transformation of society.

We fight for policies like renationalising the energy companies, rail, mail and privatised utilities. To take the wealth off the 1% by nationalising the big companies that dominate the economy, and for them to be run democratically under workers' control and management.

In this cost-of-living crisis, a huge number of workers, of all backgrounds, are taking part in a strike wave on a scale not seen for years, and more workers are balloting and preparing to join in.

When workers strike they have the potential power to stop the economy from functioning, and so to challenge the capitalists. We are seeing a new layer of Black and Asian workers joining struggle and winning. It is this collective coordinated struggle that can win a programme for socialist change and challenge all the backward ideas that breed under capitalism.

• This is the third in a series of articles for Black History Month. Others can be read at socialistparty.org.uk

Windfall taxes, 'Great British Energy' and price caps

Why we need a socialist nationalised energy system

JOSH ASKER
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Liz Truss' announcement of an estimated £150 billion bailout for the energy industry is not enough to even lower our bills. In fact, on 1 October the average typical household bill doubled from its level twelve months previously.

The bailout, replicated in different ways across Europe, is a condemnation of the model of privatisation of the energy industry started in the 1980s – and is a case study for capitalism's failings. Much of the untold billions promised by Truss will simply keep energy retailers afloat, giving them the cash they need to buy energy at record-high prices charged by super-profitable energy producers.

But what alternative is needed to end the energy crisis, and to make sure that the working class is not forced to pay, again?

'Not about nationalisation'

Addressing Labour Party conference at the end of September, Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer announced his policy to create 'Great British Energy' – a publicly owned energy producer to compete in the existing energy production market. A nice sounding proposal, for those who want to end profiteering of the energy bosses, on the surface – but falling short of Labour's 2019 manifesto pledge to "bring our energy and water systems into democratic public ownership." In fact, following Starmer's speech a spokesperson was quick to say it was "not about nationalisation".

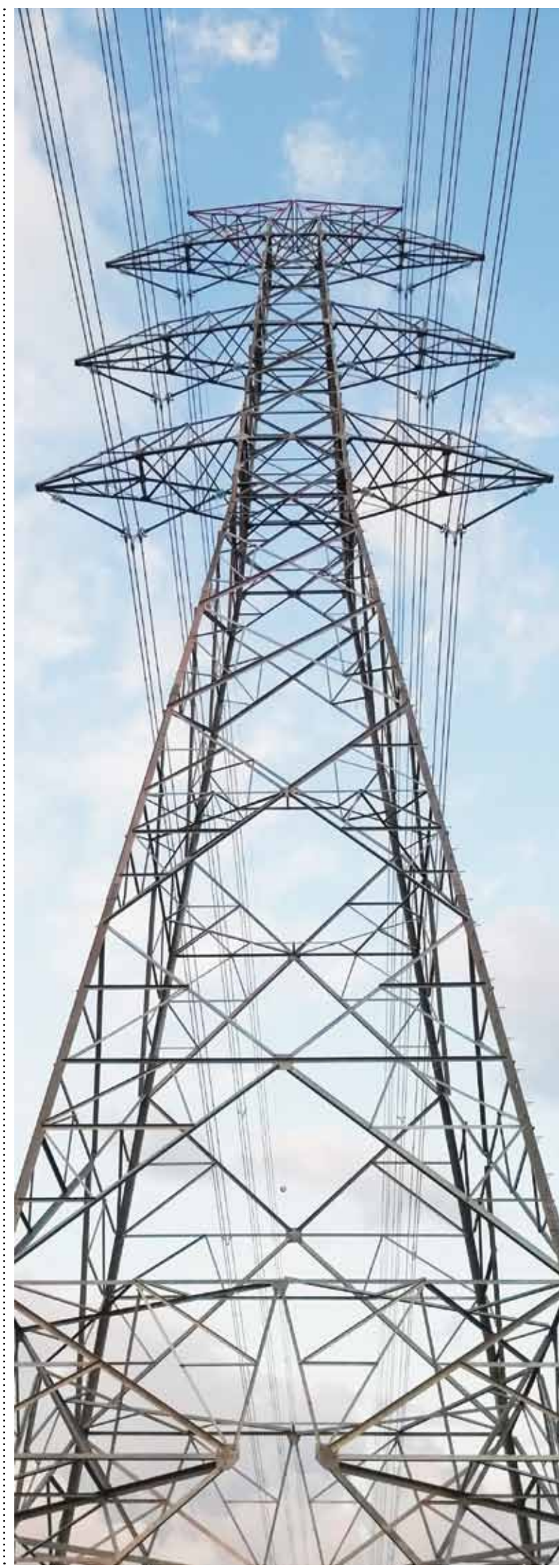
The announcement came just days after the Trades Union Congress (TUC) published its report: 'Public ownership of clean power: lower bills, climate action, decent jobs'. The report lambasts historic privatisation of the energy industry. But, like Starmer, fails to put forward policy to lower energy bills now, or seriously tackle profiteering.



A British-owned state competitor would leave the existing substantial infrastructure in private hands

Starmer's speech highlights windfarms in Wales owned by a Swedish publicly owned company and that "the Chinese Communist Party has a stake in our nuclear industry". But a British-owned state competitor would do nothing to change that, leaving the existing substantial infrastructure in private hands – wherever the owners are based.

The TUC document presents France's EDF as a model, pointing out that a typical French energy bill



is £803 a year, compared to the UK energy cap at £2,500. What is not mentioned is the billions that the French government paid out to buy out the remaining private portion of the company earlier this year, or the many billions in debt the company holds. French President Macron's intention will be to force the working class to pay for this in the future.



To have control over the energy industry, it needs to be in public hands and under the democratic control and management of the working class

Starmer's proposal is for £8 billion of funding for 'Great British Energy' to invest in renewable energy production. This figure is dwarfed by the capital available to the existing private market players, with which it is suggested 'Great British Energy' could go into joint ventures.

EDF produces over half of France's electricity, which has meant it has been used to limit price rises for French consumers. For 'Great British Energy' to be a serious competitor, it would need substantial investment, and extremely substantial investment to hold a majority of the market – unless a government was prepared to nationalise large sections of the industry, without paying compensation to the existing profiteering owners.

A threat to profits

If seen as a threat to the profits of the bosses of the existing energy firms, steps would be taken to sabotage a publicly owned entity's chances of success.

The wholesale energy market, as it stands, sells electricity generated by renewables at the same level as energy generated by expensive gas power plants. This is the source of huge profits for energy producers, and one reason why big oil companies hold large renewable energy portfolios. Truss has announced her intention to bring an end to this system. She would agree long-term price deals, locking in prices at historic highs. No wonder some energy bosses have voiced agreement!

A publicly owned company competing in the capitalist market would be compelled to engage in the same sorts of profiteering, or else lose out to its competitors. This is what has

compelled the Swedish government-owned company to maximise its profits from the windfarm in Wales.

Starmer's policies would leave the vast majority of energy companies' profits intact. The Tories' version of a 'windfall tax' takes 25% on the profits of oil and gas extractors operating in the North Sea, profits of the power station owners are exempt. This 'Energy Profits Levy' is set to raise roughly £5 billion. Labour's call only extends to backdating this and to close a loop hole, bringing in an extra £3 billion. This compared to the £170 billion excess profits the Treasury estimates are sloshing around in the energy industry.

Even a more thoroughgoing, permanent tax on energy companies would not be enough. Already firms take measures to avoid paying tax, and BP and Shell threatened to withhold investment when even the idea of the limited windfall tax was first being discussed.

Socialist planning

To have control over the energy industry, so that prices can be set at an affordable level and investment in clean energy production can be planned, it needs to be in public hands and under the democratic control and management of the working class. This will not be achieved by a competitor in the market, but requires the nationalisation of the vast majority of the industry – seizing the power stations, gas extraction facilities, windfarms and distribution networks without compensation for shareholders, except on the basis of proven need.

A nationalised energy industry would be able to distribute energy at cost price. But, faced with the immediate crisis, a government of any character with a publicly owned energy industry would be forced to buy wholesale gas and energy on the international market. Capitalist corporations, or capitalist states, selling on this market will demand a high price. This underlines the need for an international socialist solution to the crisis.

Wars, trade wars and economic sanctions – like those resulting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has driven the energy price crisis so deep – are an inevitable consequence of a profit-based system, organised as it is into competing capitalist nation states. International collaboration of socialist states, run in the common interests of the working class rather than the competing interests of rival capitalists, would mean the ability to pool resources to meet energy needs efficiently, affordably, and start to reverse global heating.

Join the fightback
JOIN THE SOCIALISTS
• Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join or call 020 8988 8777
• or text your name and postcode to 0761 818 206
to find out more about joining us today!

Students and cost of living – socialists fight back with striking workers

● Edge Hill, Ormskirk

We came across Socialist Students at freshers, and we immediately started participating with them. Very soon, we held our first campaign stall in Ormskirk town centre. We handed out a lot of leaflets, not only to students, but also workers.

At a Socialist Students stall in Liverpool, we campaigned on reinstating the night bus, for students who need to travel late at night. Many signed our petition, and listened to Socialist Students' ideas.

At a Liverpool Socialist Students meeting, 17 of us discussed our plans. We enjoyed participating in these opportunities, and came across new ideas and people.

We are trying to form an official Socialist Students society, so we can hold meetings and stalls on campus to talk to students about the issues that affect them. We are hope that our efforts will improve Edge Hill student life.

ANNANYA AND HENRY

● Bristol

Almost 50 people joined the first Socialist Students meeting of the year. It was even bigger than this time last year.

Many talked about the current strike wave, the importance of going down to picket lines to show solidarity, and the need to get organised to fight back against the cost-of-living crisis. Students have had enough and are ready to take action.

AMY SAGE

● Sheffield

A successful series of campaign stalls culminated in well-attended meetings at University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam.

Young people are sick of the Tories. They're also fed up with Sir Keir



Annanya and Henry from Edge Hill help Liverpool Socialist Students ALEX SMITH

Starmer constantly refusing to take the side of the workers and the students, and consistently not pledging to abolish tuition fees.

We've since had a subsequent meeting with representatives from the RMT and CWU educating young people on the value of joining a union and supporting striking workers. And Socialist Student members have visited picket lines, a climate change protest and the Enough is Enough rally.

NOAH EDEN

● Newcastle

Our first Socialist Students meeting focused on the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on students. Maintenance loans have not increased with inflation. And wages, housing and education are concerns for students too.

The meeting discussed the need for workers and students to fight back together, and for students to support striking workers. The meeting raised £45 to cover the costs of the leaflets we handed out at freshers, and sold £40 worth of socialist books.

PIPPA ROUS



Marching against council cuts in Gloucester as austerity began in 2010 CHRIS MOORE

These council cuts are “doomsday scenario”

Fight back for funds in South Glos and everywhere

DAN SMART SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE UNISON CHAIR

“Prepare for the worst”, the “vanishing council”, a “Doomsday scenario”, local senior council figures have warned. After over a decade of public services being pushed to breaking point, another, even more devastating, round of austerity is well underway.

The Tory asset strippers have left an £18 billion black hole in public finances. Now many councils have budget gaps – £58 million in Liverpool and £85 million in Wakefield.

In South Gloucestershire Council, where I’m a social worker, £23 million in crippling cuts are due to

be made. The local authority says redundancies are likely, and it can’t rule out cuts to vital services.

Increasing demand on services, particularly social care, means much more funding is desperately needed. In South Gloucestershire, £8.5 million a year is required. There are also inflationary pressures, increasing running costs at the council by £10-15 million, as well as energy price increases, and more.

The recent pay offer for local government staff is not backed up with any additional funds from central government. South Gloucestershire estimates this will cost it another £6.4 million.

Kwasi Kwarteng has ignited this tinderbox, choosing to subsidise energy company profits, and instead of increasing public spending. Nevertheless, local councillors have a responsibility to stand up for staff and communities.

They should firstly use reserves

and borrowing powers, which are substantial for some authorities, to set budgets based on residents’ needs. This would give time to build a mass campaign, linking with other local authorities, to demand additional funds from central government. The 65 Labour-controlled councils in England could take this route.

Even one council initially taking this approach, protecting the needs of local people, would gather huge support. It is now a choice between this, or condemning thousands of people they represent to destitution.

As an alternative to the vast majority of Tory, Labour, Lib Dem and Green councillors who have failed, the Socialist Party will stand anti-cuts candidates in the local elections, as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

● See ‘TUSC prepares for 2023 cost-of-living elections’ on page 7

Leeds – more people want to fight back



Just some of the events where the Socialist newspaper was sold in the past week...

A sign of the times was the number of people passing by shouting in support: “Get the Tories out” and “Fuck the Tories”.

There were two ways people approaching our Socialist Party campaign stall reacted to the Tories ‘budget for the rich’. A few were in

despair as to how we were ever going to get rid of the Tories. But more people felt that they needed to do something.

Many see the current strike wave as key to pushing Truss back, and agreed with our call to back up the strike wave with a working-class political alternative.

IAIN DALTON LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY



Packed out Sheffield socialist meeting

ALEX BROWN SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

The Socialist Party called a public meeting in the days after the Sheffield Enough is Enough rally.

We gave out piles of leaflets to advertise our meeting, and 54 people turned up, packing out the meeting room – the biggest Sheffield Socialist Party meeting in years. 13 of these joined the Socialist Party in the last two months.

Three school students were at their first meeting. And a third of the meeting were not members of

the Socialist Party... yet. 60% of the room we didn’t know three months ago.

Debate

There was a lively debate, and this carried on informally in the pub afterwards.

The Socialist Party is clear, we must fight for public ownership of energy companies and other key industries. And to win, we need coordinated strike action, a new mass workers’ party to fight for our class, and a socialist alternative to capitalism.

Come to a Socialist Party meeting near you

The Socialist Party has regular meetings in towns and cities across the country.

If you would like to participate: ● Go to socialistparty.org.uk ● Or text 07761 818206 with your name and postcode.

Why I’m a Socialist Party member

Capitalist parties defend cuts and block nationalisation

STEPHEN BROWN OXFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

The Socialist Party, standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), has proposed a people’s budget for Oxford. This would mean no cuts and, instead, meet the needs of the community and the environment – a budget that provides genuinely affordable homes and subsidised transport.

But the other parties, including the Lib Dems and Greens, rallied round to defend the Labour council. ‘Be sensible’ was their cry – a reminder that it’s all one big club, and we’re not in it.

There are more food banks in this country than McDonald’s outlets. But ‘be sensible’.

Pensioners will be freezing to

death because they can’t heat their homes this winter. But ‘be sensible’.

On one hand, the Greens tell us that our grandchildren won’t be able to breathe, and the planet will be on fire. But ‘be sensible’, they say.

The last three years has seen the biggest increase in wealth among millionaires and billionaires in history, while our wages have plummeted. Instead of taxing the rich to take some of that money back, the Tories have cut their taxes.

The time has come to put people before profit. The time has come to renationalise the utility companies, railways and the health and care system.

And where has this ‘sensible’ approach from all the capitalist parties got us? It has brought us to the brink of climate catastrophe and impending economic collapse.

We should be demanding more. We need a new mass workers’ party to take on all the Tories, whether their rosettes are blue, red or yellow. And we need a socialist programme to save the earth from the greed-driven climate and cost-of-living emergency.

Join the fightback JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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



SALLY GRIFFITHS

Why I joined the Socialist Party

Now is the time to fight back

MELANIE DENT READING SOCIALIST PARTY

Labour no longer represents the working class. Now is the time for workers and those forced into hardship to fight back.

The solidarity shown for the strike waves is welcome. But still workers need the leadership and support denied to them by Labour.

The politicians in power didn’t get us through the worst of the Covid situation. It was ordinary

working people. They are now saying: “Enough is enough”.

Socialists need to show support and solidarity, and present socialism as a credible alternative to capitalist chaos.

People are fighting for more than decent wages. They’re fighting for the right to be able to afford to eat, feed their families and keep them warm. Capitalist greed is behind the rising cost of living and energy price hikes.

The Tory leadership is becoming

even more inept. I am fed up with the status quo and Tories thinking they know best when they have exactly no compassion or empathy with what it’s like to struggle.

I had heard of the Socialist Party’s predecessor, Militant. I reawakened my interest during lockdown through pro-Corbyn Facebook groups.

I met Socialist Party members at a campaign stall in Reading, and decided to go to a meeting. The rest is history.



RAGANAN

Freeze rents and stop evictions

NICK AUVACHE CAMDEN AND HARINGEY SOCIALIST PARTY

The cost-of-living crisis is crippling tenants. Housing Campaigners gathered outside the department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on 6 October to deliver a letter demanding a freeze on social rents and service charges, plus a new eviction ban.

The Social Housing Action Campaign (SHAC) campaign organised the protest with others. The action was supported by Unite the Union and the Unite housing workers’ branch.

Even if the government ‘limits’ the rise in social rents to 5%, as is likely, many tenants and residents would still find this unaffordable. They are also angry that there is no cap on service charges, and that shared ownership rents remain linked to RPI inflation – likely to produce rises upwards of 15%. As well as homeowners, the interest rate hike also affects tenants, as social landlords rely heavily on borrowing.

Socialist Party member Paul Kershaw, speaking for Unite housing workers, said at the protest: “There

is little benefit in winning good pay awards for our members, if the money is immediately lost to landlords. The national average of income spent on rent is around 30%, but among our members it is already exceeding 50% in some cases. This makes rising rents an important issue for our members and our union.”

The protesters warned the Tory minister that if their demands are not met, they will take their message to the trade union movement when delegates gather for the annual Trades Union Congress (TUC) this month. Shac representatives will be speaking from the platform of the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) rally (see page 16).

- Freeze rents and extend the freeze to service charges
- Reintroduce the ban on eviction proceedings for rent arrears
- Provide government funding to councils to ensure there is no negative effect on housing quality or services to tenants. Support to housing associations and registered providers should be provided on a means-tested basis

Southampton TUSC forum - Striking workers angry at Labour’s failures

NICK CHAFFEY AND MAGGIE FRICKER SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

There is widespread disappointment on the picket lines of Labour’s failure to support the strikes, demand for nationalisation or push for a general election. There has been a wave of expulsions in Southampton, and many on the left have left Labour.

30 people attended the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) meeting on 4 October – the first in a countrywide tour (see page 7) – after we circulated the TUSC letter to union branches, activists and socialist organisations. Dave Nellist, TUSC national chair, kicked off the meeting, speaking via Zoom because of the rail strike.

After our speakers – Declan Clune

from Socialist Party, RMT, and Southampton TUC secretary; and Mabel Wellman People’s Pride organiser and Unite member – we discussed housing, NHS, cost of living and the strikes. Local strikes have won, and there is a rise in trade union membership and activity.

We are preparing to stand candidates for the general election, and continuing to build the campaign and support in the local unions, picket lines and community. Plans are in place to stand in next May’s local elections, where the full council is up, and a by-election. As soon as the date is announced for it, we will convene a meeting to organise our work.

● See more on page 7



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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

Help fund the fightback!

DONATE TODAY

socialistparty.org.uk/donate



Tram drivers begin 53 days of strike over shocking pay rates

NICK HART
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Conductors and drivers on the West Midlands Metro tram line are set to begin a 53-day programme of strikes between now and early January. The first walkout of workers on the line, which runs between Wolverhampton and Birmingham, takes place on Saturday 15 October.

Central to the dispute are the shockingly low rates of pay. Drivers who have responsibility for navigating through busy pedestrian areas of Birmingham city centre

and Wolverhampton main roads are paid just £21,537 a year. Conductors receive the same rate for being the public face of the network and ensuring passenger wellbeing.

Unite the Union has 176 members working for the publicly owned West Midlands Metro, and has demanded a minimum £27,000 salary to bring these workers in line with other similar jobs in passenger transport. The resounding 82% yes vote for strike action shows the willingness of workers not just to defend their livelihoods but to make up for lost time after years of low pay.

Strikes win barristers a pay rise

Criminal barristers in England and Wales have voted in a ballot to accept a 15% pay rise. Strikes began in June and were escalated to indefinite action in September. That action is now suspended.

The government has promised that the 15% rise in fees for government-funded defence work will also apply to 60,000 cases in the massive backlog.

New justice secretary Brandon Lewis has also offered additional payments for court preparation work that barristers were not being properly paid for.

As part of the campaign, barristers have helped expose how the criminal justice system is falling apart due to a chronic lack of funding. Cuts to legal aid had meant a 35% drop in pay.

Kirsty Brimelow, chair of the Criminal Bar Association (CBA), described the offer as: "An overdue

start. Its acceptance by barristers is on the basis that it is implemented – otherwise the CBA will ballot again to lift the suspension of action."

Other workers will learn the lesson from this dispute: striking works, especially with such a weak and divided Tory government.



IAN DALTON

Müller factory workers fight for family time



ADAM GOULCHER

ADAM GOULCHER
GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

HGV drivers and Unite members at Müller's Stonehouse factory in Gloucestershire have been on strike for seven weeks, three days a week, over new rosters that destroy family time by imposing weekend working.

Due to management intransigence, the strikers are to take eleven

consecutive days of strike action from 19 to 29 October. This escalation aims to force Müller management to negotiate.

● Strike funds are essential to maintain the pressure. Solidarity donations from union branches and individuals can be made to:

Account name SW/8164
S/C 60-83-01

Account number 20180722

Iran protests: 'We are not afraid anymore – we will fight'



Protests have continued and escalated in Iran as the movement sparked by the death of Mahsa Amini entered a fourth week in defiance of a bloody crackdown. On 8 October, workers went on strike and schoolgirls marched following the deaths of other protesters. One banner said: "We are not afraid anymore. We will fight."

Videos have spread on social media of brave young women inside and outside schools and universities swinging their headscarves around their heads, chanting, and confronting officials, including the president when he visited a university in Tehran. Protesters have also been calling for the end of the regime. Many students have been arrested, sitting in prison cells while police officers and soldiers patrol schools and universities!

The youth have been joined by workers, including some which have been involved in the series of struggles since 2017-18 on economic and social issues. Teachers, bus drivers, truck drivers and oil workers have all taken strike action and appeals are being made for others to join in. A call for a 48 hour general strike could bring the opposition together and show in practice the regime's isolation.

The protest movement has shown again how the working class, youth and the oppressed can be united in struggle, and the potential power they have, when they are. From experience,

many workers know that the regime should not be simply replaced by another gang of exploiters or figureheads, maintaining the theocracy and capitalism. An independent workers' struggle is needed to fight for a socialist alternative.

To achieve this, workers, young people and the oppressed need their own party that combines the fight for democratic demands and an end to oppression, with a call for a government of representatives of workers and the poor that carries out a programme of nationalisation and workers' control over the key sectors of the economy which, for example, the Haft Tappeh workers have raised.

A workers' party with such a socialist programme could unite the struggles to fight to end the undemocratic theocratic rule in Iran and the economic catastrophe of capitalism, replacing it with a society run in the interests the working class instead of a tiny elite, giving youth a future and bringing an end to oppression and exploitation for good.

● See 'Iran: Mahsa Amini's death triggers revolutionary youth movement' at socialistparty.org.uk

Trade unionists protest PPE company in support of victimised workers

JON DALE
MANSFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

Trade unionists, including RMT and Communication Workers Union (CWU) members, held a protest in Hull on 7 October against victimisation of Sri Lankan trade unionists and exploitation of workers in the PPE supply chain.

Hull Trades Union Council organised the protest after hearing from two sacked Sri Lankan workers, via Zoom. Also on the protest were members of Nottinghamshire Trades Union Council, Doctors in Unite and the Socialist Party. At the Ansell site in Hull, leaflets explaining the reasons for the protest were given to workers there. They were assured of trade union solidarity for their working conditions.

Ansell, an Australian multinational corporation, makes rubber gloves and other safety PPE. Its sales rocketed during the Covid pandemic. Profits rose

57% in 2021 to US\$246 million. These profits come from massive exploitation of workers in its rubber plantations and factories.

At its Sri Lankan factory, a striking worker was shot dead by police in 1994. Ansell then refused to recognise the workers' union, the Free Trade Zone General Services Employees Union (FTZGEU). More agency workers were brought in replacing workers with permanent contracts. Machines were sped up and workers were even refused time to go to the toilet. This is also a warning of the threat from the Tories' plan to set up 'Freeports'.

In 2013, the FTZGEU branch president was attacked and hospitalised. He complained to the police, and alleged company involvement. Six months later he was himself charged in connection with the assault and suspended from work. Workers went on strike, staying out for 45 days.

Ansell sacked all its 281 workers, only reinstating them two years later (without continuity of service) after

pressure from Australian trade unions. But eleven union leaders in the factory were not taken back.

Since then, an international campaign has demanded Ansell reinstate the victimised trade unionists with compensation and union recognition. On the same day as the Hull protest, Australian trade unionists rallied outside Ansell's head office in Melbourne.

Trade unionists in Britain can find out if their employers buy Ansell's PPE and ask how this squares with the Modern Slavery Act. UK companies pressuring Ansell on this issue can help the campaign for reinstatement of the sacked trade unionists. However, other PPE manufacturers also have a terrible record of exploitation.

The vital PPE industry should not be run for private profit. The whole supply chain, from plantation to end user, needs democratic planning to meet the needs of all workers. That needs public ownership of the industry and socialist change across the globe.



PHOTOS: MICK WHALE

SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

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- Mikhail Gorbachev: His life and the times he lived in

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the Socialist

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TUC MUST COORDINATE THE STRIKES

300,000

That's how many nurses in the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) are balloting over whether to take strike action, for the first time ever in the RCN's 106-year history.

If they vote for action they will join 115,000 postal workers, more than 50,000 rail workers, and 40,000 workers in BT who have been taking national strike action.

Add to those the staff in dozens of colleges and universities currently participating in action. Then there are the countless bin workers, bus drivers, factory workers and more who are taking localised strike action.

And now public sector workers in schools and the civil service are balloting, and other health unions could follow.

No wonder the strikes are popular! They involve massive numbers of people and are inspiring millions more. Everyone is struggling and everyone needs a pay - or benefits, or pension - rise.

Once on the picket line, workers,

many of whom have never done this before, are starting to feel their potential strength. Rail strikers have told our members how they now see that their strike is lifting the sights of others, giving other workers confidence.

Royal Mail bosses are digging in, tearing up national agreements, and so rightly the CWU has stepped up the action with 19 days running into December. That's why the Socialist Party calls for the unions on the front line to launch big public appeals for a strike fund.

But workers should also be confident that gains can be made, such as the 15% pay rise criminal barristers have won.

And nothing should give workers the confidence more than seeing this anti-working class Tory government of the rich in meltdown. The strike wave is playing a big part in their weakness and in forcing U-turns. Now is the time to press home our advantage!

"We should all go out together" is probably the most common thing said to Socialist Party members when we visit strikers on the hundreds of picket

lines that now stretch across England and Wales.

Strike action has been coordinated to a degree by the unions taking part - on 1 October four rail unions coordinated with each other and with the strike in Royal Mail.

But the Trades Union Congress (TUC), which involves the leaders and delegates from all the trade unions, and which meets from 18 October in its annual congress, has a huge responsibility. The popularity of the strikes shows the union leaders have authority - now they must use it!

Coordinate the action so we can all strike together, not only to win the pay rises we desperately need, but to deliver the killer blow to this Tory government. The TUC should also coordinate a mass appeal for a strike fund.

The National Shop Stewards Network is holding a pre-TUC action summit on Sunday 16 October in Brighton, open to everyone who is striking, preparing to strike, or looking for a way forward. Come to add to the pressure on the leaders to all strike together!

PAULA MITCHELL

nationalshop stewardsnetwork www.shopstowards.net

National Shop Stewards Network Pre-TUC Congress Action Summit

1pm Sunday 16 October
Holiday Inn, Brighton
in person or on zoom
ID: 885 2926 9348

ALL STRIKE TOGETHER!

Hundreds of thousands join the TUC-organised protest in March 2011, ahead of coordinated strikes to defend pensions later than year SENAN

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



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