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the Socialist

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formerly **Militant**

MAKE THE RICH PAY NOT THE WORKING CLASS



- Strike together for inflation-proof wage rises
- No more austerity. Tax the super-rich.
Full funding for public services
- Nationalise energy. Use their profits to cut our bills
- No trust in Starmer's Labour. Build a new mass workers' party

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

Make the super-rich pay - refuse to accept yet more austerity

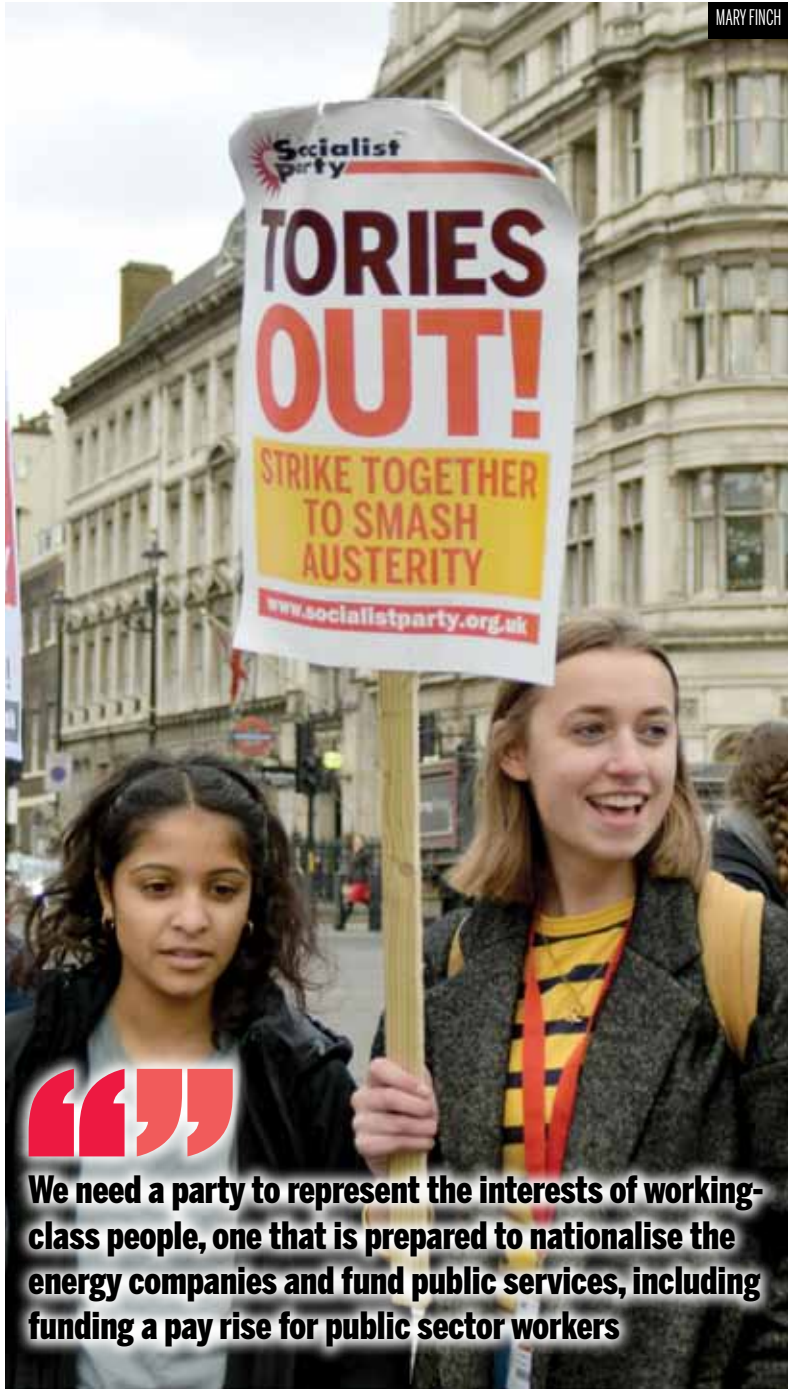
Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

As if things weren't already bleak enough, Tory chancellor Jeremy Hunt will stand up at the dispatch box on 17 November, after the Socialist is published, and announce more misery for working-class people. The same man who oversaw cuts in the NHS during much of the last 12 years of austerity will take his knife to public services again.

However it is dressed up, schools, hospitals, local councils and other services will be worse off. With prices rising, £43 billion a year is needed to keep our crumbling, already underfunded public services standing still, according to a report from the Trades Union Congress and New Economics Foundation.

The vast majority of Hunt's billions will come from hitting working-class people's pockets, and the services we rely on. But even modest taxes on the very wealthy could raise £37 billion, according to Tax Justice UK. A 1% wealth tax on assets over £10 million could raise £10 billion, applying national insurance to income from investments, £8.6 billion and bringing capital gains tax into line with income tax could raise £14 billion, among others. The UK lost £27 billion to multinational corporations dodging taxes last year.

The Conservative Party defends the interests of the capitalist class, it will not take serious measures to curtail its wealth or ability to make profits. The Tories' pitiful windfall tax is a case in point – Shell reported £8.2



We need a party to represent the interests of working-class people, one that is prepared to nationalise the energy companies and fund public services, including funding a pay rise for public sector workers

billion profits between July and September but has paid nothing into the 'Energy Profit Levy'.

Energy firms will make £170 billion more profit than expected by the end of 2023. That's a big stack of cash that could be used to fund public services if the energy companies were nationalised, to be run under democratic workers' control, and with no compensation to the fat-cat bosses.

We need a party to represent the interests of working-class people, one that is prepared to nationalise the energy companies and fund public services, including funding a pay rise for public sector workers.

Labour austerity
Asked whether a Labour government would give public sector workers an inflation-matching pay rise, deputy leader Angela Rayner told the Financial Times: "Brutally, no." Could a Starmer-led Labour government be trusted to offer anything other than more spending cuts and workers' tax rises? Categorically, no.

Workers striking back in increasing numbers, and all those facing further service cuts and hardship, do not have a party to represent us. By leading strikes and winning pay rises, like the Liverpool dockers winning a 14-18% rise and Stagecoach bus drivers in Hull winning 20%, trade unions are at the forefront of the fightback.

And if those same trade unions were to prepare to stand candidates in a general election, independently of Labour, that would get a huge response. But if the trade union leaders don't take the initiative, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition offers a banner for trade unionists and others prepared to fight austerity to use to put up a real alternative to yet more austerity (see page 11).



Reject council cuts and tax rises, make the 1% pay

NICK CHAFFEY
SOCIALIST PARTY REGIONAL SECRETARY SOUTHERN AND SOUTH EAST

The chief target of Tory cuts since 2010, local councils are facing a new onslaught from Chancellor Jeremy Hunt's brutal austerity budget. Public services, fought for over past decades, are vital for working-class communities, providing low-rent council housing, education, refuse collection and basic infrastructure.

For those unable to pay to go private when families need care and children need support, council services represent a lifeline that has been severely weakened by cuts.

Four out of five councils face being unable to meet the government requirement to balance budgets, facing technical insolvency, according to the County Councils Network.

As the squeeze is set to tighten, two of the largest county councils, Tory run Hampshire and Kent have written to the government, warning:

“Our budgets are now at breaking point. We have gone as far as we can to close the budget gaps we have faced to date, and there is nowhere left to go in future without severely impacting some of the most vulnerable people in our society”. What hypocrisy from the advocates of austerity!

Decaying services
What they now fear is electoral meltdown as voters face higher council tax bills and decaying services.

Rising costs and rising demand for services have led to a £2.4 billion funding gap across all councils in the last year, not to mention the billions more cut over the last decade. Hunt's budget won't plug that gap, but it looks likely to give permission to councils to charge more council tax. To fill the funding gap, the Local Government Association says councils would have to increase council tax by over 10%. Paying more for less will solve nothing, collapsing services

Education unions unite to fight the schools funding crisis

MICK WHALE AND KEN MCCALL (JOINT HULL NEU SECRETARIES)

Education requires an additional £7.4 billion funding just to stand still. Anything less will mean cuts. The situation is already desperate. A decade of Tory austerity has now led to a 'perfect storm' of further problems: spiralling inflation, an unfunded pay rise, the specific rise in heating bills, and staff leaving education because of a combination of workload and unrealistic targets. At the same time, Covid and other illnesses are causing significant staff absence. School budgets are stretched further paying for additional supply staff.

While individual education staff stand to lose their jobs, let's not forget the generation of school students who face less support in school. And never has the need for additional support been more needed. Poverty does not stop at the school gates!

Hungry pupils from families that are struggling to put food on the table and children traumatised by experiencing the impact of poverty on family life need the food and security that school brings. Yet it will be the poorest and most vulnerable pupils that will lose out the most.

Quite correctly, the trade unions that are balloting for action for an above-inflation pay rise have made it clear that this needs to be fully funded. Undoubtedly, the Tories will try to sow divisions between school staff and the communities they serve. They will argue it's either a pay rise or cuts to jobs and resources. But, we need to be clear, a properly paid workforce with high morale is vital if education is going to be successful.

School leaders should use the powers they have to protect jobs and services, including the setting of deficit budgets. Local authorities and multi-academy trusts must publicly support this approach.

The real choice is between properly funded education and a Tory government that continues to impose austerity on the poor while allowing the super-rich to get richer. That is why the education unions need to develop a joint campaign, linked to the other unions battling to defend their services. Such a campaign could organise coordinated strike action across the country to force the Tories out.



Nurses strike for pay and for the future of our NHS

GARETH BROMHALL
NHS AMBULANCE SERVICE WORKER, SWANSEA

Tens of thousands of nurses could take strike action before Christmas. For the first time in its 106-year history, members of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) have voted to strike. Since, the media has been full of speculation about what a strike of nurses will mean for patient safety and emergency care in the NHS.

Government MPs, in both national and devolved governments, have been assuring constituents that safe staffing levels will be maintained throughout any action. And minimum staffing levels will be adhered to by the union.

What the politicians don't mention

is that safe staffing levels are not being met on a daily basis already!

NHS workers and their unions have been calling for safe staffing levels for years. The reality, of staff shortages, sickness, and the continued underfunding and resourcing of the NHS, means that the notion of safe staffing levels does not reflect reality, despite some limited legislation in Wales and Scotland. One in ten NHS roles are currently vacant.

This issue is compounded by the reliance of NHS employers on agency staff to fill vacancies. NHS hospitals are filled with staff employed by the private sector without NHS terms and conditions.

Some NHS trusts and health boards

are paying as much as £2,500 per shift to agencies to maintain the bare minimum, according to a BBC report.

Agency staff cost the NHS in England £3 billion last year. With a higher hourly rate, staff are understandably being lured away from NHS contracts, which will only exacerbate the lack of safe staffing.

With reports of nurses and care staff being forced into food banks and to payday lenders, the question of whether NHS staff can afford to strike is being raised. However, with a cost-of-living crisis putting an increasing squeeze on people's budgets, a common answer is that they can't afford not to strike!

It's clear that this is a battle for

the NHS, for inflation-proof pay increases, maintaining and expanding workers' terms and conditions, but also about ensuring a fully staffed, funded, resourced and publicly owned service for the future.

The battle has been started by the RCN this month, but they are likely to be followed by other health unions - with strike ballots underway - in the months to come.

The fight to save our public services is a fight for all workers, and one to be fought by the whole workers' movement. A public strike fund to support all workers, including NHS workers on strike, and public rallies and protests to defend our NHS would get huge public support.

ISAI MARIJERLA
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL TREASURER

Socialism 2022 is taking place days after the Tories announce their autumn budget. At the time of writing we don't know the exact details - but the pain it will contain has been well trailed. The Tories want working-class people to pay for the crisis, again.

But there is nothing inevitable about that; mass working-class struggle can change the course of events. Socialist ideas to unite the struggles and chart a way forward are crucial.

Socialism 2022 is also taking place as a new phase of the strike wave is beginning, with public sector unions joining the fray. The results of the first nationwide ballot in the Royal College of Nursing's history show the determination of health

care workers to fight for a pay rise and for our NHS.

The massive national strikes of Royal Mail and BT workers in the CWU, and rail workers in RMT, ASLEF, TSSA and Unite have transformed things - strikes are back and the massive potential power of the working class has been glimpsed by a new generation.

The Socialism weekend event is perfectly timed to provide the opportunity to discuss the ideas needed to build this fightback in a new era of intensified class struggle. Whether you can attend or not, and we hope you can, either in person or on Zoom if necessary, every member and supporter can participate in the vital financial appeal.

The Socialist Party is asking for donations towards funding the fight for socialist ideas.

Can you give £5, £50 or £500, or

more? Every donation, no matter how big or small, will make a difference, and all of it will go to building support for socialist ideas.

Can you ask other members and supporters to donate too?

We have set a target to raise £25,000. A third of this will be to help build our international work, supporting our comrades in the Committee for a Workers' International.

We need the resources to help intervene in this new situation as effectively as possible - to make sure socialist ideas get heard by the working class and young people moving into struggle against the bosses, the Tories and the rotten capitalist system.

Help fund the fightback
DONATE
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COP27: Another capitalist climate failure

DAVE CARR

EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The planet is on a 'highway to climate hell,' according to United Nations secretary general António Guterres. But for the heads of state and governments from around the world gathered at COP27 in the Egyptian resort of Sharm-el-Sheikh it appeared to be business as usual, as fossil fuel carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions - the main driver of global heating - reached the highest on record. And, according to the Global Carbon Project, the 2015 Paris Agreement target of limiting global heating to 1.5°C increase on pre-industrial temperatures by 2050, is likely to be exceeded in the next decade.

Given this impending climate emergency, Guterres should have added the line from AC/DC's 'Highway to Hell': "Season ticket on a one-way ride"!

Summit for nothing

30 years ago, political leaders of 175 countries at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro signed a declaration for "global partnership to achieve equitable development and environmental protection". CO₂ emissions from burning fossil fuels in 1992 were 22 billion tonnes a year. Emissions today are 36 billion tonnes a year.

Given this lamentable failure of capitalist governments to seriously tackle environmental catastrophe and the associated problems of food, economic and human security, it's hardly surprising that, according to one international survey, only 22% believed anything would be achieved at Sharm-el-Sheikh.



Socialist Party members joined the climate march in Sheffield on 12 November



The 2015 Paris Agreement target of limiting global heating to 1.5°C increase on pre-industrial temperatures by 2050, is likely to be exceeded in the next decade, according to the Global Carbon Project

'Big oil'

At last year's COP26 summit in Glasgow, then PM Boris Johnson let slip that there was "no chance" of getting an internationally binding agreement on achieving the Paris target. Indeed, COP26's final declaration spoke only of phasing down "unabated" coal burning, while saying nothing about reducing oil or gas.

Environmentalist George Monbiot checked "every final agreement produced by the [26] summits since they began. Fossil fuels are named in only six of them. Just one hints at using less overall."

One obvious reason for this lack of climate action is the power of the giant oil and gas corporations.

Attending COP27 were 636 lobbyists from the highly profitable fossil fuel companies (up 25% from last year's summit); and more than the combined delegations from the ten most climate-impacted countries. 200 of these lobbyists were embedded in various countries' delegations,

including BP chief executive Bernard Looney and four other BP senior managers in the delegation from Mauritania!

Capitalism is the problem

Capitalism, with its insatiable drive to maximise profit through the exploitation of labour and raw materials, has created an interconnected global system of finance and trade, but corporate ownership still resides within individual countries. However, the solutions to adverse climate change have to be worldwide - emitted greenhouse gases don't stop at the borders of nation states.

But no capitalist government is unilaterally going to jeopardise its global share of trade and corporate profits, by implementing the comprehensive measures needed to halt climate change.

The only feasible way to achieve sustainable levels of net-zero carbon production - and a redistribution of wealth to secure decent living standards for all - is through democratic, international planning; impossible in a capitalist system of competing companies and nation states.

To stop destructive climate change, we need socialist change. That, in turn, means building a mass movement for a fundamental shift in wealth and power, based on working-class people - whose class interests are diametrically opposed to the capitalists.



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DAVID HAWGOOD/CC

In-work food bank users rise

End low pay, fight for £15-an-hour minimum wage

ROB PETTEFAR

SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY

One in five people using a food bank come from households where at least one person is in work. This shocking statistic is part of the changing profile of the average food bank user.

Nurses, shop assistants and youth workers are among the low-paid workers joining the growing list of people relying on food banks.

The rising cost of living, and the failure of wage growth to keep pace with inflation, have eroded the ability of working people to make ends meet. There has been a 40% increase on first-time food bank users in recent months, and it is expected that the situation will only get worse.

There was outrage in the summer as the news came of a 'community pantry' set up by BT in one of its call centres as staff struggle to make it to the end of the month.

After a decade of pay freezes, many NHS trusts now provide hardship

grants, discount meals for staff and their children, subsidised travel arrangements, and organise school uniform swap shops.

27% of NHS trusts operate food banks for their staff, a further 19% are looking to open one in the future. At the same time, health secretary Steve Barclay has the front to call the Royal College of Nursing's demand of a 17% pay rise unaffordable!

Food bank use has been on a long-term rise. Tory governments over the last decade and more have overseen public sector pay freezes, increases in zero-hour contracts, and benefit cuts. They have also seen even more money go to the rich in the form of rising dividends and CEO pay.

We need at least a £15-an-hour minimum wage, a decent pay rise for NHS workers and other public sector workers, and an end to zero-hour contracts.

We call on the trade union leaders to make a stand: to coordinate strike action to fight for pay rises that keep

up with the cost of living, and also to present a political challenge to austerity politicians, Tories, Labour and others, putting forward candidates in elections prepared to fight in our interests.

SOCIALISM TODAY

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November issue includes...

- Preparing for a Starmer government
- Ukraine war and the left
- Climate crisis - socialist change not climate change

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Biggest ever university strikes

70,000 University and College Union (UCU) members will strike in all UK universities on 24, 25 and 30 November. The workers are picketing on 24 and 25 November, and then heading to London for a UCU demonstration on Wednesday 30 November. The Socialist Party thinks the 30 November should be a massive trade union demo of all striking workers, and those fighting the cost-of-living squeeze.

Why I'm striking

"We are maximally exploited"

ANTHONY BRACUTI
UCU MEMBER, PHD STUDENT, LEEDS

In the scientific community, most research is undertaken by postgraduate researchers (PGRs). In Britain, we are maximally exploited: officially, 'full-time PhD students', to justify no sick leave, poverty pay, and no maternity support, but 'research staff' when it comes to loading us with unpaid teaching or committee work. Even the paltry £650 offer made to University of Leeds staff on lower pay grades was withheld from PGRs on the basis that students were not eligible.

My university is a red-brick Russell

group institution with almost £1 billion in assets around the city, and a vice-chancellor with a wage in the hundreds of thousands (notwithstanding the house, car, and other expenses paid for).

Despite this, management reason that poverty wages for their teaching and facilities staff are not only justifiable, but fair. They have cut wages in excess of 40% (via stagnation and through pension cuts); rapidly expanded zero-hour and short-term casualised contracts; done nothing to end the gender, racial, and disability pay gaps; and loaded an increasingly dangerous workload onto already-overworked and rapidly declining staff, without even the dignity of greater pay for more work.

The experiences of my colleagues, and my own experience - which is not even close to being the worst that I have witnessed - have shown me the imperative need to fight back. We hate to hurt the students, but it is the only option we have.

"Workers are the ones who keep this country running"

EMILY HOTINE
UCU MEMBER, OXFORD

The pandemic brought into sharp focus the fact that the most essential workers in this country also tend to be the most poorly paid. We stood outside our homes and clapped for nurses, then the Tory government turned around months later and refused them a pay rise.

Now low-paid workers are staring down the barrel of an economic crisis. In real terms, our pay is falling, while inflation is nearly 13%. The energy bill for an average UK household is projected to increase from £2,500 to £4,347 after April. The cost of food is increasing. Monthly average mortgage payments have risen by £300. At a time when corporate profits continue to rise while real wages continue to fall, it is workers that are expected to shoulder the burden of the government's actions.

I am striking in the hope that more join us in taking a stand and recognise what we are worth. We are the ones who generate those corporate profits. We are the ones who keep this country running. We are the workers.

And we shouldn't be squeezed until we can no longer afford food, or warmth, or a place to live. To call this government's actions 'ineptitude' is naïve: it is class warfare.

Students supporting a previous strike in Leeds
PHOTO: LEEDS SP



Oxford student: Why I support UCU strikes

CALLUM JOYCE
OXFORD SOCIALIST STUDENTS

The University and College Union (UCU) is fighting for above-inflation pay rises and action to deal with precarious working hours and stressful conditions.

Undoubtedly, the university vice-chancellors and the government will protest over the effect of the strike on education, with students missing classes. Perhaps they should take a look at themselves, and the problems they have caused through years of cuts to funding, mountains of student debt, and rising stress-related mental health issues among university staff. All this while vice-chancellors are paid over £250,000 a year on average.

It is vital that students fully support

the strike. Showing the government and university bosses that students stand in solidarity with striking workers can strengthen the action and help to secure victory. It is part of the fightback against the cost-of-living crisis.

Socialist Students is leading the charge on campuses, linking up with UCU branches, and campaigning to bring more students into a joint struggle.

The fight over pay and conditions cannot be separated from the cuts to our education. To ensure a decent education for all students and a decent standard of living for those who provide it, we need full public ownership of universities, with proper funding and democratic control over how they are run by staff and students.



Socialist Students stands with UCU on strike

SOCIALIST STUDENTS STATEMENT

Socialist Students stands in solidarity with the University and Colleges Union (UCU) taking national strike action on 24, 25 and 30 November.

The UCU has been fighting for years against attacks to our universities by management and the Tories - cuts to courses, staff wages, working conditions and pensions.

But now the cost-of-living crisis threatens even further attacks. Workers and students are feeling prices go up everywhere, with our wages and maintenance loans not even coming close to covering the increase in the cost of living.

Inflation is further squeezing the income of universities, as every day

running costs skyrocket. Socialist Students calls for a united struggle to scrap the tuition fee funding model, which is bringing universities to ruin.

- Fully fund free education
- Replace loans with grants, tied to inflation
- Cancel student debt
- All paid for by taking the wealth from the super-rich

We say building a common and united struggle between students and workers against cuts, and for the reintroduction of free education is central to ending the crisis we face on campus. That's why Socialist Students is building the maximum possible student support for the UCU, including collecting the signatures of students supporting the strikes.

The 30 November march called by the UCU in London could be a key event to bring together workers taking strike action on and off campus - CWU and RMT strikers, plus civil service workers in PCS and nurses in RCN, which recently balloted successfully for strike action - with students as well.

That's why Socialist Students is mobilising our members to that demo, and campaigning for student unions to arrange travel to London. The National Education Union (NEU) in sixth forms is taking strike action starting on 30 November, so the march that day is also a chance for sixth-form teachers and students to link up with university students in the struggle against education cuts.

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. But key now is that the different trade unions - either with live industrial ballots or currently balloting for strike action - meet to discuss coordinating action to get rid of the imploding Tory government.

Socialist Students also says that students ourselves need to get organised. This is key to building student support for the strikes, allowing us to more effectively link up with striking campus workers.

It would also mean we can discuss the cost-of-living crisis that we as students face, what demands we need to fight for, and to appeal to striking university staff to support rent control, cost-of-living grants, and free education.

CWU in Royal Mail: Why we must keep fighting

LONDON POSTAL WORKER

Since the beginning of the dispute, the Royal Mail CEOs have persisted in their slash-and-burn policy towards our public service.

The Communication Workers Union (CWU) has announced that in the negotiations currently taking place, with the mediation of ACAS, it will not accept any compulsory redundancies, or new starters on new terms and conditions, or the introduction of owner-drivers, Amazon-style.

However, where does this leave us in relation to Sunday working, later start and finish times, and - possibly more dreaded than anything else - the prospect of annualised hours?

The latter would mean working longer in the busy times of the year, on the basis of us owing hours to the company from the quieter times. That would throw our work/life balance to the dogs, let alone the child-care problems it would cause for parents - a reason many took up the job in the first place.



Recently, Daniel Kretinsky, a Czech oligarch, was given permission by the UK government to hold more than his - until recently capped - 25% stake in Royal Mail. It looks increasingly likely that he will launch a takeover bid.

Sell-off

This would potentially mean selling off the highly profitable GLS Netherlands side of the business - the holding company no longer called Royal Mail but International Distribution Services.

That would leave the so-called loss-making side, Royal Mail, out to dry.

The 'universal service obligation' to deliver mail every day would be a thing of the past, meaning NHS letters and other important mail playing second fiddle to tracked items on which managers' bonuses are currently based.

Many will argue that this was all on the cards since privatisation took place in 2013. But even when they are private, other countries subsidise their postal service. This looks highly

unlikely here, especially under a Tory government. We have to fight for renationalisation.

Many CWU members feel baffled at the cancellation of a number of one-day strikes over the past month.

There were rolling strikes planned, where various sides of the business would take a day at a time of strike action, but they had to be cancelled due to a legal challenge from Royal Mail management.

However, a number of one-day strikes were also called off.

Members are worried that this could lead to a loss in the momentum of the strikes, which have from the beginning been solid all over the country.

It is good that the Black Friday and Cyber Monday plans on 24, 25, 30 November and 1 December dates were still kept live during negotiations, and notice has now been given to the employer of strike action on 24 and 25 November.

Now is the time for the action to be escalated if we are to preserve the service and not be turned into yet another gig economy firm.

Liverpool dockers celebrate huge victory



DAVE WALSH
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Liverpool dockers are celebrating! Their strike action, which began over two months ago, secured pay increases between 14% and 18%, depending on grades.

Their action was solid from the start, with a turnout for the strike ballot of over 90% and a vote for action almost 100%.

Since then, the gates of the dock entrance have been regularly picketed and they have had tremendous solidarity support from other trade unionists and the Liverpool community.

They also received support from around the world, with the International Dockers Committee and the

International Transport Federation both agreeing not to move goods coming from or going to Liverpool.

The determined way this action has been organised by Unite the Union, under Sharon Graham's leadership, will go a long way to restore confidence in the union among Liverpool dockers.

A long shadow had been cast by the Transport and General Workers Union (one of the predecessor unions of Unite) under Bill Morris' leadership. It failed to support the dockers who were sacked in 1995 and waged an almighty struggle.

Over 600 dockers voted overwhelmingly in favour of the latest offer. The victory is being celebrated across the city, which has given a tremendous fillip to other local striking workers.

Massive 'yes' vote in civil service strike ballot

• Set dates for national strikes now • Coordinate on 30 November

DAVE SEMPLE
PCS BRANCH SECRETARY WIGAN, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The strike ballot by civil service union PCS, which closed on 7 November, secured the 50% turnout threshold for a legal strike under Tory anti-union laws for almost 100,000 members, who now have a mandate for strike action. It must be implemented without delay!

A resounding 86.2% voted 'yes', covering 126 different employers. This is a massive vote against the Tory government's plans to cut pay, jobs and offices.

This ballot victory is testament to the phenomenal work put in by rank-and-file union reps and members.

The union's national executive (NEC) met on 10 November. Many reps will have expected the union leadership to both seek a meeting with the employer and set dates for action.

In fact, they decided not to do this, but rather to write to the employer

and reconvene on 18 November to discuss how and when to call action.

NEC member Fiona Brittle, who, along with the Socialist Party and others is part of the PCS Broad Left Network, tabled an amendment to serve immediate notice of all-member strike action in the areas that reached the threshold on 30 November. This was rejected by the 'Left Unity' leadership.

This decision to delay is a mistake. It is correct to use the mandate to demand talks.

But to not also immediately serve notice of action fails to capitalise on the mood among the membership and put the government under pressure, sending a clear signal that the union is serious.

Instead it shows weakness, lets the government play for time, and misses the opportunity to launch our campaign with action alongside other unions on 30 November.

Major coordinated action on that date has already been announced by 115,000 Royal Mail workers in the Communication Workers Union and

70,000 members of the University and College Union in the universities, and now the National Education Union in sixth forms - with a demonstration planned by UCU.

If the employer does not concede to our demands, there should be national strikes as well as targeted and rolling action, linking up our members when there is industrial logic to do so, such as geographic proximity or common areas of work.

Muscle

Instead, the NEC is downplaying the potential role of sustained all-members' action, in favour of small-scale targeted action, which can be supported with strike pay.

We disagree. Enough areas have voted for action that we have sufficient muscle to fight hard with national action, in addition to the other kinds of action, to exert maximum pressure on the government.

There are big areas which do not currently have a mandate. The revenue and customs group (HMRC) narrowly failed to get the 50%

turnout, and it is understood they will be rebalotted in the new year.

The union must consider all areas which did not break the threshold for a rebalot, not just HMRC.

Bold national action before rebalots take place can have a big effect on the confidence of members in those areas that didn't make the threshold this time.

A question on action short of a strike was not included in the ballot. So members are not able to undertake an overtime ban or a work to rule, despite the major leverage this could provide.

We believe this was a mistake and the union must urgently consider whether and when to ballot for action short of a strike.

Members have given the NEC an enormous mandate to prepare the union for a massive fight that could improve our pay, secure our pensions, protect our terms and conditions and defend our jobs and offices.

The current NEC has the responsibility to act on that mandate and quickly.



London RMT strike: "We cannot allow these attacks to be imposed. We must fight back!"

HELEN PATTISON
LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY SECRETARY

London Underground and Overground workers have been on strike again in a 24-hour walk-out by RMT members on 10 November.

From Hainault in east London, Acton in the west, Morden in the south and Cockfosters in the north, across the capital there were strong picket lines and closed stations. Socialist Party members went down to support as many pickets as possible.

There was determination from many of the pickets we spoke to, to fight to defend pensions and jobs. This has already been a long dispute, but RMT members' anger at both London Labour mayor Sadiq Khan and the Tory government for their dodgy deal has not gone away.

Staff and transport users cannot be expected to pay for the crisis in Transport for London (TfL) funding with job losses, pension losses, and risks to safety and rising transport costs.

There is an alternative to the current transport chaos. We want to see a publicly owned, fully funded and democratically run transport network in the capital.



Acton Underground LONDON SP



Hackney Downs Overground LONDON SP

Jared Wood, RMT London Transport Regional Organiser, reported on his blog that RMT negotiators and reps met London Underground bosses, and offered to suspend the strike action if management agreed to suspend the implementation of 600 station job cuts until the end of this year; make a clear statement that they would not agree to detrimental attacks on pensions arising out the current pension review; and suspend consultation on organisational changes with a view to seeking a negotiated outcome. Management refused to accept all three of these proposals to allow meaningful negotiation to take place.

Sadiq Khan, Labour's London Mayor, subsequently told the press that as a result of the 'deal' he made

From the picket lines

Paul Kershaw reported a very good mood at Cockfosters, Oakwood and Arnos Grove tube pickets. In discussion, pickets were thinking about a general election: concerned to get rid of the Tories but thoughtful about how to get political representation for their struggles.

Ellen Kenyon Peers reported that strikers were in good spirits at Walthamstow Central Overground picket line, and getting a good public reaction, with people stopping to show solidarity.

Strikers felt that there was a deliberate move by the bosses to confuse the public. TfL were informed of the strike two weeks previously and yet the website showed all strike dates cancelled up until the day before. In addition, TfL were slow to put physical signage out to warn people.

This meant a lot of frustrated commuters and huge queues for buses. However angry people were, most directed it at the government and company rather than the pickets.

At Edmonton Green Overground, Sarah Sachs-Eldridge found discussion on the picket line ranged from the case for rail nationalisation, the problem with managers, to the need for a workers' alternative to 'New Labour', and how the union defends its militant traditions, as well as how the strike wave can be built.

Sarah says: "We are very much looking forward to continuing those discussions - on future picket lines definitely, but we also talked about how local discussion could be extended via the trades council, and in Socialist Party and RMT meetings".

Muller workers strike: "We're confident we'll win"

CHRIS MOORE
GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

On 12 November, Sharon Graham, Unite general secretary, visited the picket line of the nearly 70 Severn-side Muller HGV drivers and shunters in Stonehouse, Gloucestershire. They have been taking strike action since 25 August, including eleven continuous days.

The dispute was caused by bullying management, imposing rota changes that would force all drivers to increase weekend working to at least one day every week, breaking an agreement signed with Unite earlier this year.

Muller made £16.5 million profit in 2020. It promotes itself as a family product, yet for corporate greed it is prepared to destroy the time drivers are able to spend with their families.

Local management says 'take it or leave it' and refuses to negotiate with the local reps. Sharon Graham said: "If local management won't listen to the local reps, I'm here to escalate the dispute."

Unite is rebalotting to maintain the legal protections which expire after twelve weeks of a strike mandate. It is including in the rebalot



CHRIS MOORE

the issue of the company's use of outside haulage companies to cover the dispute.

The workplace rep Chris Sattin said: "Today has been brilliant. As part of a union like Unite, we're all together. We've got a chance of fighting organisations like Muller. The attitude of management has made us more determined, and union membership has increased. We're confident we'll win."

Stonehouse drivers deliver to supermarkets nationally, in particular

M&S, Waitrose, Sainsburys, Tesco and Lidl. Unite has a strategy called 'strikes plus', so pressure will now also be applied to Muller's supermarket customers. This will use, for instance, Waitrose's claim that their suppliers act responsibly and support the local community.

Senior steward Derrick Arlett-Johnson said: "Some bigger companies try to face down strikes and feel they can do what they want with workers. Which makes our strike all the more important."

Big victory for Hull Stagecoach workers



Sharon Graham addresses the strikers JANET GIBSON

KEITH & JANET GIBSON
HULL SOCIALIST PARTY

After four weeks of all-out strike action, Unite members working for Stagecoach in Hull have scored a tremendous victory: a 20% pay rise over a two-year period.

From day one, Unite general secretary Sharon Graham kicked off the strike with a fighting address to members. Throughout this dispute, the workers stood together in

solidarity on two picket lines, one at the Stagecoach bus depot from 6am, and the other at Hull's central bus interchange from 10am, in all weathers.

Stagecoach strikers were assisted throughout this struggle by Unite's strike pay, and by food bank assistance organised through Hull Trades Council's unity shop.

We are proud to have stood on the picket line with such determined class fighters!

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IRAN: THE REVOLUTIONARY YOUTH MOVEMENT FACES THE CHALLENGE OF ORGANISING FOR A 48-HOUR GENERAL STRIKE, AS THE NEXT STEP TOWARDS OVERTHROWING THE REGIME

LUKAS ZÖBELEIN

SOZIALISTISCHE ORGANISATION SOLIDARITÄT
(CWI GERMANY)

The 40-day mourning period after Jina (Mahsa) Amini's death ended with protests taking place in 30 Iranian cities.

The largest was in Saez, her hometown in the Kurdish part of Iran, attended by people from all over Iran and especially from Kurdistan. About 100,000 people took part and, despite the security forces attempting to seal off the entire city, many were able to make their way to her grave.

Three days later the commander of the so-called Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, Hossein Salami, issued a threat that "demonstrators should not overstretch the patience of the system. Today is the last day of the riots." It was significant that he also vaguely mentioned making some concessions, reflecting the strength of the opposition.

So far, however, the regime has not been able to stop the protests despite the continuing brutality of its repression. The very next day there were more large protests, especially in the Iranian part of Kurdistan, and at almost all of the country's universities.

Even before, revolutionary youth had founded councils in Sanandaj, the capital of the province of Kurdistan, and also in other cities. So far, the largest are said to be in Sanandaj and in Tehran. This is an important development in itself, and a significant step forward.

Recent appeals issued by both a few of the semi-legal independent workers' organisations and some of the youth councils are attempts to propose the next steps for the developing movement. This is crucial as the regime is trying to use a mixture of repression on the streets and in the courts to hold back the movement, while hoping that the protests will exhaust themselves. Only a strategy based upon organising the movement, adopting a revolutionary programme and stepping up the struggle can defeat the regime's strategy.

The Women and Youth Committee of Sanandaj Neighbourhoods' initial appeal called for the formation of popular councils throughout the country:

"Now is the time to turn our networks of communication and our links, which are the achievements of our struggles in this period, into a more evolved organisation. Now is the time to think about creating neighbourhood committees and councils, and student councils in universities and in schools. Our call to other parts of the society is to form workplace and neighbourhood committees and councils. Whether these forms of organisation are clandestine or open is up to the balance of power, which can be determined by revolutionary youth and freedom-loving people locally."

If this appeal is seriously followed up, not just by the youth, but by the working class and poor, it could be a decisive development. In particular the establishment of such structures in factories and workplaces is central, since they can be key to the preparation and execution of the working class both fighting for its own demands and also spearheading the movement for democratic rights, against the repressive regime and the capitalist system which is incapable of taking society forward.

Such organisations could be decisive in organising mass protests, synchronised actions and a general strike which, as with the 1978-79 revolution, could topple the regime.

No illusions

It is significant that the Sanandaj committee has no rosy illusions about the regime, something which is understandable given its long history of repression, which has been added to recently, with over 300 killed on the streets and thousands arrested. In another statement they wrote:

"The creation of these councils will help the scattered struggles of the youth to become more coordinated, to develop a programme, to develop plans and to choose certain tactics. These immediate and effective measures, in addition to providing the youth movement with order, direction and planning, will also prevent individual mistakes, and will also increase the confidence of those fighting on the streets and prevent wasted efforts.

"In addition, taking a lead in this manner, increasing the level of organisation and developing a distinct leadership, will increase the confidence of different social strata in the youth and provide the basis and possibility for them to join the movement. We insist that all young people unite and coordinate in a single movement, with a single organisation, leadership and plan in neighbourhoods, universities and high schools, and form a single front."

All this shows that the 'Women and Youth Committee' in Sanandaj aims to unite the revolutionary youth movement in a nationwide organisation and to give it a united programme. In a similar development, the Isfahan and Tabriz Student Coalition listed a number of demands that clearly flow from their own experience and the events that have taken place:

- Protest the killing in Sistan-Baluchistan
- Protest the bloody massacre of Evin
- Protest the brutal attack on the children of Shahid Ardabil School, the killing and wounding of female student prisoners, and other arrests of children;
- Protest the militarisation of the cities in Kurdistan
- Protest the repeated arrests of political activists, teachers, youth and even schoolchildren



Students of Amir Kabir university in Tehran protesting

PHOTO: DARAFSH/CC

- Protest threats, warnings, arrests and attacks on university students

Such demands can have a mobilising effect at the moment, especially on the youth of Iran. But in order to be able to mobilise all parts of the working class, a wider programme is needed that unites economic, social and democratic demands, and consciously appeals to workers and others across Iran.

Sanandaj itself is the second largest Kurdish city in Iran and capital of the Kurdish province, but it is only the twenty-third largest city in Iran. The regime would love to play the nationality card of 'divide and rule', trying to isolate the militant opposition in ethnic and religious minority areas like those of the Kurds, Balochs and Arabs.

A conscious approach is needed to prevent this happening. Consistently

clear demands against the repression across the whole of Iran, clear calls for democratic rights, the demand for a minimum wage on which one can live, action against unemployment, as well as the democratic control and management of the economy by the workers and the population itself need to be put forward. These should also include a reduction of the working week to 30 hours, so that the work can also be distributed to those who currently have no work.

Democratic demands

The democratic demands must include full equal rights for women, including the right for women to wear what they want, to be allowed to choose where they work and travel. This is a key question as this revolutionary youth movement was sparked

off precisely against the repression of women, and women, especially young women, are heavily involved in the struggle.

The call for fully democratic elections at all levels of society is central alongside the call for a revolutionary assembly which can decide the future character of Iran, unlike in 1979, when the Khomeini clique only allowed a formal 'yes/no' vote on the new constitution they themselves had written.

The women and youth bodies that have already sprung up correctly recognise that to organise and defend the movement the development of councils rooted amongst the active layers, workplaces and communities can be a key step. The widespread formation of such bodies would be a direct challenge to the undemocratic and bureaucratic structures of the regime.

northern cities of Rasht and Amol, held protests on Sunday chanting "Death to dictators", while in southern Tehran demonstrators chanted "Clerics get lost".

In the Kurdish city of Marivan, it was reported that security forces fired on crowds who had gathered after the funeral of another female protester, Nasrin Ghaderi, who was killed while demonstrating in Tehran.

However, in all spontaneous movements there is a danger that they get stuck at one level and, over time, lose momentum, which can result in the movement beginning to decline. To prevent this happening, concrete steps need to be proposed and built for. The Isfahan and Tabriz Student Coalition's list of demands ended with this call: "We must respond to the limitless crimes of the oppressors in forms of a general strike, school closures, teachers' protest rallies, street and neighbourhood rallies and protests."

This is a vital demand, and the youth councils could have an important role by arguing for a nationwide general strike, possibly of 48 hours, as the next step. Such a strike, if successful, would demonstrate in practice that the opposition is strong enough to stop the nation and, by exposing the weakness of the regime, putting the question on the table that this means that the opposition is strong enough to run the country.

The recent Sanandaj youth council statement shows an understanding of this when it says:

"Today, in addition to the unwavering support of militant teachers of the National Coordination Council, we are witnessing labour strikes in the south and in the key sectors of oil and petrochemicals, Haft Tappeh workers, fuel lorry drivers, etc. We hope that other sections of the working class and workers in the transport and urban services sector will join the nationwide revolutionary movement. Undoubtedly, the joining of different parts of the labour movement to this revolutionary uprising contains the promise of advance and victory."

To be able to help to go to the next stage, the revolutionary youth councils need to concretely turn to the working class and poor to advocate action and create bodies to organise activity where none currently exist.

These developments are an important and extremely significant step. They can also be the basis of organising the defence of the movement from the continuing attacks of the regime's security forces, while making efforts to split them by appealing to their ranks to side with the movement. The organisation of the movement both takes it forward and provides

an opportunity to discuss not only the next steps but what should be the struggle's goals.

As in 1978-79, the working class is the key force that can change society. To build support for a 48-hour general strike requires an organised mass campaign that involves the semi-legal unions and workers' organisations. Some of these have been actively fighting against the brutal rule of Iran's religious and political leaders for more than a decade, and have thus accumulated experience of methods of struggle and strategies that could positively influence the revolutionary youth movement.

At the same time, the councils and the movement must also have a discussion about what can come after the theocratic regime. The CWI argues for a government led by the workers, poor and youth that begins the construction of a democratic socialist Iran.

Socialism

The CWI has consistently argued that: "The workers' movement needs to set its own agenda, a socialist agenda which combined together the immediate demands with the need to break with capitalism so that the working class and power can begin the socialist reconstruction of society. Today, the revolution needs to seize the opportunity to do this and not limit itself to only ending the decades-long repression by the counter-revolution that pushed the working masses aside and seized power after the mass revolt that ended the Shah's dictatorial rule.

"The continuation of capitalism means that the fundamental issues facing Iran will not be answered. Inevitably, class struggles will break out, as the interests of the capitalists and the working class come into conflict. If the capitalist power is not broken this would pose the danger of counter-revolution, probably not on the same lines as 1979-80, but possibly like in Egypt in 2013, as the ruling class moves to secure its position."

This means that the workers' movement, the poor and the revolutionary youth must stand for the replacement of the present regime by a provisional government made up of representatives of the working class, youth and poor, which immediately takes action to implement the revolution's basic demands and begins the socialist transformation of Iran, something which would have an international echo not just in the Middle East but worldwide.



IRAN - CAN PROTESTS DELIVER AN IRANIAN REVOLUTION?

Come and discuss at
SOCIALISM 2022
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We're coming to Socialism 2022 because...

Excited about socialism

What I have done with the Socialist Party since I joined seven months ago is incredible – solidarity with striking workers, reading sessions, and selling the Socialist paper to others looking for an alternative. So Socialism 2022 is an event that I'm truly excited for.

The energy on the ground where I am from is that 'socialism' is no longer a dirty word, but a real change that people truly want. At Socialism 2022, I'll have the chance to speak with others fighting for socialism.

I work in the performing arts sector, and have seen continuous cuts from capitalist governments. Tuition fees – which are already expensive for many families – are planned to go up, which will damage the poorest.

The inequality between the poor and the rich is ever increasing. Greedy capitalist corporations will never fix climate change. Only socialism will tackle the problems facing us.

Socialism 2022 is a fantastic place to hear ideas and conversations about how we go forward, and bring a socialist world. It's time, especially for people looking for an alternative to this chaos, to learn that the people have the power, and that socialism has the answers to the crisis.

If you want to see a change, hope, decency, common sense and a truly better society for all, Socialism 2022 is the place to go.

TONY BLIGH
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialism is more urgent than ever

This year, as in all previous years, there is another increased sense of urgency to the need for socialism. Having been a past attendee at Socialism events, I know these are an

excellent place to meet fellow socialists, and to discuss and debate ideas.

Just about every political and financial basis of capitalism is in crisis. More and more working-class people have moved onto an industrial front in response to attacks on their pay, terms and conditions, and safety standards at work.

But they see no real political alternatives available to them. No political party represents their interests.

The debates and discussions at this year's event will centre on these vital questions, and I will be part of them.

Socialism events always provide the oxygen and energy I need to take back to my workplace and community, to pass on ideas and strategies put forward to bring about the socialist transformation of society – the only transformation that will provide for all.

DECLAN CLUNE
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

As soon as I heard, I wanted to go

When I joined the Socialist Party this year, one of the first conversations I had was about the much-hyped Socialism 2022. I was instantly eager to book my ticket, travel down to London and meet socialists from here and around the world.

The weekend event sounded like it was everything I had been looking for. A chance to meet socialists from many different walks of life. A chance to learn from acclaimed speakers and experienced socialists. And a chance to enjoy one another's company in our efforts to ignite socialism.

I am 26. I have lived nearly the majority of my life in either recessions, austerity or just neoliberal inaction. I have grown bored and angry waiting for our leaders to fix the problems facing us. And I know that I'm not the only person of my generation who thinks this. Another reason I am looking forward to Socialism 2022 – being around like-minded people

CAPITALISM IN CRISIS THE WORKING CLASS IS STRIKING BACK!

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Speakers at the rally include:

- Hannah Sell, Socialist Party general secretary
- Peter Taaffe, Socialist Party political secretary
- Prasad, a socialist leader of the mass revolt in Sri Lanka
- Jared Wood, RMT London regional organiser (personal capacity (pc))
- Shelia Caffrey, National Education Union National Executive (pc)
- Gary Clark, CWU Scotland No. 2 Branch Secretary (pc)
- Holly Johnston, NHS trade union activist (pc)
- Chaired by Lenny Shail, Socialism 2022 organiser



Part of the weekend of discussion and debate at

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Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 November, Graduate Centre, Queen Mary University, Mile End Rd, London E1 4NS

Hosted by the Socialist Party



www.socialistparty.org.uk

and helping one another to step up when our leaders fail.

I also love a good song, and I am excited to blast out 'The Internationale' with everyone else at Socialism 2022.

DANIEL SNIPE
SWANSEA SOCIALIST PARTY

going on strike. Workers bearing the brunt of economic crises has deepened anger at the capitalist system.

But where will this anger go? We all have a role to play. And Socialism 2022 provides a framework to discuss how we can fight through the trade unions for our ideas,

including the need for a new workers' party.

I encourage every visitor to Socialism 2022 to contribute in workshops, feedback what motivates you, and join us in making history.

MAX MCGEE
NUNEATON SOCIALIST PARTY

Come to Socialism 2022

- Get Socialism 2022 tickets and info – socialism.org.uk
- Socialism 2022 is an in-person event. But the Saturday night rally (see above) will be live-streamed. Watch the live broadcast here – youtube.com/video/u6ssbFZXc2k – or follow the QR code above. And a number of workshops will have Zoom access, details will be sent to ticket holders on Friday.
- Donate to the Socialism 2022 appeal – see page 3

Student cost-of-living protests – we need action now

Socialist Students organised a week of action – 7-11 November – on the student cost-of-living crisis. Plus read about the UCU strikes on page 5.

Bristol

Socialist Students' cost-of-living protest was popular. University of Bristol TV even dropped by to interview one of us.

Many students were eager to take a leaflet, as the university and student union have done little to assist struggling students.

Students were interested in learning more about socialism, and what they can do to make a difference. While there is a sense of gloom, co-ordinated demonstrations and increased activism can reassure people that they do have a voice.

NICK CLARE

Oxford

We spent the week on campaign stalls, flyposting, and organising public meetings at the universities to demand proper maintenance grants, high-quality, low-cost accommodation provided in-house by universities, free education, and scrapping student debt.

CALLUM JOYCE

Leeds

I spoke at our protest to criticise Leeds University for failing to help struggling students. Anthony Bracuti, who will be on strike with the University and College Union (UCU), said that PhD students have been blocked from receiving the government £650 cost-of-living payment.

ISLA DEFTY

Join the student fightback: join...



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

Protesting for the planet and our cost of living

On 12 November protests took place, part of an international day of climate solidarity. In Blackpool, protesters combined climate issues with the cost of living.

● **Blackpool**

Hundreds marched. The trade union council and a group of NHS campaigners were vital to organising our protest. The most deprived areas, like Blackpool, receive the worst levels of healthcare.

This protest was about showing solidarity with striking workers fighting for inflation-proof pay rises. Solidarity is not just a nice word to be saved for special occasions. It is our most powerful weapon against the bosses and their capitalist media, who try to divide workers and fuel division between trade unionists and climate activists.

There was massive support for taking energy and public utilities out of the hands of the profiteers, and bringing them back under public ownership, run for need not profit.

The protest also said no to fracking at Preston New Road, or anywhere across the world. We celebrated the important victory of twice defeating the Tories' fracking plans. This shows the power of determined protests.

There was a call for a 'climate jobs plan,' and for trade unionists to come

together to develop a real alternative to create thousands of new jobs in north west England to:

- Cut greenhouse emissions
- Generate vast amounts of clean energy
- Retrofit clean, affordable heating systems
- Insulate homes and public buildings, and a council housing building programme of properly insulated homes,
- Expand green, affordable public transport and the training for the new jobs

To achieve all this requires trade union action to fight for a living wage, workers joining a union and getting organised, supporting the pay strikes, and reversing the cuts to public services.

CHRIS BAUGH
LANCASHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

● **Bristol**

700 marched. One of the speakers was Sheila Caffrey, Socialist Party member and Bristol Trades Union Council president. She said: "Profit caused this crisis – a capitalist system which exploits the planet's resources. not for the benefit of all, but for the benefit of a handful of billionaires".

ROGER THOMAS
BRISTOL SOCIALIST PARTY



Socialist Party's Chris Baugh speaking at the Blackpool protest. MARTIN POWELL-DAVIES

● **Newcastle**

There were lots of calls for system change, but I didn't hear any of the platform speakers mention the 'S' word – socialism.

And I didn't hear of them call for nationalising oil and other utilities.

Climate campaigners are right when they say there is no planet B. We need to shout out that capitalism is incapable of keeping our planet safe.

The system change needed is socialist change.

ELAINE BRUNSKILL
SOUTH TYNE AND WEAR SOCIALIST PARTY

TUSC meetings

If Labour won't support workers, we need a party that does

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is hosting a series of public discussion meetings under the heading 'Enough is Enough! But what do we do at the ballot box?' The aim is to provide forums, on as wide a scale as possible, to discuss how a working-class alternative can be put in place for the next general election. Go to socialistparty.org.uk to read reports from the meetings so far, and see tusc.org.uk/events for future dates near you.

persuaded workers to join a union and fight for better wages during the cost-of-living crisis.

Socialist Party general secretary Hannah Sell said that even a small number of TUSC representatives in parliament and local councils could begin to transform the political direction, and speak for working-class interests.

Lots of the 28 that attended the meeting also spoke. After canvassing for Labour in the December 2019 general election, Unite the Union member Phil said he was disappointed to see right-wing Labour MP Jess Phillips celebrating the exit poll defeat for the Jeremy Corbyn-led party. Labour member John said Keir Starmer had broken every promise he made to win the leadership election.

A Labour councillor spoke of his disappointment at Labour turning its back on socialist values. The Labour council plans to raise the cost to residents of district heating schemes by 70%. TUSC supporters plan to stand an anti-cuts slate in the council elections in May, but not against any councillors who vote against cuts.

- Read about the campaign of the Samworth Brothers'

workers and sign their petition – unionisesamworths.co.uk

ALEX GILLHAM
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

● **Swansea**

There was loud applause from the 30-plus crowd after the Socialist Party's workplace and trade union organiser, Rob Williams, said: "We need a new workers' party, whose leaders would actually encourage MPs to support and attend picket lines, strike rallies and demonstrations, along with local councillors who would refuse to pass on Tory cuts".

Mark Evans spoke in a personal capacity as the secretary for Carmarthenshire council Unison union. Mark said his union branch is preparing for yet another huge battle with the Plaid council, which will yet again implement millions of pounds of cuts, instead of supporting Carmarthenshire Unison's legal 'no-cuts' budget.

Ginny Bayliss, Swansea Socialist Students, highlighted the devastating impact of the cost-of-living on students and young workers. But they're

also willing to fight back. "We need a new workers' party to stand up for young people, and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is an important step in that direction".

The Communication Workers Union (CWU) rep for Parcelforce thanked many in the audience who had visited their picket lines. He wanted to see the Tories kicked out of office, but remained extremely sceptical that Keir Starmer would re-nationalise Royal Mail.

Gareth Bromhall, Swansea Trades Union Council secretary, is "looking forward to representing TUSC in future elections, and confident in building on the support TUSC has received". The discussion from the floor was proof that young people are not passive and apathetic, but angry, motivated and militant.

ALEC THRAVES
SWANSEA SOCIALIST PARTY

● **Sheffield**

A Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) supporter explained some of the steps that the Labour and Green council could take (but

isn't) to help working-class people, and to ensure that no one is homeless, cold or hungry in the city.

60 people – 46 in person and 14 on Zoom – listened to trade unionists currently in dispute or balloting for action. The speakers included the assistant branch secretary for striking RMT members, Joe Howard, as well as Socialist Party members Holly Johnston, an NHS worker, and Liam Ball, a university worker. The meeting was chaired by former Bolsover Labour councillor, and now Sheffield TUSC candidate, Sue Statter.

People from the floor spoke about the issues in their own workplaces, and the need for a new workers' party so that we can have a real alternative to the pro-capitalist policies of the four establishment parties. Here in Sheffield, we have a so-called 'collaborative council' of Labour, Lib Dems and Greens carrying out Tory cuts!

And Sheffield TUSC already has 23 potential candidates to contest the 28 Sheffield wards in next year's local elections. The meeting also unanimously agreed to stand at least one candidate in Sheffield – in Sheffield Central – in the general election.

GARY DRABBLE
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

- For a new mass workers' party, based on the trade unions, and drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplaces, and community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, socialist political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

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International day of action in solidarity with Sri Lankan workers and youth

Protests were held across Sri Lanka and around the world on 9 November, demanding fundamental democratic rights in Sri Lanka, such as the right to protest, the right to assembly, freedom of speech, and the release of all protesters, including student leaders Wasantha Mudalige and Galwewa Siridhamma Thera.

The Inter University Students' Federation, together with the newly formed Movement for People's Councils, called for a national day of action and international solidarity action to be held.

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) stands firmly for democratic rights and the building of workers' struggle in Sri Lanka to oppose all repression. The CWI fully supported this call for international action and helped to mobilise protests in a number of countries.

The message on the day was clear: "Increasing repression will be met with further escalation of protests, and workers, youth and the poor taking a much more organised approach," said one of the protesters in London.

The Sri Lankan government has been implementing draconian methods to suppress all protest activities in

fear of a repeat of the uprising that took place in July.

Attacks on living conditions and further increases in fuel and food prices are parts of the main plan put forward by the government as a solution to the crisis. This they plan to carry out by brutally suppressing any opposition that may emerge.

The government has implemented a ban on protests in key areas and arrested thousands. However, they have not been able to fully silence the protests that continue to emerge due to the massive anger that exists in society. Many have defied the repression and took part in the protests that have been held across the country. This was accompanied by protests, activities and online campaigns organised in London, Germany, India and in many other countries.

WHAT WAY FORWARD FOR REVOLUTION IN SRI LANKA?

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London protest PHOTO: LONDON SP



TUSC public meeting in Leeds PHOTO: LEEDS SP



US midterm elections - new upheavals to come

TONY SAUNOIS
CWI SECRETARY

Although the final tally of the US midterm elections will not be finalised until December, it is clear that the expected 'red wave' Republican victory failed to materialise, and was more of a ripple.

It seems likely that the Republican Party (the GOP) will retake a majority in the House of Representatives, while the Democrats will retain control of the Senate, at least with the vice-president's casting vote. But these elections will have significant consequences both domestically and internationally.

Moreover, they will not end the highly polarised situation which exists in the US. They may also have important repercussions for the 2024 presidential elections and, in particular, for the Republican Party and the future of Donald Trump.

Most commentators expected the Republicans to take a clean sweep and make major gains in the House of Representatives and possibly take control of the Senate. In addition, they expected that Trump supporters would make substantial gains in elections to key state positions, allowing them to shape future electoral laws and regulations. President Joe Biden went into the elections claiming that the future of US 'democracy' was on the ballot, but expecting major losses.

In the event, it seems that the Democrats will lose less than 20 seats in the House of Representatives. The Democrats are counting this as a victory. Losses in the midterm elections by the party not in government are usual. Incumbent presidents' parties have lost ground in 36 of the 39 midterm elections held since the US civil war. However, the Democrats' losses in this election are far less than those suffered by previous governing parties. In 1994 the Republicans gained 54 House seats against Bill Clinton and 63 against Barack Obama in 2010.

In Pennsylvania, John Fetterman won election to the Senate, turning previously Republican counties to the Democrats, significantly having conducted a populist working-class orientated campaign, taking up issues such as the minimum wage and healthcare.

Elections a blow to Trump

These elections were a blow to Trump, who was looking to a big Republican win to launch his bid to win reelection in 2024. With typical Trump verbosity, he declared: "Well, I think if they (Republicans) win, I should get all the credit. If they lose, I should not be blamed at all."

In fact, those candidates endorsed by Trump fared worse than the average Republican, including Doug Mastriano for governor and Mehmet Oz for the Senate in Pennsylvania, and Daniel Cox, who ran for governor in Maryland.

The economy and inflation were key issues for most who voted in this election which saw a higher turnout for midterm elections than usual. However, according to exit polls, 27% also viewed the question



The need for a new party of the US working class that can offer an alternative to both capitalist parties and the system they represent is more urgent than ever

of defending abortion rights as a key question. This was reflected in the highest turnout ever in a midterm election, including a higher than usual turnout of younger voters, especially women. Significantly, in Kentucky, a conservative bastion and home to Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell, an amendment from the ruling Republicans to the state constitution giving no right to abortion was rejected.

Democrats and their allies spent \$450 million on ads supporting abortion rights. Had the Supreme Court not ruled against Roe v Wade in June, the outcome of the election may have been different, possibly resulting in a lower turnout and bigger Republican gains.

In some Democrat strongholds like New York, the Republican candidates often ignored the abortion issue, or said they would not attempt to amend state law where abortions are permitted.

The whip of counterrevolution saved the Democrats from even bigger losses, as the choice before many voters was between far-right extremist 'Make America Great Again' pro-Trump candidates, and an unpopular Democratic president, who has defended the interests of capitalism and is presiding over an economic crisis, spiralling inflation and cuts to living standards. Millions rallied to the banner of lesser evilism for fear of what the alternative would bring.

The capitalist Democrats featured

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The Democrats were partially saved in these elections by the backlash from abortion rights being attacked, and threats posed by a potential Republican sweeping victory

PHOTO: TED EYMAN / CC

not a turn to 'moderation' by the Republicans. Yet his less erratic conduct can make him potentially a more dangerous right-wing Republican threat. The highly polarised situation in the US and divisions within both parties are set to intensify following these elections.

Polarisation to deepen

The Democrats and Biden are celebrating the fact that they did not suffer even greater losses. However, this will not resolve the depth of the political and social crisis they and US society face. Even a limited Republican victory in the House of Representatives will allow the Republicans to torpedo much of Biden's agenda. The investigation into the 6 January attempt by Trump supporters to overturn the election result in 2020 could be scrapped, together with other legislative proposals from Biden's administration. They may also attempt to reduce the US commitment to fighting the war in Ukraine.

Biden's regime is poised to begin a 'lame duck' Presidency for the next two years. This at a time of deepening economic, political and social crisis in the US and globally.

The prospect of a deepening economic recession in the US, together with the global conflict in the Ukraine, and the struggle between US imperialism and China, will be reflected in increased conflict and division between the capitalist Democrats and Republicans, but also within both parties.

A 'lame duck' presidency under Biden can also lead to further trade union and other struggles erupting, as little is to be expected from Washington DC in the next two years.

The Biden presidency has seen falling approval ratings as his regime has failed to offer decisive measures that resolve the economic and social crisis facing US workers, the poor and middle class. It was partially saved in these elections by the backlash from abortion rights being attacked, and threats posed by a potential Republican sweeping victory.

The Democrats offer no way forward for the working people of the US. At the same time, they are not able to confront and offer a real alternative to the 'Maga Trumpists' or the DeSantis right of the Republican Party. The need for a new party of the US working class that can offer an alternative to both capitalist parties and the system they represent is more urgent than ever. The impending struggles that are poised to erupt in the US in the coming years offer the opportunity to build such a party. Unfortunately, previous opportunities to do this have been lost by Bernie Sanders and others who remained within the Democrats. New opportunities that will arise must not be lost again. The need for such a party is now more urgent than ever.

ROE VS WADE – THE FIGHT FOR REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS TODAY

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Book review: Capital in the Anthropocene

Kohei Saito blames capitalism for climate chaos

ADAM POWELL-DAVIES
EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

There is a common idea that Japanese people aren't political. There is certainly nothing apolitical about some of the massive struggles that have been waged by the Japanese working class. For example, two million Japanese workers staged a revolutionary strike movement under the slogan 'Rice and Peace' in 1918, and seven million people across Japan protested against the renewal of the US-Japan Security Treaty in 1960.

But, the last three general elections in Japan have seen the lowest voter turnouts since the end of World War Two. Trade union membership is just 17%. And industrial action is still at a very low level.

Many are surprised at the success of a recent book. In 'Capital in the Anthropocene', Japanese academic Kohei Saito says that ending capitalism is the only way to solve the climate crisis. Published in late 2020, it has so far sold over 500,000 copies.



Should we be surprised that people are looking for ideas to fight a capitalist system that has proven itself incapable of meeting the needs of the majority or the planet

But should we be surprised that people are looking for ideas to fight a capitalist system that has increasingly proven itself incapable of meeting the needs of the vast majority of humans, or the planet we inhabit?

Unfortunately, Capital in the Anthropocene gives no real answers to workers and young people seeking a future beyond capitalism. Saito begins the book with a useful conclusion: that capitalism is the cause of the climate crisis. But he fails to put forward any concrete steps for the working class to take economic and political control from the capitalist class internationally. Only then would it be possible, through socialist planning, to halt and then begin reversing climate destruction.

Instead, Saito draws on the work of sociologist Erica Chenoweth to argue that the system change he advocates can be achieved as long as 3.5% of the Japanese population "rises up through non-violent methods". The same 3.5% figure has informed the tactics of groups like Extinction Rebellion.

But this figure does not hold up to scrutiny. For example, how would Saito explain the failure of seven

million largely peaceful protesters to stop the renewal of the Japan-US Security Treaty in 1960? That was 7% of the Japanese population – twice what Saito says would be necessary to defeat capitalism.

The success of a movement does not depend merely on its size. It also needs a programme to win.

In the case of a movement aiming to overthrow capitalism, that would mean a revolutionary programme that explains the need for the working classes of each country to take the commanding heights of the economy into democratic public ownership, while linking up on an international basis.

In contrast, Saito consistently fails to mention the central role of the working class in changing society. Instead, he divides the working class on a regional basis, distinguishing between "winners" in the "Global North" (more economically developed countries) and "losers" in the "Global South" (less economically developed countries).

He writes: "We Japanese [in the Global North] are complicit in environmental catastrophes in the Global South. Our rich lifestyles would be impossible without the exploitation... of the Global South." But who are "we Japanese"?

There are Japanese workers, young people, pensioners, and so on. And then there are the Japanese capitalists, who comprise an international class that is ultimately responsible for the economic and environmental crises workers face in all countries around the world.

Rich lifestyles

Saito blames the "rich lifestyles" of workers in rich countries for the exploitation of workers in poorer countries, as well as the climate crisis. At no point does he consider that many workers in countries like Japan and Britain do not actually enjoy such "rich lifestyles".

Instead, he puts the onus on "us" in the Global North to reduce our consumption on a society-wide

basis. Yet at a time when millions of workers are struggling to afford even basic necessities, many will think: "Reduce consumption of what?"

Based on his view that mass consumption, and therefore mass production, is the force driving the climate crisis, Saito argues for capitalism to be replaced by what he terms "degrowth communism".

Mass production on a capitalist basis will inevitably lead to climate destruction. Different capitalists, and the governments that rely on their profits, compete in a completely unplanned way to extract resources from the planet.

But on a socialist basis, it would be possible for workers around the world to come together and draw up a plan of production based on human need, which would include the need for a safe and healthy environment.

Saito points to ecological devastation that took place in the Soviet Union to argue that that we can't afford to have "communism based on economic growth".

Apart from a short period following the Russian Revolution in 1917, up to the bureaucratic degeneration that took place under Stalin, the Soviet Union lacked any element of democratic workers' control. In a truly democratic socialist system, the tremendous economic growth that took place in the Soviet Union, based on the planned economy, could take place on a far greater scale and in an environmentally friendly way. Far from 'degrowing' the increase in the productive forces made under capitalism, such a system would build on past economic gains to develop production far beyond what is possible today.

Saito states: "I don't want to do rebaked Marxism". Yet insofar as he neglects a class analysis of the climate crisis, his arguments do not at all resemble Marxism.

500,000

people have bought Saito's book

Nonetheless, his book can be a starting point for anyone looking to fight back against the climate crisis. It clearly names and shames the system responsible for this crisis. And it points to the need to replace this system with a system based on common ownership, while raising the potential for an alternative to Stalinism.

But this alternative has to be a socialist system, based on international democratic workers' control and planning of the economy. In Britain, in Japan, and around the world, this means having organisations with a clear programme for achieving socialist change.

The level of working-class struggle is still low in Japan. But the current strike wave in Britain shows that consciousness can quickly change on the basis of events. In 2017, just 33,000 workers took industrial action in Britain – the lowest level since records began. Five years later, millions of workers are now either striking or being balloted, receiving widespread public support.

The same potential exists in Japan, where workers also face deep economic crisis. To take the levers of power from the hands of the Japanese capitalists, the Japanese working class needs its own organisations, including a new workers' party and independent, democratic trade unions.

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) in Japan pushes for the formation of such organisations, as the first step to overthrowing capitalism there. The success of Capital in the Anthropocene shows the appetite of thousands of Japanese workers and young people to engage in this struggle. It is the job of Marxists to connect with this mood and point the way forward to socialism.



‘Russia 1985-1999: TraumaZone’ by Adam Curtis

The fascinating collapse of the former USSR depicted, but not explained

CLARE DOYLE

COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS’ INTERNATIONAL

In a seven-part production for BBC TV, ‘TraumaZone’, Adam Curtis has delved into the predominantly unseen work of hundreds of BBC film crews carried out over 35 years across what was the USSR. In an extraordinarily varied assortment of footage, he aims to convey “what it felt like to live through the collapse of communism and democracy”.

In fact, it provides priceless insights into what happened when a vast, bureaucratically run planned economy ground to a halt and gangster capitalism took over. Some of the material is horrifying, some actually amusing.

The series is peopled with oppressed workers, exploited women and children, high-living oligarchs and gangsters, as well as dictatorial presidents like Yeltsin and Putin.

Catalogue of disaster

The series goes from 1985, and Mikhail Gorbachev becoming the last president of the USSR, to 1999 and the financial and industrial meltdowns at the end of the 20th century.

At the beginning, nothing seems to hang together; the juxtaposition of footage is annoyingly random. This may be an art form but, for someone who lived in Russia for much of this nightmare period, it is frustrating. The treasure trove of film and personal commentary cries out for consistent and clear explanation and analysis.

However, as the series moves on, a number of insights emerge and it becomes compelling watching.

Early scenes range from the Chernobyl disaster to the Afghan war (with its 15,000 Russian deaths). They include President Gorbachev struggling with the increasing unpopularity of the ‘Communist’ Party he heads and his famous ‘Perestroika’ experiment of economic and political reforms.

Empty food shops and lengthening queues are mixed in with co-ops displaying expensive clothes. Pensioners at metro stations sell their last precious possessions. Workers trade meagre share vouchers with grandmothers working for former party bureaucrats like Mikhail Khordorkovsky and Boris Berezovsky – labelled by Curtis as ‘Oligarch No.1’ and ‘Oligarch No.2’. They are shown looting publicly owned factories and banks to “make millions out of nothing”, as Berezovsky himself puts it. The giant Togliatti car factory is shown being carved up by armed gangsters.

End of USSR

Little of TraumaZone’s wealth of footage reached British TV screens at the time. In the USSR, chronic food shortages and queues were part of everyone’s daily experience, but reports of protests and strikes were suppressed. Mass meetings addressed by the popular Moscow leader Boris Yeltsin were rarely, if ever, shown on state-controlled TV.

Viewers in what was the USSR didn’t get a clear account of what



TraumaZone is available to view on BBC iPlayer



It was not ‘communism’ that collapsed in 1991, but an ossified one-party dictatorship based on a bureaucratically run, state-owned planned economy

happened in August 1991, when the ‘old guard’ of top generals and bureaucrats tried to carry through a coup against Gorbachev. They saw constant repeats of Swan Lake and a press conference by the coup leaders with the famous trembling hands of vice-president Gennady Yanayev.

Curtis mines a wealth of additional film from these dramatic days but without explanation. The ‘Emergency’ was over in three days and Yeltsin literally came out on top – leaving Gorbachev humiliated and the long-ruling Communist Party of the Soviet Union outlawed. The USSR then rapidly disintegrated and was dissolved on 25 December 1991 (see ‘30 years since the end of the USSR – lessons for the workers’ movement’ at Socialistworld.net).

Yeltsin’s decline

Adam Curtis’ films chart how the ‘golden boy’ and super-democrat Yeltsin turned into a power hungry and ruthless representative of the new capitalist class. It shows him using the army in a brutal attack on the Russian White House in September 1993. Former ally and chair of the

Russian parliament, Alexander Rutskoy, is seen leading a group of men from the burning building waving a white flag!

The kaleidoscope of film shows ‘shock therapy’ enthusiasts Yegor Gaidar and Anatoly Chubais, along with a later prime minister Viktor Chernomyrdin. American evangelists harangue an unimpressed gathering of school students in a field and the show goes on.

Over his years in power, Yeltsin accrued great personal powers for himself, but his health and popularity rapidly declined. TraumaZone shows how he was challenged by nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy; and how the ‘Communist Party’ was revived as a tame parliamentary buffer against real opposition. It exposes the president’s decision to send forces into Chechnya as a distraction from his own woes as his alcoholism gets the better of him.

The series goes on to show how the oligarchs then found their man in the inscrutable character Vladimir Putin, head of St Petersburg’s KGB. It shows how western leaders patronised this new representative of the now entrenched oligarchy. It exposes how foreign loans, given in times of trouble, would immediately disappear into private bank accounts abroad and much, much more.

Extremes

TraumaZone is a quite fascinating creation. It brings out so many of the features of life in what was the USSR that make it a region of huge contrasts, both in the past and in the gruesome present. Tragic scenes are interspersed with comic episodes, like the repeated attempts to get the

favorite horse of the president of Turkmenistan transported to Britain, originally as a present for prime minister John Major! It shows a number of visits by world figures – presidents, prime ministers and Queen Elizabeth II.

There are heart-rending scenes of soldiers’ mothers searching for proof that their sons are dead in order to claim a meagre pension. A girl begs for cash from car windows. The nouveaux riches attend banquets and have country mansions built for them.

A cosmonaut is abandoned when the USSR falls apart, only later to be brought back to earth. A Soviet-era museum of space becomes a parking lot. Computers and automatic checkout systems are beginning to be developed, but Moscow runs out of potatoes!

Mafia-style shoot-outs over the spoils of privatisation take place in streets inhabited by the unemployed and homeless. An aged couple is interviewed in a water-sodden tunnel under Moscow. Adults, children and dogs are shown living rough in Russia’s vast forests. What are said to be the last Russian Tsar’s bones are buried in St Petersburg and newly-weds pose at the place of his execution in Ekaterinburg.

Prostitutes in a hotel discuss who gets the condom. A girl in a ‘kommunalka’ (communal apartment) speaks of her fears of sharing a room with a stranger. Women are seen queueing up to have abortions – the only form of ‘family planning’ for most.

The extensive film footage in Curtis’ series certainly gives an insider view of the rise of today’s super-rich oligarchs, above all Putin. It also shows scenes from Ukraine over the

years, as pro- and anti-Moscow governments succeed each other and oligarchs seek to protect their newly acquired wealth.

It has juxtaposed beauty parlours, fashion shows and art dealers buying Russia’s treasures with life in snow-covered rural areas of Russia where time has hardly moved on. Pony traps go by, laundry is washed in ponds and pensioners catch fish from ice-holes.

For anyone who lived in what was the USSR, TraumaZone will bring memories flooding back and even give some insights into what was happening. For those who have never been there, it is also an intriguing way of seeing how today’s disastrous situation came about.

No explanation

Adam Curtis is said to come from a socialist background and clearly abhors the society he sees that has evolved in the hundred or so years since the workers took power in Russia. He bemoans the fact that today’s left has “failed to come up with a consistent set of alternatives to capitalism”. He is actually unable to explain the very processes he so vividly illustrates.

It was not ‘communism’ that collapsed in 1991, but an ossified one-party dictatorship based on a bureaucratically run, state-owned planned economy. Nor, as Curtis’ material amply illustrates, was any real democracy established before the Yeltsin and Putin dictatorships.

It is down to a new generation to learn all the lessons of history, to prepare for a fight to the finish against capitalism in all its forms and for genuine socialism on a world scale.

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the Socialist

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formerly **Militant**

STRIKING TOGETHER WE CAN WIN

MAKE 30 NOVEMBER A MASSIVE DAY OF ACTION

PAULA MITCHELL

SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

As we all face a bleak winter of high prices, falling real wages and paltry benefits, one bright spot is glowing and growing.

Public sector workers are taking up the beacon lit by striking rail, postal and BT workers in the summer and autumn. Hundreds of thousands of workers are standing up and saying they are prepared to fight, showing the way out of the cost-of-living crisis.

Huge inspiration will be taken from the victory of the Liverpool dockers, winning 14-18% pay rises.

Nurses in the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) have made history with their first-ever vote for nationwide strike action – only to be told by Tory ministers that their call for a pay rise above inflation is not “reasonable or affordable”.

Any strike dates announced by the RCN must be supported by trade union and community demonstrations at hospitals up and down the country – especially at those places that only just missed the Tory anti-democratic turnout thresholds.

These would be a huge boost, not just to the strikers but to members of other NHS unions currently balloting. The message must be

loud and clear to the vicious Tories: we will all fight for our NHS.

The biggest-ever strike in universities by the University and College Union (UCU) is about to start, with a demonstration in London on Wednesday 30 November. Now sixth-form staff in the National Education Union have announced they will also be striking on 30 November.

These actions coordinate with planned strikes by Royal Mail workers in the CWU. Civil service workers in the PCS union have also voted overwhelmingly for strike action. Socialist Party members and PCS Broad Left Network supporters are campaigning for

action to be called straight away, starting with 30 November.

Upping the coordination, drawing more workers into the struggle, all striking together, has the potential to win real pay rises and drive out the Tories.

It could also light a fire under Starmer's New Labour government, waiting in the wings. Starmer's deputy Angela Rayner, when asked by the Financial Times if workers could expect inflation-matching pay rises under a Labour government, answered, “brutally, no”.

Well, brutally, that isn't good enough. The fight must go on to defeat the bosses and force whoever is in power to pay up. By

necessity, that includes fighting for political representatives who do stand with the working class – a new workers' party.

- Let's make 30 November a massive day of action – join the demo in London at 1pm, King's Cross station, N1 9AL
- Coordinate as many strikes as possible
- Turn the UCU's demonstration into a huge midweek demo of striking workers, students, and all those fighting the cost-of-living crisis
- Demonstrate at hospitals on NHS strike dates
- See pages 5, 6, 7 for more on the strikes

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS ►►► see column on page 12



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