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WE WON'T PAY THE PRICE FOR TORY CRISIS



Striking posties FERDY LYONS

- **Strike together**
- **Build a new mass workers' party**

JAMES IVENS
LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Great news! A terrifying 'black hole' is set to devour us all - but the government has a way to stop it.

Tory chancellor Jeremy Hunt says he can stuff it shut with just £55 billion of our cash! Labour

leader Keir Starmer says he can do the same.

"No jam today and none tomorrow" was the assessment of the big bosses' mouthpiece, the Financial Times. Their front page headline: "Hunt paves way for years of pain."

But we're in agony already. If you're like me, you're not even sure your radiators still work. Nine in ten of us are putting off the first day we switch on heating, said an October poll for the BBC. That same month, the average price on a pint of milk was 65p. The October before, 43p.

It feels hard to make sense of

official forecasts. Like living standards plunging 7% in the next two years - the steepest dive since records began. And half a million jobs going. Over a decade into austerity, how can we possibly give up more?

Lots of us are deciding we can't. The rail workers and posties have downed tools this year to demand jobs we can live off. Now nurses, education workers, civil servants and more are entering the fray.

The dockers' strike in Liverpool has won inflation-busting rises of up to 18%. The port strike in Lerwick won hikes of up to 38%!

Turns out the bosses couldn't run a bath without the workforce, let alone an economy. So imagine the power our strikes would have if all unions called them on the same days. The 30 November strikes are just the beginning, with education and postal workers out.

What about Hunt's 'fiscal black hole'? Well, the cash isn't sucked out of the universe. British corporate profits were a record £139 billion in the first three months of this year alone. That's where all the money we lose goes: to thieves.

Starmer is happy with that. "We don't quarrel with the number" he told the Beeb, "or trying to get the debt down." Just like the "very difficult choices" and "not being able to do things" he promised Labour conference, this means: Labour will continue Tory austerity.

It's not enough for us to win on the picket line just to be robbed at the ballot box.

The working class needs a new, mass party to draw all these struggles together. Imagine the power we'd have if the unions called that too.

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Turn the screw on the Tories by taking strike action together



Public sector workers on strike together, 30 November 2011 PAUL MATTHEWSON

ROB WILLIAMS
SOCIALIST PARTY TRADE UNION AND WORKPLACE ORGANISER

The Tories have finally delivered their well-trailed autumn statement. Their latest chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, the fourth this year, tried to face both ways - assuring the money markets that the government has got a handle on public finances, while trying to stealthily soften the appearance of their new austerity blows on working-class people. But make no mistake, these are vicious attacks, on top of the brutal cost-of-living squeeze.

Twelve years ago, Tories David

Cameron and George Osborne, and Lib Dem Nick Clegg, unleashed £100 billion of cuts. The attack on public sector pensions led to what was effectively a public sector general strike of two million workers on 30 November 2011. It could, and should've been the first step in a struggle that could have defeated the Tory-led coalition, but the right-wing trade union leaders capitulated.

But the eleventh anniversary of the 'N30' public sector pensions strike will also see mass coordinated strike action. Up to 200,000 workers will be out on that day, including CWU members in Royal Mail, UCU in higher education, joined in some

universities by Unison, as well as NEU action in sixth-form colleges.

If anything, the potential is far greater now than in 2011. Then, public sector workers were very much in the vanguard. The Tories attempted to play them off against workers in the private sector. It didn't work: there was great support for the mass public sector action then, with huge strike rallies in towns and cities all over the country.

But now, in the face of spiralling prices hitting all workers, a strike wave has been growing across all sectors. It is made up of three main elements: localised, mainly private sector, strikes; key national private sector disputes such as Royal Mail,

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The unions have to come together to coordinate their strike calendars, so that the strikes of 30 November are built upon and escalated, with unions joining the action as they win their ballots

BT and the railways; and now national ballots and action in the public sector, especially the NHS.

This N30 strike day isn't a one-off. It is one of ten further Royal Mail strikes from now until Christmas, and the third of three UCU strikes. On 24 November, the EIS is calling a Scottish-wide school strike, while its members in higher education will be joining UCU and Unison on the 24 and 25. Saturday 26 November sees train drivers in Aslef take further action. And on every day there are workers taking strike action, with many winning significant victories, such as Unite members on Liverpool docks and Hull Stagecoach buses.

But Hunt's budget is a new vicious turning of the screw. It is confirmation that the Tories and the boss class that they represent want workers to pay for this crisis not of our making. They have to be taken on and defeated.

As in 2011, the most effective way to do that is to take action together. This means the unions have to come together to coordinate their strike calendars, so that the strikes of 30 November are built upon and escalated, with unions joining the action as they win their ballots.

The incredible reballoon results of the RMT in the national rail dispute, smashing the undemocratic thresholds of the restrictive Tory anti-union laws, are a real sign of the militant mood of rail workers and their determination to fight and win, given what is at stake for them and their families.

That fighting mood is increasingly being shared by more and more workers. The bosses' Tory political backers are staggering from one crisis to another. But within each individual dispute, where workers are fighting for gains, the consciousness is building that if workers fight and strike together, the employers can be pushed back and the Tories forced out.

• More on the strike wave pages 4,5,6,7,10 and 16

Get all the latest union news



with the NSSN bulletin shopstewards.net

Preparing the movement to take on a Starmer government

"One outcome of the next general election, if even a couple of the fighting trade unions like the CWU, the RMT transport workers' union or Unite, organised an independent working-class candidates' list, could be to get at least a small block of MPs elected - unbound by the Labour whips - from which to challenge a Starmer government's inevitable Tory-lite austerity policies. This would have a far greater impact in the struggle for workers' interests than lining up behind every 'official' Labour candidate."

• Read more on this and "Taking on the 'lesser evil' argument", in the November 2022 issue of Socialism Today

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Tory budget sinks living standards, Labour promises to obey markets

Build a new mass workers' party and fight for socialism

Socialist Party
WHAT WE THINK

“O rdinary voters are stuffed”. According to the Financial Times, this was the reaction of one Tory cabinet minister to the autumn statement. Another was reported to have told Labour, “you'd better be preparing for power”.

Multimillionaires Sunak and Hunt spent weeks promising that the autumn statement would be jam-packed with misery. The reality lived down to their promises. The share price of the energy companies soared when the statement was announced, so puny was the 'wealth tax' imposed on them. Everyone but the capitalist elite, in contrast, got a kicking.

Overall, living standards are set to fall by 7% over two years, the biggest fall since records began. The cap on energy bills is to be lifted to £3,000 - an unpayable sum for millions. Meanwhile taxes will reach 37% of GDP, the highest level since World War Two.

Austerity Mark II

Public services, already cut to the bone, are set for 'Austerity Mark II'. Inflation means that they would need £43 billion extra just to stand still. Hunt's statement instead means many will reach collapse point. Last week, two Tory councils warned the government that, no matter how many services they cut, they are facing "financial disaster". Even the supposedly ring-fenced services will suffer. The NHS, for example, received only half the extra money needed to stay afloat.

This brutal statement was an attempt to make the working and middle class pay for the crisis of British capitalism. Hunt, however, tried to deliver the misery in soothing tones, with a veneer of 'caring' for the poorest. Benefits, for example, are to increase in line with CPI inflation, by 10.1%. Spiralling food and energy costs mean that real inflation for the poorest in society is running at 15% plus, so this will still be a real-terms cut in benefits, which are already impossible to live on.

The reason that they did not go further, and - as they hinted at beforehand - break the link between inflation and benefit rates, is because of the social revolt that would have been guaranteed by such savagery at a time when the British economy is entering what the Bank of England predicts will be the longest recession since the 1930s.



Labour leader Starmer and Tory PM Sunak, both obeying market diktats PHOTOS: PAUL MATTHEWSON, RIVENLAND/CC, HM TREASURY/CC

The same is true of their attempt to 'backload' some of the austerity, leaving it to the next government, almost certainly Starmer's New Labour, to try to implement it. Faced with a rising tide of class struggle they realise there is a limit to what they can hope to achieve before the next general election. The workers' movement has the task of ensuring they achieve none of it, and are forced out of office in short order (see opposite).

This remains a very weak, divided government which can be defeated. Sunak's coronation represented a pause in the escalating Tory civil war, but the autumn statement marked a resumption of hostilities. The right-wing Tory-supporting press savaged it. The Daily Mail headline was "Tories soaking the strivers" and the Times "Years of pain ahead".

Trusmit Tory MPs are threatening to vote against it, and may be joined by others who don't want to vote for measures that will harm their electorate. A

complete fracturing of the Tory party, forcing Sunak into a general election before the parliamentary term ends, remains a real possibility in the near future.

'The markets'

Sunak and Hunt's justification for Austerity Mark II is the need to "re-assure the markets". In the immediate term, they appeared to have achieved that goal. However, the markets' trashing of Truss's mini-budget and its unfunded tax cuts for the rich, were not only a judgement on her government's 'irresponsibility' but also on their view of the state of British capitalism.

Britain is the only one of the G7 economies that is still smaller than pre-pandemic. Levels of investment are at historic lows, and productivity is virtually flatlining. The particular weakness of British capitalism leaves any capitalist government with limited room to manoeuvre in the current

crisis, never mind the fragmenting Tory party.

After the autumn statement spending cuts, the interest payments on government debt are still predicted to be at the highest level, as a proportion of national income, since the 1950s. And the risk of new attacks by 'the markets' has not gone away, including more hikes in the cost of servicing UK government debt and further falls in the value of sterling, increasing the cost of imports.

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The working class needs to start to build our own mass party that will stand up for our interests rather than prostrating itself before the financiers

A mass movement against Austerity Mark II could quickly force a general election and kick the Tories out. That victory would enormously raise the confidence of working-class people. However, a Starmer-led New Labour government has made it absolutely clear that it will also slavishly obey the dictates of 'the markets', which means accepting the necessity of austerity and, as Labour deputy leader Angela Rayner put it, would mean "no chance" of "inflation-matching" pay rises for public sector workers. The need for a trade union struggle will therefore continue under Starmer.

Labour shadow chief treasury secretary and ultra-Blairite Pat McFadden, explained the Labour leadership's justification for austerity when he wrote in the Financial Times that "no one should be in any doubt about the ability of the financial markets to punish a country. No wonder Bill Clinton's strategist James Carville wanted to be reincarnated as the bond market - that way, as he pointed out, you can intimidate everybody. Business needs certainty and stability after the endless chopping and changing of recent years." That, McFadden concluded, would be provided by Labour's "financial responsibility," otherwise known as doing the bidding of the bond markets, which they claim to be powerless before.

But who are the bond markets? They are not some kind of independent arbiters of sensible financial policies; they are driven by the gambling of super-wealthy speculators and managers of financial institutions across the world, interested only in their own profits. The working class needs to start to build our own mass party that will stand up for our interests rather than prostrating itself before the financiers.

The Socialist Party will fight for such a party to adopt a programme to take the levers of power out of the hands of the unelected capitalist elites, including nationalisation of the banks and finance companies under democratic workers' control and management. This, along with nationalisation of the major corporations, capital controls and a state monopoly of foreign trade, would lay the basis to begin to build a democratic socialist plan of production, designed to meet the needs of the majority rather than providing unimaginable wealth for the few.

Historic universities strike:

Fight on pay and pensions and turn the tide on marketisation

BEA GARDNER
UCU MEMBER

Over 70,000 staff at 150 universities will walk out as part of two separate disputes over pay, conditions and pensions. Up to two million university students will be affected by the action.

As well as walking out on 24 and 25 November, university staff have also begun action short of strike. This means only carrying out contractual duties, and not rescheduling cancelled classes.

A national demonstration to coincide with a third day of action on 30 November is organised (see back page), which we say should bring together all striking workers, along with everyone else fighting the cost-of-living crisis, including students.

As part of a strategy of escalating action, the next steps are a marking and assessment boycott to coincide with the winter exam period, followed by sustained strike action in the spring term, should the employers continue to refuse to negotiate with the union.

University workers have no choice but to fight. The determined mood to push back against exploitative working conditions, real-terms pay cuts and rife casualisation, plus relentless attacks to the USS pension, was clear from the impressive ballot result. The union broke through the 50% turnout threshold on a national basis for the first time.

Key now is a plan which translates this determined mood into an effective strategy of action that can deliver on aspects of the disputes.

The University and Colleges Union (UCU) leadership is leading with the slogan "the longer the picket, the shorter the strike". It is true that a strong turnout, grinding universities

to a halt across the country, will put the employers under significant pressure to negotiate.

A number of universities have already taken significant strike action over the same issues, on a disaggregated basis. Therefore, it is also necessary to prepare members for more sustained action if needed. As part of this, the leadership of the UCU should begin preparing coordination with other trade unions now, with the spring term holding the potential for education-wide walkouts, including teaching unions and others in the public sector.

The very issues at stake - low pay, insecure work and excessive workloads - can make taking action difficult. As well as a solid strike fund, discussion and coordination at every level will build confidence and help overcome obstacles. Rank-and-file participation needs to be built. Workplace meetings and picket rallies are vital spaces to thrash out the tactics of the strikes.

The unity that such a strategy would bring protects against attempts by the bosses to sow divisions. It would place us in a strong position to escalate the action, based on the maximum participation of members in a discussion of tactics.

If higher education continues to be led by pro-market senior managers, under the regulatory scrutiny of a hostile Tory government, any achievements made in these disputes will need to be defended.

Strong and effective 'broad left' organisation within the union is needed to ensure a fighting approach by the union is maintained and built.

We know that the marketisation of higher education has eroded our conditions at the cost of quality research and learning. Many members are drawing the conclusion that to solve the constant attacks we face, we



UCU strikers at Durham University ELAINE BRUNSKILL

need to go much further and turn the tide on marketisation.

A democratic left organisation could bring activists together to discuss and fight for the union to adopt a militant programme: against marketisation, for free education, and for the funding needed to run higher education as a public good.

To achieve that, we need a political as well as industrial strategy. Under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, Labour's 2017 general election manifesto put forward free higher education. Under Keir Starmer, the Labour Party no longer campaigns

for this, and has made it clear that it does not support workers getting a pay rise to keep up with the cost of living.

In the event of a general election, university workers need candidates prepared to fight in our corner for pay rises and in defence of our terms and conditions, and that fight for free, fully funded higher education. That means preparing now to put up a workers' alternative to Labour at the ballot box, including UCU members as candidates alongside other trade unionists and working-class fighters.

Unison strike growing in universities

MARY FINCH
UNISON REP, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The end of November could see the biggest higher education strike in history with UCU and Unison members walking out together.

Unison represents professional services staff - everything from libraries, exams and admissions, to cleaning, security and catering. Our members keep campuses open and the university running.

Unison members have gained confidence from being on strike and watching UCU's battle with the bosses. Our dispute is currently smaller, but growing. Eleven universities walked out during the first round of strikes this year, and, when we rebaloted, that went up by 50% to 16 universities.

The university bosses are feeling the pressure as well. The University and Colleges Employers Association implemented a 3% pay rise in August - the highest in years, and double the 1.5% we were given last year. 3% is nowhere near Unison's demand for inflation plus 2%, but it shows that strikes get results - and by continuing our dispute, we can win more.

Coordinating with UCU means we can completely shut down several campuses across the country. This will provide an enormous boost for all striking university staff, and it can bring more Unison members out on strike.

Teachers in Scotland take bold action

In a phenomenal ballot return, the largest Scottish teachers' union, the EIS, has voted by 96% to strike. Within hours of the result, the EIS leadership announced a strike on 24 November, with more dates to be added.

As Jim Halfpenny, joint secretary of the West Dunbartonshire EIS, told us: "The demand by the EIS is for a 10% wage increase. The 5% offer from the employers is an insult. We worked through the pandemic to maintain education. Workload remains excessive while more and more is demanded, with fewer and fewer resources. In response, teachers are offered a derisory pay increase which is nothing short of a substantial pay cut. This cannot be allowed to continue."

As is clear from Jim's comment, it's not just pay but also massive workload pressures that have driven EIS members to draw a line in the sand.

SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND

Sixth-form staff strike for pay and funding

ALEXANDER ZUK
NEU MEMBER

The National Education Union has balloted members in sixth-forms for a fully funded above-inflation pay rise. The 63% turnout and 88.5% vote in favour of strike action highlight the mood of workers in this sector.

Though this dispute is about a 20% cut in real-terms pay since 2010, the response from educators indicates that the issue of pay is just scratching the surface.

Many staff in education are struggling to pay bills due to soaring energy costs. With groceries going up, and the price of full-time childcare averaging at around £200 a week, it is no surprise that there have been reports that teachers are resorting to food banks. The amount of money that many teachers are earning just isn't enough.

In September, the Sixth Form Colleges Association offered an unfunded 5% pay award (in some areas this has increased to 8.9%). The response was almost unanimous

amongst teachers: 'Why should the college pay for this?' Existing college funding should be used on resources for students and for the sixth forms.

With the cost-of-living crisis, sixth forms and colleges are having to put more money into providing students with essential, basic learning resources, such as laptops, internet access and stationery. Many colleges and schools now have discreet boxes of dry foodstuffs and sanitary products because students and families cannot afford them.

Extra care goes into planning 'enrichment' activities, like trips, because not all students have the opportunity to participate. It is clear the funding for our pay rise should come from the government, not the college.

NEU is taking industrial action on 30 November, coordinating with UCU in the universities and CWU in Royal Mail.

While neither the Tories nor Starmer's Labour are showing signs of interest in the working class, there is a need for workers to stand together.



NEU strikers at NewVIC earlier this year JAMES IVENS

Why I'm voting to strike: "Ambulance workers deserve better for the job we do"



PHOTO: NUMBRO/CC

AMBULANCE WORKER

I currently work full-time as a paramedic for one of the biggest NHS trusts. I'm proud to say I started out in the ambulance service cleaning and preparing frontline vehicles going out on the road to help save lives. I realised that this could be my dream job; mixing with frontline crews who encouraged me to believe I could do it. Though they did assure me that "it's not all the job you may think it is". I do recall some paramedics, unhappy in their work, leaving the role, which confused me. But I excitedly exchanged my blue ambulance uniform for a green one.

I now know though why some people want to leave this role. Ask the average frontline ambulance worker about their job and, like me, I believe that most will tell you how much they generally love the job. There's so much about this role that is rewarding. Yes, of course it has its expected lows, extreme lows, but to some degree we should expect some.

Within the relatively short time I have worked 'in green' I have experienced and recognised many changes in the role. We are now much more social workers, with limited powers, but bearing greater responsibilities than ever before. Trauma and seriously critically unwell patients make up a very low percentage of our daily cases.

Those who have served the

ambulance service for most of their working careers are now few and far between. They recollect times when, on some days, they didn't even turn an ambulance wheel. But they were ready. Ready to face scenes that no one else should ever have to see.

It's an overwhelming demoralising feeling now that the goal of managing frontline ambulance staff is to meet and achieve time statistics, rather than achieving life support and preservation. I don't mean goals for reaching patients in time. It seems it's more about making sure that averages are met and savings on wages can be made.

Detrimental effects

Equipment is continually replaced with cheaper versions. There is manipulation of the 24-hour clock where fewer times are now considered to be 'unsocial', thus saving on wages. We expect to have to work over our normal finish times on every shift. This detrimentally affects our health and wellbeing at the end of twelve-hour shifts - particularly nightshifts or following early morning starts.

While at the scene we are now radio-called to justify our time spent there. It's not a secret that hospitals are now at breaking point if not already broken. We used to consider the conveyance of patients to hospital as the safest option. This is now not so much the case. We now expect to either just squeeze inside their corridor

doors or to have to keep patients waiting on ambulances outside.

Imagine your very elderly loved ones being left in, sometimes cold, hospital corridors with little hope of being seen soon. Consolidate that with a dementia diagnosis to imagine our distress levels at having to make decisions like that. Impact all of this onto the current steep rise in living costs and out-of-sync minimal wage increases for a clearer picture.

Paramedics working on the road today, when training, are advised they're only likely to stay in the role for a maximum of five years (due to burnout). Having now worn my green uniform for longer than this period I can certainly recognise the reasoning behind this. I do know colleagues who are burnt out and want out.

Conditions though are worsening, becoming more constrictive and generally tougher. I will say though, not as tough as it is for A&E staff. I really feel for them. At least we only treat one patient at a time. But the time is upon us where going to hospital is becoming increasingly more detrimental to our patients' health.

I, for one, am now voting for industrial action, because I need to, not just to support me and my current co-workers but for those who will be filling my shoes in the future. We deserve better for the job we do, the responsibility we hold and the sights we sometimes have to face.

Budget leaves NHS more underfunded

NHS APPOINTMENT ADMINISTRATOR AND UNISON REP

In a bid to demonstrate the Tory party's 'dedication' to preserving the NHS, Jeremy Hunt promised in the autumn budget to raise NHS spending by £3.3 billion over the next year, and another £3.3 billion the year after. Less than half what health bosses said is needed for the NHS to stand still.

Hunt's announcement was rich given that it is his party that has systematically underfunded our public healthcare over the last 12 years, leading to the current situation of over seven million people on waiting lists for NHS treatment. Hunt's announcement came only a month after NHS England reported that it foresees a £7 billion funding gap in the next year alone.

The autumn statement talked of making our public services more 'efficient' at a time when the NHS can barely keep up with the extra operating costs caused by double-digit

inflation. The Tory party conveniently forgets that greater efficiency requires capital investment. The NHS pledged to modernise its patient records system and be paperless by 2020, but many trusts are still struggling to meaningfully enter the 21st century on the shoestring budget they have been given.

The widespread staffing shortage - more than 130,000 vacancies across the NHS reported in June 2022 - is also caused by the unwillingness of the government to dedicate enough money to pay staff a living wage, leading to waves of healthcare workers leaving for the private sector. This has paradoxically led to trusts relying on expensive private agency staff to make up the difference.

This government will blame whatever it can for our crumbling NHS, whether that is the Covid-19 pandemic or the economic pressures of inflation. But, in reality, the constant state of crisis within the NHS is the result of real-terms budget cuts, privatisation and negligent short-term thinking.



PHOTO: MARY FINCH

Nurses' union strike ultimatum

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) called on the health secretary on 17 November "to open formal, detailed negotiations" on NHS pay and patient safety in five days or the union

will announce its first strike dates and locations for December. As we go to press no further announcement has been made. Nursing staff at the majority of NHS employers across the UK have voted to take strike action over pay and patient safety. In Northern Ireland, nurses in the Nip-sa union have voted 92.62% for strike action starting in December.

PCS: Fighting strategy and national strikes needed

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN PCS

The PCS statutory ballot in support of the union's pay and job demands, which closed on 7 November, delivered a mandate to strike for over 100,000 members.

The union's Left Unity (LU)-led executive, at its meeting on 10 November, decided to write to the employer for a meeting to discuss the union's demands.

But, incredibly, it did not agree to give notice of a programme of action. This was put off to a recall meeting on 18 November.

The Broad Left Network (BLN), which includes Socialist Party members, called for the union to immediately launch its campaign with a two-day all-members' strike, to include striking alongside other unions on 30 November.

We argued this should be followed up with targeted action and further all-member strikes.

The BLN called also for a reballoon of those groups which missed the 50% turnout threshold, and a further ballot for action short of strike in those groups with a mandate.

The executive's decision to put off agreeing strike strategy was a shock

to activists who had worked to deliver the strike mandate.

Shock has turned to outrage at the outcome of the executive's 18 November meeting.

It agreed a limited range of targeted strikes starting mid-December, supported by strike pay, with the possibility of any all-member action put off to late January or February.

The failure of the LU-led executive to call all-member action stands in stark contrast to the other unions currently calling national strikes.

Its decision is to base almost its entire strategy on paid-for selective/

targeted strikes. We believe this to be a mistake.

The reliance on paid-for strikes has led the executive to impose a £5-a-month levy on members. We don't disagree with the union taking steps to raise strike funds. But to impose a levy out of the blue, without preparing the ground, risks a backlash and loss of membership.

We support the executive's decision to reballoon the revenue and customs group (HMRC) early in the new year, so as to get this important area of members into the fight on pay and jobs.

But we believe the other groups which didn't get a mandate this time should also be reballoon.

We believe that the executive's refusal to ballot for action short of strikes, to support the strike ballot mandate, is a mistake. An overtime ban, for example, could have significant impact alongside a programme

of all-member strikes and targeted action.

The LU leadership starts from a pessimistic view of what they feel they can deliver, rather than what is needed to win.

The BLN has taken the lead in putting forward a strategy which can win - central to which is the role of all-member action.

It is not too late for the executive to rethink its strategy. We call upon them to do so.

A handful of LU supporters on the executive voted to back BLN supporter Fiona Brittle's amendments for national action. It is surely time for those, and others in LU who are opposed to the leadership's strategy, to recognise that LU is no longer providing a fighting leadership, and to instead work with Socialist Party members and others in the BLN to put forward a fighting, democratic strategy for the union.



PCS members in a previous pay strike

Usdaw general secretary election: The fight continues

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN USDAW

Paddy Lillis has been re-elected unopposed as shop and distribution workers' union Usdaw general secretary. In the nomination process, Socialist Party member Scott Jones received eight nominations, short of the required amount.

Scott stood to try to force an election for general secretary for the first time since 2008, and therefore a debate about the direction of the union.

Scott stood on a platform of fighting for better pay, for better deals to beat the cost-of-living crisis, and to win new members to the union. This is vital given that we have 50,000 fewer members than Usdaw had five years ago.

His programme also included joining the growing trade union

fightback; more union democracy - only half of branches nominated either candidate at all; and a workers' general secretary on a workers' wage.

If we are to harness the potential power we have as a union of over 350,000 members, then we must seek to involve as many of our members as possible in our activities, whether as a rep, in their local branch, or beyond.

It is a shame that during this current strike wave, the only dispute Usdaw is involved in is with its own staff!

Under Usdaw's previous rules, Scott would be on the ballot paper and able to put this fighting programme before the membership. But the required number of nominations was upped to 25 after left candidate and Socialist Party member Robbie

Segal ran for general secretary in 2008, and won 40% of the vote.

Strikes in recent years, and the campaign in Tesco distribution, where last year's threatened strike action saw Tesco bosses concede higher pay, show that shop and distribution workers are prepared to fight back.

As well as winning the support of branches which either nominated him or tried to, Scott's campaign also won support from a number of activists and members in the union. The task is now to build on this and continue the fight in future elections, such as the upcoming executive council election.

Join us in that fightback by joining the Usdaw Broad Left (<https://tinyurl.com/usdawbroadleft>) and the Socialist Party.

Train drivers strike and reballoon



MIDLANDS ASLEF MEMBER

As train drivers in Aslef stand united on the picket lines on Saturday 26 November, the time has come to renew the six-month strike mandate required by Tory anti-union laws. We say bring it on!

From debate and discussion between members on picket lines, in branch meetings, at open forum Q&A online meetings, and chinwags in the messrooms, there's one thing coming out clearly: members are prepared to fight on for decent pay!

We should completely reject any attempt by the bosses and their friends in Westminster to use the divide-and-rule tactics of comparing our members' pay to other workers. That's why it's so crucial we send the strongest message possible, not just through the largest possible 'yes' vote, but increasing our physical presence on our picket lines.

We make no apologies for the hard-won salaries of our members, performing crucial safety-critical work through all weathers and conditions. The Tories bang on about wanting a 'high-paying, high-skilled' economy,

but apparently that only relates to bankers not transport workers!

Unlike this wretched government, Aslef members want nurses, public sector workers, all workers to have a pay rise. We don't believe in normalising poverty pay, we want to uplift all workers' pay, not a race to the bottom.

While this current dispute is a battle over pay, we know this is part of a larger upcoming war against workers, potentially including even more anti-union laws.

That's why it's so crucial we send the strongest message possible, not just through the largest possible 'yes' vote, but increasing our physical presence on our picket lines.

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Royal Mail workers escalate action up to Christmas

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN CWU

Thousands of postal workers have participated in Communication Workers Union (CWU) online and gate meetings.

They show the iron determination of Royal Mail workers to keep on fighting - and have voted 'no confidence' in Royal Mail CEO Simon Thompson!

During the pandemic, Royal Mail made £1.7 billion in profits. In the nine years since privatisation, it has made over £5 billion in profits.

Yet it has embarked on the most brutal attack on its workers in its 500-year history.

Daniel Kretinsky, whose wealth is put at £4.3 billion, owns 22.25% of Royal Mail and is strongly rumoured to want to make a takeover bid. The bosses want us broken and our terms dismantled, to maximise their mega-profits.

Gig-economy style

The bosses clearly want to turn Royal Mail into a gig economy-style courier with a self-employed model. They want an end to the Universal Service Obligation of a six-day letter service.

They intend to start cutting 10,000 jobs, including compulsory redundancies, with a lot worse redundancy terms than currently agreed.

At present there are around 12,000 agency staff. There should be no redundancies as long as there are agency staff being used.

The pay offer remains an inadequate 3.5% and will not be

backdated. They want new entrants on 20% worse pay.

Sick pay and allowances will be slashed, the Sunday premium payment will go; they intend to impose annualised hours, and later start and finish times. They want CWU out of the workplace so they can impose rather than negotiate.

They want to hive off the profitable international wing of the company, GLS, and leave the 'loss-making' postal side, without subsidy.

The bosses say this is down to losing money. They announced a six-month loss of £219 million, but that comes after a profit in the previous year of £758 million.

They can't afford to pay us, but they could afford £600 million to the shareholders and directors!

Strikes

So far, postal members have taken eight days of strike action, with the biggest picket lines we have ever seen, and huge public support. This has rocked Royal Mail and forced it to negotiate.

We have now announced strike days up to Christmas: 24, 25, and 30 November; 1, 9, 11, 14, 15, 23, and 24 December.

This could see postal workers taking strike action at Christmas for the first time ever.

The CWU has put forward a counter-proposal, including demanding the maintenance of the Universal Service Obligation, no compulsory redundancies, a decent backdated pay rise, and serious negotiations over changes to working practices.

However, Socialist Party members

believe it is a mistake for the union to suggest the extension of lower rates for new entrants from the current six months to one year, as this legitimises a two-tier workforce and opens the door to further attacks later down the line.

It's often been said we are in the fight of our lives. This not just about our terms and conditions, but also protecting a vital service to the public.

What is required is not cuts in services but an expansion. We deliver to 35 million homes, six days a week; we have a network of thousands of buildings over the country. This could be developed as a huge social resource.

But to do that, what is required is removal of private greed and renationalisation of mail, run democratically by those who know the service - the workers!

We now need to prepare for the most intense period of strike action, including a mass appeal for the national strike fund by the CWU and the Trades Union Congress.

Not so family friendly

Jo, a striking CWU member from Fife in Scotland, spoke in the discussion on 'Women in the trade unions - a proud history of struggle' at the Socialistism 2022 event (see pages 8 and 9).

"Royal Mail calls itself a 'family friendly' company. But it wants us to finish two hours later, which will make it impossible to pick up kids from school."



HELEN PATTISON

Post Office workers vote for more strike action

In a national reballoon, CWU members in the Post Office have voted by 91.24%, on a 65.21% turnout, to continue their strike action.

Despite the Post Office making £35 million and £39 million in profit in the last two years, they have made a pay offer of just 5% from April 2022, following a pay freeze.

"And it will be dangerous for women posties working in the dark. The changes they want to make to sick pay will mean we won't be able to take sick leave when our kids are ill."

"Strikers are struggling to make ends meet, especially single parents. We urgently need a strike fund to prevent desperate strikers crossing the picket line and going back to work."

RMT steps up strike: Build on massive mandate from members to fight

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN RMT

After the rail companies made no offer in negotiations, the RMT union has announced an escalation of strike action, with a series of 48-hour strikes in December and January.

The dispute has entered an even more serious stage, and all the trade union movement must step up support for the RMT and its members.

The union's reballoon results show there can now be no doubt that RMT members are ready to enter battle once again.

Another massive mandate on the Train Operating Companies (TOCs). Avanti West Coast members returned a fantastic 97% vote for strike action, and Cross Country Trains members were not far behind on 95%.

Network Rail (NR) members have delivered a rock-solid 91%. Across all of the companies balloted, an average of 70% took part.

While setting new strike dates is vital and very welcome, many RMT members have expressed concerns about the decision of the national executive committee (NEC) to call off the last period of action, following

the offer of talks by the railway employers. Imposition of changes was withdrawn by the bosses, but leading reps and activists, who have worked hard to deliver the action so far, were disappointed with this decision.

NEC members have argued that it was necessary to call off the action because otherwise the union would have been locked out of talks. We would argue that the only reason the employers are willing to talk at all is because we are prepared to call out our members, who are ready to fight.

But now that the tremendous result of the reballoon is in, and new dates set, the lessons must be learned for this new phase of the dispute.

Members don't need to be reminded what is at stake for us and the future employment model of the railway; we all know that this is a once-in-a-generation dispute.

For a start, over 2,000 NR maintenance jobs are facing the axe in the false guise of 'modernisation', along with the prospect of over 1,000 booking offices closing and the regrading of all frontline roles. 'Driver-only operation' is now firmly back on the agenda. Our precious pension

scheme is firmly in the sights of the bosses, who want to slash their liabilities and thus make us pay more, work longer, and receive less when we retire.

Of course, our dispute on the national railway is not happening in isolation. The strike by London members on 10 November on London Underground and Overground once again brought the capital to a standstill.

Tens of thousands of transport workers have been taking action over recent months, from tram drivers in the West Midlands, who have just won a 20% pay rise, to the bus drivers across the country, who have been successfully fighting for improvements in their pay.

But the national rail dispute has not yet seen a breakthrough, and it is clear that the employers are playing a carefully planned game, determined to make savage cuts to our industry and remould it into one with less secure and more flexible jobs, lower pay, and deteriorating work-life balance for those of us at the sharp end.

The employers are working in league with the Tory government,



ALU COOK

both of whom want to break union influence in the rail industry and press ahead with massive changes which will be detrimental to our members.

We call for a national NR and TOC reps meeting to discuss building the dispute from here.

While our Network Rail members have national-level reps in the form of the national operations/maintenance councils, there is currently no national committee representing our TOC members. If one existed, it would allow TOC reps to work with NR reps more effectively, and plan a

strategy of strike action which would meet the expectations of the members across the industry. We think that a committee of this kind should be formed as soon as possible.

Action should be coordinated wherever possible with other unions, both on the railway and wider industry, such as the postal workers, university lecturers and nurses.

This would maximise our impact and would be a step towards the generalised strike action urgently needed to bring this rotten government down.

SOCIALISM 2022: VITAL PREPARATION FOR THE NEW ERA OF CLASS STRUGGLE

SARAH SACHS-ELDRIDGE

SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Socialism 2022 was a huge success. That isn't just down to the great turnout of over 700 people, with a big proportion attending their first Socialism weekend, and even their first ever Socialist Party event. It isn't just because in every one of the 35 workshops - from discussion on the 1926 general strike, to how to fight sexism and sexual harassment, to the Marxist concept of dialectical materialism - there was a mix of experienced fighters and new youth hungry for socialist ideas. It isn't just because of the tremendous response to the fighting fund appeal, with the £36,689 donated, smashing the £25,000 target.

All of these are very important. But the most important thing about Socialism 2022 is that it fulfilled its role - providing a forum for discussion on the ideas that can prepare the working class for a new period of class struggle.

The red thread running through it was confidence in the working class as the force that can win against the bosses and the Tories, and change society.

In opening the rally, Lenny Shail, Socialism 2022 organiser, set this out: "This rally, and this whole weekend, is about saying what needs to be said, doing what needs to be done, steering a course, standing firm, daring to fight against all obstacles" - for a socialist alternative.

The first speaker Lenny introduced was nurse, health activist and Socialist Party member Holly Johnston. The very fact that close to one million health workers are balloting to join the strike wave is an indication of the new period of intensified class struggle we have entered.

Many health workers, Holly said, have taken confidence from the strike wave this year. And health workers recognise they need to organise and join the action in order to save the NHS.

Holly's speech, like all the rally speeches, was interrupted by clapping. In between, in the quietness of the hall, you could feel socialist ideas being absorbed.

After Holly came Gary Clark, postal worker and secretary of CWU Scotland No. 2 branch. Gary was proud to speak as a striking postie taking part in the biggest and most important dispute in the 400 years of Royal Mail's existence.

Gary reported the CWU's plans to escalate the fight against Royal Mail's attacks, including on sick pay and redundancy pay, and cutting 10,000 jobs. The strikes have brought these brutal bosses to the negotiating table.

But Gary also gave a devastating picture of how and why the bosses are fighting this class war. Since privatisation, over £5 billion in profits have been taken out of the service - leaving it threadbare. Gary showed it isn't a lack of money that's the issue, but whether it goes to the capitalist class or the rest of us.

Jared Wood, London regional organiser of the transport union RMT, speaking in a personal capacity, smashed the Tory lie that austerity is necessary.

The combined figure for share dividends, profits and wages over £100,000, is £393 billion. In other words, a 5% cut of the income of the rich over three years could fill the government's claimed £55 billion 'funding gap'.

The class anger this type of inequality produces is a factor in the massive strikes. But, Jared said, Labour leader

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Socialism 2022 was the best I've been to. The working class is on the rise, and we are getting into shape for the battles ahead. This weekend filled me with confidence that the Socialist Party is up to the challenge

DUNCAN MOORE,
PLYMOUTH

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Of the sessions, it's only a shame we couldn't attend more. But the pinnacle had to be Saturday's rally, with so many passionate, active and eloquent speakers in the movement for socialism

HARRISON CAIRNS,
NORTHAMPTON

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You could feel the electric mood of the strike movement at the rally. Will take the vibe back to Austria, which has also strikes - shop, retail hospital and rail workers - looming

LAURA, AUSTRIA

“

I'm disabled, so I was unable to attend in person, but I was on Zoom. In the 'British capitalism and disintegration of Tory Party' session loads of participants answered my question. Everyone made the weekend the most important event I have ever been part of. I intend to get myself to Socialism 2023 in person. I'm feeling exhilarated, and so proud to be part of the antidote to capitalism's poisonous venom

ANDI SOSHAL,
NORTHAMPTON



Starmar goes along with the Tory lies. So workers also have to build a political voice.

Jared pointed to the forerunner of the RMT which, faced in 1900 with a choice of two parties telling the same lie - 'workers have to pay' - took the view that it had to build the Labour Party.

He called on everyone in the rally and watching the live broadcast to put the call out for political change, for the building of a new socialist, trade union-based political party throughout the trade union movement.

Lenny introduced Peter Taaffe, by explaining about how Peter and the rest of the leadership of the Militant, and now of the Socialist Party, have stood firm and dedicated their lives over decades to building a party that defends Marxism.

Peter spoke about how Militant had offered a lead against Margaret Thatcher - leading Liverpool city council in the 1980s, and with it a mass movement in the city that won millions from the government. And also the 18 million-strong organised movement that defeated the poll tax and brought Thatcher down. Peter explained how our party, confident in socialist ideas and the potential power of the working class, was key to this.

Peter was one of those who, in 1974, founded the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) in order to collaborate across borders

The Socialist Party 2022 rally

PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

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Realising we're part of an international group, makes our work feel part of something much larger. Loved the discussions with comrades from Sheffield, Scotland, London, Germany, US, and Sri Lanka, as well as older members who'd fought the BNP, EDL and Margaret Thatcher

CHRIS COOKE,
PLYMOUTH

and continents to build parties in the same tradition.

The next speaker, Prasad Welikumbura, is a more recent member of the CWI, in our sister party in Sri Lanka, the United Socialist Party (USP). But, like every member can - whether new, newish or experienced - he is fighting to get our ideas across to workers and young people in struggle to change their conditions.

Prasad described the incredible events of the uprising in Sri Lanka, such as the mass occupation of the presidential palace, which resulted in the brutal president Gotabaya Rajapaksa being forced to flee, and the incredible courage and determination of the workers and young people involved.

Gotabaya's resignation left a power vacuum. But, as yet, the leadership of the movement have not understood the need to fill it, and power is currently back in the hands of the regime. In these events, Prasad and the USP raise the need to build the movement with the working class in the lead.

Sheila Caffrey, a member of the National Education Union national executive, had two jobs at the rally. Speaking in a personal capacity, she reported on the fightback in education, and also asked for donations to fund our party.

Sheila showed how the two go together: our ideas help workers fight, but we need money to produce

leaflets and bulletins through which those can be shared at workplaces, picket lines and demos.

In the National Education Union, Socialist Party members have found support for our programme of national action on pay, workload and funding - fighting for a lead from the front and building from below.

Getting these ideas into the hands of all workers requires resources - strike bulletins, leaflets, posters, placards, a national office, and more.

Sheila explained that, while for the Tories and the bosses there is a magic money tree - squeezing workers' pay and living conditions, we can only rely on the generosity and self-sacrifice of our members and supporters to fund this. The result of the collection speaks to the determination in the hall and across the party to not allow the cost-of-living crisis to leave our party without the resources it needs.

Onay Kasab, speaking on behalf of Unite the Union, also addressed the theme of how workers can win - from the union's experience. He brought solidarity greetings from Unite general secretary Sharon Graham, as well as the 450 industrial disputes that the union has been involved in over the past year, over 80% of them resulting in victory.

Those victories include the Liverpool dockers, who stood strong, refused to step back, and won. He also mentioned bus workers who have

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The best part about the discussions was how they didn't just report on events and talk about theory in an abstract way. They also elaborated on how the class struggle can be taken forward, and the need for concrete organisation from below by the working class. I will be taking what I have learned back home, to discuss with other activists, and encourage others to join the struggle for socialism

CALLUM JOYCE, OXFORD

achieved double-digit pay wins, port workers who have won a 38% pay rise, and the victorious bin workers in Coventry council.

In Coventry, Kaz explained, Unite members took eight months of strike action against a Labour council that spent over £4 million on a strike-breaking operation - and lost; attacked the Unite rep - and lost.

Kaz took the opportunity to reiterate the Unite position, a position in common with the Socialist Party, that Labour councils have a choice. They can choose to adopt no-cuts needs budgets, use reserves and borrowing to plug short-term gaps, while joining with trade unions and communities to demand and win necessary funding from central government. It can be done, he explained, the magnificent Liverpool councillors in the 1980s prove that.

Hannah Sell, Socialist Party general secretary, summed up and developed the themes of the rally, setting out the tasks of the Socialist Party in this new era of intensified class struggle.

Our task is both to explain that capitalism isn't working, that a socialist alternative is necessary and, crucially, to offer concrete steps for workers and young people moving into struggle, emphasising building working-class organisation through which workers can discuss, debate, negotiate and work out the tactics and strategy for this new powerful

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I really got a sense of the passion and intelligence of our brilliant Socialist Party members. Everyone is so friendly. I left each session feeling more informed. And I loved the Saturday night, hearing reports from the heart of the strike wave. My first Socialist event since joining the Socialist Party in July. After a decade of seeking a group with a class-centred analysis, I feel everything 'clicking into place'. The more I learn about the Socialist Party, the more enthusiastic I am about the ideas which drive it.

ALEX GILLHAM,
LEICESTER

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Great to see so many young people who were knowledgeable, interested and engaged

EDDIE BLINDELL,
HACKNEY

movement emerging.

With Socialism 2022 taking place as Cop27 ends, Hannah started with the climate change crisis. A third of Pakistan has been under water this year bringing enormous suffering for the working class and poor, including our comrades in the CWI there.

Hannah explained how the capitalist system is incapable of taking the steps that are really needed. It isn't even that all capitalists are oblivious - they can see it and the problems it poses - but their system is blind.

Capitalism is ultimately an un-planned system, based on the private ownership of industry, science, technique, and driven by the lust for profit - not meeting society's needs and solving society's problems. And it's based on competing nation states, so the international cooperation necessary to deal with this global problem is impossible under capitalism.

Hannah addressed the logical, and crucial, next question: if capitalism cannot solve these problems, how can socialism be achieved? What force is capable of achieving it?

Hannah described how the BBC's Newsnight had a 'spot the difference' feature searching for how Keir Starmer's New Labour opposed any of the main aspects of the anti-working class Tory autumn budget statement. They couldn't find one. It is crystal clear that Starmer's New Labour will defend the interests of the capitalist class in office.

But, Hannah said, in 2022, for the first time in decades, a new generation has had a glimpse of a force that could, and will win socialist change.

The working class is rising off its knees and is potentially the most powerful force worldwide, and here in Britain.

We're not merely watching these events, but trying to help them win

and see what's needed to change the world. Hannah set out the ideas the Socialist Party has been offering on picket lines, in meetings, everywhere we get to discuss with workers and young people: all striking together, coordinating the strikes - building towards a one-day general strike.

Plus the need to build mass strike funds to make sure those in the front line can escalate without being starved back to work. Should the Tories try to implement more attacks on the right to strike, generalised strike action can defeat it - giving even more confidence to the working class.

Hannah explained that working-class organisation is the key, building democratic left organisations that can campaign for a fighting trade union movement, socialist societies on the campuses and a new mass workers' party.

A workers' voice in parliament could represent the struggles - supporting pickets but also moving motions for nationalisation of Royal Mail, the railways, telecoms, energy companies and so on. That would also raise workers' confidence to fight and to look for what's needed to change our conditions. And a party like the Socialist Party, that fights for all of this come what may, is essential.

As Hannah concluded: "Capitalism offers only a miserable future, but we are optimists. The working class - the billions of people who keep society running, who make the capitalists' profits - are beginning to rise off their knees and will be capable of ending capitalism and building a new democratic socialist world.

"The Socialist Party and the Committee for a Workers' International are determined to begin the task of building a mass party equal to that task. If you agree join us."



The speakers at the rally PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON



Northampton Socialist Party members at Socialism 2022 PHOTO: NORTHAMPTON SP

Sweeping tech redundancies - workers get organised!

ROB PETTEFAR
SOFTWARE ENGINEER AND SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

Amazon has announced 10,000 job losses, mostly among the devices, retail and human resources divisions. This comes hot on the heels of Facebook's parent company Meta announcing 11,000 losses, and the 3,500 and counting that were made redundant after Elon Musk took over Twitter.

Since the summer, there have been thousands of job losses in other high-tech firms including Microsoft, Apple, Snapchat and Salesforce. This does not count the yet-to-be-announced cuts at global chip maker Intel, which could see up to 20% of its global workforce of 113,700 let go by the end of the year.

Meta's Mark Zuckerberg disastrously banked on the idea that online activity would grow at the same rate, and even accelerate, after the pandemic. The stock price has plummeted. But even still, Zuckerberg persists in sinking \$10 billion a quarter into the Metaverse project.

Twitter saw an unprecedented slump in up-front ad revenue purchases amid the uncertainty over the purchase by Elon Musk, whose purchase price of \$44 billion - already over-inflated at the time - has seen the investment slide further in value as ad revenue dries up, and Musk uses slash-and-burn tactics to wrest some level of financial control over the company.



MIKHAIL NILOV/CC

Jeff Bezos has cynically made a high-profile declaration of his generosity by saying he would give away most his \$124 billion wealth on the same day the 10,000 jobs would be cut from the company. A company that has remained profitable through this time, and grew its stock value over 60% during the course of the pandemic, from \$882 billion in 2019 to a peak of \$1.88 trillion in 2020. All the while, conditions at warehouses have deteriorated, and Amazon has fought hard against unionisation.

The fairytale of Silicon Valley, with its bohemian vibes and independent-minded visionaries charting a bold new future, shares much with the tale of bold industrialists of the past. And like those tales, under the propaganda and bluster is a story of exploited labour and the concentration of wealth into the hands of fewer and fewer people. Trade union struggle historically fought and won significant concessions from the bosses. Now it is time for tech workers to get organised.

In Britain, we have seen a nascent tech unionisation effort in the form of the CWU's United Tech and Allied Workers (UTAW) and Prospect's Tech Workers' Network, as well as a number of smaller organisations like IWGB's Game Workers' Unite.

For a long time, 'learning to code' was seen as the key to continuous gainful employment in the new, high-tech economy. Trade union membership in the industry has typically been low. Indeed, most saw the constant

high demand for their skills as adequate protection of their pay at least. Long hours and high stress are seen as 'par for the course' in some high-profile organisations. It is especially prevalent in the video games industry where the 'crunch' has become a normalised aspect of the production cycle.

But there has been some level of resistance, Elon Musk's Twitter ultimatum for workers to "get hardcore" has been rejected by large numbers - although at this stage largely through resignation rather than collective action.

A number of other issues have prompted workers to make a stand, such as Google workers protesting against the firm's work with the military, and Twitter workers campaigning for Donald Trump to be banned after the Capitol Hill riots. The firing of AI ethics researcher Timnit Gebru at Google after exposing biases in facial recognition software prompted thousands of employees to protest, but ultimately led to nothing.

Getting organised in the trade unions is crucial to improve pay and conditions, and to curb the excesses of the tech company bosses. A well-organised workforce can act as a powerful counterweight to the machinations of often megalomaniacal chief executives. But real control of the industry and of technology means public ownership of the tech-giants, to be run under the democratic control and management of the working class.

Fawley oil refinery workers' mass picket

NICK CHAFFEY
SOUTHERN AND SOUTH EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

Hundreds of GMB and Unite strikers, working for contractors Altrad, Bilfinger, and Enerveo at the Fawley refinery near Southampton, mounted a mass picket on 21 November at Gate 1, demanding the maximum £2.37 hourly bonus.

Unite official Malcolm Dumper attacked the monster-profits being made by Mobil and contractors, while offering a measly 2.5% pay

offer. Gary Palmer, GMB regional officer, urged the pickets to stand firm against the attack on living standards and continue the strike for better pay.

Speaking to the mass picket, Socialist Party member Declan Clune gave a message of support from Southampton trades council: "You're part of a growing strike wave, with nurses and teachers joining the fight, to stop the driving down of wages."

A striker told us: "This used to be a good job. I started here 27 years

ago. Scaffolders are working here with no sick pay, in all weathers, and the company's making billions. But they're penny-pinchers. They don't spend on anything that doesn't pump oil. The plant's 70 years old. It's a rustbucket and a dangerous place to work. They talk about safety but when there's an accident they want you back at work before anything's fixed. All we're asking for is what's fair."

Strike action is set to continue for two weeks.



NICK CHAFFEY



NICK HART

Midland Metro pay victory

NICK HART
BLACK COUNTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

After 18 days of strike action, tram drivers and conductors at West Midlands Metro have won a resounding victory against low pay. Having previously been paid less than £22,000 a year, for round-the-clock shifts requiring high concentration at all times, drivers will now receive a 20% increase. Other grades are set to receive an inflation-busting pay rise in excess of the company's original offer.

Having never struck before in the service's 22 years, the lively pickets outside the depot, with a

well-managed rota to ensure a presence throughout the daytime, sent a strong message to management that Unite the Union members were unwilling to accept poverty pay for a physically and mentally demanding job.

But they would never have had to take action if Labour politicians on the Transport for West Midlands board had stood up for these essential workers rather than ignoring them.

We need a party that stands up for workers and fights for the funding for affordable, properly staffed and publicly owned transport across our region!



W. CARTER/CC

Fight chilling Tory energy plans with nationalisation

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

Rather than aid working-class people with soaring energy bills, the Tories' new plans announced in the autumn budget pile even greater costs on to us. The energy price cap is rising by £500 or 20%, and the £400 universal discount we had this year is being scrapped.

According to MoneySavingExpert, that makes the real rise 43%, which is going to send hundreds of thousands more households into fuel poverty. Pensioners get just £300, while further discounts are available only to those on means-tested benefits. At a time when the economic crisis means workers need more support, we are getting less!

Even the insufficient windfall tax has proven redundant from the start. The Guardian has reported that "oil and gas stocks were broadly unmoved" after limited changes to the tax were announced, showing that shareholders don't actually expect the Tory plans to take much of their bloated profits at all.

And they really are bloated profits. Shell alone has made a staggering £31 billion over the last 12 months. Its latest two quarters are its best on record. Electricity distributors like Northern Powergrid have taken a total of £15.8 billion in profits in the last year.

Contrast the incredible wealth of the energy company bosses with the millions of working-class families and pensioners having to cope with rising bills. Those on cruel prepayment meters will have their heating and electricity shut off if cash runs out. The disabled reliant on machines at home like ventilators are at serious risk. The government's plans have made all of this more likely for the worst off in society.

The private ownership of energy has created a sick system of profiteering off the backs of millions of people struggling to, or unable to, make ends meet. No tinkering with the private model can fix this hoarding of wealth, and the energy bosses don't want it tinkered with. The idea of a windfall tax was met with energy bosses threatening to cut investments, showing how our energy security is subject to the interests of the capitalist class.

Only nationalisation of energy can ensure gas and electricity are affordable, and that we have a secure supply for the future. Nationalising without compensation to energy giants would mean we could use their hoarded profits immediately to slash bills, especially for the most vulnerable. We could then begin massive investment in energy security, including transitioning to green energy, as part of a democratic socialist plan of production.

Unsafe housing tragic deaths: action needed to make housing safe

SUZANNE MUNA
SECRETARY OF SOCIAL HOUSING ACTION CAMPAIGN (SHAC)

Two-year-old Awaab Ishak died in 2020 in a flat infested with mould that had a catastrophic effect on his breathing. His parents complained to their housing association landlord, Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH), but the landlord repeatedly failed to address the causes. No one in authority seemed able or willing to force them to make the necessary fixes.

The tragedy has turned a light-house beam onto the housing association sector, but its attention won't linger. Meanwhile, thousands of tenants face a cold winter in dangerous, substandard housing.

72 people died in Grenfell Tower when it went up in flames in 2017. The Grenfell casualties also included children and, disproportionately, disabled people. Despite the outcry of horror, nothing has fundamentally changed. The government has rejected the first recommendation of the public inquiry into the Grenfell fire - that landlords must hold Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) for disabled people. The argument over who should pay

to remove unsuitable cladding is still being waged, and around 10,000 buildings remain unsafe clad.

Dig down into Awaab's case and you hit the dysfunctional complaints, regulatory, and tribunal system which is supposed to settle disputes and address problems. This again is endemic across the sector. Instead of enabling redress, the complaints process is a locked gate, barricading landlords from tenants and residents when things go wrong.

And they don't just go wrong on repairs. There is the scandal of service charge abuse, which means that people have to battle to get invoices and receipts for works allegedly carried out. Tenants get charged multiple times for the same work, the bills are extortionate, and costs incorrectly apportioned. Service charge statements are at best a rough guesstimate.

The majority of these bills are unscrutinised because around half are paid by the taxpayer in the form of housing benefit and Universal Credit, and government has no system of checks in place.

Would the wealthy accept such sloppiness from their banks? It is inconceivable. Yet tenants and

residents paying thousands in service charges face an annual war of attrition attempting to correct errors.

There are the scandals of disability discrimination, ever reducing numbers of homes for social rent, social cleansing, the mis-selling of shared ownership, and the poor quality of new buildings. The list of housing problems is endless.

These problems however have a single common root: the imbalance in power between tenants, residents, and their landlords. Unless we address this, nothing will change.

We need a movement to create tenant and residents' power, simply having a 'voice' is not enough. Well-organised tenant unions are vital to be able to hold landlords to account.

Ultimately, we need to remodel public housing so that it is truly in public hands, managed through democratic tenant and resident structures.

Noone in authority is going to come to the rescue. Tweaking the regulatory framework won't do it. We have to create the movement that will make the change. That's what we are trying to achieve through SHAC, the Social Housing Action Campaign (www.shaction.org).

Socialist Party fights for

- Independent, democratic tenant and residents' associations. Genuine accountability and control, including over repairs
- Councils must protect tenants
 - Employ environmental health officers to uphold safe housing conditions, under the democratic control of tenants and communities
 - Register private landlords to uphold standards
 - Landlords must make housing safe - councils to seize buildings where landlords refuse
 - Renovations to make all housing safe - employ in-sourced housing maintenance workers on trade union agreed pay, terms and conditions
 - Implement rent controls under the democratic control of working-class communities
 - Build council homes, with lifetime secure tenancies
- End the commercialisation of housing associations. Take housing associations into democratic public ownership, to be run under the democratic control of tenants and housing workers
- Nationalise the large building companies, land, and banks to ensure enough good standard council housing and cheap mortgages
- A democratic socialist society could plan and provide good quality homes, jobs, and services for all



DANIEL MACZEK/CC

'Step up TUSC election planning activity'

The November meeting of the All-Britain Steering Committee of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) agreed to step up preparations for the elections coming up in the period ahead.

These include the 2023 local elections in England, which will see over 7,500 councillors elected, a bigger battleground in terms of seats to be contested than in either 2021 or 2022. But also, of course, there is the general election, which must be called by the end of 2024, but may well be held much earlier.

With the Labour Party on course with its plan to have a full list of its general election candidates in place by spring 2023, one proposal the TUSC steering committee agreed was for local delegations to be organised to Labour's prospective parliamentary candidates (PPCs) to see where they stand on the policies needed to meet the cost-of-living crisis that we face.

A model letter to Labour PPCs was approved highlighting six policy areas where the pledges made in the 2019 general election manifesto under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership would go far in beginning to reverse the capitalist political establishment's austerity agenda.

Sir Keir Starmer, we know, has

made it clear that he has "put the last manifesto to one side. The slate is wiped clean". There is no prospect of radical change there.

But where do the local candidates stand? And if they can't commit to even the policies that many of them were elected on just three years ago, how can they expect not to be challenged at the ballot box by trade unionists, socialists and anti-austerity campaigners who will?

Points from Labour's 2019 manifesto which TUSC believes are critical minimums needed to reverse the austerity agenda are:

- Public ownership of rail, mail, water, telecoms and power
- Reverse privatisation and restore public services and benefits
- Council house building and rent control
- Free education from nursery to university
- Tax the rich not workers
- Fighting for workers' interests and supporting trade unions

TUSC national election agent Clive Heemskerk explained that "the response to the letter by Labour PPCs will be an important factor to take into account in whether or not the TUSC steering committee would authorise a candidate to stand in the general election under the TUSC name in a given constituency".

"As the letter says, TUSC has always been prepared to not contest seats in which the Labour candidate has stood out against the austerity consensus of mainstream politics, and that will be the case again in the next general election".

"But the idea of organising a delegation of trade unionists and community and social movement campaigners to meet local Labour PPCs is not just about that. Even where the Labour PPC is an established right-winger they should feel the heat. And what better way is there to convince trade unionists and others of the need for themselves to stand in elections or otherwise support a socialist election challenge than to be told face-to-face that their interests will not be met by their prospective Labour MP?"

"Local TUSC groups should use the model letter, adapted to their own circumstances, firstly to go to local trade union branches, trades councils, campaign groups, student societies and so on, to discuss with them the idea of organising a delegation".

"This should be done before contacting the PPC. Then, when the letter is sent, there is more chance that the Labour candidate will feel obliged to respond".

"And if they refuse to meet a representative delegation, that then itself becomes a local news story. It's all a question of building up the pressure before the election - as the movement will inevitably have to do after the election too when faced with a Starmer government's austerity-lite policies".

- The model letter, which can be adapted to the local situation, is available at tusc.org.uk/txt/479.pdf



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

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 read reports from the meetings so far, and see tusc.org.uk/events for future dates near you.



Plymouth

Martin Brewer, a Communication Workers Union (CWU) picket supervisor for the BT/Openreach strike, said some staff had to use food banks because wages have fallen so far behind inflation. Martin praised Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) supporters for consistently attending pickets and showing solidarity with BT workers, and indeed all workers that have struck in recent months.

Martin said TUSC is the political alternative we need. He will now begin sharing TUSC material in the CWU to raise awareness of what TUSC is doing to support trade unions.

Tony Rea is a TUSC town councillor in Ivybridge. Along with several other councillors, he resigned from Labour as they felt it had shifted so far away from what they believe in. Tony is keen to build TUSC's platform to bring together all those on the left looking for a socialist alternative that will oppose cuts, rather than implement them.

The Socialist Party's Tom Baldwin highlighted the turmoil in the Tory party. However, Labour is in no way an alternative and would still choose to take the "tough decision" to hammer the poor, rather than introduce policies such as renationalising rail, mail and the energy companies to tackle the cost-of-living crisis.

A member of the transport union RMT expressed a keenness to see the RMT more involved with TUSC locally, particularly as the local Labour MP hasn't been to a single RMT picket line, despite being consistently invited.

There was a real enthusiasm to put forward a challenge in both the local and general election, whenever it may land. Already, eleven candidates have been provisionally agreed by the local TUSC supporters' group to contest the 2023 local elections, five of these were Labour members at the last general election.

If Labour won't support the workers' movement, then the workers' movement will need to build a party that does.

RYAN ALDRED

Mansfield

38 people attended the Mansfield TUSC meeting in person with an additional 10 people watching on Zoom.

Jon Dale, secretary of the Nottinghamshire health branch of Unite the Union, said: "It is vital to win these strikes, but when we've won, what happens next?"

The meeting addressed the question of what to do at the ballot box? Speakers included Ferocious Dog frontman, Ken Bonsall who stood as a TUSC candidate for Warsop in the 2021 county council elections, securing 343 votes.

Ken, who is a former miner and worked as a retained firefighter for 16 years, said he stood as a TUSC candidate as he recognised that working-class communities need socialist change and feel the Labour Party was no longer representing them.

Dennis May, leading Nottinghamshire anti-fracking campaigner, spoke about the work carried out in recent months with the threat of fracking back on the agenda.

Regional chairperson of the Fire

Brigades Union, Mark Stilwell spoke about the fire and rescue service and how government cuts had resulted in a loss of workers and resources.

Dave Nellist, former Labour MP for Coventry South East, spoke about the TUSC platform and how it aims to take on the Conservatives and the Labour Party in upcoming local and general elections.

He spoke alongside Isai Marjerla, the Socialist party's national treasurer, about the aims of TUSC and how the platform offered a realistic and exciting change for working-class communities.

Isai said: "We are socialists. We are optimists, but we are realists. We recognise what we are facing. A Starmer-led government will not act in the interests of the working-class majority."

Mansfield nurse Tom Hunt said he felt it was a duty to campaign for socialist policies under TUSC, on an anti-austerity platform.

And striking railway worker, Andrew Hawkin, spoke about his work with the RMT union.

A great night was had by all, with £104.35 raised in donations.

PHOEBE COX

Upcoming TUSC tour dates

Oxford

- Monday 5 December, 7pm
- At Peace House, Paradise Street, Oxford, OX1 1LD

York

- Wednesday 30 November, 7pm
- At Friargate Quaker Meeting House, Friargate, York, YO1 9RL
- Speakers include: Steve Scott (NEU NEC member, personal capacity)

Grimsby & Cleethorpes

- Wednesday 30 November, 7pm
- At Walters, 5-6 Old Market Place, Grimsby, DN3 1DT
- For more info about TUSC in this area, ring or text Dave Mitchell on 07811377875

London

- Thursday 1 December, 7pm
- At the Indian YMCA, 41 Fitzroy Square, London, W1T 6AQ

TUSC candidate in Bitterne by-election demands funding cuts be restored

NICK CHAFFEY
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Mabel Wellman is standing under the TUSC banner in Bitterne, in a by-election for Southampton City Council, which is taking place on 1 December.

Mabel, 20, has lived in Bitterne all her life. She is a Unite member and works in a call centre as well

as volunteering to advocate for transgender rights.

Bradford

- Speakers include: Carlos Barros (RMT NEC candidate, pc); Hannah Sell (Socialist Party general secretary); Andy Walker (ex-Redbridge Labour councillor, representing the TUSC Individual Members' Section)

Cardiff

- Thursday 1 December, 7-30pm
- At Jacob's Well, Nelson Street, Bradford, BD1 5RL

TUSC conference

The steering committee also confirmed the date of the TUSC conference to be held on Saturday 4 February, from 11am to 4.30pm at Birkbeck College, Malet Street, London, WC1E. This will discuss both the local and general election plans, including a draft core policy platform for the local elections, available at tusc.org.uk, and a draft general election platform, which will be published after the next steering committee meeting on 7 December.

as volunteering to advocate for transgender rights.

Mabel wants to secure the future of a more deprived area of the city by reinstating a £30 million regeneration scheme that was scrapped in 2021 after the Tories took control of the city. In May 2022, Labour took back control, but the scheme has not been brought up since then.

This scheme would increase youth services and involve a transport hub that could help thousands through public transport, as well as help the health of Bitterne residents, who lost their walk-in centre due to austerity cuts.

This election will be a fight to demand back the £1 billion of funding that Southampton has lost since 2010.



DO YOU HAVE NEWS FOR US?

The Socialist is written, read, sold and bought by ordinary workers, trade unionists, young people and Socialist Party members. We want you to write for the Socialist.

Send us reports of your workplace and community campaigns, short letters on working-class issues, or ideas for other articles.

CONTACT US

editors@socialistparty.org.uk
020 8988 8777 - ask for the editors

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Friday before publication, or Monday morning for urgent news, unless otherwise agreed with the editors.

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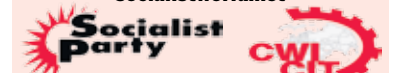
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."

Karl Marx



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.

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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.

- 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.

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

- For united working-class struggle to end discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice and oppression.

- Repeal the anti-trade union laws and all others that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest and to strike! End police harassment. For the police to be accountable to local committees, made up of democratically elected representatives of trade unions, local community organisations and local authorities.

- For the right to choose when and whether to have children – for the right to access abortion, contraception and fertility treatment for all who need it.
- For the right to asylum – with democratic community control and oversight of emergency funding resources. No to racist immigration laws.

- Expand democracy. For the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. For all MPs to be subject to the right of recall by their constituents at any time, and to only receive a worker's wage.
- 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.

- 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.

- No to imperialist wars and occupations!
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Socialist Students marching with workers in UCU JAMES IVENS



● You have our full support

For too long now, university staff have been subject to unfair working conditions and a below-inflation pay rise, which means a real-terms cut since 2009. This is just one of many injustices that they are fighting against.

They are also striking to end all unfair pay gaps based on race, gender and disability, to get rid of precarious employment, action to address excessive workload and unpaid work, which are further adding to the on-going mental health crisis, and for standard weekly full-time employment contracts of 35 hours, with no loss of pay.

All these harmful policies towards staff, while vice-chancellors make obscene amounts of money, highlight how capitalism and the marketisation of universities is not fit to meet the needs of the workers.

And this is why the UCU has full solidarity from Socialist Students and the Socialist Party.

NOAH EDEN
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST STUDENTS

● This is our fight too

We want to explain why students should get behind striking academic staff.

Firstly, this is our fight as students. With lecturing staff being unfairly paid and overworked, this means we aren't getting the high-quality education we deserve and pay for in astronomical fees.

Secondly, Socialist Students backs all striking workers. This is a corrupt world of work we will be entering. We must demand a better deal for our future selves, as well as for those being taken advantage of right now.

Thirdly, university vice-chancellors are laughing with their own obscene pay deals. Under capitalism, the ruling class inflicts poorer conditions on workers, while enjoying an affluent lifestyle themselves.

Join the picket lines at your university, and show solidarity with striking staff. As Karl Marx said: "Workers of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains".

MATTHEW BATES
NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST STUDENTS

● Hear from striking UCU members on pages 4 and 16



25 November - International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

Below we publish Socialist Students' leaflet for 'International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women' on 25 November.

A recent National Union of Students (NUS) study showed at least 75% of female students have had an unwanted sexual experience while at university. One in four women in their lifetimes will be raped or sexually assaulted.

Huge gains have been won for women's rights in recent decades, and all have had to be hard fought for. But these gains are not reflected in our experiences on campus at university, on nights out, or at work.

There is still a gender pay gap, including among university staff, which is one of the reasons for the recent strikes by the University and College Union (UCU) – (see pages 4, 15 and 16). Women are more likely to be lower paid and in insecure employment.

During the pandemic, domestic violence was on the rise. Two women a week are still killed by a current or ex-partner.

Despite all the gains and struggles for better living conditions, against gender discrimination and for equality, sexist and misogynist attitudes still persist.

Discrimination, sexism and abuse are rooted in inequality and associated ideas about gender roles. The capitalist system we live in is based

on inequalities of wealth and power that reinforces these ideas. Therefore we can't trust capitalism, its political representatives or its institutions to end sexism.

On campus, it's university management, intent on cutting costs, who make the decisions around procedures dealing with sexual harassment. We say its students and staff who make the university – not management. We demand a democratic say over how our universities are run, to make sure that all procedures are fit for purpose and under democratic oversight.

On nights out, Tory MPs suggest we should moderate our behaviour. Police suggest there should be more of them undercover in nightclubs. As if that would make anyone feel safe, given the recent WhatsApps between police officers which have been uncovered.

Whereas, a safer night out is possible if there is minimum staffing levels and proper training for staff to deal with different situations. But we can't trust night club owners, looking to profit out of young people to protect us. We need a democratic say in safety and stewarding through trade unions, local communities and young people.

Also hospitality staff should feel safe and secure at work. They too shouldn't experience sexism and should feel able to stand up to sexism at work, backed up by a trade union. We need a fully funded, free public

transport network, so that people can get home safely.

We are campaigning to win these demands. Huge gains can still be made to make our lives easier and safer.

But to end sexism, gender violence and abuse means challenging the unequal and violent capitalist system. That means fighting all the forms of exploitation which exist today. From low-paid work, to the beauty industry, to care in the family and sexism.

Such a struggle will need to unite the mass of working-class people for a socialist alternative to capitalism. Huge wealth exists in society, in the hands of a tiny few. That wealth could be used to save the planet, liberate people from the daily struggles and offer a decent future for all.

That's what Socialist Students is fighting for. Join us in that fight.

Socialist Party national meeting in London

- Saturday 14 January
- Open to all women members of the Socialist Party and LGBTQ+ Socialist Party members
- If you would like to attend, contact helenpattison@socialistparty.org.uk for details

Union protests outside Starbucks

Unite the Union protested outside Starbucks, in solidarity with Starbucks' workers in the US, who were striking against low pay and poor working on 17 November. Members

back against the cost-of-living crisis and exploitative employers.

We agreed that solidarity actions – focusing on workers in the four target employers; Costa, Starbucks, Café Nero and Pret – will take place in over 50 cities and towns in Britain.

JOHN WILLIAMS
UNITE WALES YOUTH COMMITTEE

What we thought of Socialism 2022

Read the full report from Socialism 2022 on pages 8-9

Socialism 2022 did not disappoint. There was no shortage of insight. In one meeting, people from Wales, US, Germany and Norway shared their experience in the struggle for socialism. The Internationale never sounded so good.

DAN SNIPE
SWANSEA

The Sunday after Socialism 2022 weekend, I feel more capable of participating in the struggles to come, than I was the previous Friday before.

LEE HAWKSBEE
WALTHAM FOREST

The best discussion I went to was Sarah Sachs-Eldridge on 'state capitalism'. And then to hear Clare Doyle relate her experiences of talking to workers in Donbas brought it all to life. So relevant to today's events.

MIKE CLEVERLEY
WALTHAM FOREST

The magic of an event like this is how much the 'audience' can illuminate the discussion. The young audience was encouraged to take the discussion further, and to disseminate the ideas raised.

ELLEN KENYON-PEERS
WALTHAM FOREST

Very motivating to be able to see that you are part of a bigger movement, something you can lose sight of. Safe to say that the next generation of Socialist Party members is in good hands to carry the torch forward.

JOSH CURTIS
NORTHAMPTON

Understanding the events happening internationally, and even in other parts of the UK, is a breath of fresh air. This event feeds you the tools to carry the fight on as a young revolutionary.

MILA MATHARU
COVENTRY

My first Socialism, seeing how many different branches there are, and the wealth of information at

hand, was important for me to feel part of a larger movement.

KASIAH WATSON-BLAIR
NEWCASTLE

It was an honour to be part of a weekend of organising and learning where and how we can take on the capitalist class, empowered by workers' struggles here and abroad.

NEIL DUNNE
LIVERPOOL

So many new faces. I loved every minute.

ALI COOKE
DORSET

Everyone had a story to tell and ideas to share. Loved every minute.

LAURIE MOORE
PLYMOUTH

Unfortunately my hearing aids decided to malfunction, but the stewards were excellent, making sure I could be in the front row for all the sessions.

It can be easy to think that you're alone, until you realise that you're part of something huge and international. It was the first time I have sung the Internationale, and I enjoyed that a lot.

MELANIE DENT
READING

What a brilliant rally, so pleased there was a livestream.

JILL WATERFIELD
HILLINGDON

I felt a lot of pride raising more than £100 for the fighting fund with the badge sales that I organised.

CASSIDY METCALF
SWANSEA

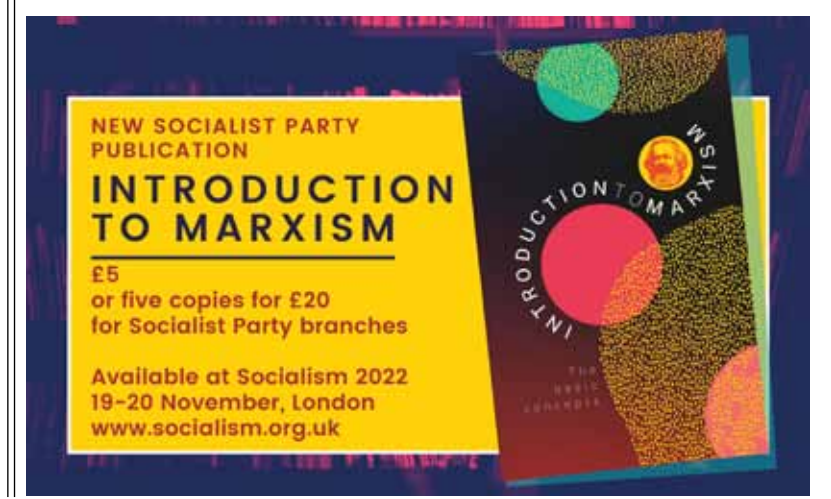
I greatly enjoyed hearing clear analysis of where Britain and its trade union movement are going.

LLUIS BERTOLIN
BIRMINGHAM

Lots of fascinating debate and discussions in each session, 'Capitalism and the Crown' was especially interesting. Can't wait for Socialism 2023.

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the Socialist

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formerly **Militant**

UNIVERSITIES STRIKE!

WORKERS AND STUDENTS: JOIN 30 NOVEMBER DEMO

Why I'm striking: For a life worth living

LLUIS BERTOLIN
UCU MEMBER, BIRMINGHAM

University staff are at breaking point.

What once used to be a prestigious profession, which offered good and secure working conditions, in the last decades has transformed into exploitative arrangements, spurred by the commercialisation of higher education.

Long, unpaid hours over contract. Fixed-term casualised contracts. Oppressive working conditions for working-class and young academics, who depend on their precarious university job to survive. A widening of the gender gap. All of these are the reality of working in higher education today.

The unwarranted threat on USS pensions is just the culmination of the contempt higher education bosses feel for their employees.

Bosses have escalated their attacks on our ability to live lives worth living, so the University and College Union (UCU) has also escalated, calling its most ambitious round of strikes yet.

I am striking because I want students to receive a proper education, delivered by lecturers who are secure in their working arrangements, and not on the brink of collapse. I am striking because I want the sector to be able to survive the greed and short-sightedness of the fat cat vice-chancellors.



Strikers and students unite during a previous strike PHOTO: MATT DOBSON

Why I support the strike: Staff are struggling

GEORGE PHILLIPS
CARDIFF SOCIALIST STUDENTS

This is the second time in my university life that the UCU has taken strike action, and the third time it has balloted. This shows nothing has changed - university management continues to ignore workers' demands for fair pay, conditions and pensions.

Lecturers and postgraduate teachers are overworked, underpaid and treated as cogs in the university business machine. Postgrad teachers are on zero-hour contracts, and lecturers work 60+ hours a week, leaving them just 20 minutes on average to prepare for a lecture.

Cardiff University vice-chancellor Colin Riordan earns £289,275 a year, has use of a company car, accommodation, and up to £1,000 for private healthcare, alongside other benefits. All this while staff struggle to pay their bills and put food on the table.

Cardiff University has the money to pump millions of pounds into vanity projects, but not to pay its staff a reasonable wage. Students must stand in solidarity with striking workers, as their working conditions are our learning conditions. We must rise up together to demand better pay, conditions and free university education.

• National strike demo in London at 1pm, King's Cross station, N1 9AL

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on page 14

