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the Socialist

Issue 1200

27 October - 2 November 2022

formerly **Militant**

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- No more austerity
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Build a new mass workers' party

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HOW SOCIALIST PLANNING CAN RESOLVE PROFIT-FUELLED ENERGY CRISIS >>> p8-9

Sunak cannot resolve economic and political crises

A socialist solution is necessary

Socialist Party

WHAT WE THINK

The final days of the Truss-led Tory government revealed a deeper than ever, jaw-dropping level of crisis in the Tory party. Following the total collapse of Liz Truss's shortest ever Tory leadership, the party's MPs were again thrown back to looking for the least potentially disastrous new leader they could find.

Almost by default they ended up choosing Rishi Sunak, despite him having been rejected by the Tory party membership less than two months previously.

Boris Johnson, who had rushed back to Britain from holiday to canvass support, was unsurprisingly dismissed by most Tory MPs as too unreliable and too tainted, especially as he will soon be coming under further official scrutiny over the Covid partygate scandal. That didn't stop him from declaring that "this is simply not the right time", suggesting he will try again in the future, when a new Tory crisis develops.

Desperate for stability

A majority of Tory MPs, desperate to avoid an early general election, also saw Sunak as a safer option than the third contender, Penny Mordaunt. However, Sunak stands little chance of even initially being able to paper over the massive cracks in the parliamentary party. A number of Tory MPs have accused him of playing a role in bringing down Johnson and Truss - such as Christopher Chope who stated that Sunak will face an "ungovernable" parliamentary party.

Chope is among those Tories who would now prefer there to be a general election, in effect calling for the end of the Tories' 12 years in power - cutting shorter their present downward spiral. They hope that their party could recover some functionality during a period out of office.

Most Tory MPs, however, faced with losing their seats in a general election, want the government to continue to cling on. That might prove impossible, as the degree of meltdown is so great that an early general election could be forced on them.

Rather than waiting to see, the trade union movement can make sure that the election takes place as soon as possible, by organising coordinated, stepped-up action.

This is now even more urgent given the colossal austerity drive being planned by this latest incarnation of Tory government. Despite the current high inflation, rising interest rates and the sink towards recession, it wants to inflict drastic public service cuts and higher taxes, with the aim of appearing to be 'fiscally



There are vast sums of money in the hands of the rich. The richest 250 people in Britain alone are estimated to have total wealth of over £700 billion, and every year they collectively become richer



New PM Rishi Sunak appeared on this year's Sunday Times rich list, his wealth is an estimated £730 million HM TREASURY/CC

responsible' in the eyes of the capitalist finance markets.

The Tories will be hoping that some memory of Sunak's furlough scheme and other assistance during the Covid pandemic will stick. But for them, that was only a temporary necessity. Sunak is a mega-rich former banker, and has been a key player in a Tory government that has acted to protect the interests of the rich.

The mini-budget of Truss and Kwarteng, handing out billions in tax cuts mainly to the rich, had the effect of worsening the economic position of British capitalism, due to the reaction of the markets. Their debacle has added to the Covid pandemic and the Ukraine war as justifications that the Sunak government will give for cutting the living standards of a majority of people further to the bone. But the economy was in dire straits before Covid, the war and the Truss episode, and Sunak's cuts will provide no solution for it. In fact they will worsen the coming recession.

A day before Sunak was imposed as Tory leader, former governor of the Bank of England Mervyn King was interviewed on the BBC's Kuensberg programme, and called for a government that will be honest about the need for "a reduction in our national standard of living." He elaborated:

"We may need to confront the need to have significantly higher taxes on the average person. There isn't enough money there amongst the rich."

The money is there

Wrong: there are vast sums of money in the hands of the rich. The richest 250 people in Britain alone are estimated to have total wealth of over £700 billion, and every year they collectively become richer.

King was partially right though, when he countered Tory chancellor Jeremy Hunt's assertion that "no government can control markets". King said: "Markets are not in charge, governments and central banks are". Yes: anathema to Mervyn King, a socialist government, backed by the majority of the working class and opposed to the capitalist markets, would be able to overrule them - and the banks too, which would be nationalised. The spreading of democratic socialism internationally would allow that over-ruling to be maintained.

Workers in Britain clearly need such a socialist government, and many rightly realise that a Labour government won't act in that necessary way. Kuensberg also interviewed Labour leader Keir Starmer, who repeated points he made at

Labour's conference along the lines that a Labour government will be faced with "tough choices" and won't be able to "do some of the things we want to do".

None of the pro-capitalist politicians have any solution on the economy that will improve or even preserve the living standards of ordinary people.

Yet money doesn't vanish into thin air. Most of the pounds being collectively lost by the working class and middle class are ending up in the bank accounts of the super-rich in Britain and globally. This is done through many routes of exploitation: the erosion of real wages, interest taken on loans, super-profits from energy production, the fortunes made by gaming tycoons, among many others. This is capitalism; and the reason why a socialist alternative is more vital than ever.

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After the TUC: Trade union leaders must mobilise to boot out the Tories

ROB WILLIAMS
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL WORKPLACE AND TRADE UNION ORGANISER

Perhaps as never, or at least rarely, before - this year's conference of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) took place in the middle of stormy events. In particular, the meltdown in the Tory party and the rising strike wave provided the backdrop to what is normally one of the most sedate union conferences.

Just minutes after the end of the congress, as delegates were walking to the train station, news of Truss' resignation flashed up on their phones. On the other hand, the last day of congress started with many delegates joining a Communication Workers Union (CWU) picket in Brighton city centre, to stand in solidarity with striking Royal Mail and BT workers.

Some of the most important speeches of the week took place not at the conference rostrum but at the strike solidarity rally, as a number of union leaders reported on the action being taken by their members, or on-going strike ballots.

On the Sunday before the TUC, the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) held its annual pre-congress event, this time billed as an action summit, to set out its main demands for the congress.

The need for coordinated strike action dominated congress. The NSSN has raised the need for the TUC and the unions to mobilise for the TUC lobby of parliament on 2 November. Incredibly, it took until the very end of the congress for the lobby to be properly emphasised. It didn't even figure in the speeches of retiring TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady, or her successor Paul Nowak!

Yet that event must become a vital



Striking Coventry bin workers march on June TUC demo TOMMY LIVERPOOL

platform to bring together workers with all those furious at the Tories. It should now be a "Tories Out" demonstration. It does seem that unions like the rail union RMT, and Unite, are now correctly pushing it in this way. Mick Lynch said: "Why are we lobbying MPs, the very people who are attacking our members? We need to mobilise against them."

The fight to kick out this Tory government, whoever leads it, is

inextricably bound up with workers' strikes against the cost-of-living crisis, especially the national action on the rails, Royal Mail and BT, and the impending public sector pay struggles.

Mass coordinated action is the way to face down the Tories, not as O'Grady stated, in response to the threat of more anti-union laws: "If the government wants to pick a fight, we're ready - see you in court!"

Unite workers' action to kick all the Tories out

Join us at the TUC lobby of parliament

2pm, 2 November

How to fight for a workers' alternative at a general election?

Most workers can clearly see which organisations are most effectively fighting our corner. The trade unions, by organising strikes of hundreds of thousands with the prospect for action bringing together millions, have shown workers' potential collective power.

No wonder the 'Enough is Enough' rallies, spearheaded by trade union leaders Mick Lynch and Dave Ward at the forefront of national strikes, have had enthusiastic support.

Most workers are also desperate to get the Tories out too. And the opportunity to do so at a general election looms. But Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer's warnings of "tough choices" signal cutbacks and wage restraint under a Labour government too.

Workers need representatives prepared to fight our corner, who vocally back workers prepared to strike to defend their pay, terms and conditions, and reject the false arguments for continued austerity and real-terms pay cuts. Even a small number of MPs backed by the

trade unions and standing independently of Labour could have a transformative effect.

That's why Socialist Party members are helping to organise a series of public discussions, hosted by the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, around the country titled "Enough is enough: but what do we do at the ballot box?"

The meetings are to bring together trade unionists, community campaigners and socialists, to start the discussion about how to fight for a workers' alternative in the event of a general election.

• For more info about a meeting near you visit: tusc.org.uk



ARE WE HEADING FOR A GENERAL STRIKE?

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

TUC lays out how rich get richer – We need more than just workers on the board

DAVE GORTON

NSSN COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

If pay had kept up with shareholder dividends between 2008 and 2019, the average worker would be £16,400 better off. This is the finding from a new Trades Union Congress (TUC) report 'Companies for People: How to make business work for workers'.

Since the 2007-08 economic crash, shareholder pay-outs have soared £440 billion above inflation, while wages have grown £510 billion less than inflation. The share of profits allocated to dividends, rather than reinvestment or salaries, rapidly increased from 16% in 1987 to 52% in 2018. It fell during the pandemic but is now rising sharply again, reaching 41% last year.

Royal Mail claims postal strikes are costing it £1 million a day, and plans job cuts to offset the 'losses', but they have already paid out over £330 million this year to shareholders!

UK energy retailers have paid shareholders more than £23 billion in the last ten years. The UK's largest train operator, FirstGroup, handed its shareholders £500 million in December 2021.

It's clear that not all are suffering. Median chief executive pay is up on pre-pandemic levels. The pay of the CEOs of Britain's biggest companies surged by 39% in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. Median pay for a FTSE 100 CEO increased from £2.46 million in 2020 to £3.41 million in 2021, 109 times the median UK full-time worker.

Unfortunately, the TUC's response is woefully inadequate. It calls for a modernisation of company law "so



Royal Mail workers in Cardiff CARDOFF SOCIALIST PARTY

£440bn shareholder payouts have risen **£440bn** above inflation since 2007-08

that boardrooms serve the interests of all stakeholders in how they manage the firm, and so they are required to focus on long-term company success as their primary aim".

The primary aim of capitalist bosses is maintaining or boosting profits, typically by driving down workers pay, terms and conditions. The interests of workers and the capitalist bosses are at odds!

The TUC puts forward "a requirement for elected worker directors to comprise one-third of the board at companies with more than 250 staff", failing to explain how having a minority of seats on a board would persuade bosses to forego profits in favour of pay rises.

Demands for stronger pay bargaining rights and making businesses responsible for employment rights in their supply chain are laudable.

£510bn workers wages have fallen **£510bn** below inflation since 2007-08

A primary way of achieving this is through workers collectively organising in their trade unions.

But the TUC should be arguing for the policies of its member unions. The Communication Workers Union has policies calling for renationalisation of Royal Mail and BT, and transport union RMT calls for renationalisation of the railways.

Nationalisation would take the ownership of these companies out of the hands of the bosses, to be run democratically by the working class, including elected representatives of the workers in the industries themselves.

This is the way to ensure services can be run genuinely in the interests of workers and service users. And a crucial step in ending the further obscene accumulation of wealth by the already rich.

More women forced out of work to care at home – Fight for flexible, free childcare

CORINTHIA WARD

BIRMINGHAM NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

At a time of record high job vacancies in the UK, reaching more than 1 million in August, growing numbers are dropping out of work to meet caring responsibilities. Of the 1.75 million people having to give up work, 84% are women.

The number of women not working to look after family has risen by 5% in the past year, a reversal of the trend of the last three decades, according to figures from the Office for National Statistics.

A big factor in women dropping out of work is the cost of childcare. Against the backdrop of a cost-of-living crisis, on average working parents in England spend 65% of wages on childcare. In London this is even worse, rising to 71%. The UK has the second most expensive childcare in the world.



FREEMIC/DILLER/CC

The Labour Party has pledged to extend parents' right to request flexible working from day one of employment, something currently only available after six months, as their answer to tackling the problem. But the right to 'request' is different to being 'entitled to' flexible working.

Many parents have requests turned down and, of mothers who do work flexibly, 86% report facing discrimination as a result, according to campaign group Pregnant then Screwed. Labour's policies are woefully inadequate to deal with the issues.

The average cost of full-time nursery fees for a child under the age of two is £274 per week in England, but the average take-home pay of a working adult is £418. Flexi-time is not much use if the cost of childcare is so unaffordable.

The real solution is to demand publicly funded, free, flexible,

high-quality nursery and childcare services - under the democratic control of elected committees of parents and childcare workers.

A flexible childcare network should be available from birth and include pre and after-school, and holiday care. To guarantee quality of care, all those working in the childcare sector should be fully qualified and paid a real living wage.

Alongside the right to flexible parental and carers' leave on full pay, it would massively support families to have a work-life balance which suits them. A shorter working week, with no loss of pay, would allow all parents more quality time with our children.

Come and discuss at **SOCIALISM 2022** tickets and info at socialism.org.uk

Unsafe, understaffed, underfunded and underpaid: Huge number of NHS workers balloting for action

HOLLY JOHNSTON

GMB REP IN THE NHS

The health union ballots are now in full swing. Each union is recommending members vote 'yes' to strike.

What is clear is that the appetite for action on pay among NHS staff has strengthened, and the unions have responded.

Many staff that have never considered striking before are now voting for it. Workers are making the link between constantly working unsafe, understaffed shifts in an underfunded service, and pay erosion and the cost-of-living crisis affecting us all. We see colleagues leaving at an alarming rate, as they have little incentive to stay.

The campaign 'NHS Workers Say NO' is calling for a general election and for coordinated strike action across all sectors to push the Tories out altogether, as does the Socialist Party.

The outcome of the ballots will no doubt result in strike action in the NHS, adding to the thousands of workers taking action across the UK.

- Unite and GMB have completed their consultative ballots and will be moving to formal strike ballots, balloting in trusts with the highest turnouts, and all 15,000 of their ambulance service members. Unite have coordinated England with Scotland and Wales, and its ballot opens 26 October and closes 30 November. GMB opened on 24 October and finishes on 29 November
- Over 400,000 members of Unison are being balloted for action, from 27 October to 25 November
- 300,000 nurses in the Royal College of Nursing are being balloted for strike action currently. That ballot closes on 2 November and is coordinated with Scotland
- The Royal College of Midwives has completed its consultative ballot and is moving to a formal strike ballot on 11 November, which will run for four weeks



PAUL MATTSOON

● Biggest campaign ever

STEVE BELL

UNISON HEALTH SERVICE GROUP EXECUTIVE, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Unison's campaign among 400,000 workers will be its largest campaign ever, with phone-banking and text-cavassing, to ensure the anti-trade union thresholds are met. Health branches are gearing up to talk to their members, to ensure the widest possible turnout.

It will be a disaggregated ballot, which means that all NHS trusts in England have been written to, to inform them that Unison members are being balloted, to enable those areas that reach the threshold to take industrial action.

● Immense pressure on ambulance workers

GARETH BROMHALL

AMBULANCE SERVICE WORKER, SWANSEA

Emergency department wait times, and the immense pressure on the ambulance service, have become daily headlines - the sharp edge of the NHS crisis, that is arguably the most visible example of how underfunded, understaffed and undervalued our NHS has become.

Many colleagues see the pay offer as insulting, with some being offered as low as 4% in Wales under the Labour Welsh government, less than staff on the same grade are being offered outside of Wales.

The GMB union's indicative ballot in the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust delivered a 90% vote in favour of strike action.

It will be going for a full ballot, as will our colleagues in ten other ambulance services across England. The ballot of all ambulance staff, from call-handlers and dispatchers, to clinical and admin staff, opened on 24 October and runs till 29 November.

Teachers and support staff ballot for action

STEVE SCOTT

NEU EXECUTIVE MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

'Yes!' Members of the National Education Union (NEU) delivered an incredible response in the union's consultation on whether they were willing to take strike action over pay: a 62% turnout with a 86% 'yes' vote for teachers, and a 68% turnout and 78% 'yes' vote for support staff.

The NEU is to press ahead with formally balloting members for strike action over the next twelve weeks. The trade dispute has been announced, and members are seeking a fully funded pay rise in line with RPI inflation.

The union is opening its ballot on 31 October, and running through to

13 January. This prolonged period of balloting could make it difficult to maintain momentum, but was deemed necessary by the executive of the union in order to ensure that the Communication Workers Union (CWU) strikes in Royal Mail do not impact the postal ballot to the point of the union not meeting the undemocratic thresholds set out by the government. At least 50% of eligible members need to vote in the ballot with at least 40% of eligible members voting in favour of strike action.

We send solidarity to CWU members and wish them a speedy resolution to their dispute. It's ridiculous that trade unions are required by law to hold postal ballots when the likes of members of the Tory party, when

electing their leader, and shareholders of companies, can vote electronically. This is just one of the anti-trade union laws that should be abolished.

The union is also balloting members in sixth-form colleges, and that ballot is running from 18 October to 11 November, avoiding a lot of postal disruption. This will allow members in these settings to take action before the Christmas break. They had an amazing result in their indicative ballot, a 76.6% turnout and 97% support for strike action, and are likely to smash through the thresholds.

For the officers and reps of the NEU, maintaining momentum and delivering a postal ballot over the Christmas break, and through CWU strike action, with the risk of lost ballots, will

be tough. Districts need to do all they can to ensure members vote.

We need a strong leadership to publicly meet with members, reps and officers to ensure as high a turnout as possible.

Socialist Party members on the executive of the union have pushed for a commitment to a programme of escalating action, which will be necessary if the government doesn't listen to our demands. This means that rather than one-day protest strikes, the union would be showing the government that members are serious about wanting a fully funded pay rise!

The road ahead will be long, but members are resolute to win, get the pay rise they deserve and ensure that schools are funded properly.

Vote 'yes' for action in the civil service

KATRINE WILLIAMS

PCS MEMBER

PCS union members have seen our wages cut in real terms by over 20% since 2010, due to government pay restrictions. On top of this, we now face a cost-of-living crisis of epic proportions. This year's paltry pay limit is 2-3%, compared to a current RPI inflation rate of 12.6%.

The union is balloting its 150,000 civil service members for strike action in support of a 10% pay claim and to defend jobs. The ballot closes Monday 7 November, but ballot papers need to be posted by the end of October to make sure they arrive in time.

Socialist Party members in PCS are working hard to get members to vote - it's vital we clear the Tory

anti-union 50% turnout threshold. We are calling for a massive 'yes' vote to defend jobs, improve pay and protect pensions.

The Tory government is weak and divided, and no matter who leads it, there will be no gain for our members. Now is the time to act. We need to join with the other unions taking action. We need, wherever and whenever possible, to strike together

to win for members, as part of a strategy of both targeted and all-members' action.

● PCS members in the courts are currently taking strike action from 22 to 30 October over a new 'Common Platform' computer system. This is supposed to allow court staff access to case information, but trials show it has increased working hours and stress levels.

Unison must fight Tories' eye-watering cuts with national action!

APRIL ASHLEY
UNISON NEC MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Unison's national executive council (NEC) met to discuss its campaign to fight the worst cost-of-living crisis in decades, as the strike wave across the country continues to intensify.

Unison members are furious about low pay as they sink further below the poverty line, and reports of pay campaigns across the different sectors and nations were debated. There are current pay ballots in the energy sector and Food Standards Agency, as well as the Scottish local government strike in the summer, and in higher education.

The NEC discussed details of the upcoming NHS industrial action ballot and the plans to get over the 50% threshold for strike action through a disaggregated ballot. We heard that NHS members were determined to fight, which has led to an increase of 10,000 members and 4,000 'pay volunteers'. Members were particularly responsive when pay and conditions were tied to understaffing, as staff are exhausted and under enormous pressure. Industrial action would be coordinated with the other trade unions in the NHS.

The meeting also debated the Truss mini-budget for the rich. The meeting was clear that the Tories would aim to pay for their £60 billion black hole with public sector cuts, and that we are potentially in for another decade of austerity. This was

confirmed by Jeremy Hunt, the third new chancellor in as many months, announcing there would be "eye-watering" cuts!

However, although it is clear that local government could once again face swingeing cuts leading to thousands of job losses, there were no plans put forward to build for national industrial action. Local branches could again be left to fight alone.

However, Socialist Party members on the NEC pointed out that the National Education Union are able to ballot for national industrial action on funding cuts, and urged Unison to explore holding a national ballot and to coordinate any action with NEU in schools.

If Unison doesn't mobilise for national industrial action to fight the second round of austerity, local branches must coordinate action ourselves, by region, or where we can, as members cannot be left to fight alone.



Napo AGM: Fighting for probation's future

ADAM HARMSWORTH
NAPO NEC MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

This year's Napo AGM began days after members heard the result of the pay ballot, with two-thirds of members accepting a below-inflation deal. As reported in the Socialist ('Probation workers accept real-terms pay cut following absence of union lead' at socialistparty.org.uk), the probation unions' leaderships failed to make the call for a 'no' vote and back their members in a fight for decent pay.

General secretary Ian Lawrence stated that, unlike most industrial disputes at present, a strike by Napo members would go directly against the government. However, at the AGM we heard from Jo Sidhu, chair of the Criminal Bar Association, which recently achieved a pay rise through strike action against the government. The Tories are a foe that can be defeated, especially in the chaos they are in, and especially if unions strike together.

Throughout the conference,

members spoke about the horrendous consequences of low pay on probation. Recruitment and retention is dire, harmed further by trainee and newly qualified staff being overworked and thrown into difficult situations.

Rather than having any remedy to this, the government has planted new threats on the horizon, including the 'One HMPPS' project - a thinly disguised measure to make cuts in the prison and probation service.

Motions calling for a fight against 'One HMPPS' and for coordinated action to oppose anti-union laws passed almost unanimously. Jim Barton from the Ministry of Justice came to the AGM to defend One HMPPS. Barton was grilled by a furious audience on the plans, which members fear could wreck probation more than the reversed privatisation scheme. Throughout the discussion there were mutters across the room about going on strike to fight it.

That readiness to fight needs a strong lead from the top of the union.

Hull Stagecoach drivers in 12-week strike

KEITH AND JANET GIBSON
HULL SOCIALIST PARTY

On 7 October, Unite Stagecoach bus drivers in Hull went out on strike until 29 December, demanding £13 an hour.

As one worker explained, in the past 20 years pay has risen by a mere £4 an hour - an average pay rise of 20p an hour a year!

Unite leader Sharon Graham addressed the picket line at Foster Street bus depot, and was greeted with cheers. She explained how workers had created £72 million profit for the company last year, while profits of the new owner of Stagecoach, Deutsche Bank, are at £3 billion.

Stagecoach drivers in Hull are among the lowest paid in the country, earning £11.14 an hour. The company is deploying its workforce, including management, from other cities to drive buses through the picket line. Those from outside Hull are being put up at Hull's luxury hotel. No expense spared there then! This will not break the strikers resolve.

After a week, Unite entered into negotiations via ACAS. The bosses offered a two-year staged pay deal to

reach £13 an hour in 2023-4, but that was seen as an insult to this highly skilled workforce.

It is vital trade unions now fight for the demand for a £15-an-hour minimum wage, linked to inflation, as a base line for workers to enter pay negotiations. This would unite workers against company bosses who hope to isolate workers via city and regional pay deals.

And the unions should call for



PHOTO: KEITH GIBSON

nationalisation of public transport with democratic control by workers and users.

• Please send solidarity messages to Kris Allen, Unite branch secretary, krisa7352@gmail.com

• Send emails to eastmidlands.support@stagecoachbus.com asking the company to pay a decent wage.

• Tweet @stagecoachgroup: 'Stingy Stagecoach stop picking workers' pockets'

Delivery drivers take action



PHOTO: LEEDS SP

IAIN DALTON
LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

In the largest action taken by delivery drivers in one city yet, drivers in Leeds working for Deliveroo, Stuart/JustEat and UberEats took strike action from 5pm Friday 21 October until midnight Sunday 23 October.

Over twenty picket lines were mounted across Leeds. A WhatsApp

group organising drivers had over 500 striking drivers involved. It was also reported at the rally that around 200 drivers had struck on Friday night in Derby.

Drivers are demanding a minimum £5 for deliveries, as well as demanding an increase in mileage rates for Deliveroo and Stuart/JustEat and an increase in 'surge' rates at busy times on UberEats.

Amazon workers want action

The first ever ballot for strike action of Amazon workers in Britain has taken place, with a huge vote for action. GMB members at the Coventry Fulfillment Centre voted 99.3% in favour of strike action - but unfortunately failed to achieve the 50% turnout required by law by just three votes!

Undemocratic Tory anti-trade union laws are intended to stifle action, but they won't stop the anger of exploited workers who have been offered tiny pay 'raises' in a massive cost-of-living crisis. And the anger isn't just in Coventry either.

GMB officials have vowed to hold another ballot at Coventry in the near future.

MATT CAREY
FORMER AMAZON FC WORKER, BRISTOL

Liverpool dockers strike again

Nearly 600 Liverpool port workers are taking two more weeks of strike action over pay and jobs from 24 October to 7 November.

See socialistparty.org.uk 'Liverpool dockers speak to the Socialist' for an interview with Unite stewards about their action.

The workers have been subject to job threats, despite plans to expand the port. Unite has exposed that, despite the bosses' statements, the workers are being offered 10.2%, the real offer is around 8.2%, a real-terms pay cut.

UNITE MEMBER

Excellent result! It was confirmed in a meeting with Bart's Health Trust that linen workers employed by Synergy

will receive NHS pay and conditions. Although not being brought in-house at this stage, the trust is to make it a condition for those bidding for the linen and laundry contract that all workers are placed on NHS 'Agenda for Change' terms and conditions. This result is further proof that tenacious campaigning and the previous massive Serco workers' win, are changing the landscape of industrial relations in Bart's trust for the better!

• See 'Massive victory for Barts hospital workers' at socialistparty.org.uk



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSOON

Transport for London attacks on our pensions and terms and conditions

Hundreds of millions in further cuts outstanding

A LONDON TUBE WORKER

On 14 October, Transport for London (TfL) proposed two profound changes to our pensions, putting an end to the fallacy that 'No change was an option.' TfL's pension report is part of the funding agreement with the Conservative government.

It now seems that TfL's preference is to transfer us into the local government pension scheme, effectively washing their hands of any responsibility or risk.

The report is clear that any such transfer would be on the terms of the scheme we transfer into. This would mean a near-doubling of our contributions, with major cuts to future benefits. These include big reductions for taking our pension before the raised retirement

age of 65, CPI rather than RPI inflation measures, and career-average rather than final-salary used to calculate pensions.

Now that the game of words is over and TfL have laid their cards on the table, it's important that we act, and act quickly.

The TUC has organised a lobby of parliament on 2 November. It's imperative that we attend in huge numbers. The phoney war is over. Let's show solidarity against the attacks on our class.

And on 3 November, let's take strike action to show London Underground and the Conservative government that we will defend our pension, our jobs, and our terms and conditions in the face of Tory ideology and austerity. The government is weak, the Labour London mayor claims to be opposed to his own attacks on TfL! We need to fight now.



PHOTO: JAMES IVENS

RMT members strike and reballot

PAUL REILLY
FORMER RMT NEC MEMBER

The RMT rail union is rebalancing members working for Network Rail and fourteen train operating companies (TOCs), due to the draconian Tory anti-trade union laws, which require a reballot every six months.

The current government has announced that it will push through further restrictions, aiming to enforce minimum service requirements: effectively forcing workers to cross picket lines.

On Wednesday 2 November, Network Rail maintenance RMT members will commence seven days of action, in response to threats from the company that would mean thousands of job losses.

In addition, members in Network Rail operations will be taking three days of strike action on 3, 5 and 7 November, over continued attacks on terms and conditions, the imposition of new technology, and the lack of a decent pay offer.

The threats by the TOCs would see the closure of every ticket office, and attacks on station staff and train crew terms and conditions, including renewed attacks on the role of the guard.

The government has continued to fund the losses of the TOCs to the tune of over £120 million so far, on condition that the companies

agree to give the final say on any deal to the transport secretary. This has prevented the union from negotiating anything through the correct channels.

The only pay offer outlined so far has been an insulting 2% for this year and 1% for next year! Therefore, there will be two days of strike action on the TOCs on Thursday 3 and Saturday 5 November, alongside the action on Network Rail.

All Network Rail and TOC members must return their ballot papers and vote 'yes' to industrial action.

The companies and the government want to push through with every attack they've ever planned on our members, and destroy the industry as we know it. As we have said from the start, these attacks are not new. They're not due to the reduction of passengers during the Covid pandemic.

They are the latest step in decades of ideologically driven attacks on our industry, to maximise profit at the expense of workers and the public. That includes 13 years of Tony Blair's New Labour government failing to reverse the shambolic privatisation of the railways, and only bringing maintenance back in-house due to a series of fatal accidents!

The Tories are falling apart in front of our eyes. We have to fight to kick them out, and demand that Keir Starmer's Labour nationalises the railways - and not just as contracts expire.

Royal Mail and BT strikes

155,000 Communication Workers Union (CWU) members are continuing their strikes in Royal Mail and BT. Socialist Party members have supported the picket lines around the country. Royal Mail pickets have remained strong despite the escalating threats from bosses.

Mitcham, south London

Pickets still in good spirits. The announcement of job cuts has made them more determined.

APRIL ASHLEY



BT Coventry PHOTO: COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

Pocklington, east Yorkshire

Pickets complained about pay being in the wrong hands, and the shareholders being the cause of all this. Members seem pissed off that the CEO won't even negotiate, and that there's no scope for redundancies in many of the offices because there's already too much work.

We had interesting discussions about the universal service and the important role this plays in communities. Under the new terms and conditions, there would potentially be no cover for ill staff, and people would just have to go without a postie.

STEVE SCOTT



Pocklington Royal Mail PHOTO: STEVE SCOTT

Hull

There was solidarity in more ways than one on the Malmo Road picket line. A civil service union PCS rep visited the picket line. Supporters brought food and a gazebo to shelter pickets from the rain. Discussions ranged from the need to stand trade union worker candidates in the general election, to the call for nationalisation of mail under workers' control, the need for a strike fund, and banter and laughs.

JANET GIBSON



Swansea delivery office PHOTO: ALEC THRAVES

Grimsby

The turnout was the best I've seen at any of the pickets I've attended. Speaking to some of the posties, [CEO] Simon Thompson's threat has had the opposite to his intended effect, as there's a stronger determination to win the dispute. Lots of honking horns as well.

BILL WARD



Hackney Royal Mail PHOTO: HACKNEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Leicester

Despite the damp weather, spirits were high on the CWU picket line at Leicester Meridian Royal Mail centre. Well catered as well! Pizza oven, barbecue, samosas, brownies, tea and coffee!

STEVE SCORE

UCU strikes



PHOTO: DUNCAN MOORE

At the UCU Plymouth City College picket line (above), one learning support assistant reported to Duncan Moore: "I started working here after doing my masters to save some money. This month, after rent, bills and food, I saved £6.50!"

Over 70,000 university staff at 150 universities are set to strike after UCU members overwhelmingly voted 'yes' to strike action in two historic national ballots.

The results in both ballots saw the union deliver turnouts that beat the anti-union threshold. More than eight in ten of those who voted said 'yes' to strike action.

The union can now deliver strike action at practically every university in the UK.

Staff were balloted across two separate ballots: pay and working conditions, and cuts to pensions.

Get all the latest union news
nationalshop
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NSSN bulletin: shopstewards.net

HOW SOCIALIST PLANNING COULD RESOLVE THE PROFIT-FUELLED ENERGY CRISIS

NICK HART

SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Over the last few months, many working-class people have been staring at their rising gas and electricity bills, and sensing that something is fundamentally broken.

Why is the average household now paying twice as much as it was a year ago to keep the lights on? Is the war in Ukraine to blame?

While the tapering off of gas supplies from Russia has acted as a trigger for the current spike in energy markets, it has, in reality, only been one domino falling in a chaotic and underprepared capitalist global energy market.

Despite the huge increase in the price paid for gas and electricity by retail customers in Britain, the bulk of supply is still coming from the same sources – natural gas from the North Sea and Norway, along with wind farms, coal and nuclear plants,

and solar arrays based in the UK and France.

However, the EU countries, which previously imported 40% of their gas used for heating and electricity from Russia, have had to look for alternative sources due to the restriction of supply via the Nord Stream 1 pipeline. This has sparked a bidding war, driving the price of natural gas in Europe up more than 50% over the last year.

Gas only accounts for 38% of the UK's electricity production. But, under the current 'marginal pricing' system, producers of electricity from other sources, including renewables, are able to peg the price per unit they produce to the cost of power from a more-expensive gas plant. This has led to an extreme form of price gouging, which is estimated to have added up to £40 billion to electricity bills.

It's not true to say that there's

no thinking ahead in the current energy market. The buying of 'futures' – effectively reserving gas, oil and electricity months or years before they're delivered – is used by electricity companies in normal times to smooth out fluctuations in wholesale energy prices caused by anything, from changes in demand to weather conditions.

But, like many other necessities of life under capitalism, where an essential commodity such as gas is limited in supply, speculators will seek to profit. At the onset of the war in Ukraine, even before gas imports from Russia by European countries began to fall off, a trading frenzy in gas 'futures' was launched, adding to the stratospheric increases in wholesale prices paid by energy suppliers.

These additional

costs being passed on to consumers means that, even with bills being subsidised by the government, already over 6.7 million households are in fuel poverty in the UK. And bills will rise much further for those people, often on the lowest incomes, who are living in draughty homes or have special medical needs that require them to spend more than the widely quoted average 'cap' of £2,500 a year.

And now, after many of us making sacrifices in our day-to-day spending to keep up with our energy bills, there is the possibility that the lights may not stay on anyway! The National Grid has refused to rule out the possibility of rolling blackouts over the winter.

No wonder increasing numbers of workers are looking at the fundamentally unequal and unfair system and wondering what can be done to change it.

Keir Starmer's plans for a future Labour government to set up Great British Energy, a publicly owned company to produce renewable electricity in competition with the existing electricity generators, would still be subject to many of the same perverse incentives described above.

And any electricity produced by Great British Energy would still be sold via the same privately owned energy retailers that have paid out £200 billion in profits to their shareholders in the last 12 years!

Nationalisation

In contrast, Socialist Party members, on campaign stalls and elsewhere, have been raising the increasingly popular demand for full public ownership of the energy producers, suppliers and the transmission network. 66% of the UK public now support renationalising the energy companies.

How would this work in practice? One common argument against this form of nationalisation is that, with the total shares of companies in the UK energy sector listed on stock exchanges currently valued at £374 billion, buying out the current owners would be unaffordable and impractical.

That's why we say: not a penny more to the large shareholders and wealth funds that currently own the lion's share of the main players in the energy market. No compensation to the fat cats who have made money hand-over-fist since privatisation of the UK's energy network began with the sell-off of British Gas in 1986.

Naturally, small shareholders and pension funds should be compensated to avoid working and middle-class people losing out on income they are counting on for their retirement. However, a study undertaken earlier this year estimated that only 0.2% of shares in BP and Shell are held by pension funds!

Public ownership could deliver

savings to retail customers right away by removing the effective premium we currently pay on our bills to subsidise the profits of the energy sector – as well as the overheads of competition between different suppliers such as marketing, purchasing and duplication of administrative functions. Not to mention the £94 that has been added on to the bills of every energy customer to cover the cost of suppliers going bust in the last 15 months!

Democratic control

But importantly, socialist nationalisation wouldn't mean leaving the control of energy supply in the hands of capitalist politicians like Sunak, Starmer and Hunt, or unelected civil servants. Instead, it would involve the democratic input of working-class communities, trade union representatives of those working in the energy industry, and utilising skilled workers' technical knowledge of energy generation and transmission.

From here, a socialist plan for expanding energy production and capacity could be developed to ensure low-cost supply to households from clean, renewable sources. While large oil companies such as Shell currently reinvest as little as 5% of their profits in developing clean energy, socialists propose using the £900 billion currently held lying idle as cash reserves by big business to fund the rapid deployment of low-carbon technology that's desperately needed to combat the climate crisis.

It's clear that replacing fossil fuels such as gas, coal and oil in electricity generation, not to mention the roll out of heat pumps and electric vehicles, will require a massive upgrade to the infrastructure of the UK's electricity network. Currently, developers of new renewable energy projects are being told they may have to wait six to ten years to connect to the National Grid.

Part of the reason is that National Grid PLC, operating as a monopoly over the UK's core energy network but owned by private investment funds, is unwilling to pay for the additional substations needed to connect new wind, solar and tidal farms to the system. This is despite it making an operating profit of £4 billion last year!

Many of these new onshore wind and solar farms, not to mention forests and crops grown for biomass, are being developed as a result of what was previously farmland no longer being profitable for purely agricultural use, due to the low prices paid to farmers by food manufacturers. But, in an attempt to rally support among sections of the Tory right, Liz Truss proposed to ban solar farms on agricultural land, citing the need to improve Britain's food security.

Rather than waiting for

individual energy developers to come forward with proposals, a socialist plan of energy generation would take a comprehensive survey of underused brownfield and greenfield sites across the UK alongside potential locations for tidal and offshore wind. This could then be used to work out how to increase green energy production from a mix of sources, while seeking the democratic input of those living near new sites to minimise disruption to communities and nature.

Jobs and training

Workers in the oil and gas industry, worried about losing their jobs in a rapid transition to renewable energy, can have no faith in capitalism to safeguard their jobs, pay and conditions. But, as part of a socialist plan for energy, workers in the energy industry would have a vital democratic role in planning the future of the industry. New jobs and training opportunities, with trade union terms and conditions, in building and maintaining new infrastructure would be created.

Currently, 80% of the world's solar panels are manufactured in China, before being sent around the globe on ships powered by high-emission Heavy Fuel Oil. Developing factories to produce these panels, and other energy equipment, closer to where it will eventually be installed, rather than simply where labour is cheapest and most exploited, would reduce the carbon

footprint of replacing fossil fuels in the energy mix.

Both the shock to gas markets from the war in Ukraine and the rise in extreme weather events linked to climate change have shown the need to make energy networks more resilient, and also increase storage capacity. Currently, gas storage facilities across most of continental Europe are over 90% full, but suppliers are still anticipating major shortages this winter.

Capitalist ownership of energy production encourages lack of extra production capacity, due to the ability of electricity generators to charge more at times of high demand and low supply. Socialist planning would take into account the fact that solar, wind and other forms of renewable power can generate more or less electricity from day to day depending on the weather!

Developing technology

A socialist plan of production would allow energy supply to be coordinated in tandem with peak times for energy-intensive industries to smooth out demand, along with developing and scaling up the technology for hydrogen and battery storage that currently exists in outline to store excess electricity generated.

However, the need to phase out fossil fuels couldn't just be approached on a UK-only basis. The effect gas supply disruption in Europe has had across the world shows the need for an international approach to energy production and distribution.

That's why the potential

for the development of affordable, clean power that bringing the energy companies into public ownership would represent can only be fully realised by replacing the capitalist system that surrounds it as well. The owners of the energy sector would be unlikely to simply give up their share of the fat profits to be made from oil, gas and renewables because an act of parliament asked them to.

But a movement of working-class people, organised and determined to take the power off the capitalist class and bring about a socialist society, could take democratic ownership and control of the wealth and resources that currently exist in society, and that their own hard work has created over years.

The current cost-of-living squeeze, and the developing environmental catastrophe, is leading increasing numbers of workers and young people to question a capitalist system that can provide the energy for private space tourism but not to heat people's homes. If you agree that we need socialist change to tackle the energy crisis, then join the Socialist Party in fighting for it.

CAN A SUSTAINABLE SOCIALIST PLANNED ECONOMY COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE?

Come and discuss at
SOCIALISM 2022
London, 19-20 November
tickets and info at socialism.org.uk



PAUL MATTESSON



Disappointment, outrage and hope led me to the Socialist Party

SUE STATTER
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

My Labour Party membership is a story of disappointment. Except during the Jeremy Corbyn years, when I was proud to support a radical agenda, it has almost always been a tough place to be for a socialist. But it did feel like the only place to be for a long time.

The final straw for me, and over 200,000 members, was the election of Keir Starmer as leader. Since I left, he has "wiped the slate clean" of the pledges that got him elected. I have no regrets.

Outrage at the capitalist system in crisis, determined to extract the last penny from exploitation of working people and our planet.

Outrage at Unison leaders' defence of pay review bodies telling their members that moving back to collective bargaining would be 'dangerous, reduce our influence, and lead to an even smaller pay increase'. This ridiculous argument was used by Unison leaders to defeat a motion at the union's health sector conference this year. I was there and voted for the motion, despite being instructed by my region to vote against.

The last time I was this outraged was when I joined the poll tax demonstration in London 32 years ago. The Socialist Party, and the amazing



Unison members protesting against cuts

members in Sheffield branch, have given me hope that radical change is possible. It feels right to be here, fighting for what's right.

Do you agree?
JOIN THE SOCIALISTS
socialistparty.org.uk/join

WHAT'S THE ROLE OF A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY?

Come and discuss at
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Wales union rally shows we need to strike together

GARETH BROMHALL
SWANSEA TRADES UNION COUNCIL SECRETARY

100 trade unionists and community campaigners attended a rally hosted by Swansea Trades Union Council and Wales TUC, part of the 'We Demand Better' roadshow. Leading national trade unionists spoke alongside local union organisers.

Charlie Wells - Youth Fight for Jobs and the Socialist Party - highlighted the stark reality facing young people in the cost-of-living crisis, and

explored the challenges facing workers organising in hospitality and other precarious sectors.

I closed the rally, driving home the importance of coordinated union action. I finished by raising that Wales TUC should call a national demonstration in Cardiff.

This could draw together the strength of the trade union movement across Wales, and put pressure on the Welsh Labour government in Cardiff on pay and conditions in devolved areas, like health and

education. It would send a message to Westminster that the Welsh working class is on the march.

ARE WE HEADING FOR A GENERAL STRIKE?

Come and discuss at
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Bristol TUSC meeting says - we need voice for workers in struggle

AMY SAGE
BRISTOL SOCIALIST PARTY

At the Bristol Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) meeting on 19 October, Socialist Party member Sarah Sachs-Eldridge raised the urgent need for a working-class alternative to be put in place for the next general election to combat the cost-of-living crisis.

The National Education Union (NEU) is balloting its members over

pay (see pages 6-7). Sheila Caffrey - National Education Union (NEU) executive and Bristol Trades Union Council president - speaking in a personal capacity, highlighted the need for a political voice to support these workers, and others, in struggle.

Dan Smart, a social worker and member of public sector union Unison, talked about the funding crisis in local government. An alternative budget should prioritise services and people.

Socialist Party member Tom Baldwin quoted a Communication Workers Union (CWU) picket as saying of Keir Starmer's Labour Party: "It's better to get punched in the face once rather than twice, but we are sick of getting punched!"

• Come along to the TUSC tour - turn to page 3 or go to tusc.org.uk

CAN YOU FIGHT THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN ELECTIONS?

Come and discuss at
SOCIALISM 2022
London, 19-20 November
tickets and info at socialism.org.uk



Hackney library campaigners, including Brian (left), lobby the council

Growing fight to save Hackney libraries from Labour council cuts

BRIAN DEBUS
CHAIR OF HACKNEY UNISON, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Hackney Labour council's library restructure proposes just 34 full-time frontline posts, a reduction of 20, to cover seven libraries open between 55 and 64 hours a week. At any time there could be as few as two staff on duty. This takes no account of holidays, sick leave, training or emergencies.

The unions and staff view this as a slippery slope to temporary closures, or even the permanent closure of a library. It will mean less ability to assist the public, especially the more vulnerable who most depend on the free services that we provide. The total cut planned has already increased to £445,000.

Hackney Unison's consultative ballot has just concluded, with 72%, on a near 80% turnout, prepared to take strike action to prevent a massive cut to library jobs and services.

We lobbied the council cabinet on 24 October, when the library strategy was presented. But the council had already started the restructure before it was even discussed in cabinet, denying us the opportunity to challenge it.

Most councillors are unaware of the consequences of these cuts. Unison has invited all councillors to take

part in a briefing to hear our views. 15 have taken part so far.

Our petition was already well on the way to 1,000 signatures in just the first ten days. 80% of local shops and small businesses have put up our posters.

If enough public pressure is brought to bear, backing up the workers preparing to taking action, these proposals could be stopped, to allow genuine consultation on how to future-proof the service.

The council should pause the process and use some of its £300 million reserves to maintain the current level of service and jobs. It has already done this to boost the pay of senior library management by £50,000 - to manage less staff!

Where are the Labour politicians prepared to fight with us? We face the fight of our lives. The most needy use the libraries, because they don't have resources at home - books, internet, even a warm room.

A very weak Tory government has imposed cuts on public expenditure. If Hackney Labour council challenged the Tories' cuts, along with other councils, it would be virtually impossible for this government to do anything about it.

• Read the full interview with Brian at socialistparty.org.uk

Help us get the Socialist paper to workers during the strikes



Royal Mail workers on strike in Walthamstow, with Socialist Party supporters

IAN PATTISON
THE SOCIALIST CAMPAIGNS EDITOR

Almost nothing can stop the Socialist. The Socialist Party has kept our paper, the Socialist, going almost every week, even during the pandemic.

Then it was hugely important to put forward an independent working-class voice to answer the Tories' claim that "we're all in this together". We weren't.

The strikes show the power of the working class. Rail workers in the RMT, posties in the CWU, and others taking strike action are an inspiration to all workers.

The Socialist Party fought to keep our paper in print, and out to subscribers during a global pandemic. We will fight to get it into strikers' hands throughout the strike wave. Striking is the most effective way to win pay rises from the bosses. Co-ordinated strike action could force a general election.

When an election is called, workers need their voice to be heard. But we won't get that from Keir Starmer's Labour - they are against the strikers, and are preparing the way for more austerity too.

Now the Royal Mail workers that normally handle our newspaper have escalated their strike action

- a necessary response to the Royal Mail bosses' brutal offensive. We'll be on the picket lines supporting the strikers.

Socialist Party members will be doing everything possible to make sure that our members, supporters and workers on strike can get copies of the Socialist over the next few weeks.

They will be giving up their time and money to drive copies of the Socialist to where they are needed. Can you volunteer to help us?

The capitalists' inflation crisis means that the price of petrol has gone up. Can you make a donation to help us cover the increased costs of doing all this?

We want to raise a socialist alternative to the rapidly changing Tory crisis. And how the working class can win needs to be said. This is what the Socialist does every week. Help us get the Socialist into workers' hands.

• If you are a subscriber to the Socialist, and your delivery is delayed, you can still see what the Socialist Party says online. Can you make a donation to help us through this period?

• If you're a seller of the Socialist, let us know if you need extra copies. And make sure you hold on to whatever Socialist papers you have, until your next delivery.

Help fund the fightback
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AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q4: OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2022	DEADLINE: 3 JANUARY 2023
East Midlands	543	1,850	29%	
North West	243	1,150	21%	
Wales	375	2,300	16%	
Yorkshire	366	2,550	14%	
South West	208	1,800	12%	
West Midlands	252	2,600	10%	
London	375	4,600	8%	
Southern & SE	138	2,350	6%	
Northern	31	750	4%	
Eastern	28	1,200	2%	
Other	407	3,850	11%	
TOTAL	2,966	25,000	12%	

Students protest with workers on 2 November



OISIN DUNCAN
LEEDS SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Runaway price rises affect students and workers. Accommodation rents are growing as the quality decreases. The numbers of students using food banks has more than doubled in 2022 from 5% to 11%.

Students are waking up to the failings of privatised education and the catastrophe of capitalism. We must align ourselves with our natural allies - the working class.

On 2 November, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) will be protesting at Parliament. Students have the chance to join with the workers' movement.

Socialist Student members from universities and colleges around the country will be going. And

we urge all students to do the following:

- Ask your student union what they're doing to support the demo
- Contact campus trade unions, like UCU and Unison, to extend solidarity and coordinate transport plans
- Join Socialist Students in our week of action following the demo

MEDICAL STUDENT
OXFORD SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Never in my lifetime have I seen anything like this - a cost-of-living crisis, combined with political and social chaos. We have been edging towards a precipice for years. Now is the tipping point.

The Trades Union Congress (TUC) protest on 2 November will be vital to call for a £15-an-hour minimum

Truth About Zane delivers 117,000-strong petition



ADAM GILMAN
READING SOCIALIST PARTY

Seven-year-old Zane died during the floods of 2014, due to hydrogen cyanide poisoning released from an undeclared landfill site behind his family home. A cover up by local authorities and the national government has tried to blame Zane's death on his parents. Zane died and the authorities lied.

On 21 October, dozens of supporters went to the Truth About Zane demo in London. Zane's father Kye, who has been paralysed from the waist down since the poisoning in 2014; Matt Wrack, general secretary of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU); and Zane's mum, Nicole, spoke.

We marched to Downing Street to deliver the 117,000-strong petition demanding an independent public inquiry. The campaign also calls for a new 'Zane's Law' to expose the hundreds of undeclared and hidden landfill sites across the country.

The campaign, led by his parents, is exposing the truth about what happened to Zane, fighting for the protection of millions of homes from potential exposure to toxic landfill sites, and demanding the right to legal aid for those at the sharp end of state injustice.

Truth About Zane is supported by the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN), the Trades Union Congress (TUC), the FBU and many more unions - visit truthaboutzane.com

wage, protect the right to strike, and nationalise the energy industry to cut astronomical bills. It should be a mass demonstration, harnessing the huge discontent experienced by striking workers.

Students contend with price hikes in energy, rent, and food, while struggling to access jobs. We need tuition fees to be scrapped, and we need our lecturers to be paid what they deserve, for the high-quality teaching they provide.

The cost-of-living crisis is a triple-edged sword - soaring prices and astronomical tuition fees, significantly below-inflation pay rises, and continuing austerity that deprives public services, including universities, of essential resources.

On 2 November, students and workers must demonstrate solidarity together. Now is the opportunity to capitalise on the momentum of a growing strike wave to push against these injustices.

• See 'Unions must mobilise to boot out Tories' on page 3

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

WHAT'S GOING ON ON CAMPUS?
Come and discuss at
SOCIALISM 2022
London, 19-20 November
tickets and info at socialism.org.uk

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

Coventry - cost-of-living crisis carries on

Liz Truss might be out, but the cost-of-living crisis is carrying on for workers. On our campaign stall, we heard from plenty of people sick of inequality and struggling to make ends meet.

We had queues to sign petitions opposing the rip-off hospital parking charges, supporting nationalising energy, and backing the strikers fighting for decent pay.

ADAM HARMSWORTH

York - we've had enough

From students to pensioners, people have had enough. The discussions on our Socialist Party campaign stall focused on coordinated strike action, a pay rise for all, ousting the Tories, and jobs and opportunities for young people, with a £15-an-hour minimum wage.

All of this was supported by the people we spoke to. One office worker had not had a pay rise for seven years.

BERNARD DAVIES



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.

CWI members join Iran solidarity protests



CWI members have been attending protests in solidarity with the uprising in Iran, including a huge demonstration in Berlin on 22 October numbering in the tens of thousands. Members of Sozialistische Organisation Solidarität (Sol) in Berlin supported the call for general strike action and raised the need for the Iranian workers' movement to set its own agenda.

Sol members also attended the 4,000-strong demo in Stuttgart on the same day calling for a united fight-back against the cost-of-living crisis and capitalism in Germany and Iran.

In Leeds too, Socialist Party members attended the fourth solidarity protest with Iranian workers and women on 22 October, where Iranian students took and photocopied Socialist Party leaflets to hand out themselves. Leeds Socialist Students member Isla Defty reports: "Socialist Party and Socialist Students members came together with the University of Leeds Iranian society and others to protest in solidarity with the people of Iran who are being persecuted and killed for fighting back. Speakers included Socialist Party organiser Iain Dalton and chants

echoed those of protesters in Iran, in particular 'Women, Life, Freedom', 'Zan, Zendegi, Azadi' in Farsi."

A week earlier, on 15 October, Plymouth Socialist Party members joined a protest that passed our weekly campaign stall. Duncan Moore says: "About 300 or so were out to protest against the killing of Mahsa Amini, and hundreds of others in the latest brutal crackdown by the Iranian government. The protesters, mostly local Iranians, chanted 'Women, Life, Freedom'. Socialist Party member Laurie Moore spoke at the rally, sending solidarity to the Iranian people and all women fighting around the world, and stating the need for socialism to end women's oppression."

- See 'Iran's revolutionary youth movement continues' at socialistparty.org.uk for more

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Egypt: hypocritical and repressive host of COP27

DAVID JOHNSON

Those attending the COP27 United Nations climate change conference at the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh won't see the environment most Egyptians live in. Blue sea and sky, coral reefs, air-conditioned hotels and conference centres contrast starkly with Cairo's choking smog. It's one of the world's most polluted cities.

Climate change threatens working-class and poor Egyptians with more hardship on top of the struggles they already endure. But they won't be allowed to demand action from world leaders at the conference. President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's repressive regime will not permit demonstrations and protests that usually take place outside COP conferences, fearing these could lead to wider protests on the cost of living.

Food prices threaten uprising

Instead, Sisi will use the platform as conference host to hypocritically claim his regime is in line with wealthier capitalist economies on climate policy. He hopes their governments will loan Egypt money, desperately needed to stave off a food crisis.

Egypt is running out of foreign currency to pay for imports. Reserves fell by \$22 billion in the first half of this year, sparked by the war in Ukraine, and fell another 5% in August. 800,000 tons of wheat were trapped in ports in September, without the foreign currency needed to release them. Warehouses were completely jammed. Wheat prices rose and 80% of private sector mills ground to a halt. "Today we have wheat that's locked up at the ports. Tomorrow we may not have any at all," said Walid Diab, former head of the mills division at Federation of Egyptian Industries.

Bread is Egyptians' staple diet, and its price is rising as world prices increase, linked to the Russia-Ukraine war, foreign currency shortage, and falling value of the Egyptian pound. Inflation is at its highest rate for four years. The government subsidises bread and some other food staples for poorer people. It would make life intolerable for millions if these were removed.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF), from which the Egyptian

government wants a new loan (the fourth in six years), is pressing al-Sisi to cut these subsidies. Nevertheless, the IMF and al-Sisi are acutely aware the spark that set off the mass uprising in Sri Lanka in April was food and fuel shortages, due to lack of foreign currency to pay for them. And Egypt has a history of mass uprisings linked to the rising cost of bread.

Regime's vanity projects threaten environment

Al-Sisi may tell COP27 delegates that his government promotes green policies and is moving towards carbon-neutral targets. He may call the mega-construction of New Alamein on the Mediterranean coast, a 'green city'. But there have been no studies on its environmental impact. The coastline has been altered through land reclamation from the sea, and digging artificial lakes, both posing huge threats to the local ecosystem.

Just a few miles away, the new Marassi resort and marina near Al-Exandria are being built with Emirati money to accommodate the super-yachts of the world's super-rich. Already construction has altered tidal flow, leading to beaches across the bay losing their sand and valuable ecosystems. Huge amounts of cement has polluted neighbouring beaches.

Environmental campaigners have come under similar pressure to human rights campaigners. Groups and researchers receiving foreign funds have been prosecuted and some charged under anti-terrorism laws which carry high sentences, including the death penalty.

Campaigns and research are allowed on 'safe' subjects like recycling, renewable energy and food safety. But no criticism is tolerated of government failures to stop damage caused by big business interests. These include falling water resources, industrial pollution, and environmental harm caused by government large-scale infrastructure projects. The \$59 billion new administrative capital being built in the desert is deliberately well away from the working-class and poor masses



in Cairo. Any projects associated with the military and the president's office are also off-limits. The massive financial and environmental cost of these projects will be paid by the working and middle classes and the poor.

Cairo is one of the cities in the world with the least green space per head of population. 66% of its people live in districts with less than half a square metre of green space per head. Working-class areas were hardest hit when new eight-lane motorways were built towards the new capital, bulldozing trees, gardens and parks.

Thousands have been forcibly evicted from their homes in Cairo, the Mediterranean coast, North Sinai and elsewhere as big property companies take over their districts for redevelopment. As well as environmental campaigners, residents and small businesses in the path of big business developments are harassed and attacked by security forces if they resist. An estimated 60,000 political prisoners suffer in Egypt's grim prisons. Nevertheless, there have been a number of protests in recent years, despite the threat of imprisonment and torture.

Working-class and young people in North Africa and the Middle East facing similar problems would be inspired to take similar action. But to achieve this needs independent workers' organisations - trade unions and workers' parties - with socialists arguing for a programme and strategy needed to end capitalism's rule. Working towards this in illegal and dangerous conditions is very difficult, but the uprisings of 2011, and this year in Sri Lanka and Iran, show that powerful governments can be challenged and may be brought down by mass movements. But unless a socialist alternative is built, a new capitalist regime will then take power.

Renewable energy, protection and expansion of green space, and of the environment as a whole, cannot be left to al-Sisi or any other capitalist regime in Egypt. The interests of people it will always come first, whether this is banked by the owners of industry, land, finance or senior armed forces officers. A socialist Egypt would make the most of its resources through democratic public ownership of the biggest companies and land estates. Local communities and workers could then control and plan their environment, with a national plan of sustainable production to meet the need for decent housing, health and education. Massive investment in clean public transport, parks and pollution controls of industry would cut greenhouse gas emissions.

Cairo's choking smog is a far cry from the resort where COP27 will take place

PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN

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100 years since Mussolini's March on Rome

IAIN DALTON
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

On 29 October 1922, King Victor Emmanuel III appointed Benito Mussolini prime minister as his black-shirts organised to march on Rome - beginning 20 years of fascist rule in Italy.

The 100th anniversary of the March on Rome is coinciding with Giorgia Meloni, of the 'post-fascist' Brothers of Italy, becoming leader of a right-wing coalition government in Italy. This has raised questions about the nature of fascism and how it initially came to power.

The period preceding the March on Rome was a stormy period of intense class struggles. Even before Italy entered World War One, conditions were such that when carabinieri (military police) shot at an anti-militarist demonstration in Ancona, leaving three dead and 15 wounded, it provoked a week of uncoordinated general strikes and uprisings across Italy - the 'red week'.

Like in Britain and many other countries, the class struggle returned with increased intensity as the war dragged on. A rising tide of strikes and factory occupations dominated the immediate post-war years in Italy, which became known as the 'biennio rosso' - the two red years.

Strikes went from 600,000 in 1918, to 14 million in 1919 and 16 million in 1920. One of the high points of this movement was in 1919, when metal workers went on strike and won the eight-hour day. In September 1920, a wave of factory occupations erupted, beginning in Milan, where 300 factories had been occupied, and spreading to the rest of the country.

In 1919, in some areas citizens' committees were set up to control soaring prices and, in Turin, a system of workplace 'commissars' emerged, at its height involving 150,000. With such organisations, workers had effective control of the production and movement of goods.

Dual power

A situation of dual power existed, where alternative workers' organisations exerted control in the factories, while the capitalists and their state were paralysed.

It was in response to the growing threat of the workers' movement that Italian big business began throwing money at Mussolini. Before the war he had been the editor of the Italian Socialist Party daily, *Avanti*. But, in opposition to the vast majority of the party, he became a supporter of Italian participation in the war on the side of the Entente.

Taking an increasingly nationalist but populist line, he launched the first 'Fasci Italiano di Combattimento' (Italian Combat Squad) in March 1919.

These bodies were drawn in the main from former soldiers, particularly among the officer classes, and also from the Arditi, the shock troops of the Italian army. Initially they were more decentralised organisations, but later were reorganised into Mussolini's National Fascist Party.

As the Entente powers carved up parts of the German and



Mussolini (centre) during the march towards Rome with supporters PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN



Turin factory occupation during the revolutionary general strike in 1922 PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN

Austro-Hungarian empire, nationalist moods were further inflamed by Fiume, a largely Italian-speaking city on the Adriatic, not being allocated to Italy. Italian nationalists seized the city, establishing a contradictory regime, which had elements of the future fascist regime in Italy, but was also the first state to recognise the Soviet Union.

This confusion was initially reflected in the outlook of Mussolini, who used anti-capitalist rhetoric to build his support. The early Fasci manifestos included support for universal suffrage and opposition to censorship.

But they very quickly used violence against what they perceived as political enemies, including the Italian Socialist Party and its associated trade unions. Mussolini had received funding for his newspaper, *Il Popolo d'Italia*, from big business, who, seeing the potential to beat down the workers' movement, began to pour

funding towards him once more.

The fascist 'squadristi' were directed to attack strikes and the workers' movement in general. When bin workers in Rome went on strike, students and other volunteers were used to break the action. In Milan, the offices of *Avanti* were attacked and burned. In 1920, its offices in Rome and Turin were also attacked.

This was the essence of the methods of fascism: mobilising the dispossessed layers of the middle class to destroy the organisations of the working class, making it difficult or even impossible for them to function. Over 3,000 socialists and trade unionists were murdered by fascist gangs in this period.

So what role did the socialist and trade union leaders play in this struggle? While internationally most of the social democratic parties formally claiming to be Marxist had supported their own capitalist classes in

World War One, the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) opposed it.

But the PSI had two major trends within it. The 'minimalist' wing stressed the immediate demands in the party's programme. But the party leadership was in the hands of the 'maximalists', led by Serrati. These defended the party's formal commitment to socialist revolution, but did so in a passive, abstract fashion.

Serrati refused Lenin's advice to break with the reformists. As the revolutionary movement developed, the PSI propagandised for soviets, but did nothing in practice to help promote and link up the committees workers were actually creating in the factories.

Smaller groups of revolutionaries around Amadeo Bordiga and Antonio Gramsci eventually broke with the PSI to found the Italian Communist Party in January 1921.

Ultra-leftism

While Gramsci's group had played an important role in the rise of the workers' councils in Turin, it didn't have the same national presence or ideological cohesiveness as Bordiga's group, which promoted ultra-left positions.

This included rejecting a united front against the growing fascist threat, not only with the PSI, but also with the Arditi del Popolo. These were initially sections of former Arditi who organised in opposition to the fascist attacks. But they developed into a wider movement of popular defence committees, repelling a fascist assault on Parma, for example.

In 1922, Mussolini declared in Naples that "either they hand us power or we will descend on Rome to seize it."

At different points Mussolini was aided by elements within the Italian state. Ahead of the fascists entering Rome, for example, the King refused to declare a state of emergency. Instead he offered Mussolini power!

He had been urged on by Confindustria, the Italian bosses' federation, which saw in Mussolini's fascists the best chance of crushing the Italian workers' movement and restoring their capitalist profits in a situation of severe global economic crisis.

This meant that, rather than the fascist bands that had gathered in four places on the outskirts of Rome marching to seize power, the march became a show of force marking Mussolini's accession.

It still took several years after the March on Rome for fascist rule to be consolidated. The biggest missed opportunity to resist this was the mass outrage that erupted after socialist deputy Giacomo Matteotti was kidnapped and murdered, with mass demonstrations demanding an end to fascist rule.

But the mass workers' organisations refused to organise decisive action such as a general strike. The continuation of the destruction of the workers' organisations was the tragic consequence, only re-emerging 20 years later as the fascist regime crumbled during World War Two.

FIGHTING FASCISM
AND RIGHT-WING
POPULISM

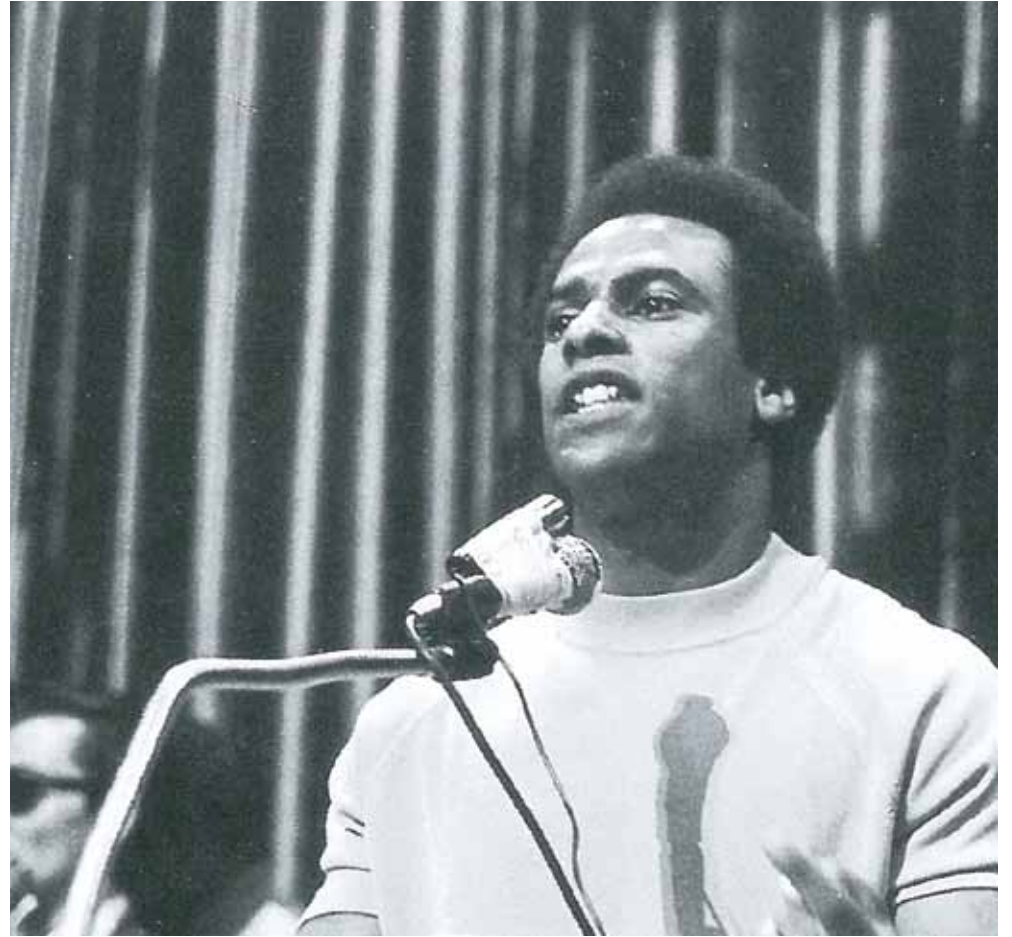
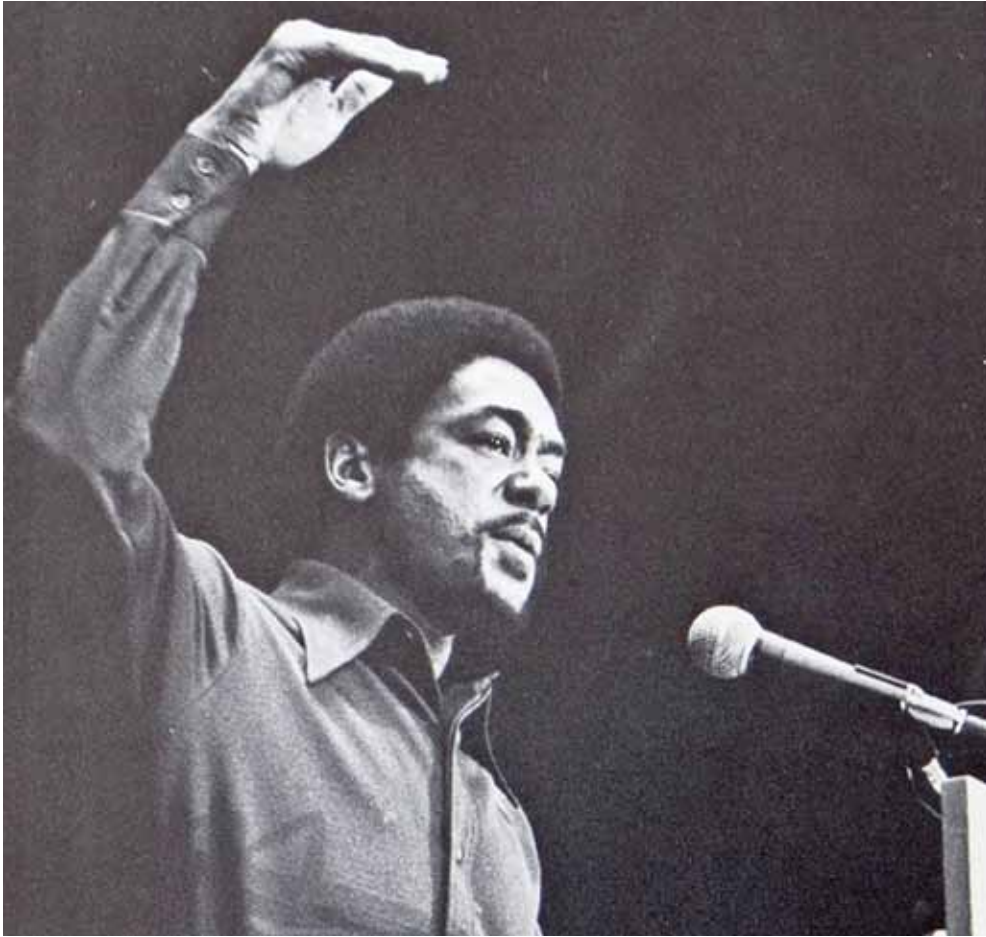
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The Black Panthers: Lessons for the fight against racism and capitalism



Bobby Seale (left) and Huey P. Newton (right), cofounders of the Black Panther Party PUBLIC DOMAIN AND CIRONLINE/CC

PIRIYASHA
BIRMINGHAM CENTRAL SOCIALIST PARTY

After World War Two, the civil rights movement erupted in America.

Black people in the US faced enormous racism and discrimination, especially in the south, a legacy of slavery.

Large numbers of Black people moved from rural areas to cities. In 1940, over half of the Black population lived in cities; by 1970 this had become over 75%. Moving into massive urban areas, in poverty in ghettos, and becoming part of the urban working class, increased their confidence, strength and collectivity.

With a deterioration in the economy and in the living conditions of working-class people, Black people in the US were inspired by the liberation movements taking place all over the world, the against.

In the United States in 1965, the Civil Rights Act was passed, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, colour, religion, sex or national origin. However, while this was a legal victory, it did not alter the reality of poverty and police brutality within Black people's lives.

Although segregation laws had broken down, poverty within the Black community had actually increased. Black unemployment was higher in 1966 than it was in 1954, with 32% of Black people living below the poverty line.

One of the most prominent figures of the civil rights movement, Martin Luther King Jr, had initially taken the position of mass non-violent

civil disobedience – which itself was a radical position in contrast to campaigns purely for legal change. But peaceful demonstrations were savagely attacked by the police and state.

King and class struggle

He drew deeper conclusions about capitalism and the need to fight poverty – famously saying: “What good is having the right to sit at a lunch counter if you can't afford to buy a hamburger?” King realised that Black people must join forces with the white working class in America to organise a class-based struggle.

The civil rights movement politicised many young Black people, who were angry at their situation and knew things had to change. Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale founded the Panther party at a time when many young Black people were rejecting the pacifist response of previous civil rights leaders, and were looking for an alternative to the threat of imprisonment and repression.

Another prominent figure, who we do not learn about in our history lessons, was Malcolm X, who came to struggle from a life of poverty as a teenager. He joined the Nation of Islam, which wanted Black separation. However, Malcolm X drew conclusions about the nature of capitalism and the integral role racism has played within it.

Leaders of the Black Panther Party also began to realise that a struggle against capitalism was required to win better living conditions for Black people. They argued that capitalism

was built on a political and economic foundation of racism, and that the Black struggle must be a revolutionary movement to overthrow the entire power structure in order to achieve liberation for all Black people.

One of the most famous quotes from Bobby Seale was: “We do not fight exploitative capitalism with Black capitalism. We fight capitalism with basic socialism.” Seale concluded that capitalism needed to be



Seale concluded that capitalism needed to be overthrown to win better living conditions, not only for Black people but for all working-class people

overthrown to win better living conditions, not only for Black people but for all working-class people.

The Black Panther Party proposed a ten-point programme, including demands for housing, employment and education, but also “placing the means of production... in the community”.

These ideas were popular amongst young Black people, as they provided some answers to the lifelong oppression Black working-class people experienced. Within two years, the Panthers had developed a new

branch in every major city, and they sold over 125,000 newspapers every week.

The ruling class was terrified of the confidence that the Black Panther Party created among black youth.

When Panther members saw police pull over a black driver, they stopped and observed the incident, usually with weapons in hand. At that time, it was legal in California to carry guns within certain limitations, and the Panthers asserted their right to do so, quoting the relevant sections of the law. When Ronald Reagan was governor of California, he signed the Mulford Act, a bill that prohibited the public from carrying loaded firearms without a permit, which was as a direct response to the Black Panthers.

Police repression

The confidence the Black Panther Party created, and the ideas they put forward, were enough for the ruling class to use extreme police repression. Police infiltrated Black organisations. Over 300 of the Panther's 1,000 core members were arrested and 39 were shot dead, including Fred Hampton while he was asleep next to his pregnant partner. By 1971, two million Black people were being arrested each year, almost 20% of the Black population at the time.

Even brutal state repression can be resisted by mass movements, and it would have been much harder for the US state to carry it out, had the struggle developed more united working-class support and involvement.

The leaders of the Black Panthers, unfortunately, were influenced by

Stalinist ideas and inspired by guerrilla movements. They did the vital work of organising amongst the most downtrodden, but didn't also orientate enough towards the organised working class. Their leaders later reflected that they relied too much on being a military group, a ‘revolutionary vanguard’ rather than building a base in the working class and aiming to mobilise the mass of working-class people.

The Black Panthers and their struggle – with their bravery, determination and their understanding of the need for a united class approach – are an inspiration to this day as young Black people are still forced to fight racism and police brutality, poverty and economic inequality.

The US ruling class are fearful of such an organisation emerging again. It is vital that a new generation learns the lessons of the need to unite working-class people and fight for a socialist programme that can challenge capitalism and its divide-and-rule tactics.

Only a socialist society, based on public ownership of the huge wealth and resources that exist, with democratic planning, can lay the basis for the eradication of racism once and for all.

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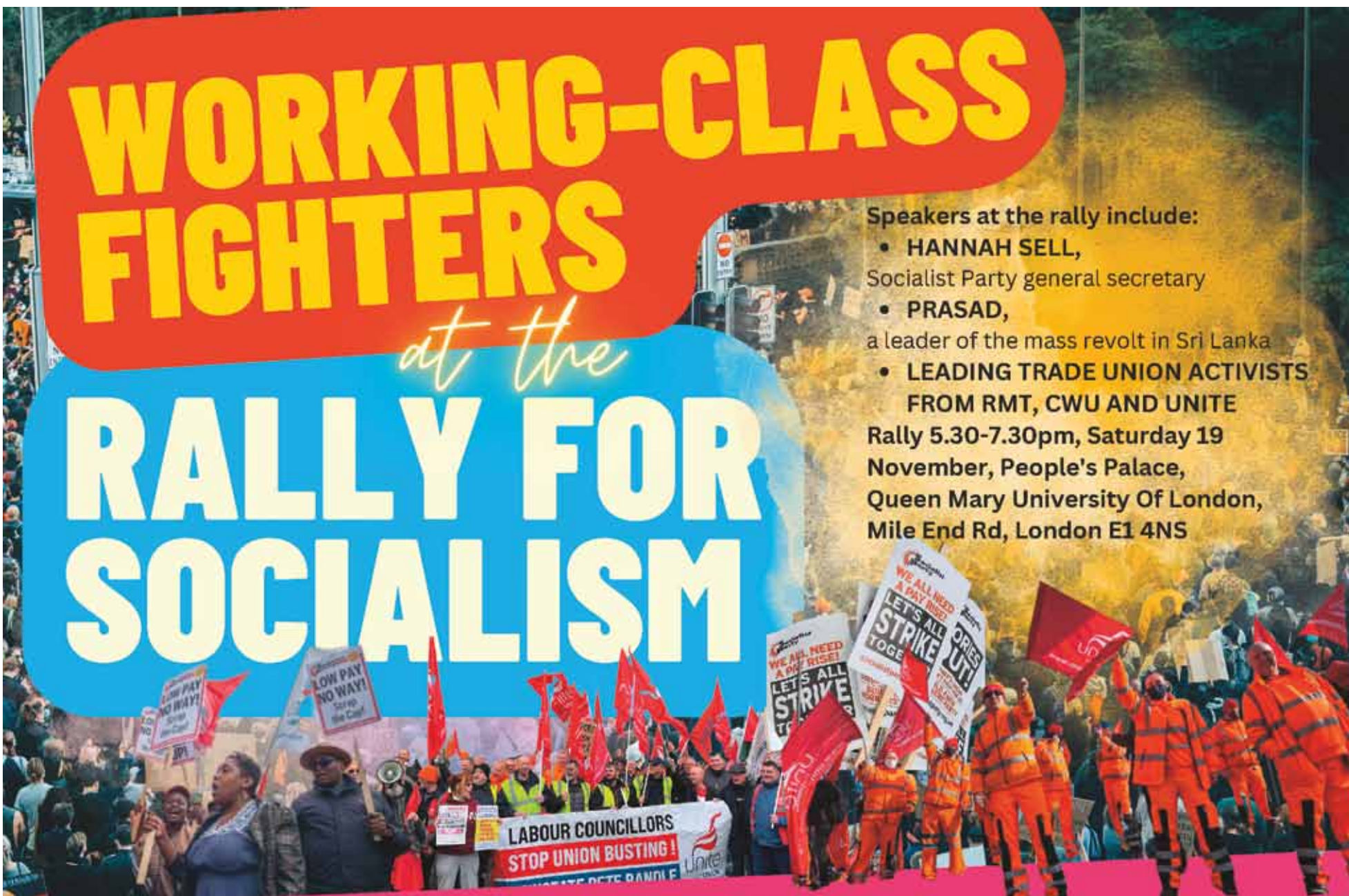
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The events of the last few years, on top of the headline circus act of the last few weeks, would be too funny if it wasn't for the devastating worsening conditions and cost-of-living crisis working-class people face.

And now, a new prime minister, rich-list Rishi, with an estimated wealth of £730 million! Prepped by the markets to tell us to prepare for more of the same suffering and attacks of the last 12 years.

The Tory and capitalist market-inflicted chaos has raised in

the minds of working people across Britain that things need to change!

The false ideas, that there are supposed norms and things will never change, have been blown away. And it's not a coincidence that at the same time we have seen the early glimpses of what working-class people can do when they strike on mass, showing who really keeps society running.

The early waves of national strike action pose the questions of how to escalate, how to further organise working-class action and our own political voice, how can workers win - the stuff of nightmares for the capitalists.

The ruling class is panicking: how can it protect and secure its wealth and profit-based system without sparking off much more of the potential monumental fighting force of the working class?

That fighting force needs to be organised and armed with socialist ideas to prepare it to take on the bosses, and to

fundamentally change society. To take ownership of the vast wealth accumulated by the bosses, and to plan society, industry and the economy in the interests of the working-class majority, wiping out the plague of horrors and suffering inflicted by capitalism across the world.

That's why we are hosting Socialism 2022, bringing together hundreds of the best-organised, socialist class fighters to meet, learn and discuss ideas. Included in the weekend event, running from 19-20 November, is the Rally for Socialism on Saturday evening. Speakers include; Socialist Party general secretary, Hannah Sell; Socialist fighter in Sri Lanka, Prasad; and leading activists from the trade unions taking strike action.

It has never been a better time to fight for socialist change. It's easy to get involved. The best place to start is to come to Socialism 2022 and become part of the struggle for a socialist world.

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on p12

