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formerly **Militant**

WE WON'T PAY FOR THEIR CRISIS

STRIKE TOGETHER

TORIES OUT

No trust in Starmer's Labour

Build a new mass workers' party

DUNCAN MOORE
DEVON SOCIALIST PARTY

Seven million people on NHS waiting lists. Nurses working 12-hour shifts and relying on food banks to feed their families.

90% of schools face running out of money due to skyrocketing energy costs. Poverty pensions and benefits. Everywhere you look, our pay,

our working conditions, our public services and our communities are being hammered. What's left to cut?

Exactly how they intend to make us pay for the crisis of their making will be detailed by Chancellor Jeremy Hunt in his autumn statement on 17 November.

The Tories will say that they are acting in the 'national interest'. This is a lie. There is no such thing as the national interest; they act in their own interest, and that of the super-rich and parasitical capitalist class they represent.

A week after Hunt announced an early end to the energy support scheme, leaving households with

annual bills of up to £4,500 from April, Shell announced it has paid no windfall tax on the £30 billion profit it made this year. The CEO of BP said his company has "more cash than we know what to do with", as it posted record-breaking profits in the midst of the cost-of-living crisis.

Well, we've got some suggestions: pay more tax for a start!

A significant portion of the budget hole Hunt is trying to fill could be filled by modest tax increases on the super-rich. But that is only a start. The super-rich will always look for ways to avoid paying tax - including exploiting loopholes like the non-dom tax status used by Rishi Sunak's

super-rich family. To get ownership of all the hoarded wealth, and to have democratic control over how it is used, we need nationalisation under democratic workers' control.

Of course we don't expect anything better from the Tories; Sunak and Hunt are multimillionaires themselves. But look to Labour for a fightback against austerity, and you'll be dismayed.

Party leader Keir Starmer says that even under a Labour government, "things will be really tough". Labour "would not take any risks with the public finances". Translated, this is Starmer saying to the markets and the bosses: 'You can count on me.'

There is an alternative. The strikes by workers in transport, communications and education have shown the power of the organised working class. By striking together, and resisting attacks on all working-class people, the strike wave has the potential power to not only win better pay and conditions but bring down this rotten Conservative government.

Imagine if there was a mass workers' party, backed up by the trade unions, which was prepared to resist austerity and make the super-rich pay instead. That is what the Socialist Party is determined to help develop, as a big step forward in the struggle for socialism.

BRAZIL - BOLSONARO DEFEATED BUT THE STRUGGLE IS NOT OVER >>> p13

COP27 - CAPITALISM HAS NO CREDIBLE PATHWAY TO SAVE THE PLANET >>> p8-9

COME TO SOCIALISM 2022 >>> p3,11 and 16

Step up workers' fightback against Tory and bosses' attacks

Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

The latest Tory prime minister Rishi Sunak, has two main messages: the Tory Party must "unite or die" and that he's ready to attack the working class. A huge new austerity onslaught is being prepared, comparable to, or exceeding, the 2010 Con-Dem version, from which public services and living standards have not recovered.

How the working class organises to fight the Tories, building on the current strike wave, is the most important factor in how Sunak, his government, and their impoverishment plans are brought down. And they can be.

The Suella Braverman affair is just one illustration of how unity in the Tories is a dream. What's more, Tory MPs prioritising keeping their own seats will not easily be whipped into voting for the attacks Sunak intends to make on the majority in their constituencies.

The Tory party's historic role, in the final analysis, is defending capitalism. It's a system that prioritises producing private profit over meeting society's needs, through exploitation of the working class.

Historically that system claimed it carried the promise of a better future for the next generation - but who believes that today? The rich get richer, but for the rest of us it's a worse tomorrow - unless we fight. Instability not unity is the order of the day for parties that defend that system.

Organise to kick them out

We cannot wait for the Tories to "die" - they must be kicked out. What they offer - more hungry cold children - is not acceptable. Nor is it inevitable. The victories on pay being chalked up by groups of striking workers stand testament to that. Workers' collective organisation and action can change events in the interests of our class.

Royal Mail's attacks on the strikes organised by the CWU postal workers' union are a sign that the strikes are successfully ramping up pressure on management, but also an indication of the seriousness and difficulties facing the current national disputes. Behind the bosses are the Tory government and all the institutions of the capitalist state, such as the courts. Fighting this requires the determination shown by the CWU, but the class attacks demand a class-wide response.

One way of showing our class won't stand by while our people, and the right to strike, are attacked by the bosses is for the CWU strike fund appeal to be a bold campaign across the TUC, combined with launching a strike fund for all unions on the front line. The huge response such a call would get would show the bosses our class is backing our class and we're preparing to fight to the win.

With millions of workers now balloting across the NHS, civil service

The rich get richer, but for the rest of us it's a worse tomorrow - unless we fight

Turning this anger into a mass movement requires a leadership with a programme that shows our interests lie in uniting and fighting back



and schools, the clearest indication that this movement will stand firm against attacks from the Tories and the bosses' is stepping up the coordination of the strikes. Cross-union meetings at every level would give enormous confidence to workers on the picket lines that this is a fight their union leadership is fighting to win.

If the Tories build on Royal Mail's attacks by introducing further anti-trade union laws, basically banning strikes, coordination will need to be accelerated with a 24-hour general strike.

Coordination

Discussion and coordination at every level can build confidence and further strengthen the movement. Workplace union meetings and picket rallies could thrash out the tactics of the strikes and feed back to the leaderships, strengthening the movement. Rank-and-file participation needs to be built. Strong and effective broad left organisation is needed to bring activists together to discuss and fight for a militant programme within their union.

Trades councils can bring unions together in local areas to build solidarity but also to bring their strength and authority to fighting local issues.

This approach is also needed on

a national basis. Millions of people are angry with their plunging living standards. Turning this anger into a mass movement requires a leadership with a programme that shows our interests lie in uniting and fighting back.

That starts with: inflation-proof pay rises, pensions and benefits; a £15-an-hour minimum wage with no exemptions; rent caps and a mass programme of council house building and of home insulation; fund and staff our NHS; nationalisation of energy, water, rail, post, and the banks under democratic working-class control; and a socialist alternative to capitalist exploitation and poverty.

Even Tory councillors are fearful of Sunak's cuts. But local government has the potential to form part of the working-class fightback. It's estimated that around one in seven people are skipping meals, which equates to over four million people living in areas where Labour lead the council. Those Labour councils have an estimated £82 billion in spending power that could be mobilised now to fight against inflation poverty, refusing to pass on those cuts, and instead fighting for funding and to bring the Tories down.

But instead, Keir Starmer's Labour is laser-focused on showing it's preparing to be a government that will

defend the interests of the capitalist class not the working class. Otherwise it would step into the Royal Mail, BT and rail disputes and commit to nationalising them on day one with no compensation to the fat cats. In 1971 the Tories nationalised Rolls Royce just as quickly when the capitalist class demanded it. But Starmer won't - and our class doesn't have our own political voice.

Candidates offering a workers' alternative at the local elections in May - and at the general election whenever that takes place - are needed. The workers' movement must also demand that the trade union leaders take such decisive steps towards building the new workers' party that is needed.

The Socialist Party fights for all these steps for the workers' movement, including building a new party - and for it to be armed with a socialist programme in preparation for the inevitable battles with the defenders of capitalism.

A SPECIAL CRISIS OF BRITISH CAPITALISM
Come and discuss at
SOCIALISM 2022
London, 19-20 November
tickets and info at socialism.org.uk

WORKING-CLASS FIGHTERS
at the
RALLY FOR SOCIALISM

Speakers at the rally include:
• HANNAH SELL, Socialist Party general secretary
• PRASAD WELIKUMBURA, a leader of the mass revolt in Sri Lanka
• LEADING TRADE UNION ACTIVISTS FROM RMT, CWU AND UNITE

Rally 5.30-7.30pm, Saturday 19 November, People's Palace, Queen Mary University Of London, Mile End Rd, London E1 4NS

Part of the weekend of discussion and debate at
SOCIALISM 2022

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

THE STRIKE WAVE - HOW CAN WORKERS WIN?
THE STRUGGLE FOR WOMEN'S LIBERATION & SOCIALISM
GLOBAL CRISIS AND THE SOCIALIST WAY OUT
INTRODUCTION TO MARXISM

Postal and BT workers in CWU spoke to Socialist Party members on the picket lines

Bill, picket supervisor at BT Openreach at Ravensbridge Drive Leicester, spoke to Heather Rawling.

"The union [was] meeting shareholders in London. They are going to put across how the dispute reflects on the business and reflects on their share price, so the shareholders can come alongside or put pressure on the CEO.

"One of the major shareholders bought the shares at nearly two pounds and sold for four. He took £78 million. He's one of the super-rich. He's not going to a food bank. But the share prices are falling now.

"We need to force the bosses to get round the table now. There's a backlog of repairs. On the fibre provision side, there is a five-week wait, on the copper version side, a four week wait.

"The mood is strong to win this strike."



A striker at the Weston-super-Mare delivery office in Somerset told Rob Jennings that the local CWU rep had been suspended from work by Royal Mail on trumped up charges.

There have now been 96 CWU members suspended nationally since the strikes began, and the pickets said they were prepared to strike indefinitely if these members are not reinstated.

Ian Pattison reports of Waltham Cross, Hertfordshire: it isn't just the BBQ that's made the Royal Mail picket lines the biggest in this strike so far - 25 on the picket line on 20 October and eighteen on 25 October.

The workers on strike aren't intimidated by Royal Mail's attacks, confident that strikes will work, and think this is a weak government that only cares about the rich. An agency worker going in asked: "Is there a strike on?" When pickets said "yes", they immediately turned around.

Glenn Howard reports that in Ledbury, Herefordshire, where originally there was only one person on the Royal Mail picket line, now many of the workers are out on the picket, with only a single person in work. The threat of redundancies has had the opposite of the management's desired effect, and has solidified support.

Royal Mail bosses run to the courts to block democratic action Postal workers defiant



SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN CWU

Royal Mail management have declared all-out war on the Communication Workers Union (CWU) and 115,000 postal workers. While officially taking part in talks at ACAS, they made a legal challenge to the Communication Workers Union (CWU) against its 19 days of rolling functional action.

Now they have made a new two-year 'pay offer' of below-inflation rises, plus imposition of a lesser rate for new starters, and bringing owner-drivers into the company. Correctly, the CWU's postal executive is calling further strike action.

There was already huge anger from members at management again resorting to threats of legal injunctions to stop democratically agreed action. At an emergency online meeting on Sunday 30 October, called at a few hours' notice, over 15,000 CWU members took part.

It's clear that it is the effectiveness of the rolling action, in the busiest pre-Christmas period, that has seen Royal Mail reverting to using the anti-trade union laws to stop the strikes, just as they did in 2019. Then,

outrageously, unelected judges ruled out a massive strike vote.

The CWU postal executive decided to suspend the rolling action, rather than risk having any further strike action ruled out. It is vital that the union looks to maintain the momentum of the dispute and ups the ante. The executive has already called all-out national strikes on November 12 and 14, and it was meeting on Tuesday 1 November to agree further dates for strike action.

They should do a 'belt and braces' review of the strike details and procedures, and then urgently re-issue notice for the rolling action alongside further national strikes, looking to coordinate with CWU members in BT and Openreach, and other workers taking action.

Socialist Party members have consistently argued that the union should launch a public strike fund, and welcomes the decision to do so. It is needed more than ever, both to cover the hardship of striking members, and also to mobilise the rest of the trade union movement and working-class communities in support of the action.

Now it is becoming clear that a

support group network is required. This will galvanise workers all over the country and show the support postal workers command. CWU branches should spearhead this, in conjunction with local trades councils and union bodies.

It is also becoming clearer to more and more postal workers that the only long-term solution is to fight for democratic socialist nationalisation of the postal and telecommunications services.

The offensive by Royal Mail comes at the same time as the Tories look to bring in even more restrictive anti-union laws, for the same reasons as Royal Mail - to attack our ability to defend our members from the bosses' offensive.

But they can be defeated. The whole trade union movement must be prepared to take united decisive action, on the scale of a 24-hour general strike, if such measures are implemented.

And it's also vital that the CWU takes the lead in calling for coordinated strike action across the private and public sectors, against brutal employers like Royal Mail and BT and their Tory political backers.



Tories up divisive anti-migrant rhetoric, while attacking all workers

ISAI MARIJERLA
SOCIALIST PARTY BLACK AND ASIAN MEMBERS
GROUP

Another day, another crisis accelerated by this Tory government. This time it's migrants and refugees abandoned and used as scapegoats by the Tory government of the rich.

The inhumane treatment of migrants in the Manston processing centre in Kent has been in the spotlight. The facility was set up in February this year by the government, under pressure to deal with the migrant crisis. It was meant to hold up to 1,600 migrants, for a maximum of 48 hours before their asylum case is heard. But the facility now holds about 4,000 people, for up to 32 days.

The independent border inspector David Neal told MPs that he had been left speechless by the 'really dangerous' situation at Manston, which is dangerously overcrowded with disease spreading. The conditions have worsened since his visit, a further 700 migrants have been moved into the facility following the firebomb attack on an immigration centre in Dover.

Home secretary Suella Braverman already had a reputation for being hostile to migrants after her brief



Refugee camp in Calais PAUL MATTESSON

time in the role previously under Liz Truss, before getting sacked for breaching the ministerial code. Her stated 'dream' remains seeing a flight take asylum seekers to Rwanda.

Now back in post under Sunak, with her job under threat again, she is ratcheting up her divisive anti-migrant rhetoric, describing migrants, many fleeing war and

repression, as "the invasion on our southern coast".

The Tories will use anti-immigration feeling as a tool to stir division in communities for their own political

gain - blaming the people in these facilities for a lack of housing and the strain on public services their policies have caused - whatever the consequences.

By fuelling division, Braverman is increasing the confidence of far-right racist extremists to carry out anti-migrant attacks, like the petrol bomb attack on the migrant centre in Dover.

It is clear that Labour won't be much different to the Tories. In fact, according to Labour shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves, the problem is that there has been a lack of deportation during "12 years of Tory failure". Labour leader Keir Starmer has made it clear that further cutbacks would be in store under a Labour government, not the investment in public services and council housing that is needed.

We say that immediate action needs to be taken to solve the urgent crisis in Manston migrant centre. The 238,306 long-term empty homes in England, the vast majority owned by profiteering companies, could be used to house all those in need. There is a mountain of wealth concentrated in the hands of a just few individuals. We say take the wealth of the 1% to provide a decent public services and a decent standard of living for all.

RACISM AND THE POLICE
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World Cup exposes Qatari regime, but fans can unite to support struggle against oppression



JOE FATHALLAH
CARDIFF WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

When the final whistle blew, along with 33,000 other Wales football supporters at the Cardiff City Stadium in June, I leapt out of my seat in ecstasy. Wales had beaten Ukraine 1-0, and qualified for our first World Cup in 64 years.

While I'm ridiculously excited about cheering the team on in the tournament, I've got no plans to make the trip to Qatar.

For a start, I probably wouldn't be able to get tickets for the matches.

The Wales supporters' club - Y Wal Goch (the Red Wall) - has been allocated just over 2,000 tickets for each of our three group matches. Supporters of other teams have similar allocations, with the English Football Association advertising 2,500 tickets.

The stadiums hosting the tournament have seating capacities between 40,000 and 80,000! What has happened to all these tickets? Are we not allowed to go to support our teams?

Even if I was able to get into the matches, the trip wouldn't appeal

to me - a travesty really considering we've been waiting for so long.

Qatar has little-to-no football tradition or culture. The Qatari national team is ranked one of the lowest in the tournament, and has never previously appeared at a World Cup.

It was awarded the 2022 hosting rights by Fifa, world football's governing body, in 2010. During the selection process, two members of Fifa's executive were suspended under suspicion of accepting money for votes. And they weren't the only allegations.

Fifa has a chequered history. In

2015, 14 people connected with Fifa were indicted by the FBI for fraud, racketeering and money laundering.

Qatar has a poor human rights record. The Al-Thani family has ruled as a near-absolute monarchy for almost 200 years.

Seven of the eight World Cup stadiums have been built or rebuilt specifically for this purpose, in a short time frame, in slave-like conditions. Over 6,500 migrant workers have died in Qatar, according to the Guardian.

Homosexuality is illegal and, on paper, could even carry the death penalty. So how can we simply take the regime's word that LGBTQ+ supporters will be safe during the World Cup? And even if it's true, it's not acceptable to simply leave the LGBTQ+ people in Qatar living in fear again once the tournament has finished.

Alcohol consumption - an essential part of an away trip for many supporters - is forbidden. Under pressure, officials have stated that this will be allowed during the tournament.

I'm half-Arab myself, and feel a real emotional connection to this part of the world. But unfortunately for working-class people in the region, capitalist imperialism has a real financial connection to it as well.

Many Arab countries sit on plentiful oil supplies. This means that regimes such as Saudi Arabia, one of the world's most brutal dictatorships, exist in harmony with US capitalism,

which supplies weaponry for the brutal war in Yemen.

For imperialism, human rights go out of the window where there is a profit to be made. But the masses in the Middle East and north Africa have the power to overthrow dictatorships and imperialist stooges, laying the basis for a voluntary democratic socialist confederation of the Arab world. The magnificent uprising of the masses in the 2010-11 'Arab Spring', showed this huge potential, but for the absence of a revolutionary leadership with a socialist programme.

To change how the World Cup is run, Fifa needs to be fully democratised and brought under the control of supporters' associations and professional footballers' trade unions. All corrupt officials must be immediately removed. Decisions, such as bidding for tournaments, should be held with fully open public scrutiny of the bids received and the process that a decision is arrived at.

Supporters clubs need to show up the brutal nature of the Qatari regime, and support the struggle for human rights, democracy, and the rights of workers and LGBTQ+ people. We need to make Fifa's corrupt decision into an opportunity to fight back, and support the Arab masses in their heroic struggles.

The Arab working class has enormous power to overthrow capitalism and imperialism, and international socialist solidarity is key to bringing that to fruition.

Public sector strike ballots: 'Why I'm voting yes!'

After years of pay restraint, public sector workers are gearing up to fight for a pay rise to meet the rising cost of living, by voting on whether to strike. A teacher and a nurse told us why they are voting for strike action.

Teacher: for school funding, pay and workload

I am voting 'yes' in the National Education Union (NEU) ballot for strike action for a realistic pay rise to take account of the cost-of-living price hikes. The pay review body's recommendation of 5% just won't cut it. And it's unfunded - schools are expected to pay for the increase out of current funding.

I am voting 'yes' because the NEU calls for a fully funded, above-inflation pay rise which doesn't eat into teaching and learning resources for our students.

I am voting 'yes' because a national strike of the largest teaching union in England and Wales will build the confidence of all teachers. It will show our potential strength if we stand together. It will build our confidence to deal with the wider issues of workload, performance-related pay, examination reform and democratic control and management of schools.

DAVID
NORTH LONDON TEACHER



PAUL MATTESSON

Teachers and school support staff in the NEU working in schools are being balloted until 13 January. A ballot of NEU members in sixth-form colleges closes on 11 November. Teachers who are members of NASUWT are being balloted until 9 January.

Nurse: for a proper pay rise and fully resourced NHS

After working through the pandemic, receiving claps on the doorstep, and being hailed as heroes, the very least NHS workers hoped for as a reward was a decent pay rise.

Over the last decade, NHS workers have received a real-terms pay cut of around 20-25%. With official inflation at around 10%, the reality for NHS staff and workers in general is much a higher increase in everyday household necessities.

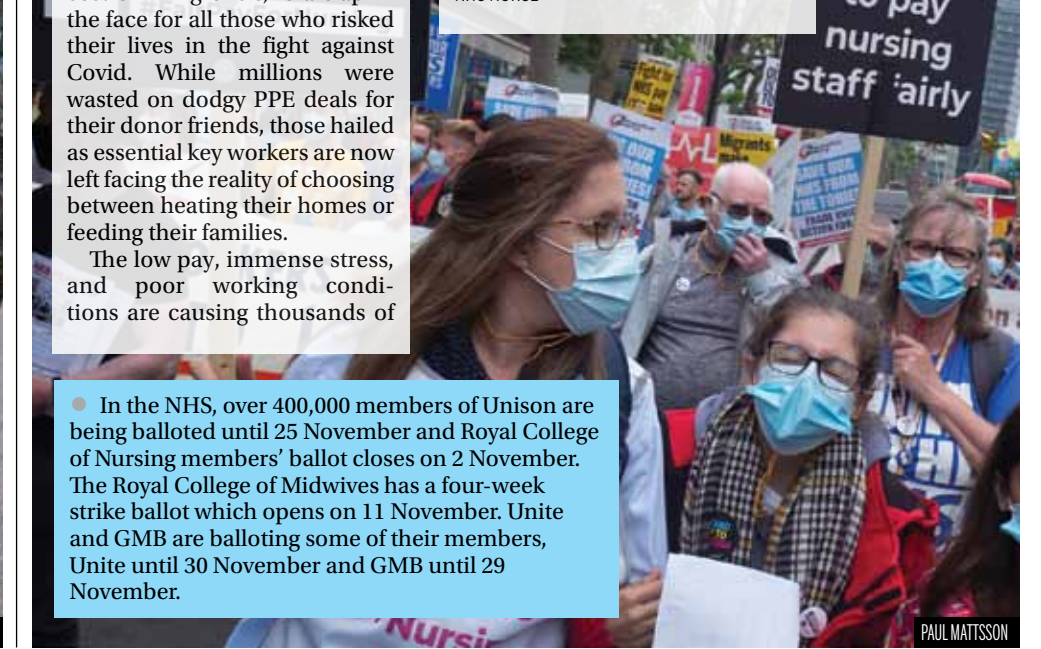
The insulting 4% pay offer from the Tories, in the face of the cost-of-living crisis, is a slap in the face for all those who risked their lives in the fight against Covid. While millions were wasted on dodgy PPE deals for their donor friends, those hailed as essential key workers are now left facing the reality of choosing between heating their homes or feeding their families.

The low pay, immense stress, and poor working conditions are causing thousands of

workers to leave the health service altogether. This has a horrendous impact on the care that the NHS can provide. More than 40,000 nurses have left the NHS in the past year, and one in ten nursing roles are unfilled. The fight for better pay and conditions is also a fight to keep our patients safe.

I will be voting 'yes' in the upcoming Unison strike ballot. Yes to a proper pay rise and an NHS that has the resources to look after everyone in our society.

MATT
NHS NURSE



PAUL MATTESSON

In the NHS, over 400,000 members of Unison are being balloted until 25 November and Royal College of Nursing members' ballot closes on 2 November. The Royal College of Midwives has a four-week strike ballot which opens on 11 November. Unite and GMB are balloting some of their members, Unite until 30 November and GMB until 29 November.



JUDY BEISHON

NHS haemorrhaging money to PFI companies

JANE WARD
SOUTHAMPTON WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

£475 million was spent by the NHS in 2020-21, just to pay interest on Private Finance Initiative (PFI) loans alone. With interest linked to RPI inflation, as the costs of goods rise, so does the size of PFI debt, and of annual repayments too. This is at a time when the NHS is facing cuts of £12 billion a year by 2024-25 as Covid funding is withdrawn, and an estimated £6 billion of increased costs next year due to rising prices.

The PFI contracts ensure that repayments are guaranteed and will take precedence over all other NHS expenditure such as staffing and equipment. Investors in PFI schemes make huge profits while the NHS and patients suffer.

PFI was introduced by the Tory

government in 1992, and massively expanded under Tony Blair's New Labour government. Private companies raised capital for hospital building schemes, built them and then leased them back to the NHS on lucrative contracts lasting as long as 50 years. In addition, they maintain the fabric of the buildings and may provide services such as cleaning and catering.

It is calculated that PFI schemes will eventually make £80 billion for the lenders and leave the NHS with just £13 billion of assets. A third of projects ran late and went over budget, and a number of PFI hospitals had structural defects.

The new Royal Liverpool Hospital has just opened, five years later than planned. Carillion, the company that was building it, went under. Major cracks in the concrete structure were

detected and the external cladding was found to be combustible. The cost of building the hospital was estimated to be £624 million. The final cost is believed to be over £1 billion.

The government stopped any new PFI schemes in 2018, but their legacy and a mountain of debt remain. The Socialist Party demands the scrapping of all PFI contracts and the cancellation of all outstanding debt. The PFI companies should not be paid any compensation. For a fully funded and publicly owned NHS.

WHAT WAS BLAIRISM?
Come and discuss at
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Victory for Calverton school strike: "We won everything. Striking works!"



Louise addresses the picket line JAMES IVENS

Striking workers at Calverton primary school in Newham, east London, have won their dispute. Their National Education Union (NEU) district secretary, Socialist Party member Louise Cuffaro, spoke to the Socialist about the struggle.

What caused the strike and what have workers won?

The big issue was that the new head came in, after a major restructure and voluntary redundancies last academic year, and wanted to impose a new dress code, and also to cut paid dependants' leave.

This is something low-paid workers especially rely on, to take care of family in emergencies and sick dependants. Management cut it, from up to ten days a year, down to five.

The NEU reps tried all summer term, and then again at the beginning of the autumn term, but the head would not budge - until the strike won. The school will also pay it backdated to anyone who suffered during the period of reduction.

The new management also wanted to get rid of the extended day - 'wrap-around care' for parents who need extended childcare due to work. That was really important for parents in the area, but also for low-paid staff, because it meant both more hours and overtime rates.

We have got them to honour the existing contracts. Hours will be made up by breakfast club and after-school clubs, and anyone receiving overtime pay will be honoured till March 2023.

Staff felt the new management displayed an unacceptable bullying and

disrespectful attitude towards long-standing staff.

But agreement has now been reached. Workers who had been victimised or unduly punished before the strike have had all proposed changes reversed. And management has promised to treat all staff with respect and open regular opportunities for dialogue.

They also conceded that any changes to school policies must be negotiated with the NEU and other appropriate unions. That's really important. It comes from something that happened while we were in dispute.

A week or so into the strike action, management unilaterally announced a review of support staff contracts! We viewed that as a punishment for going on strike. But now they've completely withdrawn that, with immediate effect.

What lessons are there to learn from this?

We took eleven days' strike action. We won everything. Striking works!

Support staff at Calverton have learnt, the hard way, that there's strength in unity. It was difficult for them. They are predominantly from the local community, and they care about the pupils and their education.

They reached out to parents with leaflets and meetings, to explain that staff working conditions are ultimately the children's learning conditions, and that both parents and staff need to be consulted before any changes are made.

We held a meeting to explain the real issues and get them on board. They came on the vibrant picket lines.

We published more strike action dates for after half term, to show how determined the strikers were. The parents were vital in supporting the strike. They helped push the school to settle, and at the end we had a well-attended celebratory get-together.

This all helped to ensure the local authority and school leadership were keen to discuss and negotiate an agreement based on the NEU demands.

The union group at the school feels very strong and together. But we do have to remain vigilant. Especially as all schools are going to be under even worse pressure than before to cut jobs and increase workload. The cost-of-living crisis comes on top of a system in crisis and already cut to the bone.

At Calverton we still have a legal strike mandate, so if they try to back out while that's still live, watch this space. But the main thing is that in the long term it'll be very important for Calverton, and all other schools, to get, and remain, organised.

We need a national strike, alongside other workers. Education is in crisis. It's not just about pay, it's about funding, and a voice for all workers in schools, to have a say on what kind of education we provide and how pupils and staff are treated.

And we can't rely on the Labour Party to fight for us. The Labour local authority mostly stayed out of our dispute - until we announced further strike dates.

The unions want to resolve all matters by talking, but when faced with intransigence, action speaks louder than words!

Newham's Labour council could and should have intervened immediately, on the side of the union. You can see their real attitude in their attempt to break the strike of their own bin workers over pay. The working class needs a new party of our own.

• NEU members have begun a national ballot for strike action over pay and funding. See 'Teachers and Support staff ballot for action' at socialistparty.org.uk

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

Newham bin strike: Labour council honours Eleanor Marx while attacking today's striking workers!

NIALL MULHOLLAND EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

On 17 October, during a full meeting of the council at Stratford town hall, officials from Newham Labour council outrageously called the police to try to stop people in the public gallery voicing support for striking refuse workers.

A protest lobby took place outside the town hall, including representation from the refuse workers, who, as members of Unite the Union, have been on strike in recent weeks for decent pay.

A Unite activist interrupted the council meeting to say that a request for a relative of a sacked refuse worker to make a deputation to the council had been denied. He was quickly surrounded by council security staff and the chair adjourned the meeting, causing protests from the public gallery.

Socialist Party member Lois Austin, who previously stood for Newham mayor as a Trade Union and Socialist Coalition candidate, was singled out by an unelected council official, who told the meeting it could not continue until she left, and the police were called!

To allow a Green councillor the opportunity to ask a question about council cleansing staff, who are

balloting for strike action over their disgracefully low pay, Lois decided to leave the chamber, accompanied by four other Socialist Party members.

In the foyer of the town hall building, they were met by police officers. A senior officer told the five that they were "detained" because there "may have been a breach of the peace". After Lois and other Socialist Party comrades adamantly defended their rights, the police officer said they were free to leave.

When the council meeting resumed, a Labour councillor manoeuvred to change the order of business to stop the cleansing workers' plight from being taken on the agenda.

Despite this, councillors had the temerity to agree to erect a plaque to Eleanor Marx, a champion of the workers' movement, at Canning Town library!

- On 28 October, Unite, with Newham Trades Council backing, held a rally and demo of refuse workers, relatives and supporters, trade unionists and community activists, in East Ham. Niall spoke for Newham Trades Council and called for an immediate pay rise for the refuse and cleansing workers, and an emergency needs budget by the council to meet the needs of the community.



Demo to the council FERDY LYONS

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MARXISTS AND THE TRADE UNIONS Come and discuss at SOCIALISM 2022 London, 19-20 November tickets and info at socialism.org.uk

Huge vote for national strike action in universities

UCU members have been striking in FE colleges ROGER THOMAS



BEA GARDINER UCU MEMBER

Over 70,000 university staff at 150 universities can now strike after University and College Union (UCU) members overwhelmingly voted 'yes' to strike action. Over 80% voted in favour, in two national ballots, beating the anti-union 50% turnout threshold.

We now need to build on this momentum with a strategy that backs up the ballot results, builds on the significant action already taken in recent years, and demonstrates we are prepared to take serious, escalating action in conjunction with other campus unions, Unison and Unite.

We must also appeal to students to stand with us as we take on our common enemies - the fat-cat vice-chancellors and the Tory government - fighting for free higher education, run in the interests of both staff and students.

It is the first time UCU has achieved a national mandate for strike action since the anti-union voting threshold was enacted in 2016. Every university member can now stand together to fight back against low and unequal pay, insecure work and high workloads, and every USS pension scheme member can strike together for a decent pension.

The results are a significant escalation in the disputes, which have been fought on a disaggregated basis so far.

The ballot campaign had many positive aspects, including the noticeable increase in resources allocated to support the ballot by the head office. But the main factor that secured a strong turnout and 'yes' vote is the conditions members face, combined with the confidence gained from seeing other workers taking action.

The political and economic situation further intensified members' anger. Liz Truss was in post for less time than our ballot ran for, and the promise of fresh attacks by our new rich-list prime minister is a potential rallying point for struggle.

Determined to mobilise

With the ballot campaign and results fresh in members' minds, these conditions will generate strong picket lines, including in the branches taking their first strike action since the 2011 pensions dispute.

Many activists in these branches are determined to mobilise for sustained action if required. Having been on the sidelines in recent years, they are now able to join the fightback.

Yet the general secretary's proposed strategy, circulated as a discussion document, does not reflect these ripe conditions or the determined mood of most members. Of course, the ballot results should be used as a tool in negotiations, but the strength of the mandate is lost if the employers don't think we are serious about using it.

53 days of action by Metro workers

RICHARD GINGELL BLACK COUNTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

In the West Midlands, joining the fight against the rising cost of living, are the drivers, conductors and other

tram-service workers at West Midlands Metro Limited (MML), members of Unite the Union.

These workers facilitate over a million journeys a year, providing vital connectivity between Birmingham and Wolverhampton.

Their reward for this? £22,000 a year - just a smidgen over minimum wage, making them some of the lowest-paid workers in the industry. It's no surprise then, that after 23 years of operation, the workers at MML have finally had enough.

In the face of increasing bills, and a constant churn of staff unable to make a basic living from these wages, the workers of MML are out in force, with over 50 total days of strike action

Similarly, the confidence members have right now is in danger of waning if action is stalled, or takes the form of token strike days with the promise of something more down the line. The overwhelming feeling is the result is an opportunity to show the collective power of university workers, and we want to use it!

A final decision on strategy and strike dates will be made at a Higher Education Committee meeting on 3 November.

Coordination

The union is fighting two separate disputes on a range of issues, and the experience of members coming into action is varied. Building links between branches and solidarity from the wider trade union movement, as well as maintaining the strike fund, will be important to keep the union united.

Serious coordination of strategy with the other campus trade unions is essential. Unite is currently balloting, and some Unison branches have live mandates, taking strike action already this term. As a minimum, the UCU should ensure our strategy aligns with the other campus unions.

Better still would be to join the striking UCU further education college branches, organising joint education demonstrations and mass pickets.

We should plan with the National Education Union, which is currently balloting its members over pay, as a step toward a coordinated education strike in the spring.

WOMEN IN THE TRADE UNIONS - A PROUD HISTORY OF STRUGGLE Come and discuss at SOCIALISM 2022 London, 19-20 November tickets and info at socialism.org.uk

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

RMT national rail strike Fighting against looting bosses



MIDLANDS RMT MEMBER

As we approach winter, and working-class families are trying to hold off switching the central heating on for as long as possible, RMT transport union members are taking several days more strike action in defence of our jobs, pay and conditions.

This national railway dispute is the responsibility of the Tory government, Network Rail management and the Train Operating Companies (TOCs), which have all decided that railway workers must give up terms and conditions and forgo a real-terms pay rise.

It is plain to see that, taken in the context of the wider situation, railway workers, like so many others, are being told to take a pay reduction in order to re-inflate the profits of the rail industry bosses and shareholders.

But worse than this is the fact that the TOC employers intend to, in effect, 'wipe the slate clean' and replace many current roles with new ones, with inferior pay and conditions. Thousands of Network Rail maintenance jobs are to be scrapped, wholesale changes to working practices are to be introduced without agreement with rail unions, and pay is to be driven down across the board.

One area the government isn't planning to touch is the bloated salaries of top railway executives, shareholder dividends, and the astronomical profits of the parasitical Rolling Stock Leasing Companies (ROSCOs).

RMT recently revealed the

shocking scale of profiteering which goes on at a time when we are supposedly 'broke'.

Bosses enrich themselves

While we are told that we must tighten our belts and lose precious terms and conditions, £152 million was paid out in dividends by the ROSCOs, £235 million profit went to maintenance contractors, and no less than £600 million was siphoned out of the railway into the pockets of the TOC shareholders.

Every penny of this loot was created by the efforts of the railway workforce. And they expect us to accept that there's no money for a pay rise!

We deserve safe and secure jobs, we deserve to be paid properly for the work we do, and if the employers want to change our jobs then this should be agreed with the rail unions and not imposed against our will.

We're not asking for the earth but we will fight on until we get what we want. We will also continue to demand the democratic socialist nationalisation of the rail industry.

NATIONALISATION AND WORKERS' POWER Come and discuss at SOCIALISM 2022 London, 19-20 November tickets and info at socialism.org.uk



COP27: CAPITALISM HAS 'NO CREDIBLE PATHWAY' TO SAVE THE PLANET

WHY A SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE TO PROFIT-DRIVEN CATASTROPHE IS NEEDED

COP27, the 27th United Nations Climate Change conference, will be held from 6 to 18 November 2022 in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt.

Mark Best, Socialist Party national committee, looks back at last year's conference, what came from it, and why profit-driven capitalism finds itself unable to avoid climate catastrophe.

It has been a year since the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference was held in Glasgow. The Conservative Party, then led by Boris Johnson, was keen to use the event to show the world that it, and the capitalist system it acts to maintain, understand the anger and urgency working-class and young people feel when looking at the already catastrophic effects of climate change.

The 'once in a lifetime' heatwaves that have happened twice in Britain over the last five years. The forest fires, floods, droughts and storms that are occurring globally with increased frequency and intensity. The bosses feel the pressure on them as people across the world are drawing the conclusion that if the capitalist system can't afford to provide us with decent jobs, decent housing, and even a safe planet to live on, then we can't afford their system.

After all the trumpeting of their green credentials, what actually came out of COP26? The conference wasn't defined by a new world plan to take the necessary steps to solve the climate crisis. It was defined by arguments over who would pay for the investment necessary - no one wanting to be green at the expense of finding themselves at a disadvantage in the competition for profits across the world. Pledges for investment, by banks and big companies, fell apart under closer inspection.

But was the failure of COP26 down to the individual failings of the politicians, CEOs, lobbyists etc who descended on Glasgow? Could more skilful, more pragmatic capitalist politicians have sorted out a better deal?

Reviewing the conference, its debates, and who was there, makes it clear: the barrier facing the needed action on the climate is the capitalist system itself.

Even the UN environment agency has said that there is "no credible pathway to [limiting the temperature rise to] 1.5C in place" and that the only option is the "rapid transformation of societies." Of course, it cannot draw the conclusion about what type of society is needed - a socialist society.

One of the contradictions inherent in capitalism is that, although production is global, with supply chains

going through multiple countries and companies owning subsidiaries all over the world - it is still based on nation states. Capitalists compete with each other for markets and for profit, so seek to drive down the cost of production as low as they can get away with.

You can see this in the disagreements over the plans on how, and how quickly, to move away from using coal to produce energy. Neither India, China nor the US were among the 40 countries that signed the pledge to end coal power by 2040. To do so would put their own capitalists at a disadvantage by limiting their ability to profit, losing out to others around the world.

A transition to net zero, removing more greenhouse gases than are being produced, is necessary to prevent climate change. But to do so would require a massive shift in the production of energy and its distribution. Those bosses in polluting industries currently making a profit from the extraction and burning of fossil fuels would lose that avenue for profit.

Banks and investment funds across the world have invested heavily into these industries because they make money. But a transition to net zero by 2036, would mean \$11 trillion worth of assets becoming worthless, around the same as the loss of growth in the recession following the 2008 crash.

Here, the irrational logic of capitalism is on display. The necessary action to preserve itself is unable to be taken, in part because of the massive damage to profits it would cause!

Fossil fuel industry

It's no coincidence that the largest delegation at COP26 was from the fossil fuel industry, there to fight for its own position. Its vast economic power, enormous profits, and extensive lobbying and financing of capitalist politicians, means it can have a large influence on the actions taken by governments - often conflicting with the interests of other sections of the capitalist class.

An example of this was the opposition from right-wing US Democratic Senators Manchin and Sinema to Joe Biden's climate and stimulus bill. Heavily funded by the fossil fuel industries in their states of West Virginia and Arizona, the Senators won concessions for the oil and gas industries, holding up a key stimulus bill until they were included.

But does the race for profit mean there will be no action over climate change under capitalism? Environmental laws exist in countries across the world. In the interests of the capitalist class as a whole, capitalist states have taken measures to ban companies from excessively polluting the environment, for example, even if that limits the ability of a narrow section of the capitalists to maximise profits.



PHOTOS: PUBLIC DOMAIN, MARY FINCH AND KENJUE/ICC

The ability and willingness to enforce these measures is another thing - look at the inaction on the pollution from sewage and chemicals to British waterways in recent times.

Internationally, action has been taken as well. In 1989, due to mass anger and it clearly damaging the ozone layer, CFC chemicals were banned. Since, the damage has stopped and begun to reverse. The effects of this measure were spread relatively evenly across the capitalist states. But the scale of the shift away from fossil fuels, the unevenness of its impact and the need for democratic planning, make it impossible under capitalism.

That doesn't mean no action will be taken, however. Capitalist politicians feel the pressure and can see how the impacts of food scarcity and natural disasters can lead people into struggle against their rule. One of the first things Sunak did when he became

prime minister was to reinstate the ban on fracking, because of how unpopular this is for the constituents of many Tory MPs.

A country being energy self-sufficient, and relying more on renewable energy, can mitigate the impacts of global events like the war in Ukraine's effect on fossil fuel prices. And, on a purely economic basis, some 'green' moves are beneficial for the capitalists. Manufacturing the engines of electric vehicles requires fewer steps than combustion engines. It therefore presents the bosses with an opportunity to weaken the power of the organised working class in the car plants.

Owners and shareholders of, for example, wind turbine manufacturers have an interest in more 'green' policies. But they don't make and sell these primarily because of the environment. They are produced to make a profit.

Any action put forward by the political representatives of the capitalist class will try to mitigate the impact on profits as much as possible. This means attempting to pass the cost on to the working class. It can mean austerity, justified by the need for investment in green energy. Or regressive taxes on consumption, like the fuel charges in France, which sparked the yellow vests movement. A shift away from polluting industries on the basis of capitalism threatens workers with being thrown on the scrapheap, without skilled well-paid jobs to go to.

Surveys of North Sea oil workers have shown that they do those jobs because of the pay and security, not because they like extracting oil. And the majority would want to use their skills to safely decommission the existing polluting infrastructure and instead build renewable energy infrastructure in its place. But a 'green transition' to renewable energy under

capitalism would mean workers' jobs, terms and conditions under threat to maximise profits.

However, the future doesn't have to mean continued capitalist misery, green or otherwise. For socialists, ownership and control of how goods are manufactured and distributed is key to dealing with the climate crisis. Under capitalism, the capitalist class, making up a small minority of the population, own and control the means of production - the machinery, buildings and so on that are needed to produce goods, using the labour of the working class.

The working class, from its pivotal position in relation to production and distribution, has the power to run society, not on the basis of profit and competition - but democratic planning.

That's why when we call for the nationalisation of the top 150 companies which dominate the economy,

including those involved in energy production, distribution and fossil fuel extraction. This is to form the basis of a democratic socialist plan. That means the working class collectively, nationally and internationally, coming together to debate and decide on what we need to produce; what research and investment is needed; how we can produce what is needed in a way which doesn't destroy the environment.

From this flows the demands we fight for, our slogans, and what sort of action is needed to win. At every stage, pointing towards the power of the working class when organised, and its potential to run society.

Workers' struggle

Collective struggle of workers and young people to replace the current capitalist system with socialism is the only way to truly be able to fix the climate crisis and plan to end environmental destruction. Unfortunately, other groups and individuals put forward ideas and take actions which fail to unite the working class and can, in fact, do the opposite - creating the idea that the interests of workers and of environmental protesters are conflicting.

Blaming the development of the productive forces or fighting for "de-growth" will not be able to convince the mass of the working class to join the fight.

Nowhere in the world will workers be won to a programme which is seen to be promising a worsening standard of living. Even more so at a time when inflation of energy bills mean working-class people are forced to decide between heating and eating.

This winter, individual's fossil fuel emissions will decrease as people struggle to heat and power their homes. Without linking the need to reduce these emissions to the wastage, inefficiencies and built in obsolescence that capitalism creates, the need to do so becomes abstract to most workers.

A key debate which needs to be had for those taking action over the climate is over what tactics can win.

Just Stop Oil, a campaign group calling for the ending of any new fossil fuel developments in Britain, has been in the news for actions involving small numbers of individuals blockading roads, bridges and petrol stations, and throwing soup on the (undamaged) Sunflowers painting by Van Gogh.

Actions which are disruptive are not bad in and of themselves. When rail workers go on strike, the cancelled trains and journeys mean the bosses lose millions of pounds in profit. But that is an act of collective struggle, one in which the inconvenience to travellers can be understood to be the fault of the rail bosses, not workers fighting for jobs or pay and conditions.

The rail strikes earlier this year

have shown the way for other sections of workers to fight back against the cost-of-living crisis. Strikes and strike ballots have drawn in hundreds of thousands of workers, making the movement potentially more powerful.

The effect of small forces causing disruptions, or taking provocative direct action, can have the opposite effect; failing to build mass popular support, and risking suggesting that small groups of activists can replace the powerful potential of the working class acting for itself.

We fight for the maximum unity of the working class to be able to take the necessary action to end and reverse environmental destruction. That would mean a rational and democratically produced plan of production here and across the world.

Friedrich Engels in his 1876 unfinished work 'The part played by labour in the transition from ape to man', writes how, with each leap in understanding and ability to improve our standard of living, "nature takes its revenge on us. Each victory, it is true, in the first place brings about the results we expected, but in the second and third places it has quite different, unforeseen effects which only too often cancel the first.

"And, in fact, with every day that passes we are acquiring a better understanding of these laws and getting to perceive both the more immediate and the more remote consequences of our interference with the traditional course of nature.

"In particular, after the mighty advances made by the natural sciences in the present century, we are more than ever in a position to realise, and hence to control, also the more remote natural consequences of at least our day-to-day production activities [...] and so are afforded an opportunity to control and regulate these effects as well.

"This regulation, however, requires something more than mere knowledge. It requires a complete revolution in our hitherto existing mode of production, and simultaneously a revolution in our whole contemporary social order."

To do that requires taking into public ownership the commanding heights of the economy and drawing up a democratic plan of production, research and investment. And to do that requires getting rid of the bosses and their rotten system, and replacing it with socialism.

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



Reviewing COP26 makes it clear: the barrier facing the needed action on the climate is the capitalist system itself



Collective struggle of workers and young people to replace the current capitalist system with socialism is the only way to truly be able to fix the climate crisis

Students - Fighting back against cost-of-living crisis - Standing with striking workers

THEO SHARIEFF

SOCIALIST STUDENTS NATIONAL ORGANISER

On 2 November, striking workers and trade unionists protested outside Parliament to demand that the crumbling Tory government goes. Socialist Students was there, and out on campuses on the same day, standing in solidarity with the trade union movement fighting back against the cost-of-living crisis.

The trade unions have shown what can be achieved through getting organised. That's why Socialist Students is holding a national week of action from Monday 7 November to demand action from university management on the student cost-of-living crisis.

Students face a massive hit to their maintenance loans. Many are worried at the very real prospect of running out of money before the end of term. Socialist Students fights for rent control, cost-of-living grants for students, and free education.

In order to achieve this, it is necessary to build a nationally coordinated student movement. A national

student movement could link up students with workers in struggle. This way we can fight for the funding our universities need from central government, in order to provide a decent, high-quality, free education for all.

Socialist Students stands in solidarity with the University and Colleges Union (UCU), which has successfully balloted for strike action (see page 7). Over 70,000 workers at 150 universities could take strike action soon.

The UCU has been fighting for years against attacks to universities by management and the Tories. Socialist Students will be visiting UCU picket lines, and getting in touch with UCU branches to discuss how best to build student support for the strikes.

And on 9 November, Socialist Students is standing in solidarity with students and workers in Sri Lanka, who have been fighting against their own cost-of-living crisis, and now face brutal repression from the Sri Lankan state (see below).

● Visit socialiststudents.org.uk/join to join local protests and events near you

Sri Lanka – support call for international day of action Protest on 9 November

The Movement for People's Councils (MPC), together with the Inter University Students' Federation (IUSF), are appealing to the workers, students and youth, internationally, to support the struggle in Sri Lanka.

As a first step, they request organisations call a protest on 9 November – or in that week – outside Sri Lankan embassies and 'high commissions', to highlight the undemocratic actions of the government. Both the Socialist Party, and the Committee for Workers' International (CWI) that we're part of, fully support this call.

Conditions in Sri Lanka continue to deteriorate for millions of people. Neoliberal austerity is proposed as the solution by the government.

In order to carry through those measures, the government has increased repression against all opposition. Every single peaceful protest is brutally attacked by state forces.

Many activists are arrested for just taking part in the protests. The convenor of Inter University Students Federation is still being held under the draconian legislation, the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA).

The government further plans to curtail freedom of expression and assembly. There is an urgent need to defend fundamental democratic rights in Sri Lanka.

The campaign demands that the Sri Lanka government must:

- Release IUSF student leaders, Wasantha Mudalige and Siridhamma Himi, detained for over 65 days
- Stop the attacks on all protesters and drop all charges
- Repeal the PTA and all other oppressive laws
- Allow freedom of assembly, speech, and freedom to dissent

- Protest in London on 9 November, 4pm-7pm – Sri Lankan High Commission, 13 Hyde Park Gardens, W2 2LU
- Please sign the petition – righttoprotestik.org
- Read more about the protest movement in Sri Lanka – socialistworld.net

WHAT WAY FORWARD FOR REVOLUTION IN SRI LANKA, WITH PRASAD, A LEADER OF THE MASS REVOLT

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

Katie (centre) and Corinthia (right) at the protest in Birmingham



Thousands on 'March of the Mummies'

● Birmingham

Every week, I see posts in an online group of women, who are being let go from their job after falling pregnant, given reduced hours without consultation, or forced to work full-time while being the main carer of a young child. The trade unions must fight on these issues.

I attended from Northampton, with a friend who is a single parent of a daughter under two. She told me she would love to return to work, but childcare costs are too much. She plans to wait for her daughter to turn three, when she can benefit from 15 hours free childcare.

For me to do the same, I would have to reapply for my job. There is no guarantee it would still be available, or that my hours could be flexible around childcare needs.

The March of the Mummies demanded investment in childcare, but the parents on the demonstration were making the case that childcare should be free, and that these services need to be taken back in house.

KATIE SIMPSON

Many of the protesters had not been to a protest before, but their accumulated anger about the cost of living and more, has forced them onto the streets.

Labour MP Steve McCabe addressed the crowd. But has criticised the Birmingham homecare workers when they were on strike to defend their jobs and pay in 2019.

Sombrey, he said that a Labour government would inherit the Tories' mess and have to be 'practical'. This is same line pushed by Keir Starmer, that under a Labour government renationalisation of industries is 'not realistic', and austerity will be used to bill the working class for Covid and the economic downturn.

There are 250 billionaires in the UK. We need a new mass workers' party and coordinated strike action to fight for the redistribution of this wealth, so it can be invested back into society, creating free, quality childcare, where staff are paid at least £15 an hour.

CORINTHIA WARD

● London

Thousands of parents descended on Westminster on 29 October. They filled Parliament Square for a protest demanding childcare rights, organised by the Pregnant Then Screwed campaign. Many came decked out in rags and fake blood – a 'March of the Mummies' against the Tory horror show.

The cost of childcare is unaffordable to working-class parents, and many middle-class parents too. But if you take time out from work to care for your children instead, your income at the time and long-term career prospects suffer hugely.

There were trade unionists and international campaigners among the crowd. Many others were from

walks of life traditionally less affected by these attacks, but now feeling the pinch. The Socialist Party's calls for free childcare now got a good response all round.

Platform speakers rightly criticised the Tory government for slashing funding to the public sector. They pointed out that affordable, public childcare facilities had suffered the worst cuts in deprived areas.

Those areas are managed not by the Tories, but by Labour. It is Labour councils who are mostly responsible for accepting Tory austerity and punishing parents and kids – rather than trying to mobilise a fight for the resources we all need.

Some were hoping against hope that a Keir Starmer government would solve these problems. But Starmer has promised to continue austerity if – as seems almost inevitable – his New Labour wins the next election. That's why we call for the unions to take steps towards a new, mass party of the working class.

JAMES IVENS

HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN – WHERE DOES IT COME FROM AND HOW TO FIGHT IT

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

Why I'm coming to Socialism 2022... and you should too



Socialism 2022 is the place to be for striking workers ELAINE BRUNSHALL

'Time and money well spent'

NICK HAWKESFORD
DEVON SOCIALIST PARTY

I was thrilled when I heard about Socialism 2022. I eagerly awaited the release of the programme of workshops.

As a newly elected Equalities Officer for my Unite union branch, I was hoping there would be talks on topics that would be relevant. And the programme has not disappointed.

With so many interesting topics on offer, I may have to pin the programme to the wall and throw darts

at it to make a decision. But I know whatever I decide, it will be time and money well spent.

I joined the Socialist Party in July. I did so, first and foremost, because I wanted to make a difference, to improve the conditions in which people live, and to channel my energy into something productive.

I was sick of the kind of politics endemic to certain parts of the internet – identity politics and futile bickering, which served only to waste precious time and energy. I was bored of the same old tired arguments used to justify the same old tired austerity policies, and I was delighted to find a party whose goals align with my own.

I'm going to Socialism 2022 because it's important to meet socialists

outside of our own area, and to come together to learn, listen, and share our views with people who have the same political goal.

'Not to be missed'

DAN FELMLEE
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

This year, the Socialism 2022 event is more relevant ever, as we see an increasing cost-of-living crisis and co-ordinated strike action. We all have the sense that the excesses of capitalism are causing the global economy and governance to strain the buttons, if not burst at the seams.

During this turbulent time, it is

crucial to have a firm footing in understanding socialism. There is an overwhelming abundance of workshops to attend and participate.

The events around the passing of the Queen will be addressed in 'Capitalism and the Crown'.

I'm part of the University and College Union (UCU), which has just voted for strike action. I think it will be critical for me to attend the workshops about the lessons of the 1926 general strike, and 'Are we heading for a general strike?'

I'm very concerned about climate change, and can't imagine a capitalist motivator to solve it. So I am eager to attend 'Can a sustainable socialist planned economy combat climate change?' And I think it will be important to attend 'Harassment and violence against women – where does it come from and how to fight it?'

I'm also look forward to the warm fellowship of Socialist Party members, and meeting people from throughout the country. Socialism 2022 is not to be missed.

'Its powerful stuff'

LYNN GUNNIGLE
DEVON SOCIALIST PARTY

Last year was my ever first Socialism event. I was a little apprehensive, but I need not have worried. It was very well organised, and there were so many workshops to choose from.

The sessions were interesting and informative and passed far too quickly. I was made to feel very welcome by everyone. And it was lovely

to meet face to face with socialists from across the country.

The speakers at the rally and workshops were great. I remember thinking how lucky I was to be learning so much, in such a short space of time, from each of those individuals who had worked for years or even decades in their own industry or sector, and were now passing on their knowledge and experience. I found that invaluable, especially on subjects I know little or nothing about.

What I wasn't expecting was the buzz, the vibe and the overwhelming feeling of solidarity that hundreds of people with the same hopes, dreams and determination coming together can create. Its powerful stuff.

I especially enjoyed the social side of the event – the lunch and coffee breaks, the evening drinks, even the journey travelling with Socialist Party members from Devon. I talked and chatted for what seemed like the whole weekend, met lots of new people, and learnt a lot.

I came home in a happy haze, inspired to keep on striving for socialism in any way I can. It was a really good experience from which I concluded that socialism is the only viable way forward, and food for the soul.

That's why I am now looking forward to doing it all over again at Socialism 2022. See you there.

- Find out more about Socialism 2022 on pages 3 and 16

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

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- or make cheques payable to Socialist Party, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT



SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	%	Q4: OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2022	DEADLINE: 3 JANUARY 2023
South West	834	1,800	46%		
East Midlands	633	1,850	34%		
North West	258	1,150	22%		
Northern	150	750	20%		
Yorkshire	499	2,550	20%		
Wales	441	2,300	19%		
Eastern	155	1,200	13%		
West Midlands	262	2,600	10%		
London	431	4,600	9%		
Southern & SE	168	2,350	7%		
Other	457	3,850	12%		
TOTAL	4,288	25,000	17%		

Cumbria Workers' Rally

BRENT KENNEDY
CARLISLE TUC PRESIDENT

The Cumbria Workers' Rally brought almost 50 people together to hear local trade union reps and organisers give a picture of the bosses' attacks. At the event, organised by the Trades

Agency have joined the union, their workforce meeting was the best-attended ever, and two-thirds have already voted.

At the McVities biscuit factory, two-thirds have rejected the pay offer and voted for a strike. Attendance at union meetings has increased from 22 to 160.

With Royal Mail trying to break the Communication Workers' Union (CWU), a striking worker said concrete solidarity from other unions

must include a central strike fund. They said there is no permanent solution to the problems at Royal Mail, short of renationalisation.

A striking BT worker thanked members of other unions for the continued support on the picket lines. While a striking rail worker said they would defy any new anti-strike laws.

Some speakers demanded that Labour commit to repealing all anti-union laws, and come out clearly in support of striking workers. Others

criticised Keir Starmer for dropping popular nationalisation policies, and promising more austerity when in government.

ARE WE HEADING FOR A GENERAL STRIKE?

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



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 sick pay, 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.

- 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.

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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.

- 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.

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World's richest billionaire buys Twitter

Fight for democratic public ownership of social media



Elon Musk PHOTO: DUNCAN HULL/CC

JOE FATHALLAH
CARDIFF WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

Elon Musk, currently the world's richest billionaire, has completed the takeover of micro-blogging platform Twitter for a sum of \$44 billion. The New York Stock Exchange reported on 20 October that trading in Twitter's shares had been suspended, with the reason "merger effective". Musk himself tweeted "the bird is freed".

Musk, who is also the CEO of Tesla and SpaceX, was born and brought up in apartheid South Africa, in a wealthy family. His father, Errol Musk, is the co-owner of an emerald mine in Zambia. Elon holds a reputation as a micro-manager with an oppressive style and is known for firing employees in bulk who refuse to comply with his companies' long-hours culture.

Musk's own Twitter usage has caused controversy in the past, including tweets comparing Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to Hitler, and deriding the use of preferred pronouns to refer to people. He was also involved in the spreading of misinformation about the Covid-19 pandemic. Not the sort of person who should have control over a major media outlet!

Twitter has gained a reputation for abuse, especially towards women and minority ethnic users, which the previous management tried to address through the banning of offending accounts - for the purpose of the company's public image, of course.

Musk's first acts have been a series

of sackings at the top. As well as being a potential precursor to wider job losses, it also suggests a change of policy. Jessica Gonzalez, from media advocacy group Free Press, commented: "I think we'll see prolific conspiracy theories, and white supremacists return to the platform, and a lot more people who hold power and who are willing to use platforms to spread hate and harassment campaigns."

The tech multinationals which own the social media platforms are private companies which exist for the sole purpose of generating profit. This means that the content which gains prominence is that which creates the most advertising revenue, regardless of any other potential harm it could cause.

Socialists are not generally in favour of state or corporate censorship. Where such measures are put in place, they can be used against the left and the workers' movement. Instead, we support public ownership and democratic workers' control of the social media platforms. This would allow the algorithms to be redesigned to prioritise valuable content rather than clickbait and potentially harmful content.

In the first instance, this would mean nationalisation of the hosting platforms and codebases with compensation only based on proven need - of which the Silicon Valley giants have little! Of course, these companies are multinationals, so to be able to democratically plan the most effective use of information technology on a world scale, an international socialist system is needed.

TONY SAUNOIS
COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL (CWI)
SECRETARY

In the tightest presidential election ever in Brazil, the far-right populist Jair Bolsonaro, was narrowly defeated by the veteran candidate of the Workers' Party (PT), Luiz Inácio da Silva, popularly known as Lula. Lula scraped to victory, taking 50.9% of the vote to Bolsonaro's 49.1%. Lula won 59 million votes to Bolsonaro's 57 million. Brazil is now a highly polarised and divided society. Despite Lula's victory, the battle for Brazil is not over.

The defeat of Bolsonaro was celebrated by millions who feared a second term for the far-right reactionary populist. The narrowness of the result has shocked many given the catastrophic consequences of his government. A Covid-denier, he presided over 900,000 deaths during the pandemic. Millions have been driven into poverty and living standards have fallen. Vicious racism, homophobia and misogyny have been the hallmark of his regime, along with the destruction of vast swathes of the Amazon rainforest as he colluded with loggers and powerful landowners.

At the same time, his populism managed to win support among the large Brazilian middle class and sections of the urban poor, reflecting the fears of many, of violence and crime. This was combined with an appeal to reactionary sections of society, under the slogan of "family, patriotism and religion", many of which have been drawn into the explosion of the evangelical churches which, according to some estimates, now embrace up to one third of the population.

Lula

Millions rallied to support Lula in order to eject Bolsonaro. However, many did so with a heavy scepticism because of the record of past PT governments. Lula was president for two terms, first elected in 2003. Under his presidency, he was able to introduce social reforms, which opened the universities to millions from the 'favelas', especially black youth who had previously been excluded.

An extensive social welfare programme, Bolsa Familia, provided financial aid to some of the poorest. When Lula left office after his second term, he enjoyed an 80% approval rating. These reforms were also accompanied by privatisations and attacks on the pension system, which led to a left-wing split from the PT and the formation of the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL). The reforms introduced were possible at that time because of a boom in commodity prices, and the explosion of exports to the then growing Chinese economy.

However, his appointed successor, Dilma Rousseff, also from the PT, who was elected in 2014, faced an entirely different economic and world situation, with a recession. Living standards fell and unemployment rose. At the same time, the PT was embroiled in an explosion of corruption scandals involving huge sums of money. An investigation into corruption, Lavo Jato, led by a right-wing judge implicated Lula who, for a period, was imprisoned for corruption. He was later released and cleared of all charges. However, the PT was riddled with corruption. The stench of corruption still remains, haunting

Brazil presidential election

Bolsonaro defeated – but the struggle is not over



Jair Bolsonaro and Lula PHOTOS: RICARDO STUCKERT/CC AND ISAC NOBREGA/CC

2million Lula beat Bolsonaro by 59million votes to 57million

the PT and other parties and politicians. This was exploited to the full by Bolsonaro and his supporters during the election campaign, despite their own corrupt practices.

The failure of the 'left' PT to break with capitalism when in government ultimately sowed the seeds allowing Bolsonaro to build a powerful right-wing reactionary bloc. They also exploited to the full the catastrophic situation in Venezuela, warning that under Lula, 'socialism' à la Venezuela would result. The failure to break with capitalism, combined with the US embargo and top-down bureaucratic, corrupt methods under Hugo Chavez, and more so under Nicolas Maduro, and the economic and social disaster which has followed, have given a weapon to the right wing throughout Latin America to attack the left and socialism.

At the same time, in Brazil the left split from the PT, PSOL, failed to build a mass alternative with a solid base among the working class and poor throughout the country. PSOL, in this election, wrongly failed to stand a candidate in the first round and has suffered splits.

Lula has made enormous efforts to prove himself to be a safe pair of hands for capitalism. He even formed a coalition with the right-wing Geraldo Alckmin, who stood against Lula in previous elections. But that is not what allowed him to win. Lula's victory has arisen from

the hatred of Bolsonaro by millions who wanted him out.

A majority of the main bourgeois interests in Brazil and internationally backed Lula against Bolsonaro. They never backed Bolsonaro when he stepped into the vacuum and won in 2018. At that stage, all of the traditional capitalist parties and the PT suffered a collapse in support and credibility.

In the run up to the election it seemed possible that Bolsonaro would attempt to do a Trump and refuse to accept the election result. He has had a strong base of support within the military, and had relaxed gun controls making it easier for his supporters to arm themselves. Had he mobilised his base and sections of the military, and attempted to cling to power through some form of attempted coup, it could have triggered a social explosion and armed conflict with elements of civil war.

It seems, at the time of writing, the military and other political leaders supporting him have pulled back from such actions for fear of the consequences which would flow from them. Such a step would be very dangerous for capitalism. Should Lula have come to power following such a conflict, the masses would have been radicalised and demanded the government go further, and take more radical measures that could encroach on the interests of capitalism. This could change should sections

of Bolsonaro's base attempt to mobilise their forces to prevent Lula taking office in January 2023. The working class and left cannot rely on Bolsonaro not attempting to remain in power, nor on the political leaders of Lula's pro-capitalist coalition. A mass mobilisation needs to be organised to take any measures necessary to prevent Bolsonaro or his supporters clinging onto power.

Although Lula won the presidential election, Bolsonaro's supporters still control the most populated state in Brazil, São Paulo, where Tarcísio Gomes de Freitas, Bolsonaro's former infrastructure minister, won the governor's race. In congress, in the lower house, Bolsonaro's right-wing bloc is the largest. Lula has a block of only about 25%!

The next Lula government will not enjoy the support of his first two terms as president. His coalition of the PT and right-wing capitalist parties is unwieldy, and splits are certain to open up. Moreover, Lula is not coming to power under the relatively favorable economic conditions as when he was first elected. Brazil faces its own recession, as well as a global one, inflationary crisis and higher interest rates. Lula, following his election victory, has declared that he will: "Govern for 215 million Brazilians. Not just those who voted for me. We are one people, one country, one great nation". Yet Brazil is not one country. It is not yet one people! It is highly polarised both socially and politically.

He declared: "We no longer want to fight. We're tired of seeing the other as the enemy". This is not how the Bolsonaro right wing views the impending struggles that will develop.

'Safe pair of hands'

His attempts at reassuring capitalism that he is a safe pair of hands is not satisfying sections of the ruling class. As one banker very consciously put it just before the election: "We will get Lula elected in order to stop Bolsonaro. Then, on day one of his government, we go into opposition."

Lula is likely to stop or reduce the destruction of the Amazon rainforest, which has been taking place unfettered under Bolsonaro. But his coalition government will not be stable and will go into crisis as divisions and splits open up. It will not have the prospect of implementing the scale of social welfare programmes that were introduced during his previous governments.

Following the election, a renewed battle for Brazil will open both with Bolsonaro's reactionary forces and with the ruling class. The PT is now wedded to capitalism and riddled with corruption. The working class, and all those exploited by capitalism, need to prepare for the struggles that will rapidly unfold. A part of this struggle is to build a mass party of the working class, with a democratic socialist programme to break with landlordism and capitalism, offer a real way forward, and defeat Bolsonaro's reactionary right-wing populism and the capitalist system from which it arose.



**We will get
Lula elected
in order
to stop
Bolsonaro.
Then, on day
one of his
government,
we go into
opposition**

- Brazilian banker

LATIN AMERICA'S
'PINK REVOLUTION' –
WHERE IS IT AT?

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

CHINA PRESIDENT XI CONSOLIDATES POWER AT COMMUNIST PARTY NATIONAL CONGRESS

NIALL MULHOLLAND
COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS'
INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT

The 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which took place in Beijing from 16-22 October, saw a marked increase in the centralisation of power around the figure of General Secretary Xi Jinping. He was made president of the country for an unprecedented third term (the absence of any heir apparent to Xi indicates that he intends to rule China for another five years and perhaps longer, although that is not at all guaranteed). The powerful Politburo Standing Committee will now be dominated by Xi's allies (both the seven-member Politburo Standing Committee and the 24-seat Politburo were filled exclusively with males from of Han ethnicity - hardly an advertisement for the so-called Chinese Communist Party's 'diversity'!).

In a move reminiscent of the cult of personality under the rule of Mao Zedong, the congress decided to incorporate "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" into the party's constitution. These congress decisions mark a definitive break from the years of supposed 'collective leadership' that followed the turmoil of the 'Cultural Revolution' and death of Mao.

Furthermore, the tightening of centralised control of the CCP and government are indicative of the oppressive regime's nervous reaction to the slowing down of the Chinese economy - not least its fear of an upsurge of labour disputes - and growing trade and military tensions with the US.

The congress saw a reshuffle in China's top military leadership, signalling that the People's Liberation Army will be focused on Taiwan.

The regime undoubtedly still has huge resources at its disposal, and reservoirs of social support that are largely based on continuing to deliver economic growth. But Xi's elevation to a third term in power, and his increasingly autocratic role, are not signs of strength of the ruling CCP, but its underlying weakness and uncertainty in the face of multiple problems.

In the run up to the highly staged congress, 2,296 delegates were elected to represent the CCP's 96.7 million members. However, there were voices of

dissent. On 13 October, a lone protester hung banners and burned tyres on Beijing's Sitong Bridge. The protest banner themes included Xi Jinping's cult of personality, dictatorship, human rights, censorship, Xi Jinping's seeking of re-election, the implementation of the 'zero-Covid' policy, and long working hours. One banner said: "Go on strike at school and work, remove dictator and national traitor Xi Jinping!" The protester was quickly removed by state personnel, but the protest went viral on Chinese social media until references to Sitong Bridge were censored by the regime.

The nervousness of the regime to any form of opposition, and its resort to swift repression, is a reflection of the more difficult period that has opened up before it domestically and in foreign affairs.

Another unscripted event also took place on the closing day of the congress, when former president Hu Jintao was escorted out of the meeting. The incident was barely reported in the Chinese media, but has still given rise to speculation about whether Hu was genuinely unwell and needed help to leave the hall, or if his removal was an act of public humiliation of a figure more closely associated with the 'collective leadership' years, and who is close to the youth wing of the CCP, which is reported to be critical of Xi.

On the opening day of the congress, Xi gave the keynote speech, dealing with Covid policies and the economy, and Hong Kong and Taiwan, which set the mood for the rest of the meeting. Xi stated that the congress marked the beginning of a new era, which will eventually see China become a "modernised and prosperous world power" in around three decades. To achieve that, Xi insisted the Communist Party's leadership is crucial. In other words, no opposition will be brokered by the ruling regime, not least one based on an independent workers' movement.

Xi defended China's approach to the Covid-19 pandemic. This policy may well have saved many more lives in its initial phases than the reckless, short-term, profit-driven Covid policies of 'western' governments, but it was implemented in a top-down, bureaucratic and repressive manner, and contributed significantly towards China's economic problems. Now there is growing popular opposition to

the 'zero-Covid policy'.

Xi announced that under the banner of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" the economy would concentrate on "national development". This is a reflection of military tensions between Beijing and Washington, exacerbated by the Ukraine war, and the evolving process of the 'decoupling' of their economies. In reaction, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has warned against the "fraying of global linkages", which first spiked in 2018 amid rising US-China trade tensions, and again in recent months as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Although there has been a slowing down of globalisation, the two leading economies, China and the US, remain reliant on the world economy. China still requires access to the world market to sell its goods and for international capital and advanced technology. Indeed, the country's foreign direct investment rose by 15.6% from a year earlier in the first nine months of this year. China's state planners recently issued an expanded list of sectors for foreign investment to encourage foreign capital to flow into manufacturing sectors in a bid to improve industrial and supply chains.

But US imperialism regards China as the greatest threat to its hegemony and is determined to undermine Beijing. President Biden maintained the trade tariffs imposed by former president Trump and added advanced semiconductors to the list. It is expected that the US will follow this up with new sanctions targeting China's biotechnology and artificial intelligence industries.

These severe trade sanctions by the US will see frantic efforts by the Chinese regime to develop its own technology. President Xi called on China to "win the battle" in core technologies during the 20th party congress. For now, the sanctions clash between the US and China can act as a serious factor in pulling the world into a new recession. The IMF

Xi Jinping
PHOTOS: UN GENEVA/CC
AND YINAN CHEN/CC



warns of so-called "friendshoring", where nations decide to trade with "friends" and "give up on efficiency", and the capitalist institution pleads for "globalisation and multilateralism to be preserved". The 'decoupling' of trade between China and the US has its limits for the two co-dependent world economic powers.

There is no way out of its long-term problems for the Chinese regime, either on the basis of a more national-based programme, or through the world market, or a combination of both. Only a genuine socialist China, including a planned economy under democratic workers' control and management, and real socialist internationalism - a workers' state in China acting as a spur for socialist revolution in the region and worldwide - can secure prosperity and peace for the working masses. This much is clear from the history of the modern Chinese state.

The 1949 Chinese Revolution that overthrew capitalism and landlordism, and which expelled foreign capitalist powers, was a huge step forward for the toiling masses. It resulted in significant economic and social gains for the working class and poor peasantry under a planned economy (notably, the 'iron rice bowl', security of employment, as well as state-provided health, housing, education, and welfare), albeit with the burden of a monstrous Stalinist regime. Unlike the early years of the workers' state in Russia after the 1917 revolution, under the rule of Lenin and Trotsky, and the Bolsheviks, workers' control and democracy was never implemented in China post-1949. Instead, Mao modelled his regime on that of Josef Stalin and the murderous bureaucracy that usurped power from the Russian working class.

By the 1970s, the ruling Stalinist regime in China, facing economic problems as its dead-hand bureaucratic rule acted as an enormous drag on the planned economy, allowed capitalist market forces to develop from 1978 onwards and to invite foreign capitalist investment.

The lessons of the catastrophic restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union, which saw the plummeting of living standards and banning of the Communist Party, led the Beijing regime to attempt to oversee the reintroduction of capitalist relations in China in a 'controlled manner', with the Chinese Communist Party/state maintaining a key role. Today, China has a unique form of state-capitalist economy, where the CCP/state apparatus plays a big role in steering capitalism in a way that preserves its power. However, this cannot continue indefinitely, as sections of the capitalist class will not always be prepared to accept CCP 'guidance', as indicated by the exodus of some of the super-rich figures from China recently.

Economic growth, based on China acting as the cheap labour exporter of goods to the world, saw spectacular rates over the last 40 years. China now accounts for more than 18% of the world's economy and ranks as the second largest. But this extraordinary growth has brought its own huge contradictions and problems. It has seen an intensification of social tensions in China, a massive gulf between the rich and poor, and the ruthless exploitation of the Chinese working masses.

With the Chinese economy forecast to record its lowest growth rates for 30 years, and already high youth and rural unemployment figures rising, social explosions are on the cards. Covid border controls and intermittent lockdowns have been a big factor in slowing China's economy, not least causing a consumer spending slump. And China also faces a property crisis. A growing number of property developers are defaulting on their debt. The currency is weakening, capital outflow is rising and youth unemployment hit a record high of 19.3% in June.

Facing discontent simmering among workers, Xi used his congress speech to advocate for "common prosperity", and he pointedly denounced corruption. Many labour disputes in China are reportedly centred on the actions of local corrupt officials and management.

The IMF expects China's growth to slow to 3.2% this year, its smallest expansion in four decades, excluding the first year of the pandemic. China has longer-term problems, the IMF warned, including productivity loss and an ageing population. The IMF expects that China's slowing down will be "significantly bad" for Asia, which has strong trade links with China, including Japan and South Korea. Any slowdown or recession in China and Asia will only compound the economic problems facing the US and Europe, which are teetering towards recessions.

The China and United States tensions are most explicitly centred on Hong Kong and Taiwan. In his congress speech, Xi said that Hong Kong had "a major transition from chaos to governance" - code for the repressive crackdown on opposition, and elimination of any pretence at free and fair elections on the island. Xi also called for Taiwan's "peaceful reunification" but vowed to not renounce the use of force. On China's position on the world stage, Xi boasted that: "China's international influence, appeal and power to shape the world has significantly increased."

Soon after the 20th National Congress, a Pentagon defence strategy document said while a conflict with China "is neither inevitable nor desirable", efforts must be made to prevent Beijing's "dominance of key regions". This is a reference to the large military build-up by China

in the South China Sea and its increased pressure towards Taiwan.

The Pentagon document notes Russia's war in Ukraine and says Russia is a serious threat to the US and its allies, with its nuclear weapons, cyber operations and long-range missiles. But China "is the only competitor out there with both the intent to reshape the international order, and increasingly the power to do so", stated US Secretary of Defence, Lloyd Austin. The Pentagon document states that the US is facing two major nuclear armed competitors in Russia and China. Indeed, soon after the congress, China's foreign minister, Wang Yi, phoned his counterpart in Russia, Sergey Lavrov, to say that any attempt to "block the advancement of China and Russia would never succeed." Beijing has been guardedly critical of Russia's disastrous war effort in Ukraine, yet Moscow remains an essential ally in opposition to the US and its allies.

While an invasion of Taiwan by China is not imminent in the view of most military commentators, it is lodged in the 'logic' of the situation for as long as the rising power of China and declining power of the US continue to square off. Ultimately, only the organised working class in China and throughout Asia and the world can cut across wars and militarisation by mobilising on an independent class programme.

Beijing will have learnt from the military blunders of Moscow, which sent in its army to Ukraine unprepared for a Ukrainian army that has been professionalised and heavily resourced and trained by Nato forces since the two countries' last serious engagement in 2014. Although Beijing is developing its military abilities considerably, it is estimated by most Western military experts that China is some years away from being able to successfully invade Taiwan. Even if this is the case, in the meantime, any number of 'accidental' events in the region, including skirmishes between US and Chinese military naval vessels, could trigger a wider and devastating conflict given the high tensions.

The stakes cannot be higher for the Chinese working class and the masses of the region. The building of mass parties of the working class, with an independent class programme, in China and across Asia, is an essential prerequisite to the working class removing the tycoons and enriched bureaucrats, and introducing workers' genuine democratic running of society.

WORLD RELATIONS
AND THE DECLINE OF
THE US SUPERPOWER

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Issue 1201

3-9 November 2022

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Students face: Cost-of-living crisis Economic chaos Climate catastrophe...



PAUL MATSSON

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LLUIS BERTOLIN
BIRMINGHAM UCU (PERSONAL CAPACITY) AND
SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Students are worried. Gone are the days when they only worried about their lectures, their marks, and where to have their night out.

They must now worry about whether their maintenance loan will last for the whole year, amid spiralling inflation, or whether they will get that part-time job that they require to pay the rent and bills. They even wonder if there will be a liveable world for them in the future.

All of them are carrying the burden of a cost-of-living crisis, Tory fiscal flip-flopping, and an ill-conceived model for funding education. This is while the bosses and capitalists get richer and richer, fattening themselves on engorged profits at our expense.

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