



Issue 1217 9-15 March 2023 formerly Militan

Unions must meet to prepare

24-HR GENERAL STRIKE

For fully funded, inflation-proof pay rises

Teacher: why I'm striking on 15 March

STEPHENNEU MEMBER

n 2 March I stood on a picket line with a teacher in her first year of teaching whose rent has gone up by 20%. She is struggling to get by in one of the most expensive cities in Britain. And beside her was a teacher who is retiring at the end of this academic year, and is unlikely to benefit much from an improved pay deal, but is prepared to take a stand for the future of the teaching profession. Both were appalled by the government's refusal to get into talks about funding as well as pay.

Just one reason for striking is the fact that there is a clear correlation between the 20% real-terms pay cut over the last twelve years and the fact that the government is missing its recruitment target for next year by 40%. This will put a strain on everyone and degrade educational standards across the board.

We are not just striking to get a better pay deal for ourselves, but to improve pay, conditions and funding for the whole education system, for education workers and students alike, for next year and beyond.

And it is clear that, far from valuing education and educators, this government looks on teachers with

So, we set up the first-ever picket line at our school and had almost 20 teachers join us. They all sensed that we are in a new phase and that the outcome of this strike could determine the future of the education system in Britain for years to come. There was a defiant mood and plans were made to continue the fight by marching in London on 15 March.

BUDGET DAY MASS STRIKES

'Why we're striking'

Fund schools properly

"We are striking because we would like the government to make a reasonable pay offer to reward our members for all the hard work that they do, and to help with the increasing cost of living. We would also like the government to fund education properly so we don't have to fight over resources and scrabble around for materials.

"Our members are really angry because we do not feel respected. This is not helped by the media trying to portray us as not wanting to work during the pandemic. Many of our members put themselves at personal risk teaching vulnerable children during the pandemic.

"We have lots of public support, and support from parents as well, who understand this is a strike for the future education of their children.

NEIL MEMBER IN WALTHAM FOREST NORTH FAST LONDON

Passengers deserve safety, and workers deserve decent pay and pensions

"I am a worker on the railway who drives a train in London. I work in the east end of London and am a thirdgeneration Underground worker. I am a member of the RMT rail union. As a Londoner I am proud of my city, and as a commuter I want to feel safe. I am a faithful servant of London Underground and I do not want to have to go on strike!

"During the Covid pandemic, the world held its breath when key workers kept society running. Rail workers on the front line died. We were afforded the status of 'key workers.' We were deemed indispensable and even afforded hero-like status. We are not heroes but members of the working class, who are highly trained. We keep London moving and contribute to the great wealth generated in London. Were it not for our efforts, and the efforts of other workers, the business of our city would cease.

"Passengers on the London Underground deserve the highest levels of safety, and workers deserve a decent wage and pension, which is in fact deferred wages after the worker finishes work. A working life that is dedicated in large part to unsocial hours, which has been proven to shorten life expectancy.

"As a reward, rail workers have been awarded a series of attacks on our terms and conditions. These attacks have taken place throughout our industry, including on London Underground.

"The station grades have seen an initial 600 job cuts. The travelling public was told that the closure of ticket offices would result in more visible and accessible staff, but these staffing numbers have now been slashed.

"Far from the 'king's ransom' the bosses report our pension to be, at present it will enable workers to retire without being in dire straits. Now workers with 20 years' service risk seeing the rug being pulled from under their feet, potentially contributing more for much less upon

"Workers who previously crossed picket lines have had enough of the attacks on pensions and terms and conditions. At the time of writing, Aslef drivers' union has called strike action on 15 March as well.

"We have no option but to strike. See you on the picket line!

RMT TUBE DRIVER

CONTINUED ON P5





Junior doctors propping up the

"As a junior doctor in 2016 I was faced with no choice but to strike. We were buoyed by the support we received from other unions, including a delegation to our picket line in Poole from the Communication Workers Union

"Now as a specialty doctor I am not eligible to strike, but I stand fully in support and solidarity with the junior doctors in their dispute. They have faced unprecedented levels of debt due to ever-rising student fees and cuts to the NHS bursary, and are working increasingly hard to prop up a system that has been decimated by more than a decade of Tory austerity.

"Like many other healthcare workers, the junior doc tors have been left with no choice but to take industrial action. The ballot results show the strength of feeling in the profession and I hope the health secretary gets round the table soon for a swift and successful resolution for staff and patients alike."

Civil servants on the minimum wage

"On 1 April, nearly a third of Revenue and Customs (HMRC) staff will receive a pay rise. This is because the ninimum wage will rise to above their current pay.

"It is a travesty that HMRC, the government department responsible for enforcing the minimum wage, has become a minimum-wage employer. Unless the ideology of public sector pay restraint is beaten, things will get

"PCS members in HMRC recognise this and have voted in unprecedented numbers to strike back, in a reballot that was necessary due to just missing the Torjes' undemocratic turnout thresholds first time around.

"No matter which major party is in power, it's workers across all sectors that are made to pay for a crisis they didn't cause. I'm going on strike to say: 'We won't bail out

"I'm going on strike to win - on pay, pensions, jobs, terms and conditions. Solidarity with PCS members and all workers on strike!"

PCS MEMBER IN HMRC

Young workers have to fight

As well as the 15 March national strike, PCS members are taking some targeted action. Workers at Ofsted are taking twelve days of rolling strike action. Pickets in Manchester talked about the high levels of agency staff, staff turnover, and the outrageous £7.95 daily fee that workers have to

A Socialist Party member in the workplace said: "As civil servants we work for the government, but without an adequate pay rise for the work we do, we're trapped in an economic mess of the same government's making. We younger workers have to fight tooth and nail for crumbs off the plate. But landlords have given themselves a 20% 'pay' rise per tenant and nobody's batted

Universities rely on exploitation

"At first sight, it may seem like I do not have any good reasons to strike. As an academic with a research grant paid by the EU, I have a relatively good salary, get to travel to attend conferences and give guest lectures, and my working conditions are flexible.

"I strike out of solidarity with my colleagues, who face the cost-of-living crisis and real-terms pay cuts while trying to manage impossible workloads and expectations from university authorities. I strike because I fail to comprehend how the education of students, who pay close to £10,000 a year, can rely on exploiting postgraduate students and academics on fixed-term contracts, or crappy teaching contracts that do not pay any money during holidays.

"I also strike for myself. The higher education system normalises fixed-term contracts, thanks to which I have moved countries three times in the last decade to chase jobs that would only last me two to three years. It also normalises working overtime, on weekends and even during annual leave, to produce publications in a rating system that pits academics against each other and destroys the spirit of collaboration. It destroys our self-worth so that people like me are ready to accept any scraps just to avoid unemployment. Not to mention the near impossibility of starting a family and crippling anxiety about the future it is not clear what my pension will look like after working on various types of contracts and none, in four different

"This is the result of the marketisation of higher education. We need to fight for a socialist education system that would make education free for all and make science work for the benefit of society, not for the profit of

JOANNA CHOJNICKA

Build for a 24-hour general strike to smash the cost-of-living crisis and force the Tories out!

"I know they re-

ally really do just hate work."

This was the WhatsApp exchange between former Tory health secretary Matt Hancock of 'I'm a Celebrity. Get Me Out of Here' fame and ex-education secretary Sir Gavin Williamson. This took place during the depths of Covid, when teachers along with many other workers were on the front line of the pandemic, risking their lives, while the Tories were presiding over a catastrophic failure, and at the same time getting their mates rich through facilitating coronavirus crony capitalism.

The leaks of messages like this and probably many others to come will infuriate teachers and all those striking on 15 March - the biggest day vet of joint strike action in this strike wave, when over 600,000 workers will be walking out together. This is the day when the Tories move their latest budget in Parliament.

Matt and Gav's texts yet again shine a light on the cruel class disdain of

Model motion: unions must meet to prepare further coordinated action

This union branch welcomes the growing strike wave against the Tory cost-of-living crisis. The huge joint strikes of 1 February and 6 February (the biggest in NHS history), and now the 15 March Budget Day action, show the potential for mass co-ordinated

This union branch believes that the Budget Day strike must be followed up with further coordinated action on an eve

This union branch calls or the union NEC/EC to urgently approach all other unions especially those with a live strike mandate, to meet together to agree a strategy, including naming the date for co-ordinated action involving all such unions. This approach should include calling for a conference of members of

Socialist the Tories and their hypocrisy, that sees workers told there's not enough money to enable their nay to keep money to enable their pay to keep pace with spiralling inflation so that they can keep the heating on, while the energy companies make massive profits. One of these is Centrica, the owner of British Gas, which brutally slashed workers' contracts by about £10,000 through 'fire and rehire' during the Covid lockdown, and then sent car transporters to pick up vans from those who had been made redundant

But this isn't the only example of the double standards in cold-hearted capitalism UK. Two days after Budget Day will be the anniversary of the 'St Patrick's Day Massacre', when 800 P&O ferry workers were viciously sacked, with private security guards sent on to ships, some with handcuffs. Brazenly, the company CEO told MPs that he knew that senior management were acting illegally but there was no other alternative to smashing workers' pay and conditions to 'protect' the profits of P&O. Yet a year later, these executives have effectively got away scot-free. This is while the Tories are pushing through Parliament new strike restrictions on top of the existing anti-union laws. already the most undemocratic in Western Europe.

Defend the right to strike

These latest attacks on the right to strike must be taken seriously by the unions but they, along with the government seemingly holding the line on pay, aren't signs of how strong the Tories are. Far from it! Rishi Sunak is their third prime minister in seven months and Jeremy Hunt the fourth chancellor since July. Sunak himself resigned amid the endgame of the campaign to ditch Boris Iohnson.

The Tories have been reluctant to move an inch on pay to any group of workers because they are well aware that, given the generalised cost-ofliving squeeze, all other workers would demand a real pay rise too.

But, Sunak has been forced to the negotiating table that he ruled out visiting a few months ago by the titanic struggles in the growing strike wave. The continuing strikes across every sector have now grown to a size not seen since the public sector pensions battle in 2011, when 2 million workers took action together against the attacks of the Tory-LibDem coalition. The 'MegaStrike' of 1 February, the biggest NHS strike in history on 6 February, and now the mass strike on 15 March, which continues on the 16th with the NEU and UCU being joined by the RMT on national rail, have all forced the Tories to start talking to unions.

or at least 'intensive' talks have been offered to the FBU, UCU, NEU, RCN and now it seems other NHS work-

ers. It appears that the Tories are now

trying to get some of the disputes

And, if any of these were able to

over the line. (See pages 4-5)

extract from the Government a deal that broke the pay cap - certainly if it was at least of RPI inflation, which has been as high as 14% plus over the last year - it would signify a defeat for the Tories. That could embolden all workers to also fight for such a win. But such a deal hasn't been offered to any of the unions, and there is a danger that the united front of unions' action could fray and splin-

Coordinate the strikes

A real victory, all the way down the line, is absolutely possible. But to get it means maintaining and extending coordinated action. There have been no reports of the unions meeting together after the mass February strikes. Such a meeting could have hammered out a fighting strategy to build on those successful mass strike days. It could have seen the Budget Day strike reach even higher levels, Within weeks, proposed pay deals : perhaps of over a million workers if

ter for pay offers well below what is

come together on that day.

Socialist Darty

But nevertheless, the 15 March action is another crucial milestone, and the infusion of fresh forces joining the action, such as the junior doctors, shows that the strike wave is not relenting and, on the contrary can be broadened and escalated. Another sign is the historic first strike by

Amazon workers in the UK. Militant members, reps and activists in all the unions must demand that the unions meet immediately to name the day for even greater coordinated action, up to the scale of a 24-hour general strike to inflict a major, if not terminal, defeat on the Tories, altering the class balance of forces in society.

During the 1 February mass strikes, tens of thousands of strikers flooded the streets surrounding parliament. Inside, Labour leader Keir Starmer failed to even mention them. On 15 March, the Tories will present their budget, this time surrounded by potentially hundreds of thousands of striking workers.

Jeremy Corbyn spoke at the teachers' strike rally on 2 March in his Islington constituency. But Starmer has barred him from standing to de-

the next general election, as part of his crusade to appeal to big business. The Socialist Party calls on Jeremy to confirm that he will stand, even as an independent. Our members are campaigning for the trade unions to back him too.

We are raising the demand for a trade union-backed workers' list of candidates to contest the next general election, to give the strikers a voice in parliament, to tip the balance of class forces further still, and as a step towards a new mass workers' party that is so desperately needed.

If you agree or want to discuss how the strikes can be won and the fight for

Come to a **Socialist Party** meeting near you

- Or text 07761 818206 with

STRIKE WAVE

NEU: Fighting for pay and funding, to save education

ousands of educators in

the National Education Un-

streets in rolling regional ac-

tion to show the government

that we will not stand for further cuts

to schools, and that any pay rise must

There were many fantastic speech-

es at the rally in Leeds on 28 Feb-

ruary, with key messages around

schools on a strike day, but we want

o talk about minimum service levels

We want a qualified teacher in

every classroom, a teaching assis-

tant with every student who needs

one, maximum class sizes of 25, and

a minimum pay rise each year that

doesn't lead to educators leaving

ninimum service levels.

n schools all the time!

be fully funded.

ion (NEU) have taken to the

9-15 March 2023

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

STRIKE WAVE

Civil service unions gear up for struggle:

United national action can win!

PCS BRANCH SECRETARY WIGAN (PERSONAL

n 28 February, the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union announced strike ballot results for sections of the UK and devolved Welsh civil service.

With thumping majorities, 33,000 workers in key areas such as Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and the Welsh Government have announced their intention to join the 100,000 other civil servants taking national strike action on 15 March.

Cuts to pay - a 2% pay rise in 2022 compared to 10% inflation – as well as ongoing attacks on civil service pensions, redundancy rights and jobs, are driving anger across the civil service. This is not limited to Westminster: both the Scottish and Welsh civil service are in revolt.

Pay is so low in Westminster departments that, in April 2023, pay for key operational grades will fall below

It is not just PCS that is winning ballots in the civil service. Prospect, representing technical and specialist

February, with 72% of members voting in the ballot and 80% voting for strike action. Prospect will strike on 15 March

FDA, the union for senior civil servants, has balloted members in the 'fast stream' accelerated-promotion scheme, and these too have voted for action.

The government is clearly interested in dividing unions; it offers talks to some and stonewalls others. The civil service unions should not play this game; they should come together to plan serious joint action. 15 March should be day one of united, escalating, national strikes.

PCS has been engaged in selective strike action since December, with small groups of members receiving strike pay for going on strike for longer than a few days. No movement has resulted on 2022 pay as of yet, so it is time to consider intensification of

After the success of national action on 1 February, and the boost to members' confidence, there is scope to discuss seriously across

The national civil service reballot grades, declared ballot results on 27 : in PCS begins on 20 March, in order

for reballots in areas that missed the

if there is an offer that is well below

inflation." The action planned for 20

March is currently going ahead, de-

In Unite, the decision was in the

hands of reps with a mandate for

action, who initially decided to con-

tinue with their strikes. Reps did not

agree with a non-consolidated award

for 2022-23, or that a pay award

should be linked to productivity. The

government then stated that any pay

offer would come with new money,

and that 'productivity' and 'efficien-

cy' changes would not lead to attacks

on members' conditions. It is under-

standable that, once it was clear the

other unions were going into talks.

Unite reps. with fewer numbers on

the ground, decided it would be bet-

ter not to be excluded from the talks.

Royal College of Nursing (RCN) ac-

tion has 'paused' for talks. A nurse

spoke out in last week's Socialist

against that - see 'Nurses say: Fight

till we win' at www.socialistparty

In a consultation, members of the

Royal College of Midwives (RCM) in

Wales rejected the latest offer from

the Labour-led Welsh government.

by an overwhelming margin of 82%.

nounced on 28 February that they

would "move to accept" the offer,

However, the RCM leadership an-

pending on the outcome of talks.

turnout threshold first time around -



first six months' mandate for action. on 7 May. Socialist Party members in PCS, like reps across the union, will throw themselves unstintingly into winning this

A clear programme of national strike action, a worked-out plan to : unite civil service unions in action, i of waiting us out.

government have made it clear there

is no more money on the table to

improve the pay offer, hidebound as

they are by the money they get from

Another example of how the so-

called 'social partnership' between

the Labour-led Welsh government

and trade union leaders, instead of

joining together to fight the Tories,

s actually used to hold back work-

ers' fighting for what they need and

Nurses in the RCN in Wales also

rejected the offer. On 3 March the

RCN announced that the Welsh gov-

ernment had come back for further

talks. Ambulance strikes in Wales

have also been suspended for talks.

UNISON

IN RESTART YOUR

CAN:

the Westminster government".

be angry and calling for action – and : This was on the basis that "the Welsh

to be completed by the end of the : and a thorough discussion across PCS about how the national leadership can support branches to deliver more national strike action - all of these would serve only to boost confidence, aid victory in the impending national re-ballot, and deliver a massive blow to the government's hopes

Members of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) have voted to accept the latest pay offer from the employers: 96% accepted the offer on an 84% turnout The deal is for a 7% pay rise for 2022-23. and 5% from July 2023.

pens in the NHS and teaching.

However, we understand that many firefighters would have wanted to bank this offer, particularly given

The union makes the point that firefighters' pay is determined via direct negotiation with the employers through collective bargaining. This is in contrast to recommendations by a supposedly 'independent' pay review bodies, stuffed with 'experts from business and banking, as hap-

The improvement on the origina 5% offer has come about as a result of the threat of strike action, in a massive vote to strike by FBU members The crisis-ridden Tory government is besieged by fighting workers from all

As FBU general secretary Matt Wrack has said, 7% still falls well below RPI inflation for 2022-23, which has been as high as 14%. Socialist Party members in the FRII believed more could have been won from this divided government through

The job cuts have meant a rise in

staff. Whereas staff used to be paid extra to open and close more than one station in the dead of night, this practice is now seen as a part of the working day, with financial penalties for not complying with this poten-

One female colleague was reportedly told that she was exaggerating after she was cat-called by a group of men at 2.30am. It is much harder to retreat to a place of safety when you are the only person on the sta-

These station job cuts will impact train drivers. Station staff were previously tasked with ensuring all assengers exited the train, before the train went into a siding or de pot. Instead, a practice of 'flash and dash' has been implemented by the bosses, whereby drivers are to flash the lights multiple times and tell passengers via the Public Address system that they must all change. If passengers do not hear or see this or are too slow to exit the train, then they face being carried into a siding or depot.

abandoned previously after a fatality. We now find the penny-pinchers risking the safety of the public and staff again. I for one do not wish to be in a siding with an irate member of the public!

What are we to do, faced with these huge cuts and attacks on our

We could roll over and accept the unilateral imposition to our terms and conditions. However, we in the RMT have been on strike at least six times in the last year. 2022 saw a year of activity on the picket lines, with Socialist Party members in attendance, supporting the lines, selling itempting to normalise poverty.

papers, and discussing well-received

me and said that it was "wonderful" that Aslef and the RMT were striking at the same time on 15 March. I responded that we as workers do not want to strike. We do not wish to breach our contracts of employment and lose money. This is not

them learn

They talk about 'levelling up'. Let's level up education so every child gets the high-quality education they deserve. Let's fight for school funding so that regardless of whether you attend a small comprehensive on the coast whether you go to a large inner-city primary school, or whether you go to Eton, you have the same opportunities, the same education, and the same prospects for your future.

has a permanent teacher; so that

every child has the resources to help

We need to fight to save The government wants to talk education. about minimum service levels within

Teachers are standing strong, we will continue to take the action needed to show the government that we need funding at the top of the agenda. We are taking to the streets of London on 15 March, along with brothers and sisters in many other unions, to show that we are willing to stand together and demand better After that, if the government still

the profession in droves! All schools doesn't move sufficiently, the NEU should be funded so that every child must plan to escalate the action.

RMT on London Underground:

Faced with no choice but to strike

CONTINUED FROM P2

A TUBE TRAIN DRIVER

The cuts to jobs on London Underground are part of what has been referred to as a 'managed decline'. The network is at risk of descending into a feeling of danger with every trip on

If you are disabled by barriers in society there will be less staff to assist, with the only comfort being a 'help point' with a member of staff in a distant location. Less staff available to escort visually-impaired persons to the platform. Less staff to assist with ramps onto trains for people with wheelchairs.

Passengers who have difficulty purchasing a ticket will find no ticket office and less staff to help. If you do not have an Oyster or bank card you are out of luck.

lone working. Staff now cover two or more stations. As well as a depletion of customer care, there is a potentially disastrous consequence on operational matters. Welfare checks on drivers following a safety incident will be delayed. Drivers not seeing the platform cameras and station staff being unavailable has been an

This environment is less safe for



recently approached West Ham vs Millwall, this is workers vs Tories. We are facing an attack on i continue. But it is now clearer than the working class, with the Tories at- ever that pension attacks remain on it to identify further strike dates and

Socialist Party members in the RMT say

The 15 March strike, coordinated with other unions, is an important step in our fight against massive cuts demanded by a Tory government and passed on by a Labour London mayor.

We must also discuss how we now escalate our fight, RMT has succeeded in maintaining support for our action across all functions. This must

cuts being proposed by management on trains, and organisational changes being proposed that include the prospect of members being redeployed into lower-paid jobs with only short-term protection of earnings.

We have the unity of our members on London Underground, Unity with other workers within the rail sector and elsewhere will only strengther

An RMT reps meeting has agreed

the national minimum wage.

NHS strikes

The British Medical Association

(BMA), representing junior doctors,

walked out of talks with the Tory

health minister, calling the talks "dis-

appointing" and a "facade". It says the

minister, Steve Barclay, had not been

given a mandate to negotiate on pay.

As things stand, the junior doctors' strike goes ahead 13-15 March.

Now, consultants have voted in an

indicative ballot, 86% for action on

a 61% turnout, with the threat of a

Ambulance strikes by GMB, Uni-

son and Unite members have

been suspended for talks with the

While understanding that striking

health workers want a resolution to

the dispute, Socialist Party members

on the Unison health service group

executive (SGE) argued against

suspension. They report: "We were

presented with a letter from the gov-

ernment that outlined the pre-con-

ditions to talks. We argued we could

not accept non-consolidated pay for

2022-23, as that was not a meaning-

ful pay rise. Others on the committee

agreed. It was only the Socialist Party

members who voted against sus-

pending the action to go into talks,

out it was made clear that any deal in-

cluding non-consolidation will come

back to the SGE and we will have the

strike ballot next month.

government.

SOCIALIST PARTY

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Paula Mitchell Mark Best ISSN 1366-9621

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Editorial staff Scott Jones Ian Pattison

STRIKE WAVE

Royal Mail dispute at crucial point

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN THE CWU

he Communication Workers
Union (CWU) national leadership has agreed a national
joint statement with the Royal
Mail Group board, after involvement of the former general secretary of the Trades Union Congress
(TUC) Sir Brendan Barber, in talks
with ACAS.

The statement followed a significant move by Royal Mail - the removal of CEO Simon Thompson from negotiations.

The joint statement was supposed to move the long-running and extremely bitter dispute forward and bring in more intensive negotiations towards a final national agreement. But in the view of many union reps and activists, the statement did not go far enough, and lot of pressure has been put back onto the local reps in the workplace.

In previous months, Royal Mail pushed ahead with their 'executive action': imposing changes to duty structure and start times, and bringing in new starters on significantly worse terms and conditions, among other things.

The joint agreement was supposed to put a hold on the bosses' actions, instead holding a joint review of what has been forced in, and making no changes to start times or duty structure unless agreed locally. But in practice, bosses are still continuing at pace, with the ink not even dry on the paper.

It seems that despite the CEO being removed from negotiations, he's

still trying to dictate to certain managers to push ahead with his plan to smash the influence of the CWU in the workplace.

Managers were let off the leash in the last few months, told that it's their company to run, which has seen over 300 reps and members suspended and a number sacked. The CWU cannot make any agreement while reps and members are still suspended. All must be reinstated.

The company has also threatened the prospect of going into administration. The CWU leadership has said, at recent meetings with reps and members, that we have got to realise the financial situation the company is in.

But this is a situation created by senior management, giving £600 million to shareholders and huge pay-outs to the senior directors. Now they expect ordinary postal workers to pay. We say, open the books! Show us where the billions have gone.

A clear demand must now be made for Royal Mail to be brought back into public ownership, from the completely corrupt mismanagement which has been taken place to enrich multimillionaires. The CWU should demand that the Labour Party commits now that an incoming Labour government would immediately bring Royal Mail into public ownership, with compensation only where there is proven need.

The postal executive should name a series of dates for industrial action, if there is no clear sign of an acceptable national agreement to meet the aspirations of the membership.



Tyneside walkout

Barely a few hours after the national joint statement issued on 2 March, including to find "the most constructive way to work together in local revision activity", management at the Tyneside delivery centre attempted to unilaterally implement the working practice revisions at the heart of the current dispute, and suspend local CWU stewards.

In response, around 1,000 CWU members on the night shift walked out at 2.30am, and were followed by the day shift on Friday morning. The management climbdown was rapid, with the work revisions and suspensions withdrawn. Work was resumed at around 11.30am.

A victory for the CWU, due to rapid collective action of the local reps and members. It's a warning to keep vigilant for wildcat action from management during this period of negotiations.

NORMAN HAL

SOUTH TYNE AND WEAR SOCIALIST PARTY

Leicester rep sacked

CWU members streamed out of the Leicester Meridian mail centre for a gate meeting on 6 March. This followed news that their main union rep, one of around 300 nationally suspended or dismissed on trumped-up charges, has now been sacked.

The joint national statement (see left) says that the disciplinary action taken during the dispute will be independently reviewed, in an effort to "minimise the current tensions across Royal Mail Group workplaces."

The sacking of union reps is a blatant attempt to neuter the effectiveness of the union and, alongside pay and conditions, is a key issue that would need to be resolved before any agreement can be reached. CWU members are concerned that reps are still being sacked even while this 'independent review process' is meant to be taking place.

STEVE SCORE SPOKE TO LEICESTER CWU REPS

Courage and organisation in the fight against the biggest of bosses



ADAM HARMSWORTH

COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

Taking on one of capitalism's biggest employers demands a great deal of courage and organisation. The Amazon strikes in Coventry are impressive events that show both. Wellorganised picket lines have dozens of picketers at every shift change. They have blocked lorries and cars to try to convince their co-workers to turn around.

And it's working. Miles of traffic build up as workers stop in their cars and lorries to hear the arguments of the unionised workers. Most of the striking workers weren't even in a union until a few months ago, when spontaneous protests erupted against the 50p-an-hour pay rises.

By the January strike day, GMB membership at the site had grown from 30 to 300, out of a workforce of just over 1000; by the February action it was around 350; after several trucks and cars refused to cross the picket line, it has been reported another 70 joined the union.

On the warehouse flo

conversation is extremely limited and is watched by cameras and managers. On the picket line, workers are able to discuss the horrendous conditions and the impact of low pay.

Every worker now knows about the colleague who was threatened with the sack for being off ill with cancer for too long, and about another called into the manager's office for looking at his phone for five seconds. Everyone knows someone who struggles to pay the bills, or is stuck in debt, or uses a food bank. They know their best chance of changing that right now is by winning against Amazon, which they know can afford to give them £15 an hour and better conditions.

Amazon has responded by sending police up to the picket, by labelling some striking workers as 'no shows', and organising 'all-hands meetings' at sites across the country, presumably to plan workarounds for the strikes.

It is important to continue the union recruitment drive across the Coventry site, combined with mass meetings of the striking workers, to discuss what next after the week-long strike, including possible further escalation.

The action could inspire walkouts at other sites, as we saw last summer. Socialist Party members have raised the need for coordinated strike action. The week of action 13-17 March includes Budget Day, when Amazon workers will join 600,000 other workers on strike.

That day could be used as a rallying call for Amazon workers across the country to protest. Further days of national protest, and depot meetings addressed by Coventry strikers, would aid union recruitment and the potential to spread the strike.

Defeating Amazon would be a gigantic step forward for workers at Coventry and for the other 75,000 Amazon workers in Britain.



with the NSSN bulletin shopstewards.net

Matt Hancock leaks - Tories put profit above safety

100,000 WhatsApp messages from Matt Hancock – the Tory health secretary during the Covid pandemic – have been leaked. Here, two Socialist Party members respond, and explain what key workers and trade unionists were really doing during the crisis.



Social care worker: 'I saw people die'

DAN SMART

SOCIAL WORKER IN ADULT CARE

hese leaks confirm the Tories' catastrophic handling of the crisis. And they stress what those working in the social care sector already know, that the Tories put profit above public

As a newly qualified social worker in adult care during the Covid crisis, I saw people who could no longer remain at home, entering care homes only to catch the virus and die shortly after.

Impossible decision

I remember no tests being available for people with learning disabilities going into supported living. This created the impossible decision of either leaving someone at risk at home, or potentially infecting multiple other vulnerable people. There was a 175% rise in the number of unexpected deaths of people with learning disabilities and autism from April to May 2020.

Matt Hancock assured us that he had put a 'protective ring' around care homes, to shield those most at risk of the virus. But, as shown in the messages, he ignored advice from Chief Medical Officer Chris Witty saying there should be "testing of all [people] going into care homes".

Bafflingly, Matt Hancock said in private that testing community admissions would "muddy the waters". Community testing wasn't introduced until August 2020. In this gap, 17,678 died of Covid in care homes.

Another series of messages shows the Tories' privileged arrogance. Hancock arranged for the child of Tory cabinet member Jacob Rees-Mogg to get a prioritised Covid test, when there were mass shortages. An aide messaged Hancock to say: "We've got a courier going to their family home tonight... courier will take it straight to the lab. Should have result tomorrow AM."

These revelations reinforce that the Tories ignored scientific advice which could have saved thousands of lives, failed to plan for social care, prioritised the market and profits over people's health, and were mired in self-interest and corruption.

Democratic control

The Socialist Party calls for full public ownership of the social care sector, with democratic control by workers, service users and the community. Armed with scientific advice, these 'frontline' experts – carers, social workers, nurses and so on, who were putting their own lives at risk throughout the pandemic to support those most in need – would ensure that decisions are made by and for those they directly affect.



Jane Nellist was part of the National Education Union (NEU) health and safety organising forum during the pandemic.

Matt Hancock should have remembered the old saying: "Be sure your sins will find you out". His WhatsApp messages reveal what we knew all along – the absolute contempt that he and others showed education workers and trade unions. We especially came under fire from them during the height of the pandemic.

Then education secretary, Gavin Williamson, states in one WhatsApp message, in reference to a request for PPE for schools: "So they can't use it as a reason not to open... Some will just want to say they can't so they have an excuse to avoid having to teach."

Scandalous profiteering

School staff, health workers, and others were demanding PPE to protect themselves. We now know the extent of the scandalous profiteering and fraud with PPE contracts.

£4 billion of useless PPE has been destroyed – what an utter waste. That money could have been invested into making schools safer.

These leaks have caused real anger and hurt throughout the education sector for a number of reasons:

- Schools immediately ensured that children of key workers and vulnerable pupils attended school during lockdown
- We set up online learning even though there were shortages of laptops for pupils
- We ensured that every child

entitled to a free school meal had that delivered

 We checked on pupil's welfare, and countless other measures to meet their needs, despite government inaction

In another exchange, Matt Hancock states: "What a bunch of absolute arses the teaching unions are", and Gavin Williamson replies: "I know they really do hate work".

Trade union health and safety reps and officers supported staff to ensure that risk assessments were in place. We worked with local authorities to ensure that all appropriate measures were taken in schools to safeguard staff and pupils – with adequate cleaning, social distancing and PPE. We also had to fight to ensure that vulnerable staff, and those with vulnerable family members, could work from home, to prevent transmission.

Huge step

By January 2021, Covid infection rates soared. NEU members took the huge step of using Section 44 of the Employment Act – refusing to work in an unsafe environment. It wasn't helped that we were opposed by the Tories and the Labour Party led by Keir Starmer.

The fact is, despite the many failures of the government, education workers, supported by their unions, with fully researched, evidence-based guidance, saved many lives. The heart of the government's policies during the pandemic was never really about protecting communities, but about protecting the profits of the capitalist class. Those responsible must be held to account by the working class.

Bus strike set to grind West Midlands to a halt

NICK HAR

BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

The West Midlands is set for a historic bus strike after drivers and mechanics at National Express West Midlands voted by a massive 96% to take all-out continuous strike action, starting on 16 March.

Thanks to the virtual monopoly held by the company over bus

services in Birmingham, the Black Country and Coventry, services are set to grind to a halt when the 3,300 Unite members covered by the ballot walk out.

The same day that the ballot result was announced, the National Express parent company made an announcement of its own – of underlying profits during 2022 of £197.3

£197.3 million

National Express profits

While profits have doubled, National Express bosses can only find the funds to offer a below-inflation increase of 8% to the workforce, claiming there's no more money available.

To add insult to injury, following the ballot result, a management communication suggested that workers should "look at their payslip" – as if they needed reminding how little they earn – and referred them to online counselling!

Speaking to workers on the garage gates, it's clear that there is a strong mood to strike among workers who have had many years of declining pay and conditions, as the job becomes ever more stressful. Socialist Party members will be right behind them in their fight for a living pay rise, as we are with all workers.

socialist

NHS, fully

owned and

genuinely

free at the

needs, as

part of a

socialist

production

to meet the

needs of all

plan of

point of use

for all health

publicly

JAMES IVENS

SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

he fight is on to save our NHS. The biggest strike in the service's 75-year history brought tens of thousands of nurses and ambulance staff out together on Monday 6 February.

Thousands of physiotherapists and support workers have taken strike action this year too. As a national protest for the health service musters on Saturday 11 March, junior doctors will be readying a 72-hour strike up to the end of Budget Day.

The significance of all these actions is huge. The British Medical Association has only called strikes twice before - the Royal College of Nursing. never! Health workers feel this trade union fightback is overdue and very welcome.

It's been needed for years. But now Covid and its fallout have opened a new phase in the NHS crisis.

Ambulance dispatchers can't order responses because crews are queued for hours - even days - outside A&E. Safety investigators report them desperately asking: "How many people are we going to kill today?"

It's not just emergency care. Waiting lists to start planned treatments more than doubled from three million in 2015 to seven million in 2022. The **Vacancies** number of patients stuck more than a year without treatment exploded tenfold to over two million.

Leaders of doctors' professional associations wrote in the British Medical Journal this January: "The concern of many colleagues is that what we have previously described about the situation being a crisis is, with hind-

"It was hugely challenging but now we are seeing what a crisis really means, with delayed and missed treatments, and unacceptable care and working conditions."

Our NHS is being bled dry by profiteering companies. Every year, tens of billions of pounds flow from NHS funding into the accounts of private providers seeking to make a profit - 26% of NHS England spending in 2018-19, according to one estimate.

The tendrils of private profit penetrate all aspects of the NHS: huge profits for drugs companies are extracted at our expense and services outsourced to companies like Serco to employ workers on inferior pay, terms and conditions

New 'Integrated Care Boards' (ICBs) commission local services - and give the private sector a direct say. Billionaires like Richard Branson snap up public funds to provide the least intensive services, leaving the complex, expensive cases for the NHS.

Then there's ruinous 'Private Finance Initiative' debts. Decades of dues to private firms to pay off public buildings. Ten trusts spend more on PFI bills than drugs!

The NHS was built on three pillars: universal provision, free at the point of use, based on clinical need not ability to pay. What we're seeing is a breakdown in universality, without which the other principles start to lose their effect too.

That's why one in eight of us have had to resort to private healthcare despite the gut-punching bills

THE FIGHT FOR OUR NHS New wave of struggle faces new phase of crisis

9-15 March 2023

More troubling still is that one in ; the NHS budget in order to undersix who have tried to access the NHS: pay them. But outsourced workers have felt forced to treat themselves: at Barts NHS Trust in London won a instead. There are horrifying tales of ; big pay rise and an end to outsourchard-up workers pulling their own

socialistparty.org.uk

We all know the pandemic overoaded the system. But it wasn't the fundamental cause. It simply laid bare decades of cuts, privatisation and de-integration. So what change do we need to rebuild and expand the NHS - and how can we win it?

Invest to end the staffing

The number

of unfilled

in the NHS

If you can get an appointment at your hospital or GP's surgery, you'll see exhausted staff dashing from crisis to crisis. There's just not enough of them.

One in ten NHS vacancies are unfilled - including over 9,000 doctors and 47,000 nurses. Add to that staff who are off sick due to extraordinary stress or exposure to diseases like Covid - it's a wonder anyone's in at all. This in turn adds to the stress.

Closing that gap is a start, but not enough. The UK has around 31 doctors for every 10,000 people. Germany has 45, and Cuba 84! Particular fields. like mental healthcare, are especially short compared to demand.

Nurses have told Socialist Party members visiting their picket lines that the numbers their union delegated to go in for basic safety were higher on some wards than on non-strike days! Wouldn't they make better decisions on staffing?

The Socialist Party says

 Emergency investment now to hire and train permanent staff,

> including more GPs and mental health workers, to end the shortage and start expanding

Health unions and patient groups should have democratic oversight of staffing and safety

A big reason there are so many vacancies is that workers can't afford to live on NHS wages. One in seven nurses relies on food banks.

Staff across the health service have lost the equivalent of a full year's pay since 2010. For packets are 20% smaller in real terms.

> Support grades - like cleaners, caterers, security, receptionists - are often the worst-paid of all, worse still when outsourced. But the NHS would grind to a halt without them.

To add insult to injury, their private employers cream profits off:

ing by striking last year. That's the way

The Socialist Party says

- Inflation-proof pay rises for all workers
- A minimum wage of £15 an hour
- Insource all privatised staff and services on full NHS pay and

Given the huge stress and poverty pay, it's not surprising young people are reluctant to train for healthcare roles. Students enrolling on nursing courses are down 10%.

Back-breaking debt from uni fees and abolition of bursaries haven't helped. Meanwhile, medical degree enrolment is capped by the government because it's unwilling to pay to train enough doctors!

The Socialist Party says

- Abolish tuition fees and debts. reinstate living grants and training bursaries
- Scrap the cap on medical degrees - invest in fully publicly funded higher education for all

Health infrastructure, not cash

The lifeblood of healthcare is its workforce. But staff can't do their jobs without infrastructure. Capital investment in the NHS is about half that of comparable countries as a share of GDP.

The problem of hospital bed availability is now chronic. You could fly halfway round the world quicker than get off the trolley or out of the waiting

One well-publicised cause is 'bed blocking' - medically dischargeable patients who can't leave without care arranged for them. The appalling deficiency of social care is a result of local council budget cuts and privatisation.

But there's also just not enough beds. The UK has 2.5 hospital beds for every 1,000 people. France has about 6 - Japan has 13.

Non-emergency care is increas ingly farmed out to private hospitals that bill the NHS. Instead of opening experienced nurses, wage : more wards and beds, the Tories and Labour both want to hand more NHS cash to those profiteers!

The Socialist Party says

 Nationalise and fully fund the social care sector to meet social need Spend public money on more NHS wards and beds, not handouts to private hospitals

The next bright idea from the



bosses' politicians is abolishing some wards outright. Both Tories and Labour see 'virtual wards' as a cheap alternative to hospital investment.

Patients would be in bed at home, with clinicians checking in remotely. But efficient care requires in-person connection with health professionals, to maximise information and meet the emotional needs of patients.

It's patently unsafe to have hospitalised patients scattered miles away from staff. It also shifts a burden of unpaid care onto families, especially

Instead, how about those 40 new hospitals Boris Johnson promised us? Hospitals are riddled with crumbling buildings and outdated facilities. The

rose 11% last year, to £10 billion.

The Socialist Party says

 Build and extend hospitals to provide in-person care, not 'virtual

Invest in repairs and upgrades now

Where new technology could help is in planning and coordination. The NHS still struggles to share medical records. And patient flow in most hospitals is run manually on clipboards. But digitised systems with patient wristbands have apparently improved efficiency.

Private tech suppliers will, of course, leech out profits from the NHS - and as we learned again during Covid, may never deliver the goods. Staff

agement could use new tech to sweat them like Amazon workers. Outdated technology, disjointed planning and poor communication

may also be wary, rightly, that man-

problem. The NHS is fragmented and infested with private interests. Successive governments have implemented artificial 'internal market' competition and broken up the service into isolated local 'trusts'. This made planning and resource sharing harder, and increased expensive

bureaucracy. The pandemic showed us the truth. Public coordination and planning got us through Covid. Private contracts got the Tories' mates richer and achieved little else. Let's have the lot, fully coordinated, under workingclass control instead of sticky-fingered capitalists.

The Socialist Party says

Scrap PFI and cancel the debts

Boot out the profiteers renationalise all NHS services with no compensation to fat cats!

 Scrap trusts, ICBs and the internal market - for coordination and planning at all levels, under the democratic control of health workers and service users

 Invest in new tech to improve the service, but publicly owned and with democratic oversight from health unions and patient groups

Capitalism makes us sick

To distract from their crimes of underinvestment and privatisation, one of the capitalist establishment's favourite scapegoats is the sick. They bemoan the difficulties of treating an ageing population.

Over the next two decades, the proportion of over-65s in Britain will rise from a fifth of the population to a quarter. Surely ordinary people living onger is a good thing!

The problem is that capitalism stops valuing workers when they stop contributing to profit through production. Instead of paying for living pensions and quality public services to keep us well, they want those retired or unable to work removed from their balance sheets.

They may yet get their wish. Life expectancy growth started to slow ten years ago, and among some deprived demographics has gone into reverse. Researchers at Glasgow University have pinned the blame on austerity.

The bosses, of course, prefer to moralise about 'lifestyle choices'. But if you're working long hours, with low pay, little access to decent food and services, suffering constant anxiety about your job and home... they're

'Affordable' housing is overcrowded and often damp or clouded in pollution. Patients on NHS waiting lists get sicker while they're waiting, in a vicious cycle.

The for-profit pharmaceutical inare all symptomatic of a much larger dustry charges the NHS extortionate rates for drugs. It also has little incentive to invest in cures, which after all mean you lose your customers. Profit, poverty and inequality kill - at all ages.

Added to this general physical and psychological strain, the government has slashed spending on public health departments aimed at preventing illness. That's why the Tories can claim they (slightly) increased NHS spending. They raided the public health budget to do so, sawing off the branch the NHS is perched on.

The Socialist Party says

Reinstate fully funded public health schemes in all areas

 Nationalise big pharma and medical supply firms to cut costs and invest in research, as part of a publicly owned, democratically controlled NHS

 Fight for living wages, pensions and benefits for all

 Mass building of safe, high-quality council homes

Reverse austerity! Fully fund all public services - take the money from the super-rich

Striking to save our NHS

NHS workers on picket lines this winter have made it clear that the strikes are about pay, but not just pay. They are striking to save the NHS.

The Tories' splits on NHS pay, and Sunak's latest hints at concessions, show that strikes can get results. Further coordina-

tion between health unions and unions in other sectors would maximise impact. Coordinating strikes across all sectors could break this fragile and factional

The Socialist Party says Coordinate the

actions! Union leaders must meet urgently to name the date for further days of coordinated action bringing together all those with a live strike mandate. Build towards a 24-hour general strike

leaders: launch a national strike fund, and appeal for public support to sustain strikers in hardship

Fight for socialism

This strike wave could be a force to bring down the Tory government. But would its replacement with a Labour government led by Sir Keir Starmer solve our problems?

Starmer has committed to almost all the Tories' policies on NHS privatisation and general austerity. His health spokesman, Wes Streeting, took £15,000 from a hedge fund manager connected to vulture healthcare privatising.

NHS workers - and all workers need political representation that's controlled by and for our class, not big business.

The Socialist Party says

 No trust in Starmer's Labour Prepare a trade union-backed workers' list for the next general

 Build towards a new mass workers' party

Nve Bevan, founder of the NHS, supposedly said that "the NHS will last as long as there's folk with faith left to fight for it." But why should we have to keep having that fight over and over?

The NHS - and whole welfare state were won after the Second World War. The working class was fed up with abysmal social conditions. There was the living example of a recent revolution in Russia.

The bosses feared revolution here and reluctantly conceded reforms. An economic boom totally unique in its growth and duration, meant they could tolerate higher public spending against their profits. Even so, there were gaps. We pay for dentistry and prescriptions, for example - hardly 'free at the point of use'.

They've been clawing it all back bit by bit ever since. And today, they face not world-historic upswing, but longterm stagnation and crisis. So winning the NHS we need - and making it permanent - means taking the wealth and power off them for good.

The Socialist Party says

 Take the wealth and power off the super-rich! Nationalise the banks and big businesses that dominate the economy under democratic workers'



Get your workmates to celebrate May Day with the Socialist



SURREY UNISON (PERSONAL CAPACITY) AND SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

Every year during February, I contact fellow activists in Surrey Unison - reps, officers, staff, even regional officers. I ask them if they would like to donate towards a May Day greeting in the Socialist.

I explain the importance of the newspaper, show them previous greetings from the branch and (if they want) give them a few back issues to look at. In contrast to most of the news you read or watch, the Socialist unequivocally backs workers in struggle. It contains within it comments from workers on strike, strategy to win our disputes and socialist ideas to win permanent gains for the working class. Strikers across the country will have seen the Socialist on their picket lines and read the material contained within.

In most trade unions you can take a motion to your branch asking it to take out a greeting in our May Day edition. If not, then send in a greeting from Socialist readers and supporters, making clear it's paid for by

This year I have raised over £300 from about 30 activists already, with a few pledges still to come in - so we should once again be able to have a full-page greeting. Not all branches have so many activists - we are a big and vibrant branch (currently balloting on our pay claim) but smaller branches with just a handful of activists could still raise £30 or £50 by being bold and asking.

The key is to be bold and confident in the ideas of socialism, in what we goes to support the Socialist can help to strengthen working-class struggle. Let's make this May Day issue the

Back the paper that backs the workers **May Day Greetings in** the Socialist

Take out a May Day Greetings ad or find out prices - email: scottjones@socialistparty.org.uk or visit

Three months as a Socialist Party member - no looking back!



SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

of the Socialist Party! What made me join is not a simple question to answer. I felt complete disillusionment with Corbyn and the Labour Party after my experience of campaigning with Momentum in the 2019 general election. My time and energies were

decided. So I was on the lookout for a new. cohesive and - now that I had lost my faith in Labour as a champion of socialist policies - more radical organisation to throw my lot in with.

completely misinvested, I have since

But why did I go specifically for the Socialist Party among the several Marxist parties and organisations on offer? That is much harder to explain. I knew about Militant, (the Socialist Party's predecessor) its activities in the 1980s, and its role in getting rid of the hated Thatcher. That was a nudge in this direction.

But what really did it for me, was a cover-to-cover reading of an issue of the Socialist last November, held out to me enthusiastically on my high street by a smiling young person. What immediately jumped out from the pages was the collective but, at the same time, personal feel of the paper. Each article speaking clearly from a common viewpoint but also rooted in individual experiences of the workplace. I was impressed too by the number of people, many young, confident enough to contribute an article but also able to speak with such ideological clarity and passion. The plurality of voices, the unity of vision, the youthful energy – it all struck a chord with me! This first impression of the So-

cialist Party has been reconfirmed for me on multiple occasions in the last weeks, both in meetings and in discussions with other members. In branch meetings, for example, everyone is made to feel easy and participation is high. No one's contribution. however modest, goes unacknowledged or undiscussed. I have seen the beneficial effects of this not just in myself but in other new members who, from initial silence, have turned into fountains of voiced ideas once the democratic vibe has worked its

AREA & RECEIVED & TARGET South West 3,071 1,800 Wales 2,798 2,300 London 4.685 4.600 North West 1.050 1.150 outhern & SE 2.104 2.350 Vorkshire 2.280 2.550 872 1.200 East Midlands 1.335 1.850 Other 1,989 3,850

Protests and cuts – come to **Socialist Students** conference

econdary school students around the country have staged protests against restrictive school rules, notably around toilet access and uniform policies. The protests show an urge for students to have a say in how their education is run. This means students having an organised voice that can fight for their interests. while also working together with school staff, who are at the sharp end of attacks on pay and conditions. Socialist Students campaigns for democratic, fighting students' unions in all schools and colleges, linked up with : cuss at this year's Socialist Students education trade unions.

9-15 March 2023

Students at universities also need to get organised. The latest rounds of cuts at universities like UEA and Birkbeck are the product of a bro ken funding model, resulting in living conditions of students and staff reaching historic lows. Socialis Students campaigns for a renewed student movement that can fight for the funding our universities need, linked to the need for socialist

the Socialist

If you are a student and you want help organising in your school, college or university, come and dis

Sign up here: STRIKING BACK **COST OF LIVING CRISIS Socialist Students Conference 2023** MIDLAND INSTITUTE Birmingham, B3 3BS

Birkbeck and UEA propose dramatic staff cuts due to 'deficits'

Birkbeck, University of London and the University of East Anglia (UEA) are proposing dramatic job and budget cuts to cope with deficits of millions of pounds. On the eve of its 200th anniversary. Birkbeck plans to cut 140 jobs by July 2023, with more to be announced, due to a deficit of £13 million. UEA has had a £13.9 million loss in 2021-22, and has proposed compulsory redundancies, savings across all departments and want services such as cleaning, libraries, security and student support to reduce budgets by 10-20%. UEA has also asked staff to temporarily reduce their hours, take unpaid career breaks, or voluntarily reduce their salary!

Birkbeck vice-chancellor Professor David Latchman is one of the bestnaid university leaders in the country with a salary of more than £385,000. Both Birkbeck and UEA University and College Union (UCU) branches have passed a vote of no confidence in their senior leaderships.

UEA and Birkbeck have been suffering from falling student numbers in recent years. Birkbeck saw

Toilets in many schools in the UK are

now locked during lessons against

the wishes of the majority of students.

which has sparked protests. Many

are also short of toilets, resulting in

ong queues. In my school, this was a

esult of the local Labour-controlled

School protests: 'We want to be

heard and are ready to take action!'

fell short by 8% of their entry targets (following a 17% shortfall in 2021) which had... an 'adverse financial impact of £6.4 million." Concrete also revealed: "Rising energy costs were... stated as a reason for the debt, standing at 'circa £5 million in the last year." The cost-of-living crisis has been cited as a reason students are choosing not to go to university, in a recent article published by the

ous year. 'Concrete', UEA's student

newspaper, reported: "In 2022, UEA

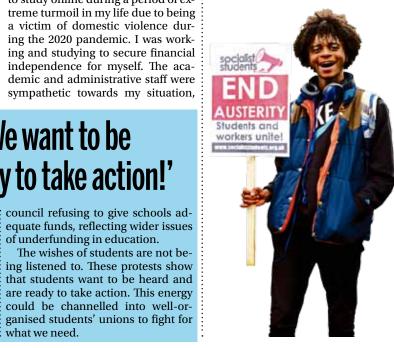
Entry requirements for some UEA courses have risen for the 2023-24 year, in part to deal with the increased competition among more prestigious universities. Birkbeck markets itself as 'London's evening university, boasting accessibility for working students by hosting classes between 6-9nm.

I graduated from Birkbeck with my postgraduate degree in 2022, having to study online during a period of extreme turmoil in my life due to being a victim of domestic violence during the 2020 pandemic. I was working and studying to secure financial independence for myself. The academic and administrative staff were

in 2021-22 compared to the previ- : and if it were not for their support would not have chosen Birkbeck as my place of study. Cutting staff may solve these deficits in the short term but will have long-term effects on their reputations and the quality of education students receive

Socialist students calls for

- No redundancies, no course closures! Support university workers taking action to save jobs, courses and departments. To build fighting student organisations to link up with staff and campaign for the resources we need
- Fully funded, high-quality free education. Scrap tuition fees, take the wealth off the super-rich to fund education and living grants
- Nationalise the energy companies alongside the banks and big business to be run under democratic working-class control and end the cost-of-living crisis



WHAT WE STAND FOR

apitalism is an ailing, crisisridden 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 workingclass 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

and is democratically run by workingclass 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

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

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
- 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 sociallyacross the world. Our demands include: 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 Replace universal credit and the
 - punitive benefit system with living

 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 For a socialist NHS to provide for

The manner of more experienced

members is characterised by persua-

sive argumentation based on care-

ful analysis of concrete situations,

whether it be reporting back on a

particular picket line attended, or

giving an extended talk on realistic

strategies for socialists in the current

A democratic, clear-headed and

passionate socialist party - ves. defi-

British and international contexts.

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- everyone's health needs, including dental and eve 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.
- 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,
- 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

parents and student organisations.

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.

- Prioritising major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels and nuclear power with renewable energy, and ending the problems of early obsolescence - where products are and unrecycled waste
- Nationalisation of the energy companies, under democratic workers control and management, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need, in order to carry out a major switch to clean, green energy, without any loss of jobs, pay or conditions. A democratically planned, massively
- expanded, free to use, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution. For a major, publicly funded,

- insulation and energy transition plan for existing housing stock. Agribusiness to be taken into
- democratic public ownership. For a food processing and retail industry under workers' control to ensure that standards are set by consumers, small farmers, and all workers involved in the production. processing, distribution and retail of food.

- 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

CARDIFF SCHOOL STUDENT

- 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 selfdetermination. 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.

of underfunding in education.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM No to imperialist wars and

occupations! Take the wealth off the super-rich!

For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and

management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need, not to the fat cats. A democratic socialist plan of

production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment. No the EU bosses' club. Organise a campaign with European socialists and workers' organisations to use the talks on post-Brexit relations to tear up the EU pro-capitalist rules. For a real collaboration of the peoples of Europe on a socialist basis as a step towards a

Do you agree? Join the fightback! JOIN THE SOCIALISTS Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join

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ELECTIONS ELECTIONS socialistparty.org.uk

TUSC: Gearing up to challenging austerity in May's elections

The 4 May elections in England will see contests in 229 councils. Nearly 8,000 candidates will be up for election. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), in which the Socialist Party participates, is preparing to stand - to give an alternative to Tory and Labour public service cuts and council tax rises. This is a shortened and edited version of the opening contribution made by TUSC national chairperson Dave Nellist to the discussion on the core policies platform (the common ground between all those who want to stand as TUSC candidates in the May local elections) at the TUSC conference on 4 February.

There should be nothing inevitable about the poverty and suffering that has impacted working-class families by the cost-of-living crisis.

We know that trade unions are winning victories against individual employers. But there is another force within society that could be part of the working-class fightback: local government itself. As someone who spent 14 years as a Socialist Party councillor on Coventry City Council, I took inspiration from several battles of the past.

For example, Poplar in east London in 1921. There, Labour councillors defied the government, the courts, and the Labour Party leadership. They called for the council to

receive more income to tackle the ; council houses, five new sports cenarea's high unemployment, hunger and poverty, and to raise council workers' wages, including equal pay for women workers. Three of our policies echo their struggle.

The councillors' protest led to them being jailed. Thousands demonstrated in their favour. The councillors continued to run the council from their prison cells. They originated the phrase "it's better to break the law than to break the poor."

Fifty years later, in 1972, in the small Derbyshire town of Clay Cross, Labour councillors refused to implement the Tory Housing Finance Act, which required councils to raise rents by 50% to the average of private

A government commissioner was sent into the town. The councillors refused to give that commissioner a desk, a chair or even a pencil! Two or more of our policies take inspiration from a town of 10,000 people and their fight against the imposition of Or the biggest example of all, in

the mid-1980s, when the socialist councillors of Liverpool set a budget based on the real needs of the local population. They then led a battle against Margaret Thatcher for more funding and - just as an aside - today's prime minister Rishi Sunak is no Margaret Thatcher! They won the funds necessary to build 5,000

tres, six new nurseries, and three new parks, and employed 10,000 workers a year to do the job. They showed how to mobilise a mass campaign around a needs budget and a serious fight for government funding.

So, the policies we're putting be fore you today oppose those who claim nothing can be done against austerity. Whether in London boroughs, small towns, or major cities, we have a history in the labour and trade union movement of challeng-

But such battles are not going to happen under today's Labour, whose overriding priority is maintaining a 'tight grip on public finance'. Our priorities would be different. Any successful TUSC councillor would call at their first council meeting for emergency measures so no one is cold, no one is hungry, and no one is

And councils do have powers and resources to deliver that. We give examples on our website, not only of demands to put but answers to the arguments that councils cannot do anything because of legal restrictions or the so-called threat of bankruptcy.

Councils have buildings that they can open up, not just as warm spaces but also as youth clubs, crèches, and social spaces for older people. They could house all homeless people indoors. They could give free school



breakfasts, lunches and after-school meals, not just for the 195 official days

of the school year but for all 365 days. Councils should not outsource the social responsibility of providing a safety net to the charity workers of food banks. They should fund and democratically organise food distribution through rebuilt social services departments. Councils could now begin a mass home insulation programme, not just in a few pilot

Most councils had budgeted for 3% inflation this year. The government will give an extra 5.5% to local authorities, but only if they raise council tax by the maximum allowed 5%. We will oppose such council tax rises.

With inflation of 10% or more, local authorities' finances are being hit. But councils have reserves. And in most local councils, those reserves have risen over the past three years. Councils also have borrowing powers. We'll argue that councils should refuse to implement austerity and, in the first instance, use those reserves and borrowing powers instead.

But we also recognise that borrowing and using the reserves is not a long-term solution for the needs of local communities. To restore the libraries, youth clubs, and community centres - and rehire the hundreds of thousands of essential council workers that have been axed - we need a mass campaign, like Liverpool showed in the 1980s, to force the government to fund local services fully.

Our candidates will demand central government restores the cuts in local funding of over 50% since 2010. If mobilised and coordinated, coun-

weak, Tory government

Trade union struggle is becoming not only more widespread but more popular. Just look at the 43,000 new members who've joined the National Education Union in the past few weeks. Struggle inspires other workers to get involved.

Bold measures by councils to resist austerity would also inspire and draw in local and national support, as it did for Liverpool in the mid-1980s. Since 2019, the Tory government under successive prime ministers has made 30 U-turns. A concerted and coordinated campaign by local councils could force the government

Unite the Union has an official policy for councils to set needsbased budgets, a policy that was campaigned for by TUSC supporters. We need to raise that idea in other unions as well. Keir Starmer's Labour is preparing its local election campaign by promising Tory newspapers it would keep a firm grip on public finances. Labour is presenting itself in these elections as an alternative Tory party, not an alternative to the Tory

The struggle to defend local public services and budget for the needs of local communities should be raised in every town, city, and county in the May elections. With this local election platform as the common ground between all our candidates, TUSC will play its part in building a serious challenge to austerity.

• On the TUSC website, tusc.org. uk, there is a directory of the elections and a form if you want to stand as a TUSC candidate. The final deadline for submitting applications to be a

Hundreds protest against Croydon council cuts and tax rise

SOUTH WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Outside Crovdon Town Hall on 2 March, fury was vented from about 200 demonstrators at a proposed 15% rise in council tax, by the three-times bankrupt local authority, which was : Croydon. robbed of 50% of its budget from Conservative-run central government in the last ten years, with cuts passed on by the Labour council. The Tory Westminster government gave special permission for the hike 10% higher than the 5% limit elsewhere.

On the protest, some blamed the council's attempt to enter the property market through dozens of developments around Croydon in which Labour gambled on investments, including a hotel, shopping centre and risky housing development, to repay the council's loans for their construction. A £36 million shortfall from the housing development has exacerbated the crisis, but that is only part of the story.

This is also a mess left by Labour in central and local government when they bailed out the bankers in 2008. Since, the bill was passed down through savage cuts to councils by Tory governments, implemented by councils. including Labour in

Labour, Green and Lib Dem councillors voted down the council tax proposals. But they are unlikely to ask for the return of the 50% slashed from Crovdon council's budget in ten years and Labour in office has passed on millions of pounds of yet more cuts to services. The current Tory administration put forward another £27 million of service cuts, on top of the £36 million this year.

Politicians from all the major political parties are complicit in these cuts and attacks on Croydon workers and the community. None are pre pared to stand up and fight for what's needed. We need a new mass workers' party that will

Trade unions must back fight against council cuts



NICK CHAFFEY

In a time of Tory cost-of-living crisis, council budgets are being slashed further, alongside council tax, rent and other charge increases. Having been deselected as sitting councillor for Coxford in Southampton, Barrie Margetts called on Southampton Labour council to take immediate action at the recent budget setting meeting.

"I oppose cuts to council services, increased council tax and council rents. Look at the difficulty facing people. People are broke. People are starving. It is unacceptable. We have reserves we should use. Our responsibility is now. We have to use all the powers we have so no child goes

5.7% pay increase when inflation is

"We need Labour councils standing together and saving no more, as we did with the poll tax. We need to bring back in-house all outsourced services We should run St Mary's Leisure Centre. We should bring bus services into council and make them free."

Unite the Union, which represent council workers, shares the view that councils should fight back. That councils should set "legal no-cuts budgets" became national policy in 2021. Unite should give its full back ing to Barrie's stand and call on other councillors to do the same. Unite should also call on all it

members to stand as anti-cuts candi dates in the May elections. A fighting stand would gain huge support and up the pressure on councils to take

Tories out! But what's to replace them? Prepare a workers' list for the general election



common refrain from people reading the headline 'Tories Out' that has featured on number of the recent issues of the Socialist.

There is no doubt that, for very good easons, millions of working-class people want them gone after over a decade of austerity, pandemic catasrophe and now cost-of-living hell.

But when a general election hapoens, at some point between now and December 2024 at the latest, what is the alternative? Sir Keir Starmer, by blocking Jeremy Corbyn from standing as a Labour candidate, and declaring his party is "unrecognisable from 2019", is sending a clear signal to the bosses that he is on their side - not on the side of workingclass people.

The trade unions have led the fight

for pay and funding for services with

the biggest strike wave for decades. The Socialist Party is calling on them

ions to back Corbyn to stand in the next general election.

political alternative too. We have prepared the model motion below, calling for the trade unhave been on strike in the last months Such a stand would make a huge

to lead the fight for a working-class

Our members are campaigning for the trade unions to prepare a workers' list for the next general election It could include Corbyn and other left-wing MPs barred from standing for Labour, trade union leaders themselves, and hundreds of workers that

difference, it would boost workers confidence and raise the possibility of a small group of genuine workers

MPs after the next election.

And if a union-backed workers' lis doesn't get off the ground in time, the Socialist Party is backing the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition's campaign to bring together 100 candidates to stand. Such a stand could bring together members of left-wing groups and parties including the Socialist Party, as well as individual trade unionists and campaigners. It would plant a flag and give over a million people the option to vote for a working-class alternative to Tories

Model motion to move in vour trade union

Support Jeremy Corbyn for MP

This union organisation/conference notes the announcement by Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer that Jeremy Corbyn will not be allowed to defend the Islington North seat, that he has held since 1983, as a Labour candidate at the next general

This union organisation/conference believes that:

 This is an utterly undemocratic act, removing Jeremy's right to take part in a selection contest As with Jeremy's suspension from the Parliamentary Labour

by the Labour leadership. moving the party to the right politically, proving its credentials to big business and the capitalist establishment. It follows the refusal of Starmer to support striking workers, and the sacking of Sam Tarry from the shadow cabinet for speaking up for union action from the picket line

Party, this is a political statement

 It is confirmation that, under Starmer's leadership, Labour does not represent the interests of workers and working-class communities

Therefore, workers need political representation that supports their action against the cost-of-living squeeze, and stands for policies such as renationalisation, opposition to cuts and for the repeal of the Tory antiunion laws

Therefore, this union organisation/ conference agrees to:

 Instruct the union NEC/EC/ Executive to give full support to Jeremy Corbyn, and if necessary change the rules of the union to allow the union to campaign for his re-election as the Islington North MP if he decides to stand in the next general election, including as an independent candidate

Where there are local authority elections in May 2023

 Encourage members to consider standing as anti-cuts candidates in the council elections scheduled for May. We note that there is nothing that prevents them standing as candidates, in a personal capacity, for any party which truly supports trade unionist and socialist principles

The Committee for a Workers International (CWI) is the internation socialist organisation which the Socialist

'France at a standstill' on 7 March, towards an all-out strike?

socialistparty.org.uk

Translation of a statement of Gauche : Révolutionnaire, CWI France, written by Cécile Rimboud in advance of

ince 19 January, six days of strikes and national demonstrations have brought together millions of workers, young people and pensioners in a formidable struggle against the destruction of pensions. In one month, the question of the total shutdown of the country is being posed. This lightning pace of events shows the power of the workers' movement and of mass strike action. We have the possibility to humiliate President Macron by making him withdraw his pension law.

70% of people are still against retirement at 64. Once again, Macron has tried to take us for fools by telling us that we had "not understood" the reform. Showing his contempt, it is he who has not understood the depth of the anger and frustration that drives the movement. So, the more the government expresses itself on the reform, the more the opposition grows!

It is a very political groundswell, because it carries the underlying desire to end the reign of Macron and all his dirty tricks. The movement has the pension reform as its figurehead, but it is carried by the anger against the whole system - the one that lowers wages, that destroys public services to transform them into markets. and that plunges millions of people into misery.

Record profits are piling up. To-talEnergies has made €19 billion in profits - a record. Exxon made €56 billion in 2021. Engie has made €5.2 billion in revenue. There is enough money for workers to be able to retire at 60 with 37.5 years of service based on the ten highest-earning years, and to hire everywhere where there is a need, to rebuild the hospitals, invest in education, create free public transport, and to increase wages in the face of the rising cost of living!

It is all this that must be expressed in the struggle, and which is indispensable to broaden the movement. The struggle, the strikes, the unions must translate all this into demands. In our workplaces and in our places of study, let's discuss our demands.

The unity of the unions has been a strength from the beginning. Leaders have been pushed to the left by the power of the struggle and Macron's intransigence, right up to this call, supported by six out of ten people, to :

"blockade the country" on 7 March. Left leader Mélenchon and others have also called on shopkeepers to close, on young people to strike and to come and demonstrate. The day of strikes and mobilisation is already looking huge.

How to win?

All the unions need to call very seriously for an increase in strike militancy. Thousands of workers have joined the unions since the beginning of the year, so they can be real activists rather than just members. They should call on every union delegate and representative to talk to workers, to organise workplace assemblies and meetings everywhere to discuss demands, and to convince as many people as possible to take part in the next strike. Specific demands in certain sectors of work are not contrary to the struggle coordinated together, instead, they can allow a debate involving more workers in the struggle.

From 7 March onwards, there should be picket lines everywhere, to discuss, to be visible, to generalise the strike. In Paris, pickets in sectors like education are going to take place in the form of a 'coffee table' in front of schools, an example from which we can draw inspiration: no need to only be in a factory to picket!

And the same goes for students, who are quickly repressed in the event of a police 'blockade', but can set up picket lines like filter roadblocks. It's also an opportunity to have strike funds specific to workplaces so that loss of pay is not an obstacle for anyone, especially workers on low wages. And on the demonstrations, let's march together, in identified contingents, to show our collective strength. So far the demonstrations have been really massive, especially in medium and small towns, but have been characterised by a low level of organisation, with people coming to demonstrate on their own.

Faced with an intransigent but fragile Macron, we need to move up a gear. We have to prepare ourselves for the possibility that he won't give in on 7 March. Some unions have already announced renewed strikes. For example the RATP (public transport workers in Paris) calls for a mobilisation at least on 7 and 8 March; the CGT railway workers' union for a massive movement from the 7 March onwards. This discussion must continue because strikes limited to just 24 hours have rarely won. The trade union leaderships must already say: "If the pension law is not completely withdrawn on 7 March, then it will be the beginning of a national, renewed strike". This must be openly discussed in strikers' general assemblies.

The level of organisation, discussion and demands of the strike must be increased. Here are the demands that Gauche Révolutionnaire proposes to discuss in order to build and broaden the struggle:

- Full retirement at 60, 55 when necessary, after 37.5 years of service
- An immediate increase in wages, which must at least follow the rise in prices, at least €300 immediately for all
- No net income below €1600 a month
- A massive reduction in prices and their subsequent freezing
- Quality employment for all massive resources for quality public services (health, education, public transport and so on)
- Satisfy the needs of all: expropriation of the capitalists, nationalisation under the control and management of the workers

struggle, the

strikes, the

unions must

translate

demands

all this into

An all-out, indefinite strike cannot take place on the simple demand of "withdrawal of the pension reform", even if it is necessary to obtain this withdrawal. Because the general strike is a political movement, it poses a question, which will be in the air on the 7 March - if the working class can put society on hold, why can't it lead it? A mass movement poses the question of power: who runs society and in whose interests? A general strike's movement alone won't bring all the answers to these questions.

It is also in order to be able to discuss all this that the workers need their own party, which can organise and unify our camp, to discuss a programme to really get rid of the capitalists and put an end to this exploitative society by replacing it with a democratic socialist society

Yes, we will have to get rid of Macron and all his pack in the service of the capitalists, who are a minority in society and its institutions, and replace them with a workers' government born of the struggles and organisations of the workers' movement, of worker-fighters. "Those who are never talked about and who make France run every day", as France Insoumise's MP Rachel Kéké

This government will have to remove the control of the capitalists over the economy by nationalising the main sectors such as energy, health, public transport, large-scale distribution, and so on. Democratic control and management by the workers will meet the needs of all. not just the profits of a few. Enough of capitalism and Macron-style governments, let's fight for socialism!

Come and discuss and build the struggle with us!



Renewed strikes

Shock turns to anger over horrific Greek rail crash

The pictures of incinerated carriages strewn across the tracks following a head-on train crash outside Tempi, in central Greece, will have shocked everyone who has seen them. In Greece, that shock is turning to anger. Rail unions have made clear that, thanks to enforced cuts and privatisation, such a disaster was always "an accident waiting to happen."

Read more at socialistworld.net

Nigeria general election

Read reaction and analysis from Democratic Socialist Movement (CWI members in Nigeria) at socialistnigeria.org



Enough of capitalism and Macronstyle governments,

let's fight

socialism!

'Jobs, homes and services for all' - our answer to racists in Carlisle and everywhere

BRENT KENNEDY

CARLISLE SOCIALIST PARTY AND CHAIR OF CARLISLE AGAINST RACISM

250 people opposed to asylum seekers being housed in Carlisle marched through the city on 4 March. Racists on the march verbally abused and intimidated asylum seekers housed in a hotel. Fortunately, they were politically challenged by trade unionists, socialists and others mobilised by Carlisle Against Racism.

A number of volunteer groups, who help refugees and migrants, had previously met with the police and agreed not to call a counter-protest in order to "deescalate" the situation, and not "give them the publicity they crave". As if the far right needs an excuse to express racial hatred!

Free rein

Worse still, they neither invited Carlisle Against Racism to the meeting, nor even let us know about the racist march. When we found out, they asked us and other organisations to respect their decision and stay at home. The Labour parliamentary candidate and councillors announced canvassing in another part: united will never be defeated".



of town. If it were up to all of them, the racists would have enjoyed all the TV and press publicity without answer or challenge.

The Carlisle Against Racism protest was working-class opposition under the slogan "Jobs, homes, services not racism", with chants of "Workers

The local paper reported that some people joined the march organised by the far right because of the costof-living crisis. But the most effective way to defend our living standards and public services is through trade union action.

Socialist Party members have stood on the picket lines of all striking workers. But we've never seen the far right give striking workers support not that they'd be welcome.

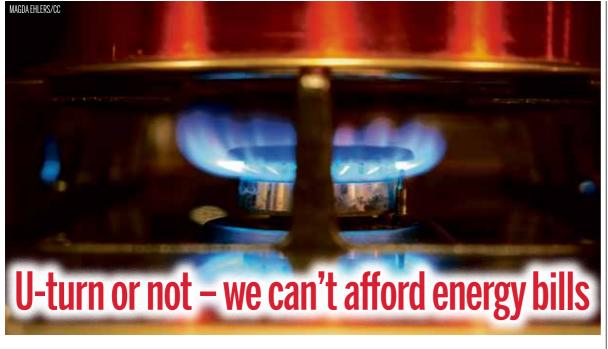
Both local people and refugees are not being housed properly. That's why the Socialist Party fought the bedroom tax. Why we called on the council to requisition empty houses when residents were flooded out.

The government is faced with a working class increasingly united in this strike wave and a mood of solidarity. So the unpopular Tories have a conscious strategy of whipping up racism, and other prejudices against minorities, to shore up their support - diverting attention away from the economic and social mess they have

Labour is ducking these issues, or even demanding more deportations. Imagine if Carlisle's previous Labour council had done what the Socialist Party demanded - build council homes and refuse to implement the bedroom tax. Instead, when in power locally and nationally, both Labour and the Tories have refused to build the council homes that people need.

By failing to offer a political alternative, Labour has opened up a political vacuum for the far right to

A new mass workers' party – fighting for housing, services and better living standards would undermine the far right's ability to find an audience for their dangerous ideas.



LINDSEY MORGAN

SOCIALIST PARTY AND UNITE MEMBER

It's likely that the Tory government will U-turn on its proposal to lift the energy price cap from £2,500 to

With falling wholesale energy prices, record profits for the energy companies, and tumbling support for the government, the Tories are weighing up whether they can get away with another rise.

Not raising the cap is a relief to working-class people. But it still doesn't help those who are already having to choose between a damp and mouldy, cold home or going without meals.

While the £400 discount towards

energy bills was nowhere near enough to protect people from fuel poverty, it provided some cushioning from the extortion. But the government will still scrap it when it ends

Budget for billionaires

On 15 March, the Tories will announce their budget. As always, it will be a budget for the billionaires. The Tories are attempting to stave off rising workers' struggle, at the same time as keeping their super-rich donors happy.

Labour has promised to save the average household £200 a year on energy bills. But bills have shot up £1,200 in the last year!

forward any meaningful proposals, because its main goal is showing the capitalist establishment that it is a safe pair of hands for them.

The Socialist Party argues for the immediate nationalisation of the energy companies, under the democratic control and management of working-class people - the only way to effectively control gas and electricity prices. We can't control what we don't own.

We could plan resources and production. We would be able to ensure a transition to green energy without workers losing jobs.

And we wouldn't give a penny of compensation to the fat cats, whose bank accounts have grown fat on the Labour is incapable of putting: back of our suffering and exploitation.

Capitalist profiteering means high food prices and empty shelves

DAVE CARR

NEWHAM AND EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Restricted food supplies and everrising food prices in the UK have been blamed on adverse weather conditions due to climate change; war in Ukraine leading to price hikes; global supply chain disruption; labour shortages and disadvantageous Tory-negotiated trade deals.

Underpinning all of these factors is the anarchic capitalist system which has wrecked the global environment and pitted nation against nation, creating a dog-eat-dog, profit-driven dystopia. Consequently, billions worldwide live in food insecurity and are experiencing a cost-ofliving crisis not seen in a generation.

But while UK shoppers search empty supermarket shelves, environment secretary Thérèse Coffey has come up with a simple solution - 'eat turnips' instead! This modern-day equivalent of the famous quote "Let them eat cake" is the kind of out-oftouch idiocy which will help hasten the end of the toxic Tory government.

At the recent National Farmers' Union (NFU) conference - once a bedrock of Tory support - delegates booed Coffey after she airily dismissed the current fruit and vegetable shortages as 'beyond the control' of the Tory government.

One year ago, Minette Batters,



NFU president, derided the government's "total lack of understanding of how food production works", its "completely contradictory policies" on farming, and the likelihood of "repeatedly running into crises", due to the absence of a food production

A food production plan - produced by non-exploited labour, that guarantees plentiful, wholesome, affordable food, while protecting the land against environmental degradation cannot be provided under either 'protectionist' or 'free trade' models of the capitalist system.

Ending food insecurity and price volatility means fighting for workers' governments here and internationally, and the implementation of a democratically agreed and organised socialist plan of production.

- Go to socialistparty.org.uk to
- 'Food and a capitalist Brexit: No trust in Tory deals!'
- 'Capitalist profiteering and competition - why are shelves



formerly Militan **Issue 1217** 9-15 March 2023



HOLLY JOHNSTON

NURSE AND GMB UNION REP

e know the government could invest properly in health, but over the last decade and more, we've seen it doesn't have the political will to do so. Instead it turns to private-sector providers which have failed the NHS time and time again.

Government policies and the crisis of capitalism have led to growing levels of inequality which have exacerbated the crisis in the NHS. We need emergency funds to make up for the annual deficit of £35 billion. We need to invest in a fully, publicly owned NHS that guarantees free healthcare for future generations. And we need to pay all workers properly in order to recruit and retain staff.

Part of the fight for the future of the NHS is led by striking NHS staff. We fight for fair pay after years of real-terms pay cuts, but we also strike for the future of the NHS as a whole. At present the health union leaders have paused strikes to enter talks on pay - a pre-condition set by the Tories. There will be discussions around 'productivity savings' and 'efficiencies' which do not fill staff with confidence. We say any offers must be put to members to vote on whether to accept or reject.

It is likely that the government will play one group of workers against the next, nurses may be offered something different and so on. Although we don't know the details of any offers as yet, staff are beginning to feel that there are attempts to divide the NHS workforce. It's vital we stick together and that unions push for a deal that respects the current 'Agenda for Change' pay scale so all our NHS colleagues are included and no one gets left behind.

Health unions have said strikes:

will return with a vengeance should : the talks break down. The worry is that the government will delay talks and push through new anti-trade union laws in the meantime - the Strike (Minimum Service Levels) Bill which, if passed, would allow the secretary of state to make regulations setting out the minimum service required in certain sectors during strikes. Unions and workers would be expected to comply with these or face losing protections from being sued or dismissed.

NHS staff, supporters, patients and the public are marching on the 11 March in the 'SOS NHS' national

demonstration. We want to show the government that people are defending the NHS, that we won't back down, and we stand by NHS staff forced to take action. The NHS and its staff have mass public support despite the attempts by the Tories to turn people against them. We need a 24-hour general strike, coordinated with all workers fighting on pay, and a new mass workers' party to fight Tory and Labour attempts to destroy our NHS.

See 'The Fight for our NHS new wave of struggle faces new phase of crisis' on pages 8-9

