

£1 / £2 solidarity price

socialistparty.org.uk



# the Socialist

Issue 1222

13-19 April 2023

formerly **Militant**

# NO ONE TO BE COLD, HUNGRY OR HOMELESS

## Socialist policies to beat cost-of-living crisis

- We need a new workers' party
- Vote TUSC on 4 May

**N**o one to be cold, no one to be hungry, no one to be homeless. This should be a basic expectation in the world's sixth-richest country, in the 21st Century.

Instead, rising prices plunge growing numbers into poverty, onto the streets and into food bank queues. Meanwhile, big bosses and major shareholders rake in obscene profits and gluttonous dividends.

On the bosses' side, the age-old Tory party captained by rich-list Rishi. And sat on the bench ready to come on, Sir Keir Starmer's Labour Party, "unrecognisable from 2019", when under Jeremy Corbyn it stood for building council housing, free university education and an end to austerity.

Taking to the pitch in the mighty strike wave, working-class people have refused to give up the fight to maintain our living standards - standing firm for fully funded inflation-proof pay rises, but without a mass political party behind us.

Having already received bumper energy bills, water bills, rents, and supermarket receipts, households will also be receiving record-high council tax bills. We are being asked to pay even more for even less, again.

Through over a decade of cutbacks, councils led by any combination of Tories, Lib Dems, Labour and Greens have carried out austerity. Founded by and still receiving funding from the trade union movement, the Labour Party, where it leads councils, has taken the axe to jobs and services.

We need councillors prepared to fight for no one to be cold, hungry or homeless. That's why Socialist Party members are among 260 standing for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in local elections on 4 May. All TUSC candidates pledge to vote against cuts. Socialist Party members are fighting everywhere for councils to set no-cuts budgets to meet people's needs, mobilising the trade unions and local communities in mass campaigns to demand the money from central government.

We need a new mass workers' party that is prepared to back workers striking for a real-terms, inflation-proof pay rise, and to defend services. That party needs to be armed with a fighting socialist programme to take the on the super-rich - nationalising the banks and big industry under democratic workers' control. Then, rather than being run to maximize the profits of the rich, the economy can be planned to provide warmth, food and a home - a decent standard of living for all.

● More on the TUSC election challenge p2-3

● Visit [tusc.org.uk](http://tusc.org.uk) for a full list of candidates

UNISON ELECTIONS - ELECT A FIGHTING LEADERSHIP >>> p7

UKRAINE WAR HEADS TOWARDS NEW, BLOODY PHASE >>> p8-9

WILL THE 'WINDSOR FRAMEWORK' RESOLVE TENSIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND? >>> p14-15



the Socialist

formerly Militant

Issue 1222  
13-19 April 2023

DO YOU HAVE NEWS FOR US?

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

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

CONTACT US

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

DEADLINES

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

The Socialist goes to press on a Tuesday night. We publish online on Wednesday and in print on Thursday.

SUBSCRIBE

to the Socialist for weekly working-class news, analysis and fighting strategy

- socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe
Paper subscription £4.50 a month, or £6.50 including Socialism Today
E-subscription £2.50 a month, or £4 including Socialism Today

SOCIALISM TODAY

our monthly Marxist magazine
socialismtoday.org
Paper sub £3 a month, e-sub £2.50

SOCIALISM: THE PODCAST

on all major podcast platforms

FOLLOW US

facebook.com/CWISocialistParty
Instagram @SocialistPartyCWI
YouTube - Socialist Party
Twitter @Socialist\_Party

SOCIALIST PARTY

The Socialist is the weekly newspaper of the Socialist Party, the England and Wales section of the Committee for a Workers' International

socialistparty.org.uk
socialistworld.net

BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS

Socialist Books: our publishing house
socialistbooks.co.uk
Left Books: Marxist classics bookshop
leftbooks.co.uk

OUR NEWSPAPER TEAM

Editor of the Socialist: Josh Asker
Editorial staff: Scott Jones, Ian Pattison, Paula Mitchell, Mark Best
Circulation manager: Chris Newby

ISSN 1366-9621

Published by Socialist Publications, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT
Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office
Printed by trade union labour at Reach Printing Services

Militant issue 1: October 1964
The Socialist issue 1: 7 February 1997

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

FIGHT BACK AGAINST COUNCIL CUTS

Workers and young people in 260 local election contests, and every elector in Leicester and Mansfield where Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates are standing for mayor, will have a chance to vote for a 100% anti-austerity socialist candidate on 4 May.

All TUSC candidates pledge to refuse to implement Tory cuts in the council chambers, to use their powers to set no-cuts needs budgets, and build mass campaigns to win back the resources taken from communities by over a decade of austerity.

Find the TUSC core polices and the full list of TUSC candidates at www.tusc.org.uk. See if you can vote for one of the 260 candidates, and find a local election challenge which you can help take part in.



PHOTO: WALES SP

Young people need an alternative to cuts-making Labour

NOAH EDEN
SHEFFIELD TUSC CANDIDATE AND SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Young people have suffered from over a decade of Tory austerity. The Tories are hated by many young people. But who can we rely on to represent working-class and young people and fight for us in the council chambers?

Keir Starmer is making the Labour Party a safe space for the bosses, and Labour councils up and down the country continue the Tories' dirty work locally by carrying out cuts to public services and raising council tax. This is exacerbating the cost-of-living crisis workers already face.

Green, have spent over a decade cutting local services, refusing to use their financial powers to resist cuts and fight for the resources local people need.

Our society is suffering, made worse by the loss of children and young people's services. Permanent, high-quality council housing is almost non-existent while the Tories try to blame the housing crisis on refugees fleeing gruesome conditions and wars.

The current parties at Westminster are destroying our livelihoods and our planet. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition is prepared to stand up for what I believe in, treating all people fairly. I want to see a socialist society that meets the needs of humanity and protects the planet for the future.

Standing for the local council as a socialist candidate is my way of trying to catalyse change.

We have to start somewhere!



Southampton TUSC

of cuts to the social care budget for next year.

Young people can, however, rely on Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates to fight for their interests if elected. Jeremy Corbyn inspired millions of students and young workers with the anti-austerity policies in his 2019 manifesto. Keir Starmer is doing all he can to remove any trace of Corbynism left in the party, including blocking Corbyn from standing as a Labour MP.

Councils could immediately implement many of the policies in Corbyn's manifesto. They could reinstate grant money to help students at school and college, previously called Education Maintenance Allowance, and extend free school meals to all. Councils could start good-quality, affordable, mass council house building programmes, capping rents for all including student housing.

If elected, TUSC candidates pledge to refuse to implement the cuts and commit to help to build mass campaigns involving unions, community campaigns and residents to win back the resources stolen from our communities. On this basis we could invest in transport, leisure and cultural spaces to provide young people with decent jobs and a decent place to live.

On 4 May, vote for a socialist alternative, vote TUSC!

FIGHT FOR A SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE VOTE TUSC ON 4 MAY



Leicester TUSC mayoral mailing

An anti-austerity choice in the Leicester Mayoral election

STEVE SCORE
LEICESTER MAYOR TRADE UNIONIST AND SOCIALIST COALITION (TUSC) CANDIDATE AND SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

"What's the point of Labour if it's going to be the same as the Tories?" was just one comment we got while out campaigning in the local elections in Leicester.

One current ex-Labour councillor and two past Labour councillors are among TUSC candidates in Leicester, standing in nine wards and for the city mayoral seat. All the candidates are local campaigners, including in the recent campaign by residents against a massive hike in the district heating charges imposed by the council.

In a city that after the last local elections in 2019 had 53 Labour councillors out of 54 seats, Labour is now in turmoil. 19 Labour councillors were removed days before the election campaign began by a panel appointed by the Labour Party nationally. Others had already left the Labour Party.

Our candidates have a record of fighting. Two of them, Wayne Naylor

Party under Keir Starmer to make it acceptable to big business. Any councillors who disagreed with the city mayoral system or were in any way opposed to the cuts were turfed out. One of those, Ruma Ali, is now standing for TUSC. Other ex-Labour councillors are standing as independents, one as a Green.

Anger at heating charge hike

The 108% minimum jump in district heating charges was actually a climb down by the council since their original plan was to more than quadruple it! It was only a massive campaign involving residents that won the concession. But it is an indication of the callous disregard for working-class people that the City Mayor and council have.

They have enthusiastically passed on the government's cuts, spending on council services has been reduced by around £60 million over the last seven years, slashing youth and community services, welfare rights, homeless provision and more.

Our candidates have a record of fighting. Two of them, Wayne Naylor

and Barbara Potter, then TUSC councillors, put an anti-cuts amendment to the city council budget in 2015 having previously called a local conference to discuss a 'people's budget'.

The mayoral system has become a major issue. All the mayoral candidates bar the Labour City Mayor himself say they would either end the mayoral system or organise a referendum on it. But it is only the Socialist Party and TUSC which has consistently opposed it from the start and pledged to abolish it every time we stood. We pointed out that the usurping of a committee based, more accountable council system made it harder to push the council to listen to local working-class people.

TUSC in Leicester is proposing to use the more than £200 million available in reserves to reverse cuts and allow time to build a mass campaign to force the money we need for the Tories. Beyond the elections we hope to build on an anti-cuts alliance that is now being forged, with some independent candidates approaching TUSC even after the election began.

Why I am standing in Reading

MELANIE DENT
READING TUSC CANDIDATE AND SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

I live in a working-class area of Reading in the Redlands council ward and am also a Reading Borough Council tenant.

Every day I see people struggling against the cost-of-living crisis which sees working-class people pay for the greed of the 1%. I myself have had occasions when I have had to choose between two essential items while grocery shopping simply because I cannot afford both. I have seen people having to leave their shopping behind because they can't afford it. I hear people on the bus and in the street despairing about how they will find the money for item X or bill Y.

This is absolutely disgusting in the sixth-richest country in the world. Of course there is always money to bail



Melanie campaigning in Reading

out the banks or fund the latest Tory vanity project, but not enough to give NHS staff, who brought us through the pandemic, a much deserved inflation-proof pay rise.

That is why I am standing in Redlands, to show ordinary people that we can fight back and say no to cuts and austerity.

May Day Greetings from the picket lines

LLUIS BERTOLIN
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

The recent University and College Union (UCU) strike at the University of Birmingham gave me an excellent opportunity to dip my toes into collecting donations for a May Day greeting in the Socialist.

I was genuinely surprised at the ease with which the collection of donations went. I would encourage anyone who has been active in their trade union branch (or any socialist or left-wing organisation) for the past year to consider asking around to raise money for a May Day greeting, you might even be surprised at who says "yes"! Collecting donations for a May Day greeting, or arguing a motion on making the donation through the official channels, is not only a boon for the good health of the Socialist newspaper, but also reiterates why producing and selling the Socialist as wide as possible is important.

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

Final deadline 17 April email scottjones@socialistparty.org.uk or visit socialistparty.org.uk/mayday





BMA doctors on strike

# Gender pay gap is getting worse

KATRINE WILLIAMS  
CARDIFF WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

Eight out of ten employers pay less to women workers. That's even more than when mandatory gender pay gap reporting started in 2017, showing that we cannot rely on employers to address discrimination and pay problems.

### Working for nothing

Women workers get the worst deal in the banking and insurance industry. The pay gap is so huge in this sector – over 31% – that it is the equivalent of women working for nothing until 23 April each year. The banking and finance pay gap is made worse by large numbers of women workers in the lowest-paid roles, while men occupy the vast majority of highly paid senior management positions.

Work traditionally seen as jobs for women is undervalued and underpaid. Bosses lean on this to hold down wages and boost profits. While attitudes have substantially changed, caring responsibilities still overwhelmingly fall on women.

The lowest-paid worker is usually the one in the household to

cut their hours. So 40% of women workers are part-time. The slashing of our public services has only made it even more difficult to juggle work and home responsibilities. Employers capitalise on the need for workers to get part-time working and keep pay down.

### Strike wave

All of this means that women workers have even more to fight for. Trade union militancy has been rising, including in sectors with large numbers of women workers. Health, education and civil service workers have been taking strike action as the cost of living bites.

The whole working class can unite around immediate demands for improved jobs, pay and services, by fighting for inflation-proof pay rises, cutting the working week without loss of pay, free good-quality flexible childcare, and fully resourcing all our public services to meet needs.

To end low pay and the gender pay gap for good, we have to get rid of the whole capitalist system that drives division on pay, and discriminates and oppresses women, and fight for a socialist alternative.



JUDY BEISHON

# Tory cuts have worsened crime

ELLEN KENYON-PEERS  
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

Anti-social behaviour rose by nearly 30% between 2015 and 2020. But Tory prime minister Rishi Sunak's new 'crime plan' fails to deal with the real causes, which have been worsened by a decade of Tory austerity.

Real-terms cuts to youth services since 2010 have now reached an appalling 74%. The annual spend per head on 5-17 year olds has been slashed from £158 to just £37.

Almost half of youth centres have closed in the last decade. And no work has been done to restore the 4,500 youth work jobs that were cut during the pandemic.

The UK has a housing deficit of 4.3 million homes. This pushes many more people into crowded and unsafe living conditions and, in an increasing number of cases, homelessness. Over 20% of the homeless population are children.

The government's new crime plan

includes a proposal to criminalise rough sleeping, and more measures to curb 'nuisance begging' – just more attacks on society's most vulnerable. It's all a distraction from poverty, the fundamental cause and propagator of crime. 52% more crimes are recorded in the most deprived areas.

### Landlords

In their 'beating crime plan' the Tories have shoehorned in a reward for parasitic landlords. They'll be able to evict tenants who are just two weeks late on their rent or deemed 'antisocial'.

More young people than ever before are trying to access mental health services. The proportion of 6 to 16-year-olds diagnosed with a mental health condition has risen to one in six, a 60% increase since 2017.

Increased awareness of mental health alone cannot account for this uptick. A recent survey by the National Education Union (NEU) revealed a lack of access to services is putting

teaching staff under huge pressure. 92% said their school has either not enough or no access to mental health provision. That report also found that one of the largest contributors to worsening health and wellbeing was the economic crisis.

When combined with the prevalence of zero-hour contracts, and a sharp decline in the growth of service and entertainment industries – typical areas of employment for young people – it has resulted in a trifecta of trouble for youth. Fewer opportunities, more precarious living situations, and no safe spaces for respite.

Rishi Sunak won't tackle these problems. And Keir Starmer is trying to copy the Tories by pretending to be 'tough on crime', writing in the right-wing Daily Mail, while Labour councils cut the services we rely on.

Instead, we need fully funded youth services, rent control, mass building of safe and secure council housing, jobs and the minimum wage raised to £15 per hour to give everyone the future we deserve.

# Privatisation and profit combine to pollute our waterways

DAVE CARR  
NEWHAM AND EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Faced with setbacks in upcoming council elections and losing the next general election, Rishi Sunak's government has embarked on announcing a series of populist policies aimed at shoring up the Tories' dwindling support.

Its latest offering is imposing 'unlimited fines' on the polluting, privately owned water utilities for illegally discharging untreated sewage into our waterways.

This is a partial U-turn by the government. In its 2021 Environment Act, it refused to make it illegal to dump sewage in rivers. Instead, it called on water companies to "secure a progressive reduction in the adverse harm" caused by sewage dumps.

The current number of discharges

beggars belief – an average of 824 a day. These discharges also contain microplastics, persistent chemicals and antimicrobial-resistant pathogens.

### Legal dumping

However, even under the new 'tougher' government proposals, water companies will still be able to legally dump untreated sewage in 'exceptional weather circumstances'.

While sewage and wastewater dumping from water companies accounts for 36% of waterway pollution, another 40% comes from agricultural pollution, mainly slurry from mega-farms. Tory environment secretary Thérèse Coffey has ignored this aspect of pollution.

The current system of fines levied by the Environment Agency – £144 million in the last seven years – has clearly had zero effect on

preventing dumping. And the government won't enforce companies to invest in water treatment infrastructure to prevent discharges in the first place.

The fines pale beside the £2 billion profits made by the water companies each year since the industry was privatised 30 years ago.

Labour's Keir Starmer has criticised the Tory plan as being "flimsy". But he refuses to countenance the one measure that can make a real difference to the quality of our waterways – nationalisation!

Only by removing the profit motive from the industry would it then be possible to direct resources solely to protecting the environment and public health.

• Further reading see 'Britain's waterways choked with a 'chemical cocktail' on socialistparty.org.uk



NEU teachers in Yorkshire on strike for a fully funded pay rise this year JAIN DALTON

# Everything is rising faster than our pay

SEAN DEVLIN  
JOB CENTRE WORKER AND PCS MEMBER

You would be forgiven for thinking the Tories' March budget was full of so many good things. Everything was going to rise – your pensions, benefits, emergency cost-of-living payments, even corporation tax and income tax for the wealthy.

Both the state pension and Universal Credit were increased by 10.1%. This was based on the CPI measure of inflation in September 2022.

### 14% inflation

But the government used the lower measure of inflation, rather than using the higher, and more realistic, RPI inflation. At the time, RPI was close to 14%. Even now, RPI price rises have been 11.1% in the year to March 2023 – above the pension and benefit increase.

For those in work aged over 23, the National Living Wage rose 9.6% on

1 April, from £9.50 to £10.42. Again, this too falls shy of the current rate of inflation.

Whether in receipt of benefits, retired or working, working-class people are becoming worse off, despite the grandiose rhetoric from the Tory government that is spending 'more' under threat of a generalised revolt by workers.

Average public sector wage rises have not exceeded 5%. In the private sector, its slightly higher – 7%.

But this is distorted by a small number of super-rich people soaking up bigger increases. Chief exec pay at Britain's 100 richest companies rose 23% in 2022.

Compare this to price rises that the government could have limited. The energy price cap rose by 20% on 1 April to £3,000. The average council tax rise is 5.1%. Average rail fares rose by 5.9% in March, with rises often falling hardest on busy commuter routes. Real wages have kept up with none of these.

To add insult to injury, Tory chancellor Jeremy Hunt has frozen the income tax allowance. This means that workers, who win pay rises through determined strike action, will now pay more tax than they would have.

Hunt and his Tory compatriots have bemoaned the impact on inflation of pay rises. Such parsimony is always selective.

### Profits

Figures from Unite the Union show that average profits amongst the top 350 UK companies have rocketed by 89% since 2019. The 'big 3' supermarkets, the 'big 4' agribusinesses and the 'big 4' UK energy providers have profits over \$100 billion in this period.

On this, there is hardly a whisper from Hunt. There are some rises he'd rather we didn't pay attention to!

That's why the Socialist Party supports the strike wave, so workers can win fully funded inflation-proof pay rises, as well as pensions and benefits that rise with the cost of living.

# Social care – Tories force some into early grave

GLYNN DOHERTY  
SOCIAL CARE TRADE UNION ORGANISER

The state of social care in Britain is appalling. So what does the Tory government do? It halves the promised extra funding for the desperately needed social care workforce.

The Tories are facing criticism from social care providers, users and trade unions. In response, the government claim that they "have made good progress on implementing [the People at the Heart of Care white paper], including by boosting workforce capacity, digitisation, improving oversight and enhancing the use of data." Gobbledegook!

Over half the social care workforce will, this month, receive a pay rise. They have to, or their wages would be illegally below the minimum wage!

That rise will do nothing to stem the exodus from the sector. Staff have had enough, and are walking away from the job.

The only possible outcome from halving what was woefully inadequate extra funding in the first place will be deaths. It can't be sugarcoated. The Tories are pushing some of

the most 'at risk' people into an early grave.

The inevitable further decline in the amount of support and care provided to older people will pile more pressure on families and carers, and leave the NHS in constant crisis mode. At the start of this year, a record number of those well enough to leave hospital – over 14,000 – were still in a hospital bed. Around 13,000 people still find themselves in that position.

### THE SOCIALIST PARTY CALLS FOR:

• National and local government to invest resources directly into the provision of social care, not to big businesses who milk the system for private profit. Social care should be in public hands

• An organising campaign to unionise social care workers, with pay claims submitted to every employer. These should include an immediate £15-an-hour minimum wage for social care staff, with no age exemptions

• Turn to page 6 to read about the South Gloucestershire social care strike

165,000

social care jobs are vacant, with a staff turnover rate of 30%

12%

of people over 50 have unmet social care needs

550

deaths a week of over-65s whose requests for social care have not been met

1/3

of care homes across England have considered closing during the past year, because of financially crippling running costs

42%

of providers have had to partly close down, or hand contracts back to local authorities to cut costs

1 in 7

people in Britain are satisfied with social care services

# Jobs, homes and services for all, not Tory barges

KATIE SIMPSON  
NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

The Tories plan to house 500 people who come to the UK illegally on a barge in a Dorset port. The barge is deliberately unpleasant to 'deter' migrants from coming here. But the Tories ignore the real reason people flee their homes in dangerous parts of the world – war, economic instability and incredible poverty.

Fighting for public services for those fleeing war, terror and poverty, as well as people already living here, is an important start to tackling this division. However, both Labour and Tory councils have cut the services we rely on.

• Read 'Build a working-class political alternative for jobs and homes not racism' at socialistparty.org.uk

hateful racist organisations. Socialist Party members have helped mobilise the local community to oppose the far right on this issue in Kirkby, Carlisle, Newquay and Mansfield by campaigning for 'jobs, homes, and services for all' (see 'Far-right attack Kirkby migrant hotel' at socialistparty.org.uk).

The Tories have no plans for extra money for Dorset's already stretched and underfunded services. The barge is on top of the government's current arrangement – asylum seekers living in hotels.

Due to the Tories' divisive rhetoric, these hotels have become targets of



# PCS elections: Time for change

KATRINE WILLIAMS  
PCS MEMBER

Ballot papers for the 2023 PCS civil and public services union president and national executive elections will be posted out to members on 20 April. The closing date is 11 May. There are also separate online group elections, which open on 27 April and close 16 May

Socialist Party members in the union are campaigning for the joint slate of Broad Left Network (BLN) and Independent Left candidates. These two groups have joined forces to contest the elections on an agreed commitment to:

- support the strikes currently taking place on pay and jobs
- develop and build a serious escalating programme of national, targeted and selective strike action to beat the cost-of-living squeeze and anti-union laws
- ballot for action short of strikes
- ensure that PCS takes the lead in calling for coordinated action
- campaign for a 'yes' vote in the rebalot
- strengthen democracy and accountability in the union, including extending elections to full-time officers and bringing their pay more into line with the members they represent

### Broad Left Network

The BLN is a rank-and-file socialist group in which Socialist Party members are active. Its demands include:

- 100,000 new civil service jobs
- Oppose office closures, no redundancies, increase investment in local communities
- Better flexible working arrangements, not used to cut office space, close offices and cut services
- End privatisation. Return outsourced work to the public sector; protect all jobs, pay and conditions
- PCS should lead a campaign against the Tories' further anti-union legislation

- Tories out! We need a strong political voice. Support candidates who are anti-austerity and support the interests of our members and our policies. Corbyn stands with us and we would support him standing independently
- Reject all attempts to divide us on the basis of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age and all other oppression
- Climate change: campaign for public ownership and democratic control of energy and the big polluters, and tax justice to fund investment in renewables. A socialist just transition on jobs

### Challenge

It's time for change. The current leadership is not up to the challenge of the fightback that is needed on pay and the many other problems facing members.

In 2020, the leadership signed up to 'national unity' during Covid by 'parking' the PCS pay claim. BLN members campaigned for a serious national fight on pay. In 2022, having secured a statutory strike mandate on 7 November, they waited six weeks before taking any action at all, in the form of small-scale targeted strikes, and only called three one-day national strikes in six months. Their strategy has failed to move the government.

We urge full support for the joint Broad Left Network and Independent Left slate of candidates.

Vote **Marion Lloyd** for PCS president. The full set of NEC candidates can be seen here:



# South Gloucestershire adult social care strike



On the picket line ROBERT THOMAS

DAN SMART  
BRANCH SECRETARY, SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE  
UNISON (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Social workers and occupational therapists (OTs) at South Gloucestershire Council took groundbreaking strike action from 4 - 6 April. Around 60 Unison members in adult social care walked off the job for three days, taking a stand on pay inequalities.

I was one of the striking staff, as a social worker and union rep. For the vast majority of us, including myself, this is the first time we have ever taken strike action. Despite some initial anxieties, the turnout and enthusiasm on the picket lines has been inspiring.

Children's social workers were recently given £3,000 yearly retention payments, and £3,000 welcome bonuses, due to the staffing crisis. But workers with adults received nothing. This inequality was the last straw for these workers, who have exactly the same qualifications and also face

major staff shortages. 94% voted in favour of striking.

On our first morning of pickets, large numbers turned out, getting stuck in. Members engaged in lively discussions, and at several points cars were queuing back to the nearby roundabout while strikers debated with those staff going in to work.

This momentum continued into the second and third day, with a very well-attended strike rally. I was moved by the growing confidence of staff to speak up about the pressures they face. One of our reps pointed out how people are getting trained-up in the council only to move to agency work afterwards, where they can receive up to three or four times the pay with less stress.

Shockingly, the average length of service for OTs in the council is one year! Resources should urgently be invested in permanent staff, with a focus on long-term retention not short-term sticking plasters.

Over the course of this dispute, Unison's strength in the department has grown exponentially. We now have four reps, from none two years ago, and have numerous other developing activists. Collective organising and strike action get results.

We are continuing negotiations this week and will fight tooth and nail to get the equality we deserve.

We will take further days of strike action if that is needed. Members have already indicated they would be in support of this, and have been buoyed by the solidarity over the strike week, bringing us all closer together.

This dispute has started to get an echo among social workers and OTs beyond South Gloucestershire, and many will be thinking that they ought to be doing the same thing. It's about time we got organised, advocating for ourselves and service users amidst cuts, the cost-of-living crisis and pay injustice.

# Unison members at Surrey County Council vote overwhelmingly to reject pay offer

PAUL COUCHMAN  
UNISON BRANCH SECRETARY AND LEAD  
NEGOTIATOR (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Unison has entered into a formal dispute with Surrey County Council after 87% of staff represented by the union voted to reject the council's 2023-24 pay offer. The council has offered a 5% average increase, meaning the lowest paid will receive around £1,300-£1,500 cash equivalent, and the directors between £8,000 and £10,000 per year.

We represent care workers, social workers, teaching assistants, librarians, trading standards, and many more at the council, and our

members have signalled to Surrey County that we will move to a formal ballot for industrial action if an improved pay offer is not forthcoming.

Our next step is to hold a demonstration outside the next meeting of the council's People, Performance, and Development Committee (PPDC), taking place on 2 May. I will be attending that meeting with members from our pay team, and workers will lobby outside calling for a significantly improved pay offer.

After years of below-inflation pay increases and the cost of living rising by well over 10% in the last year, staff are struggling to make ends meet. Many are skipping meals or using

food banks to get by. With many bills set to rise further this month, the strength of feeling on this issue is clear.

The ball is now firmly in Surrey County Council's court and the clock is ticking. They can avoid disruptive industrial action, but councillors need to get serious. Otherwise be in no doubt - we will be balloting for strike action. We refuse to be left behind!

*Surrey Unison negotiates separately from the national negotiations, Surrey County Council being one of several South East councils that left the national negotiating body.*



Surrey Unison PAUL COUCHMAN

# Unison elections Vote for a leadership prepared to organise action to beat the cost-of-living crisis

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN UNISON

The elections for Unison's National Executive Council (NEC), which run from 17 April to 19 May, come at a time when members continue to find themselves casualties of the cost-of-living crisis, piled on top of decades of low pay and underfunding for the public sector. Many workers are facing crisis point in terms of staff shortages and burnout from excessive workloads.

Now more than ever they need a leadership which is prepared to go to the end for the members, and not crumble in the face of attacks from the employers, nor support deals that leave members poorer.

Two years ago, Unison members voted out the old right-wing NEC, and a new left-leaning NEC was elected, including four Socialist Party members, with the Time for the Real Change (TFRC) grouping in a majority.

Unison members have been part of the national strike wave, taking action in higher education and the Environment Agency, for example. For the first time in years there has been strike action by Unison members in the NHS, in ambulances and some hospital trusts.

### Reject the NHS pay offer

Unison members in the NHS have shown a determination to fight that has forced the weak Tory government to the table and to improve the pay offer. More could be won. Socialist Party members on Unison's Health Service Group Executive (SGE) argued to campaign for the offer to be rejected.

But the health SGE is still dominated by the old right wing, supporters of general secretary Christina McAnea, and it narrowly voted through a recommendation to accept, with a sizable minority voting against - 20-15. Now full-time officers are spending more time and energy trying to secure an 'accept' vote than they did in winning the ballot in the first place. Meanwhile, many health workers are rightly angry and are organising to campaign across the health unions for 'reject'.

While the NEC doesn't have direct control over pay negotiations, nonetheless they have a duty to come out and give a clear lead, and to seek to bring together the unions in a coordinated fight.

### The right want to win back control

These elections will be fiercely fought, as the Starmerite right wing, led by Christina McAnea, is desperate to wrestle back control of the union. What has happened in health

is an indication of the direction the leadership would go in, if the right wing were to win back control of the NEC.

There is no doubt that should the right wing win back control they would revert to all their old witch-hunting methods, clamping down on democracy, to try to ensure that never again could they lose control.

It is therefore vital that the left not only maintains the leadership, but develops a clear strategy to fight low pay, cuts and privatisation, if members are to see the real difference a left, fighting leadership can make.

### Local government pay

A ballot for action will begin in local government in May, demanding inflation plus 2%. The inadequate Tory-backed employers' offer of a flat-rate £1,925 is the same offer as last year. Last year Unison's leadership did not mount a campaign and consequently in a consultation the offer was accepted by members - although Socialist Party members on the union's NEC and local government SGE both argued for a campaign, and showed on the ground that when a lead was given and a campaign was waged, Unison members would vote for action, just the same as union members were doing across the public sector.

Now the massive strike action in the public sector, including in schools, has both given confidence to Unison members and applied pressure to the leaders, who have now moved to a statutory ballot.

If this ballot is successful, it will bring hundreds of thousands more workers into action and would be another big step up in the strike wave.

### Unity and coordination

It would also underline how essential it is to strive for maximum unity across trade unions organised in the same sectors. The right-wing health representatives on the NEC and in the health SGE preferred to follow a sectarian policy during the health dispute, almost under the banner of 'the workers disunited will never be defeated!' They called individual union days of action and refused to coordinate, even with the Budget Day strikes, which Socialist Party NEC members called for.

As the largest local government union, Unison could spearhead a united pay campaign with Unite and GMB, and especially in schools, where huge numbers of teachers have participated in national action. Support staff organised by the National Education Union (NEU) demonstrated their willingness to fight alongside teachers in a strike ballot which only narrowly missed the Tory turnout threshold. The rebalot of support staff by the NEU now raises

the possibility of huge, united organisation and action in schools.

That is why, when Unison's general secretary complained to the TUC, and attempted to organise a programme of non-cooperation, over the NEU's campaign for strike action among its support staff members, which has resulted in a £200,000 fine being levied on the NEU by the TUC, Socialist Party Unison NEC members argued against this action, and for maximum unity between trade unions instead of division (see 'Unison and NEU: For maximum unity not division' at socialistparty.org.uk).

Unfortunately, in the last two years the TFRC leadership has not always shown itself capable of mounting a fight against the right wing and for the members, and instead has mistakenly covered over differences with talk of 'unity'. Yes, unity is strength, but only if it is unity in fighting in the interests of members. Their approach to the Paul Holmes issue, not being seen to take complaints made by mainly women members seriously, gave gifts to the right wing that led to significant and unnecessary defeats at conference last year.

### Our own political voice

A key question in the next year will be the general election and the union's strategy towards the Labour Party. Keir Starmer has made his position clear, that Jeremy Corbyn and all his anti-austerity programme are history. A New Labour government will do the bidding of the bosses and the unions should expect little. This will put Unison members in direct conflict with a Labour government, and any new union leadership that fails to have a clear programme will end up holding members back from action, accepting just a few crumbs off the New Labour table. There are already warnings of this in the deals that have been accepted in schools and health in Wales, where there is 'social partnership' between union leaders and the Labour-led government.

Unison members already rightly ask why we hand over millions of pounds of members' money to a party whose leader can't even bring himself to support us on a picket line, let alone take on the interests of big businesses.

It is clear that our members' jobs, wages and conditions cannot be protected, let alone improved, without the resources needed, and this cannot be achieved without ending the scourge of profiteering in the public sector. That means cancelling all PFI debt, bringing back in-house all the privatised services, and renationalising the public utilities where our members work, such as water, gas and electricity.



Lawrence Hill, Bristol MIKE LUFF

While many of the current TFRC left leadership agree with these policies, they do not address the question of which political party stands for such a programme? Clearly not Starmer's Labour Party. He has banned Jeremy Corbyn from standing, and, outrageously, the Unison representatives on Labour's NEC abstained on the vote! That is why the Socialist Party calls for a democratic discussion about how to achieve a genuine political voice for Unison members, and demands that the union's political funds are opened up to

allow branches to democratically decide to support candidates that back Unison policies even if outside the Labour Party.

The Socialist Party argues that the trade unions must back Corbyn to stand, as part of a workers' list of candidates. We will be the only ones in the Unison elections openly calling for the union to stop funding Labour cutters and privatisers, and to start the process of building a new workers' party that would genuinely defend the interests of Unison members and the working class.

It is therefore vital that a strong bloc of Socialist Party members is re-elected and strengthened in number on Unison's NEC. Please vote for:

- **Hugo Pierre**, national black members' male seat
- **April Ashley**, national black members' female seat
- **Adrian O'Malley**, national health service general seat
- **Paul Couchman**, national local government male seat
- **David Maples**, national disabled members' general seat
- **Jim McFarlane**, Scotland male seat
- **Mary McCusker**, Scotland female seat
- **Naomi Byron**, Greater London reserved seat
- **Tom Hunt**, East Midlands region male seat

Get all the latest union news...





# UKRAINE WAR HEADS TOWARDS NEW, BLOODY PHASE AND THE WORKING-CLASS MASSES SUFFER



NIALL MULHOLLAND  
COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL (CWI)

The bloody war in Ukraine grinds on, with reportedly hundreds of thousands of deaths and injuries inflicted on both sides. As we enter spring, a new massive offensive appears to be in preparation by the Ukrainian forces, with military backing and training from Western powers. A new, even more bloody, phase of the war is likely in the short term. The conflict has involved the use of high-tech weaponry, and also recourse to trench warfare and artillery assaults reminiscent of World War One and other previous conflicts.

Currently, the main theatre of war is centred on the city of Bakhmut, in the east. This is regarded as a vital staging post by the Russian forces and its capture would be a big propaganda coup and help them consolidate territorial gains in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions. Although some Ukrainian military strategists and Western advisers have cautioned Zelensky about throwing so many soldiers and military resources into the defence of the city, which they believe is not essential to the overall war effort, Zelensky insists it must be defended at all costs. The brutal conflict around the city alone is estimated to have cost tens of thousands of lives on both sides.

Socialists and the international workers' movement must oppose the

bloody invasion of Ukraine by Putin's forces. There can be no justification for the unleashing of terror against the people of Ukraine and the huge destruction it has entailed. We call for the immediate withdrawal of Russian forces and an end to the war.

The main task of the working peoples of Ukraine and Russia is to organise their own independent organisations against invasion and war and to oppose the reactionary oligarchs and their political allies in both countries. This entails urgently building genuinely independent trade unions and mass parties of the working class with a bold socialist programme for the ending of war, poverty, and exploitation, and for a democratic socialist society without coercion or oppression of any nationality or minority.

The invasion of Ukraine was a thoroughly reactionary and desperate measure by Putin, who bases his regime on an appeal to 'Great Russian' chauvinism. Dissent to the war in Russia is ruthlessly dealt with by the authorities. A new clampdown on travel restrictions that target higher layers of state officialdom has been introduced by Putin's regime, indicating fears of growing opposition to the war at all levels of society.

In Ukraine, Zelensky presides over a right-wing regime that prioritises the interests of Ukraine's oligarchs over that of the mass of people. Zelensky's government has banned left parties that dare to criticise its policies, and imposed draconian anti-union and anti-worker legislation under the cover of war. With the eastern Orthodox Christian Church split on national lines, and believers fighting on both sides of the war in Ukraine, the Zelensky regime has taken repressive action against Orthodox institutions supporting Russia, and against those deemed not fully supporting the Ukrainian war effort.

The people of Ukraine live daily with rising poverty, as well as a military conflict. Around eight million

people have fled Ukraine since the start of the Russian invasion when the country had around 40 million inhabitants. Around seven million live in areas under Russian control.

The war has been catastrophic for Ukraine's economy. Last year, its GDP fell by 30%. On 21 March the International Monetary Fund (IMF) announced Ukraine would receive the seventh biggest bailout in the fund's history (\$15.6 billion over the next four years through an emergency programme). Yet the Zelensky regime estimates that it needs an extra \$39.5 billion more than it expects to receive from tax and aid, a shortfall equivalent to 9% of GDP.

All told, Ukraine could face paying 7.5-8.0% rates on the IMF loan. "The nightmare would be crippling the country with debts while it is still at war, or just beginning to recover", commented the Economist.

### US v China

Ukraine has become the de facto frontline of the conflict between the United States and its allies, on the one side, and Russia and its wider allies, particularly with China, the main economic rival to the US, on the other. While not opposing Moscow, the Beijing regime has been cautious and has not endorsed or openly supported the Russian invasion.

China's President Xi Jinping visited Moscow recently, with a '12-point

peace plan' for Ukraine, which was only palatable to Russia. Beijing has aided Russia by buying vast quantities of Russian oil and gas at reduced prices. While Western military intelligence admits that there is no proof that China has given significant amounts of weaponry to Russia, it is an open question as to whether this could change should Ukraine get the upper hand on the battlefield.

The Ukraine war has had the knock-on effect of greatly increasing tensions over Taiwan. Dexter Roberts, from the Atlantic Council thinktank in Washington, commented: "Xi Jinping and other top leaders genuinely feel sympathy for Russia. They believe Putin has his back pushed against the wall by Nato expanding. They very much see a parallel... with the US presence in the Indo-Pacific."

An editorial in the Economist warns both the US and China that, "seeking military dominance around flashpoints, notably Taiwan, could spark incidents or clashes that spiral out of control".

The US, UK and Australia held an 'AUKUS pact' summit a few weeks ago, and agreed that nuclear submarines can be stationed in Australia.

Trading and commercial tensions are growing between the US and China, with the IMF estimating that 'decoupling' can cost the world economy anywhere between a 0.2% to 7% loss of

world GDP. Washington has imposed embargoes on semiconductors and other goods in an attempt to maintain US technological supremacy, for the time being.

Notwithstanding the current terrible battlefield casualty rates in Ukraine, the conflict is set to escalate. The fierce battle for Bakhmut appears to be edging towards Russia, at the moment, but there is no guarantee about the outcome for either side. Significant military resources, including battlefield tanks, are being despatched to Ukraine from several Nato countries, as Kyiv prepares for a much-anticipated spring offensive against Russian forces.

And the sphere of border tensions between Western powers and Russia grows. Under immense pressure from Washington, Turkey has relented to Finland joining Nato, and Sweden will probably follow suit. While Putin has toned down his rhetoric over the use of nuclear arms, his Belarusian ally, President Alexander Lukashenko, said that Belarus may host Russian nuclear weapons, bringing the weapons closer to the border of Nato states. The Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orban, blurted out last week that the EU is "close to sending peace-keeper troops in some form or another" to Ukraine. Such a move would be a red rag to Moscow.

Former Russian President Dimitri Medvedev responded by stating: "It is clear that the so-called Nato peace-keepers are simply going to enter the conflict on the side of our enemies..." and this would "bring the situation to the point of no return."

Whether these statements may amount to no more than a bluff, they signify the feeble situation and the ratcheting up of tensions in an already combustible military situation in eastern Europe.

Putin's regime, should it be faced with even greater losses and a defeat, could out of desperation resort to the limited use of a 'tactical nuclear weapon' or other weapons of mass destruction. Putin has put this issue on the table. His recent threat to deploy such weapons to Belarus underlines this possible danger at a certain stage, should the Moscow regime face an existential threat. This would have enormous repercussions internationally and provoke massive anti-war movements.

The working class in Ukraine and Russia, and internationally, are the main losers from war and militarisation. Neither side in this disastrous war are prepared to even countenance negotiations and a ceasefire at this stage, while they believe they can still win or at least carve out the best results for themselves at the expense of countless Russian and Ukrainian soldiers' lives.

### Spring counter-offensive

The anticipated counter-offensive by Ukrainian forces is expected to strike in the south. "A thrust of about 50 miles over the steppe from the current front lines to the Russian-occupied city of Melitopol would split

Russian-held territory into two zones, sever supply lines and put Ukrainian artillery within range of Russian bases on the Crimean Peninsula", according to the New York Times.

The crucial role played by the West in preparations is spelt out by the newspaper: "Tens of thousands of new recruits have undergone training in Europe and inside Ukraine, including in newly formed Offensive Guard units. About 35,000 Ukrainians have signed up for the assault units".

But success is not assured for Kyiv. In the south, Russian units have been building defensive positions since they were pushed out of the Kherson region last November. Sophisticated tanks will be critical in uprooting those positions, according to Western military sources. But what Moscow may lack in state-of-the-art military equipment, it will try to make up with a potentially enormous pool of human resources to throw against Ukraine.

The Ukraine offensive can lead to another bloody stalemate, rather than a quick breakthrough. "The key point in the eyes of Washington elites is that Ukraine has to be seen as having gained significant land in the coming offensive," according to Cliff Kupchan, chair of the Eurasia Group, in Washington.

Some government figures in Nato-member countries, like France and Germany, have already raised the prospect of Ukraine having to countenance accepting territorial losses in the east, and not taking back Crimea, should the quagmire continue. They have posed the need for Kyiv to engage in negotiations with Russia, as the 'best worst' option.

As the war drags on at a terrible human cost, morale will inevitably be affected on all sides. The New York Times says: "Morale, an area in which Ukrainian fighters held an edge for much of the war, is becoming more of a challenge. In a dozen or so recent interviews, soldiers at positions near

Bakhmut or emerging from the crucible of street fighting for short breaks expressed dismay at the scale of violence and death."

Over the past year, about 100,000 Ukrainian soldiers have been killed or wounded, according to Western figures, which is probably an underestimate. Even higher figures are given by the West for Russian casualties, which are unverifiable, but seem likely. Whatever the true extent of fatalities and injuries, it is clear that both sides are suffering enormously, with little territorial gain over the last months or with the sight of an end to the war.

Yet, at some point, opposition to the endless slaughter will grow in Russia and Ukraine. Socialists and the international workers' movement internationally must do all they can to support those resisting the conflict and the rule of the oligarchs, on both sides, and work to build strong anti-war and anti-capitalist movements in their own countries.

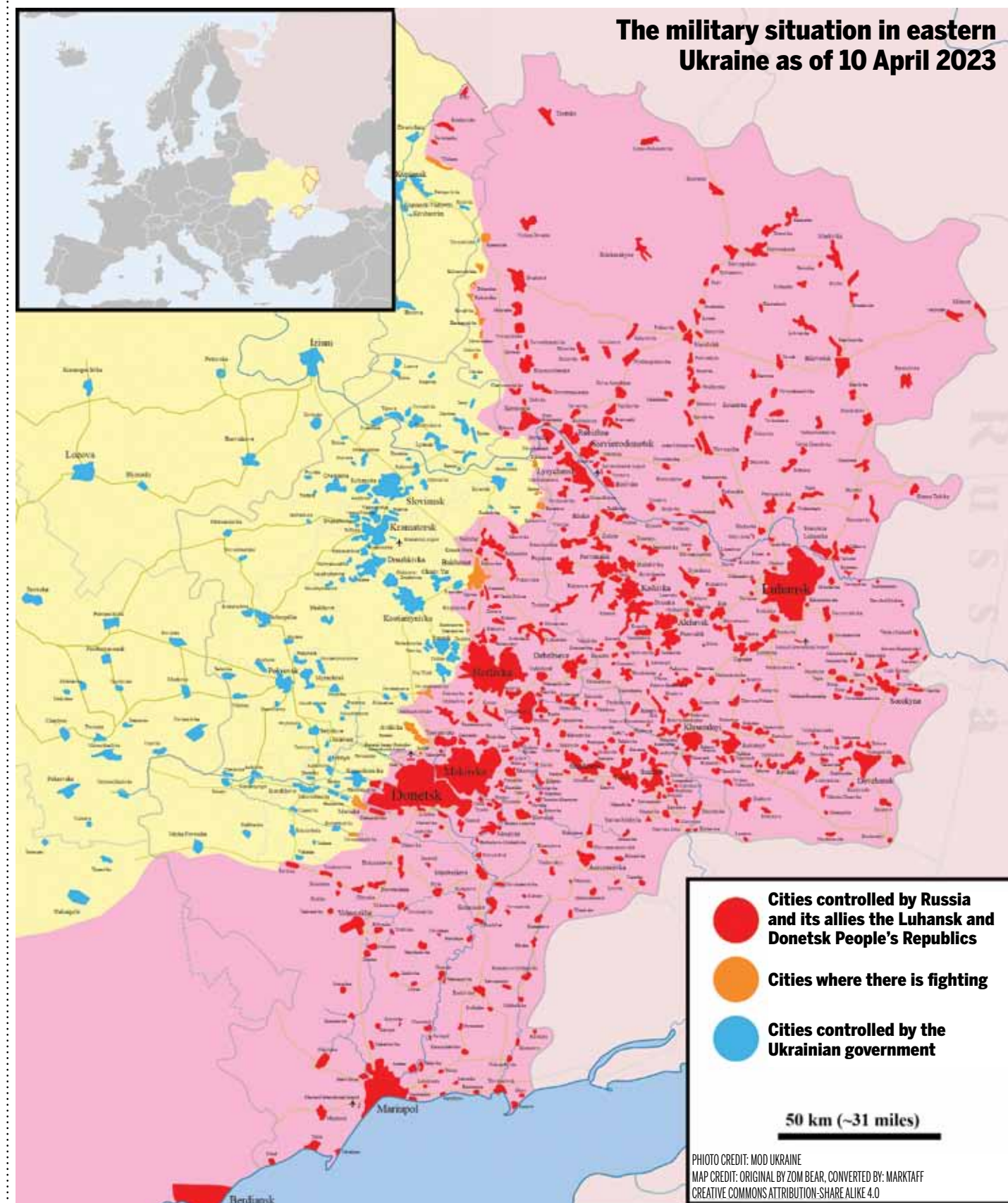


PHOTO CREDIT: MOD UKRAINE  
MAP CREDIT: ORIGINAL BY ZOM BEAR, CONVERTED BY: MARKTAFF  
CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION-SHARE A LIKE 4.0



# Accelerating SNP crisis shows need for a real workers' alternative

PHILIP STOTT  
SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND

The crisis in the Scottish National Party (SNP), triggered by the resignation of party leader and Scotland's first minister Nicola Sturgeon on 15 February, shows no sign of abating. Falling opinion poll ratings, the clashes and splits that emerged during and after the ensuing leadership contest, the loss of 30,000 members in the last two years, and the resignation of the chief executive who lied about the drop in membership, were bad enough.

The malaise facing the nationalists was, however, added to last week when the said former chief executive and husband of Nicola Sturgeon, Peter Murrell, was arrested by police, questioned and then released without charge pending further inquiries. The police action followed a very long investigation that began in July 2021 into SNP finances, following complaints about how public donations were being used.

Between 2017 and 2020, the SNP said it received a total of £666,953 from independence referendum-related financial appeals. During that time, which followed the Brexit vote, they were campaigning for a second indyref and had pledged to spend these funds on that referendum.

However, by the end of 2019, the SNP reported just £90,000 in the bank and assets of around a quarter of a million pounds. Murrell himself loaned the SNP more than £100,000 in 2021, which underlines the problems the party was facing as a result of the loss of members, support and income.

This raises the question, given there was no independence referendum to spend the £666,953 on, was some of that money spent elsewhere? For example, on the running of the party, election campaigns or perhaps other unknown reasons.

Certainly a number of independence supporters and SNP members believe that the money should have been ring-fenced for a future indyref. Indeed, the original complaints to the police came from pro-independence supporters.

The media coverage of the police raid at Sturgeon and Murrell's home, and the SNP offices in Edinburgh, made headline news for days. It helped reinforce the idea that the SNP is in a rapidly accelerating downward spiral. SNP president Mike Russell commented: "In my 50-year association with the party this is the biggest and most challenging crisis we've ever faced."

There was, however, also a backlash from some against the police operation. Solicitor Aamer Anwar, a supporter of independence and of the SNP leadership, commented following the police operation: "Today when people look at this, a lot of people are asking the question - police ticker tape, several police vans, forensic tents - many of course are asking the question that they didn't see



Nicola Sturgeon and Peter Murrell  
SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT/CC

any of that from the police at No 10 when law breaking was happening right under their nose, and people are quite right to ask those questions today. When we face a cost-of-living crisis this is almost like a deflection."

## No support for capitalist state

It's very likely that the Police Scotland investigation, launched in the summer of 2021 when backing for independence was at over 50% and the SNP had just won the Scottish parliament election of that year with a record number of votes on a 'mandate' for a new referendum, was seen as an opportunity to weaken the SNP and public support for independence itself.

Socialists can give no clean bill of health to a pro-capitalist party like the SNP, the leadership of which has lifestyles and class backgrounds far removed from the lives of ordinary workers.

The SNP is certainly not a left party, let alone a workers' party. However, its support for the break-up of the UK has put it on collision course with the

overwhelming majority of the ruling capitalist class who have welcomed the current SNP debacle.

Despite our trenchant and consistent opposition to the SNP leadership's anti-working class policies and bureaucratic methods, we oppose the capitalist state intervening in this way.

The capitalist class has, of course, a long history and current practice of attacking the workers' movement through the use of anti-union laws, the courts and the use of the state generally. During the miners' strike of 1984-85 the South Wales area of the National Union of Mineworkers had £700,000 sequestered by the courts. Arrests and prosecutions of hundreds of miners took place during the strike as well.

In a genuine workers' party, members would be able to scrutinise finances and take action if it were needed, including the right to remove elected officials under the right of recall. Crucially, we would also demand that all elected representatives should live on the average wage of a skilled worker.

It was precisely Sturgeon's role in implementing austerity, including refusing inflation-proof pay rises demanded by trade unions, that has undermined support among the working class. The other crucial factor was the SNP leadership's inability to mobilise mass struggle to challenge the refusal of the Tories to grant the powers for a second referendum.

Effectively, it is the SNP's pro-capitalist policies that have created the crisis it now faces. As arch-Blairite Martin Kettle gloated in the Guardian newspaper: "Sturgeon resigned, it should be remembered... because her political strategy on issues from independence to gender recognition was falling apart."

## Falling support

Currently, SNP support has dropped to around 36% in voting intentions for the next Westminster election, a drop of around 8% since Sturgeon resigned. Scottish Labour, which had moved up to 30%, primarily at the expense of the Tories in Scotland, now seem to be gaining some support from former SNP voters. The pro-independence Greens and Alex Salmond's Alba party are also showing increased support in the polls.

While the SNP remains by some distance the largest party in electoral terms, significant losses at the next election seem very likely, with Scottish Labour most likely to benefit. However, Scottish and UK Labour are in the vice-like grip of the neo-Blairites - the dominant capitalist wing of the party. A Starmer-led government at Westminster would not only refuse a second indyref, it would also savagely defend the interests of big business and attack the rights of the working class.

Significantly though, support for independence - on average sitting at 47% - has not been falling in tandem with dropping SNP support. This reality can mean that the SNP still have a base of support to draw on as the largest pro-indy party currently.

In the wake of Sturgeon's resignation, splits are deepening in the party. A 15-strong faction of the SNP parliamentary group at Holyrood associated with Kate Forbes is now openly opposing the new Hamza Yousef leadership from the right, wishing to take the SNP in a more 'business orientated' direction. Further fissures and even splits are likely.

## A new party for the working class

The most important question is, where does the working class go for its political voice? The way forward is for the trade unions - or a significant section of them - to take the necessary steps to build a new workers' party.

The recent strike wave has underlined the enormous attraction of working-class struggle to combat the cost-of-living disaster. Further strikes are now possible in local government, among North Sea and dockyard workers on top of the current action by university workers in UCU and civil servants in PCS. The need for a party of the working class to fight for socialist policies to end the capitalist crisis while standing for the right to self-determination for Scotland is growing.

A good place to start would be standing as many worker, socialist and trade union candidates as possible at the general election.



# NEU conference: Up for the fight!



Gateshead ELAINE BRUNSKILL

**SEAN MCCAULEY**  
NEU NEC, PERSONAL CAPACITY

**A** fighting spirit prevailed throughout the whole of the recent four-day National Education Union (NEU) national conference.

Conference opened with the announcement of the huge vote by members to reject outright the government's insulting offer. On a 66% turnout, 98% of members said that Tory Education Secretary Gillian Keegan must do better.

The mood of members to fight has hardened as a result of the government's offer: a deal worse than that accepted by members in Wales, which, in turn, was worse than the deal struck by the EIS (teachers' union in Scotland).

Members' sense of their own strength and unity will have been further buoyed by the result of the consultative vote on the offer, a result more conclusive than the tremendous initial indicative ballot on strike action in October last year. It is Socialist Party members who have been at the forefront on the National Executive (NEC) pushing that members should be consulted, sometimes in the face of strong opposition from others on the left. Members of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), AWL and Socialist Alternative all opposed this consultation. But the consultation has helped build a strong sense of determination to win fully funded, inflation-proof pay awards for 2022-23 and from Sept 2023.

## Calls to escalate

An emergency motion was proposed by the NEC majority on the pay

dispute. Other emergency motions had around three amendments, but this one had 11, showing how much dissatisfaction there was with the NEC majority's position. In the NEC meeting on the Sunday evening before conference, Socialist Party members were the only voices expressing concerns about the seven-week gap in the NEC majority's strike proposal. This gap risks the strong fighting mood amongst members dissipating. Despite there being so many amendments, the same amount of time was given for discussion on this motion as for other emergency motions - 40 minutes!

There was only time to hear two amendments, which didn't pass. The third, proposed by members of the Socialist Party, was not taken. Our amendment called for an escalation of strike action, including during the exam period. The original motion called for two days of action on 27 April and 2 May, and then nothing until the end of June, after the exam period. Our amendment also called for NEU members, not school management, to decide on how and whether revision sessions should be organised for students, "to show that it is us, not the government, that supports our students. This should be decided by school union groups if deemed necessary." It also called for a relaunch of the hardship funds as 'strike funds', using stalls and community events to raise funds for striking members.

Conference was addressed by Paul Whiteman, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT). Its members have also resoundingly rejected the government's pay offer. All four major

education unions have now rejected the offer. A majority of those NAHT members who voted in their consultative ballot agreed they would be prepared to strike. NEU's campaign has added to the pressure and must keep doing so, to ensure that NAHT does indeed ballot its members for strike action. The pressure of the NEU's campaign will have helped the NASUWT teachers' union get over the Tory anti-union turnout threshold in its consultation, which didn't happen in its ballot last year. Now that must also be turned into action.

## Support staff

Support staff, some of the lowest-paid workers in education, often on iniquitous term-time-only contracts, and part-time too, earn less than the living wage. The call was made to reballoon them for strike action and seek unity with Unison, which has also moved to ballot its members on the 2023-24 pay offer, and with GMB and Unite if they too choose to ballot. The Socialist Party amendment called for the union to launch a reballoon of support staff in April, "so that support staff could join our teacher members on the picket lines in the summer term." But this amendment wasn't heard. The 18 May NEC meeting will take the issue forward.

## A new national contract

Workload is a major concern for teachers. A leaked government report of a 2022 survey of 11,000 teachers showed that 22% of teachers work 60 hours a week or more. Previous reports have shown the vast majority of teachers work over 54 hours a week. This is unsustainable.

The national contract of

employment for teachers contains the line: "A teacher must work such reasonable additional hours as may be necessary". It does not quantify what "reasonable" is. Most schools ride roughshod over the idea of "reasonable". A motion proposed by Socialist Party member and NEU NEC member Steve Scott called for a new National Contract for Education, which clearly sets a limit on how many hours a teacher can be expected to work.

Socialist Party members have long fought for such a contract to include support staff and the fully funded return of whole-year contracts for support staff. We also want to include supply teachers, eliminating the pernicious exploitative agencies and umbrella companies, by re-establishing local authority supply pools and thereby full pension rights to supply teachers. The motion was passed.

However, the clear strategy on how to achieve our demands, including national strike action, was removed from the motion by an amendment from the same quarter of the executive, part of the 'NEU Left' grouping, who, prior to our successful ballots over pay, had opposed national action for a new contract on the grounds that we would not win a ballot on national action on any issue. Clearly, that is not true, and those individuals have had to shift their position. So why oppose action on the one issue that, for teachers, trumps all other issues, in union survey after union survey?

Instead of national action, it is now proposed we simply continue our workplace-by-workplace campaign. Socialist Party members in the NEU

will not abandon the fight to have unsustainable levels of workload addressed through national action as well as local.

The conference ended with the farewell speeches of Kevin Courtney and Mary Bousted, the joint general secretaries of the NEU since its inception in 2017. Kevin Courtney was general secretary of the NUT from 2016 up to the merger. At the end of August they will hand over to newly elected Daniel Kebede, about whom the Daily Telegraph published an article entitled "Education Secretary 'gathering intelligence' on hard-Left union leader".

The article said: "The Education Secretary is concerned about the prospect of Daniel Kebede taking over as the general secretary." They quoted Socialist Party member and NEC member Sheila Caffrey, who chaired our fringe meeting: "What we want to continue ... is an activist, fighting union, and that is what Daniel has said he is going to be."

Socialist Party members will maintain the pressure on both the current and future leaderships to maintain a bold fighting lead. We need a union that leads from the front and builds from below.

## ● Israel-Palestine urgent motion

Socialist Party members Nicky Downes and I moved and seconded an amendment to the urgent motion brought on the situation in Israel-Palestine. The motion condemned the Israeli government for its murderous attacks on Palestinians in the occupied territories. There have already been 94 deaths amongst Palestinians this year and if the attacks continue in this way, deaths are set to exceed the 231 last year, which itself was the highest since the early 2000s. Our amendment, which was passed by conference, welcomed the mass movement of Israelis against the Netanyahu government, indicating support for the 600,000-strong protests and the general strike called by the Histadrut trade union federation.

The following Socialist Party members are standing in the NEU national executive elections.

Re-elect sitting NEC members:

**Sheila Caffrey**, district 12  
**Sean McCauley**, district 8  
**Steve Scott**, district 3

Also vote for **Anna Scott**, district 3

If successful, they will join **Louise Cuffaro**, already elected unopposed, in district 16.

Do you agree?  
**JOIN THE SOCIALISTS**  
[socialistparty.org.uk/join](https://socialistparty.org.uk/join)





## Why I joined the Socialist Party



Laurence (right) campaigning in Guildford PHOTO: SURREY SOCIALIST PARTY

LAURENCE DUNN  
SURREY SOCIALIST PARTY

I have been involved in grassroots trade union activity for many years, founding the Northumbria Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) branch and holding some officer positions in that union. I came across anarchism at a young age, being given texts to read by a secondary school teacher. Over time I became disillusioned. We were forced to overcome hurdles put in place by the leadership to take part in on-the-ground organising drives. Having been a member for over seven years, I became depressed and burnt out - dropping out of political activity for some years.

I had been exposed to the Socialist Party's ideas for some time, having met members in Newcastle and played football with some of them! The Militant Tendency (the Socialist Party's predecessor) was a well-known boogey-man of the capitalist class in Britain, so naturally, that made me want to investigate their history.

After my experiences in the IWW (not all bad, there are great members who are still close friends and I

learnt a lot), I was left demoralised, crushed even. From that point I kept my head down, became very pessimistic and begrudgingly 'accepted my lot'. This feeling deepened during Covid which caused further health problems and problems keeping up with my rent. I lost my small place and had a rough time.

However, watching the strike wave emerge over the last year and having a terrible manager who harassed work colleagues moved me out of my inertia. I was sick of 'yes-sir', 'no-sir' and I realised I wasn't alone. My experiences told me that it wasn't 'one big union' that was needed, but a political party of dedicated socialists, with clear thinking and the will to fight in every avenue - the workplace, on the political field, everywhere, tooth and nail, for socialism.

After a bit of shopping around, I contacted the Socialist Party. An

organiser got back to me straight away. It's the best decision I have made in a long time. The level of commitment, consideration, attention to detail and organisation astounds me every day.

Since then, the Socialist Party has grown quite significantly in my area - with a branch beginning to form in Guildford and new members inspiring me with their level of interest and enthusiasm. I have every confidence we will continue to grow and become a strong presence in the area.

Ultimately, I joined the Socialist Party because I am a socialist, and I found an organisation that isn't playing. We are serious about fighting for socialist change.

• To read the Socialist Party's programme go to page 14. And if you agree or want to discuss the fight for a socialist world then join us.

Join the fightback  
**JOIN THE SOCIALISTS**

• Visit [socialistparty.org.uk/join](http://socialistparty.org.uk/join) or call 020 8988 8777  
• or text your name and postcode to 07761 818 206  
to find out more about joining us today!



## Swansea Socialist Party's Egg-cellent Easter weekend

ALEC THRIVES  
SWANSEA SOCIALIST PARTY

Members of Swansea and West Wales Socialist Party branch had a bumper weekend of campaigning for socialist ideas and helping to raise money to fund that fight.

Thursday's egg-citing Easter branch quiz saw 18 contestants battle for the delicious Easter egg prizes, raising money alongside an Easter chocolate cake raffle.

An Easter Saturday stall in defence of our NHS and supporting health workers on strike met a popular response, including students signing up for more info on our youth stall. An egg-sample of the growing support for socialist ideas.

• What is your branch planning to help reach this quarter's fighting fund target? Schedule a discussion in your Socialist Party branch meeting to plan ahead



Fund the fightback  
**DONATE TODAY**

• Visit [socialistparty.org.uk/join](http://socialistparty.org.uk/join) or call 020 8988 8777  
• or make cheques payable to Socialist Party,  
PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD



## Socialist Party hosts Croydon meeting to fight 15% council tax hike



Socialist Party campaign stall in Croydon against the tax rise PHOTO: LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

OSCAR PARRY  
SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Workers and young people in Croydon are angry. Around 30 people attended a public meeting hosted by the Socialist Party on 6 April, including Croydon residents and members of the Croydon Trades Council.

Speakers from the platform Deji Olayinka, CWU member, and April Ashley, Unison NEC member speaking in a personal capacity, outlined how Croydon council, led by the newly elected Tory mayor, passed a budget that would increase council tax by 15% and make a further £27 million of cuts. Despite opposition from local people, all Labour councillors abstained, effectively enabling the budget to pass.

These latest attacks come after a decade of cuts to the funding of jobs and services in Croydon, where both the Tories and Labour have implemented a programme of austerity.

Rather than fighting for the resources we need and setting a no-cuts budget, previous Labour administrations obediently passed on Tory cuts and got involved in private housing projects to make up for lack of funding, projects which subsequently lost millions of pounds.

With a £36 million shortfall between income and expenditure, the council received a section 114 notice

over two years ago, providing only statutory services since. This has led to hundreds losing their jobs, children's centres and libraries shutting down, and vital services being cut to the bone.

This austerity programme was compared to what Militant, predecessor to the Socialist Party, did in Liverpool in the 1980s. There we led a tenacious mass campaign with the trade unions against Thatcher to win the funding Liverpool needed.

The meeting ended with the agreement that a mass campaign needs to be built to defend non-payers against persecution and to continue to fight against the 15% council tax hike, involving local community members and trade unions.

It is crystal clear that neither Labour nor any other pro-austerity party will fight council cuts. Working-class people need our own political party, armed with a fighting socialist programme, that will stand up for us. The Socialist Party has stood in previous council elections in Croydon and elsewhere as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). We fight for councils to refuse to implement Tory cuts, and campaign to bring back the funding that our communities desperately need.

• See pages 2-3 for reports of candidates standing against the cuts in this year's local elections

## Brutal Israeli police raid of al-Aqsa mosque unleashes wave of conflict



A previous Israeli attack on the Al-Aqsa Mosque PHOTO: JER2/CC

AMNON COHEN  
COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL

The brutal police attack on Palestinians in the al-Aqsa mosque on 5 April has unleashed a new wave of conflict. Footage shows paramilitary police using long batons to relentlessly beat Palestinian men and women inside the third holiest site in Islam during Ramadan, causing outrage.

In a huge understatement, the Arab League group of nations said that this put "regional stability at risk". 44 missiles were fired from Gaza into southern Israel, and 34 were fired from Lebanon into northern Israel - the largest barrage there since 2006. The Israeli state immediately fired missiles into Gaza and Lebanon. Demonstrators clashed with police in East Jerusalem, as well as in Arab towns in Israel, including Nazareth, Sakhnin, Baqa al-Gharbiyye and Kafra Mandia.

In separate attacks, a tourist was killed in a Tel Aviv car raid, and three were shot dead in an Israeli settlement in the West Bank. The number of Palestinians killed this year has risen to over 100. By comparison, 231 were killed in the whole of last year, that itself the deadliest since 2005.

The Israeli police actions were intended to clear the al-Aqsa mosque (Haram al-Sharif) - known to Jews as Temple Mount - of Palestinians ahead of a visit of members of the

messianic Temple Mount Movement the following morning. The Temple Mount Movement wants to rebuild the Jewish Temple (destroyed by the Romans in 70AD) on the site of the Dome of the Rock and the Al Aqsa mosque, built in the 7th and 8th Centuries. They believe that the consecration of the Third Temple would bring about the coming of the messiah.

In the 1980s, members of the Jewish Underground, a right-wing vigilante group, were arrested for planning to blow up the Dome of the Rock. A number of its supporters were arrested on 6 April trying to bring animals onto the Haram al-Sharif in order to slaughter them for ritual sacrifice.

The majority popular opinion in Israel is to reject the Temple Mount Movement as dangerous zealots. But they are supported by the ultra-nationalist faction which the Netanyahu government depends on for the survival of its majority, including national security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir.

Residents of northern and southern Israel living under Hamas missile attacks have been told to stay near air-raid shelters. But successive governments have shown their contempt for these poverty stricken working-class communities by cutting schemes to retrofit homes with shelters.

Around 50,000 Israelis living within nine kilometres of the Lebanon border still do not have usable shelters.

Both the north and the south of Israel - considered by the state as the 'periphery' - are unemployment black spots, whose population consists of the most downtrodden sections of the working class, including in the north Israeli Palestinians. The rockets fired into these areas have, so far, not caused any casualties. Marxists totally oppose such indiscriminate attacks on working-class communities, and acts of individual terror such as the Tel Aviv car raid and West Bank shootings. They can only help to rally support around the beleaguered Netanyahu government.

This dramatic escalation of the conflict occurs after 13 weeks of mass protests have brought hundreds of thousands of Israelis out onto the streets against the government's assaults on 'democracy'.

Many of the self-appointed capitalist leaders of the protest movement have fallen behind the ultra-right government as military conflict has developed. Prominent capitalist opposition politician Benny Gantz says the opposition will give its full support to the government in responding to the escalating violence, and calls on people to unite behind it. Opposition leader Yair Lapid said: "When it comes to security, there is no opposition and there is no coalition".

Ultimately the capitalist ruling class has no solution to the national conflict, and no alternative to the brutal repression of the Palestinians. The Netanyahu government cannot

be defeated by Hamas missiles fired into working-class communities, which could only be used to bolster his support. His supporters and the far-right will try to use this situation to consolidate their shrinking support.

The general strike of 27 March showed the power of the working class to force Netanyahu into retreat. The mass protests, which have brought hundreds of thousands onto the streets, need to shake off the capitalist leaders, such as Gantz and Lapid.

Protest organisers called for the continuation of protests: "Citizens to go out to the streets in masses on Saturday [8 April]". Tens of thousands responded to the call. This should be welcomed. But there should also be a call for further escalation of strike action along with mass mobilisations.

Crucially, activists and organisations involved in the movement should form an independent mass workers' party, take control of their own movement and wage a decisive challenge to the government.

The movement needs to link up with Palestinians protesting and confronting the repressive forces of the state, in the Palestinian towns in Israel, as well as in the territories. The working class, united, has the power to defeat the ultra-nationalist government of Netanyahu and Ben Gvir, and pull the Middle East back from the carnage of regional conflict.

## Curtain falls on Sanna Marin's tenure as prime minister of Finland

As the curtain falls on Sanna Marin's tenure as prime minister of Finland, the need for a mass working-class socialist party in Finland to provide an alternative to capitalist stagnation and militarism has seldom been more pronounced, write CWI members in Finland.

The election on 2 April brought the conservative National Coalition Party (NCP) back to power just a day after the parliament of Turkey ratified Finland's accession to Nato.

Many workers turned to Antti Rinne and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) at the 2019 election out of disgust at the outright attacks by Juha Sipilä's, Centre (Kesk) government. Nonetheless, the SDP, claiming the smallest mandate in their party's history, made the choice, as we predicted, to continue these attacks and handed over control of the economy and state finances to the Centre party.

This sudden but inevitable betrayal was made plain when Rinne, a former union boss elevated to the role of Prime Minister, was forced to resign in disgrace after his conspiring with postal bosses to force hundreds of workers onto a worse contract triggered nationwide strikes.

Sanna Marin continued the campaign of direct attacks on workers: the Covid-19 pandemic became an excuse to lay off thousands in the state-run parts of the transportation sector; the forestry industry now openly operates as a cartel against lumber and paper workers, and the unemployed must now brave additional layers of time-wasting bureaucracy to claim benefits. So Marin's defeat was not hard to predict, even as the SDP gained a few seats in the election...

• Read more at [socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net)

Committee for a Workers' International  
**FIGHTING FOR A SOCIALIST WORLD**  
[socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net)



Sanna Marin PHOTO: FINNISHGOVERNMENT/CC



# Will the 'Windsor Framework' resolve trading and border tensions in Northern Ireland?



Stormont, the Northern Ireland Assembly building WKNIGHT94/CC

NIALL MULHOLLAND  
COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL

The 'Windsor Framework' amending the 'Northern Ireland protocol', agreed between Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, has been approved by parliament. The protocol caused significant trade problems and the collapse, last year, of the Stormont Assembly after the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) walked out of the power-sharing institutions.

After making the agreement with the EU, an exuberant Sunak announced that the Windsor Framework 'delivers smooth-flowing trade within the whole United Kingdom, protects Northern Ireland's place in our union and safeguards sovereignty for the people of Northern Ireland.'

On the contrary, the fact that the power-sharing institutions have barely met for half of the last quarter of a century and that several new 'agreements' and 'frameworks' have had to be cobbled together to keep the Good Friday Agreement alive, only underscores that long-term peace, stability and prosperity have not been delivered to Northern Ireland. The Windsor Framework is yet another sticking plaster that cannot act as a long-term prescription to remedy the sectarian divisions in society.

The majority of voters in Northern Ireland voted 'remain' in 2016, but a majority of Protestants voted 'leave'. All the main parties opposed a 'hard border' with the Republic, which remains an EU member state. They feared this would lead to economic dislocation and present a powerful propaganda weapon to republicans dissidents as physical customs checks were restored to the border.

But a restored Assembly fell apart last year over the DUP's opposition

to the 'Northern Ireland protocol' negotiated with the EU by their erstwhile ally, Boris Johnson, while he was Tory prime minister. This saw an 'Irish Sea border', whereby goods from Britain were subject to customs checks at Larne and Belfast harbours on the Antrim coast, making Northern Ireland an 'exception' within the UK. This greatly frustrated and angered many Protestants, who felt the protocol undermined their place within the UK.

The protocol also caused significant trading problems and higher costs for businesses. By 2022, checks on goods from the UK at ports in Northern Ireland accounted for 20% of all checks at the EU's borders.

The new Windsor Framework is an attempt to smooth out problems with the protocol and allay unionist concerns. In light of the Ukraine war, the British government and the EU were also under pressure to overcome divisions.

The Framework makes it easier for goods, including food and medicines, to ship between Britain and Northern Ireland via a 'green lane' with minimal checks. Goods destined for the Republic, and thus into the EU's single market, would be subject to stricter controls in a 'red lane'.

The Windsor Framework also gives the Northern Ireland Assembly a say over any new EU rules. In "exceptional circumstances" the Assembly can apply the Stormont 'brake' if 30 of the 90 legislative members from at least two parties vote to block the adoption of updated EU single market rules, although the final decision will be taken by the government in Westminster.

Most of the main political parties in Northern Ireland have welcomed the Windsor Framework as the basis for a return of the Assembly. Sunak appears to have successfully divided the hard-line Tory pro-Brexit

European Research Group on the Framework.

DUP members of Parliament voted against the Framework, with the party's leader Jeffrey Donaldson saying: "While significant progress had been secured in the Windsor Framework across a number of areas it does not deal with some of the fundamental problems at the heart of our current difficulties."



**No amount of fudging the issues will remove the fact that Northern Ireland remains 'exceptional' to the rest of the UK – part of the EU single market, as well as part of the UK – and this will be a running sore with unionists**

Donaldson is caught between DUP hardliners, who say the Windsor deal is not good enough, and DUP moderates who see it as the best one available. DUP MP Ian Paisley Jnr has said the Framework does "not cut the mustard". Former party leader and First Minister, Peter Robinson, urged the DUP to "consider whether in rejecting the framework... we place unionism and Northern Ireland on more perilous ground".

The DUP announced on 6 March that it had set up a 'consultative panel', made up of former party leaders and legal and business people, to evaluate the revamped post-Brexit trading regime by the end of March.

According to "one well-informed unionist" quoted in the Financial

Times (FT): "This is all about edging towards going back [to Stormont] and I don't see any hard-core sceptics in there." However, fearing that the more hard-line Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV) can make electoral gains at the DUP's expense, Donaldson has stated that his party will not re-enter power-sharing institutions until after the 18 May council elections. And perhaps the DUP will aim to get over the summer 'marching season', when sectarian tensions are heightened, before considering returning to the Assembly, with or without formally agreeing to the Windsor Framework.

## Irish Sea border

Sunak claims the changes remove "any sense of a border in the Irish Sea". For many DUP members and the TUV, however, any EU role in Northern Ireland is a violation of sovereignty. EU rules will continue to apply in some areas of the economy and the European Court of Justice remains the final arbiter of EU law. It is possible that a sizable DUP internal opposition can result in the DUP refusing to rejoin the Assembly, for the medium term, at least.

At the same time, pressure continues to mount on the DUP and other parties, as public services in Northern Ireland continue to struggle under the weight of budget cuts. The £1 billion shortfall in funding for public services has resulted in a series of public sector pay strikes.

Public services are also collapsing, as has been witnessed with the engineered closures of emergency surgery at Daisy Hill, South West Acute and Causeway hospitals. The pressure on politicians, and in particular the DUP, will only grow.

In the absence of a functioning government, the potential is there for the Tories to intervene and take responsibility for regional governance directly into their hands. The possibility of 'direct rule' also sees the nationalist parties calling for a degree of 'joint authority' involving the Dublin government. This would be even more problematic for unionists and would only further destabilise the institutions, and the peace process.

The DUP will also come under strong pressure from the UK, US and regional business interests to agree to the Framework. The US is concerned about long-term stability on the island particularly given the favourable low-tax status in the South, where large US corporations are based.

Speaking at a Coca-Cola factory in Lisburn, Sunak talked up the economic advantages for Northern Ireland: "If we get this framework implemented, we get the executive back up and running, Northern Ireland is in the unbelievably special position, the unique position in the entire world in having privileged access not just to the UK home market, which is the fifth biggest in the world, but also the European Union single market."

Yet, to date, Northern Ireland's "unique position" has not translated into prosperity. Gross domestic product per head is ranked 10th out of the 12 regions of the UK. High levels of deprivation partly explain why public spending per head is about 20% higher in Northern Ireland than in the UK as a whole but expenditure on transport, science and technology – regarded as key drivers of productivity by economists – is the lowest. The North is also significantly poorer, with income per head about 25% below the UK overall.



Ursula von der Leyen and Rishi Sunak NO10DOWNINGSTREET/CC

No amount of fudging the issues will remove the fact that Northern Ireland remains 'exceptional' to the rest of the UK – part of the EU single market, as well as part of the UK – and this will be a running sore with unionists. Added to the mix, demographic changes have taken place, with the last census showing Catholics are now a narrow majority in Northern Ireland.

## Border poll

Looking to return to Stormont with the position of First Minister, and aiming to be the largest party in Dublin after the next general election, Sinn Féin campaigns for a 'border poll'.

But a head count will not end sectarian division or bring the peace and prosperity that many supporters of a united Ireland yearn for. As the endless wrangling over the protocol indicates, the Protestant working class will strongly resist any sense of further diminishing of their British identity and culture and being incorporated as a minority into a capitalist united Ireland.

Low-level paramilitary activities, both republican and loyalist, continue in many deprived areas, as does state repression. The recent shooting of a member of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, near Omagh town, which was claimed by the New IRA, shows that armed republican groups remain capable of recruiting and mounting operations despite marginal support and frequent crackdowns against them by the state. In opposition to the working class being pulled back into violence and sectarianism, Omagh Trades Council held a rally of several hundred people after the shooting.

Only a united working-class struggle can show a way out of austerity, violence, poverty, injustice, and sectarian divisions. Genuine 'power-sharing' from a socialist perspective entails working-class people, Catholic and Protestant, coming together to democratically agree on new

arrangements. A socialist society, based on people's needs, would see the ending of all coercion against either of the communities and overcoming historic fears and distrust: genuine 'power-sharing' in a socialist Ireland, linked to a voluntary and equal socialist federation of Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales and Europe.

The vehicle to achieve this, a new mass party of the working class with a bold socialist programme to unite workers, has not emerged since the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, so far. However, the potential is indicated by important spring shoots, such as the election of Militant Left (CWI Ireland) supporter, Cllr Donal O'Cofaigh, in Enniskillen, Co Fermanagh, for Cross Community Labour Coalition, in 2019.

The ongoing strike actions by several trade unions in the north over pay are important steps towards building workers' unity, in practice. And the victory of the Broad Left slate on the general council of NIPSA, the largest union in the north, along with the election, last year, of Militant Left supporter, Carmel Gates, to the union's post of general secretary, is also a reflection of the growing combative mood of the working class.

## SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

April issue includes...

- New act in Tory Brexit drama, but not the last
- Northern Ireland: 25 years since the Good Friday Agreement

socialismtoday.org/subscribe  
020 8988 8777

- Paper sub £3 a month, e-sub £2.50



## WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

### WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

- A £15-an-hour minimum wage for all, without exemptions. For the minimum wage to automatically increase linked to average earnings or inflation, whichever is higher.
- Share out the work. A maximum 32-hour working week with no loss of pay or worsening of conditions. The right to flexible working, under the control of workers not employers. An end to insecure working, for the right to full-time work for all who want it; ban zero-hour contracts.

- All workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness, parental and holiday rights from day one of employment. End bosses using bogus 'self-employment' as a means to avoid giving workers rights.
- No to austerity through inflation. For all wage rates to be automatically increased at least in line with price rises.
- Open the books of all companies cutting jobs or claiming they can't afford to pay a real living wage. State subsidies, where genuinely needed, for socially-useful small businesses.
- For trade unions independent of the capitalist state, with members having democratic control over their own policies, constitutions and democratic procedures. For all trade union officials to be regularly elected, subject to recall by their members and paid a worker's wage.
- Reduce the state retirement and pension age to 55. For decent living pensions.
- Replace universal credit and the punitive benefit system with living benefits for all who need them.

- 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

- 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.
- For trade unions independent of the capitalist state, with members having democratic control over their own policies, constitutions and democratic procedures. For all trade union officials to be regularly elected, subject to recall by their members and paid a worker's wage.
- Reduce the state retirement and pension age to 55. For decent living pensions.
- Replace universal credit and the punitive benefit system with living benefits for all who need them.

### PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

- For local councillors who are committed to opposing austerity and all cuts to local services, jobs, pay and conditions.
- For a socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs, including dental and eye care – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out the private companies! Nationalise the pharmaceutical industry under democratic workers' control and management.

- Renationalise privatised utilities – including rail, mail, water, telecoms and power – under democratic workers' control and management.
- Free, publicly funded and democratically run, good-quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees and write off student debt, end marketisation, and introduce a living grant. No to academisation. For all schools to be under the genuine democratic control of local education authorities, school staff, parents and student organisations.

- The right to a safe secure home for all. For the mass building of genuinely affordable, high-quality, carbon-neutral council housing. For rent controls that cap the level of rent. Fair rent decisions should be made by elected bodies of tenants, housing workers and representatives of trade unions. For cheap low-interest mortgages for home buyers. Nationalise the privately owned large building companies, land banks and estates.

- Prioritising major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels and nuclear power with renewable energy, and ending the problems of early obsolescence – where products are designed to 'wear out' and be replaced – and unrecycled waste.
- Nationalisation of the energy companies, under democratic workers' control and management, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need, in order to carry out a major switch to clean, green energy, without any loss of jobs, pay or conditions.

### ENVIRONMENT

- 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

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

## JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

- Visit [socialistparty.org.uk/join](http://socialistparty.org.uk/join)
- or call 020 8988 8777
- or text your name and postcode to 07761 818 206

to find out more today!

Help fund the fightback!

## DONATE TODAY

[socialistparty.org.uk/donate](http://socialistparty.org.uk/donate)

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

### DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

- For united working-class struggle to end discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice and oppression.
- Repeal the anti-trade union laws and all others that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest and to strike! End police harassment. For the police to be accountable to local committees, made up of democratically elected representatives of trade unions, local community organisations and local authorities.

- For the right to choose when and whether to have children – for the right to access abortion, contraception and fertility treatment for all who need it.
- For the right to asylum – with democratic community control and oversight of emergency funding resources. No to racist immigration laws.
- Expand democracy. For the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. For all MPs to be subject to the right of recall by their constituents at any time, and to only receive a worker's wage. For proportional representation and the right to vote at 16.

- For the right of nations to self-determination. For an independent socialist Scotland and for a socialist Wales, both part of a voluntary socialist confederation of Wales, England, Scotland and Ireland.
- Oppose the dictatorship of the billionaire owners of the media. For the nationalisation of newspaper printing facilities, radio, TV and social media platforms. Access to these facilities should be under democratic control, with political parties' coverage being allocated in proportion to the popular vote at elections.

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

### SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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





£1/£2 solidarity price

socialistparty.org.uk



# the Socialist

Issue 1222

13-19 April 2023

formerly **Militant**

# SUPPORT JUNIOR DOCTORS

# FULLY FUND OUR NHS

## Kick out health racketeers

HEATHER RAWLING  
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

“Steve Barclay where are you!” “Rishi Sunak you’re so tight, junior doctors have to strike!” were just some of the chants on a lively picket line in Leicester. Up and down the country junior doctors are striking against the government’s refusal to negotiate a decent pay offer. Nobody wants to strike, least of all those responsible for treating patients. But what choice do they have?

Junior doctors save lives every day for £14 an hour, less if they are paying back a student loan. They are standing on picket lines up and down the country in a fight to save an NHS in a critical condition. Doctors outside Leicester Royal Infirmary left reporters in no doubt about their determination to fight for their pay claim.

But they also made it clear that unless they win their struggle, the NHS may not survive. Inside hospitals, doctors and nurses are being stretched to breaking point. Recruitment of staff to the NHS, including doctors and nurses, is in crisis and many are leaving because there is too much stress for too little pay, with too little resources.

Working-class people understand that the NHS is in jeopardy and NHS workers have been striking for its future. Their struggle is our struggle. The noise of horns blaring as cars, buses, ambulances, and lorries went past was loud and clear.

And the money is there to pay the junior doctors and other NHS staff. £457 million was spent by the NHS in 2020-21, just to pay interest on Private Finance Initiative (PFI) loans alone. The Socialist Party says cancel all PFI debt.

£11.5 billion of outsourced contracts were given to private companies between 2013 and 2020 – over 6% of total NHS spending. These companies are only interested in making a profit, not our health or health workers themselves. During the pandemic, the Tory government paid private hospitals an extra 25% to treat NHS patients. Yet 43% less healthcare was delivered by them than the year before the pandemic!

We can’t look to the Labour Party to defend the health service. Labour leader Keir Starmer and Labour shadow health secretary Wes Streeting in government would resume Blair’s policies, further opening the NHS for big business. We need a new mass workers’ party, fighting for a fully funded NHS, to reverse all privatisation and outsourcing, to nationalise the pharmaceutical, medical and all companies profiteering from the NHS under democratic workers’ and community control.



Junior doctors striking at Leicester Royal Infirmary  
PHOTO: STEVE SCORE

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY’S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on p15

