



TORIES WOUNDED

KICK THEM OUT

■ **No trust in Starmer's Labour**

■ **We need a new mass workers' party**

BEN GOLDSTONE
SOUTH WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Over 13 years, the Tories have led the country into rapidly declining living standards for the majority of the population, rising poverty, stagnating wages, collapsing public services, and have attacked the right to protest and strike, alongside scandal after scandal. All the while, the richest have continued to see their profits grow.

Unsurprisingly, people are angry. And the 4 May local elections showed it. The Conservatives lost over 1,000 seats, and lost control of almost 50 councils.

In the same week, Charles was crowned king. Public services are stretched to breaking point. We're told that there isn't enough money for pay rises that keep up with

inflation, and yet, despite the royal family having an estimated wealth of over £21 billion, the government found up to 100 million to put towards the event. Why should they be allowed to live like kings when many are barely able to scrape by?

The local election results are another example to show that the Tories can be defeated, especially given how weak and divided they are. This should provide hope and empowerment to workers on strike and everyone hit by the cost-of-living squeeze. The Tories and the bosses can be defeated in the battle for inflation-proof pay rises.

Seeing the back of the Tories would be welcome to millions. But would Labour be any different?

Keir Starmer has ruled out a Labour government giving workers the pay rise we need. When asked about junior doctors walking out, Labour shadow health secretary Wes Streeting said: "I don't support the strike".

We need a new political party that actually has the needs of the working class at its heart. That's why Socialist Party members were part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) stand in over 250 seats in the local elections, as part of the campaign for a new mass workers' party.

• Read 'Tory local election drubbing sets Starmer's sights on Downing Street' on page 3

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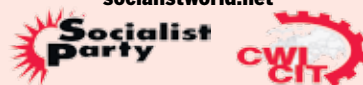
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."

Karl Marx

National Shop Stewards Network: 'Come to our conference to build solidarity with the current strikes and to discuss how to prepare for the battles ahead'

The following letter has been distributed by the National Shop Stewards Network, ahead of its conference in London on 24 June. Members of the Socialist Party, activists in their trade unions will be attending, and campaigning for the fighting trade unionists we have met through the strike wave to come and join the discussions too.

Dear comrade,

We are writing to shop stewards committees, union branches and trades councils on behalf of the National Shop Stewards Network, to ask you to consider sending a delegation to our national conference taking place at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London from 11 am to 4.30 pm on Saturday 24 June, 2023.

Our Network was initiated by the RMT in 2006 and now also has national support from Unite, CWU, NUJ, NUM, POA, BFAWU, NAPO and FBU, as well as many trades councils and individual branches in other unions. This will be our sixteenth national conference, but in our opinion, it will be the most important yet.

We will be meeting after a year when workers have suffered the steepest fall in our real incomes for half a century. It has also been a year when the working class has refused to accept the misery on offer from the Tory government and employers. Strike action has taken place on a bigger scale than at any time since the late 1980s. In 2017, strike figures were the lowest in history, yet in the current strike wave we have seen two days where over half a million workers have walked out together in mass co-ordinated strike action.

While a number of disputes are ongoing, some have been settled. The results vary, but every public sector strike has forced the Tory government to step back from their initial refusal to negotiate. And in the private sector, some important victories have been won. The last year has proven that striking works, but the cost-of-living squeeze on workers is unrelenting.

Alongside how to build solidarity with the current strikes, key questions for discussion at the Network conference will therefore include:

- How can we be better prepared for inevitable future strikes?
 - It is possible to 'all strike together' in a 24-hour general strike?
 - How can we fight the threat from the latest Tory undemocratic anti-union 'minimum service' legislation?
- Hundreds of thousands of workers have been on strike for the first time. Many hundreds, if not thousands, have become workplace reps or stewards for the first time.

Our conference will bring together active rank-and-file trade unionists – both new and longstanding – from across the whole of the trade union movement, including every union that has been involved in strike action. If members of your branch would like to take part in that kind of discussion, please consider sending them to our conference. All union members are very welcome to attend and to fully participate in the discussion.

We have a website, Facebook group, Twitter account, and a regular weekly e-bulletin. Thousands of reps and activists across the trade union movement currently receive it. All are available to trade unionists and their organisations to publicise their disputes, events etc. Please feel free to use these platforms. Invitations to speak at your union meetings are also welcome. If you would like more information please get in touch.

Yours in solidarity,

ROB WILLIAMS NSSN CHAIR
KATRINE WILLIAMS NSSN SECRETARY

www.shopstewards.net

nationalshop stewardsnetwork

2023 National Shop Stewards Network Conference Saturday 24 June Conway Hall, London WC1R 4RL 11am-4.30pm

If you've been on a picket line, this is where you need to be next!

FIGHT THE TORY COST-OF-LIVING SQUEEZE AND THEIR ANTI-UNION LAWS!



TORY LOCAL ELECTION DRUBBING SETS STARMER'S SIGHTS ON DOWNING STREET

Prepare for a workers' stand in the general election



WHAT WE THINK

People want 'Tories out.' That is the bleedingly obvious lesson from the 4 May local election results. The Tories set their expectation bar – at 1,000 losses – so low they hoped it would be impossible to go under. But they did, losing 1,061 seats and control of 48 councils. Labour, gaining 536 seats, Lib Dems 407 and Greens 241 – shared the spoils.

Much less than half the electorate voted, evidence of the widespread disdain with capitalist establishment politicians. Voter turnout was lessened still by Tory voter-ID rules putting up more barriers in the way of voting. Scandalously, reliable data was not recorded of numbers turned away on the day.

Local elections, across not all councils in England and none in Scotland and Wales, cannot be an accurate predictor for the outcome at the next general election, which could come any time before December 2024. Nevertheless, it dominates the thoughts of the establishment parties. Not least whole swathes of Tory MPs fearing for their jobs. Are there any who are safe?

In 'red wall' leave-voting areas, such as Blackpool, Grimsby and Middlesborough, Tories lost ground to Labour. In wealthy 'blue wall' seats in the south east they lost out to Lib Dems in many cases. Lib Dems say they made 132 net gains in council areas covered by Tory cabinet members. Prominent blue wall Tories, including Michael Gove, Theresa May, Nadim Zahawi and Jeremy Hunt, will all feel under threat.

Even Mid-Suffolk, an area which has not had a non-Tory MP since the 1950s, was lost to the Greens who now have their first-ever majority council.

Such uncertainty will stir the already simmering cauldron of discontent that is the Conservative Party. Many Tory MPs and councillors who hoped against hope that Sunak would give some stability following the Liz Truss disaster and Boris Johnson's lying sleaze, will again be looking to save their careers.

All of the running sores of division in the party will be examined once again – on the issue of the relationship with the EU and the Windsor agreement, on money for so-called 'levelling up' just how draconian to be towards people fleeing war and oppression on small boats, when and whether to invoke new anti-trade union laws on striking workers, and on the treatment of ex-prime minister Boris Johnson.

For Sunak and the Tories, the road from here to a general election will be far from smooth. Sunak may not have his own way on when exactly



Political poison for the majority of the electorate, in Conservative clubs up and down the country many party activists hark back to his temporary populist appeal. The potential recommended sanctions from the Privileges Committee report into whether Johnson lied to the House of Commons will come before the Commons in the coming weeks and months. Tory MPs will have to vote to accept or reject.

For Sunak and the Tories, the road from here to a general election will be far from smooth. Sunak may not have his own way on when exactly

the poll takes place, and the party may go into it with fewer MPs sat on its benches than at present.

Labour picked up the most seats on 4 May, although not as many as some predicted they could have. In the more than 50 local authorities controlled by Labour, voters have already had a taste of what a Starmer-led government would mean. All have passed on cuts and austerity as demanded by the Tories, without putting up a fight.

Labour's projected vote share was no higher than in last year's local elections at 35%. Still, Sir Keir

Starmer declared: "Make no mistake, this means we are on course for a Labour majority at the next election". But make no mistake, many would not have voted for Labour with any enthusiasm, only as what they deemed the best way to inflict a blow on the Tories. At a general election, where turnout is likely to be up, that urge will be even greater.

Among the spectrum of extrapolations from the election results, many put Labour as the biggest party in a hung parliament. A lot can happen between now and a general election, and a lot rides on Labour's performance in Scotland where the Scottish National Party, which holds 45 out of 59 Scottish seats in Westminster, is in crisis (See 'Accelerating SNP crisis shows need for a real workers' alternative' at socialistparty.org.uk). But it is highly likely Labour will be the biggest party, and Starmer prime minister.

How is he preparing for office? By doing all he can to reassure the capitalist class that he will govern in their interests. That is why he speaks of "fiscal responsibility", rules out keeping the party's policy for free higher education, sacks frontbenchers for speaking out on picket lines, bars Jeremy Corbyn from standing for Labour and removes the whip from Diane Abbott.

Just as Starmer is preparing for office, so too must the workers' and trade union movement prepare for a Starmer-led government. And be under no illusions that it will be possible for Starmer to act in the interests of both the bosses and the workers. As much as his approach is modelled on that of Tony Blair, unlike Blair, who governed initially in a period of economic growth, Starmer will inherit a stagnant or recessionary economy, with stubbornly high inflation. Acting in the interests of the bosses will mean assisting them in continuing to attack our living standards.

How can the trade unions prepare to defend their members against attacks and real-terms pay cuts from a Starmer-led Labour government?

The Socialist Party is campaigning for a trade union-backed workers' list of candidates to contest the election, as the first step towards the development of the new mass workers' party we need. It could include Jeremy Corbyn standing in Islington North, other left-wingers barred by Starmer from standing, striking workers and trade unionists, and socialist campaigners.

Socialist Party members are taking part in debates throughout trade union conferences on what kind of political representation our class needs. That includes backing a motion at Unite conference for a rule change to allow the union to financially back candidates who support Unite policies outside of Labour.

Even just a small group of fighting, workers' MPs in parliament under a Starmer government would be a pole of attraction for all those fighting for an alternative to continued price rises and misery.

If a workers' list is not prepared in time for a general election, Socialist Party members will stand as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, as our members have in the 4 May elections (see pages 4-6). In doing so, giving people the opportunity to vote for a fighting alternative to cuts and austerity, and preparing the ground for future workers' electoral struggles on an even larger scale.

TUSC

Shine comes off Greens in power in Brighton

DAVID MAPLES
BRIGHTON SOCIALIST PARTY

With 241 gains across England the Green Party had cause for celebration. But events test political parties. The result in Brighton and Hove, where they had minority control, was in stark contrast. In 2020 the Green Party became the largest party on Brighton and Hove Council after Labour expelled Corbyn-supporting councillors. The last three years have tested the Green Party which has been found wanting.

The Tories have reduced funding to the Council by £110 million per

year since 2010. Rather than mount a campaign to get this money back, the Greens have scrambled around looking for cuts. This year's desperate measures include closing public toilets. Although Labour offered no consistent alternative, they campaigned against this.

Labour are the immediate beneficiaries but, facing 20% cuts to the core budget, they will also quickly be tested.

TUSC candidates gained 900 votes, including 277 in Moulsecoomb and Bevendean ward, and will continue to fight against austerity in Brighton, Hove and beyond.



Brighton TUSC outside hustings we were excluded from

Fight for a new mass workers' party needed in Worcester

ARCHIE HARRISON
WORCESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

With voter turnout on the decline in Worcester, Labour making only slight gains from Tory failures, and the Greens increasing their support, it is clear now more than ever that there is a need for a new mass workers' party.

This year's local elections in Worcester saw the Tories fail to win a single ward, losing all seven incumbent councillors up for election. Labour now have the most seats, but they don't have a majority, because the Greens have benefited where the Tories have failed, taking them past the Tories with a total of ten seats.

TUSC candidates stood in three wards, a step towards a broader stand next time. We heard while campaigning that people want to stand up to the Tories, but don't have faith in Starmer's Labour and are looking for working-class representation. They're looking for a party to stand up to the Tories, not imitate them.

We need a party that will stand up to vicious cuts, that will protect public services, and resist all attempts at privatisation, on a local and national level. TUSC's stand is an important part of this process to build such a party, a new mass workers' party.

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Tackling food poverty, supporting strikes: Building the fightback with TUSC stand in Southampton

NICK CHAFFEY
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

This year's council elections came as food inflation hit 19%. For TUSC candidates in Southampton, it was an opportunity to hit back at the crisis facing many families, and demand council action from Labour councillors to use their powers to provide free school meals for all school and college students during term time and holidays. The campaign had been launched by Barrie Margetts, former Labour councillor for the Coxford ward, who had been deselected by Labour for raising demands that the Labour group refuse to raise council tax and rents, and use reserves to provide free school meals. We took the petition with Barrie to school gates in his ward and across the city and got a great response from parents who are getting hard hit by rising food prices but also council tax, rents and charges put up by Labour.

We've met hundreds of people over the last four weeks, many on picket lines, who are angry at the problems we face. It's not lost on many that supermarkets and energy companies are making huge profits and the government does nothing. Many were enthused to hear we were standing candidates and were prepared to back the strikes, unlike Labour. On the NEU teachers' strike march and rally, one of our candidates was asked to speak.

This year May Day was marked with a march and rally organised by Southampton TUC, with striking workers from UCU, NEU and PCS unions speaking about the need to strike together, and others from the RMT, health workers, tenants and environmentalists who are fighting back against austerity. TUSC candidates joined the march and raised the call to Labour councillors that it was time to fight back and not add to the attacks facing working-class families.

At our election day campaign stall nine of our candidates were out campaigning and had a great response. Two young workers we met on our teatime stall came to our meeting

that evening. One was a young nurse livid at the bills she was struggling to pay while the royals were set to wine and dine.

These elections have been a blood-bath for the Tories. Over a third of the seats they lost were in the South East. In Southampton they lost 12 seats. Labour now have 35 of 51 councillors. What reason can there be not to act now to help families and send the bill to this weak and divided government? But in local councils across the country Labour have carried out Tory cuts. Here in Southampton, talk of a looming 114 notice to halt all non-statutory spending. In Labour's hands, further cuts are inevitable. We have to step up our campaign, mobilise parents and trade unions to demand council action on food poverty and, make the case for trade unionists and socialists to prepare to stand in the next general election.

Do you agree? JOIN THE SOCIALISTS socialistparty.org.uk/join



Over 2,800 votes against austerity in Sheffield

LEAH BYATT
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

Sheffield TUSC candidates stood on an anti-austerity, socialist programme in 27 of the 28 seats up for election this year. We received 2,852 votes across the city as the only anti-austerity option.

Fulwood candidate John Bunn participated in a successful hustings. Those in attendance were receptive to our ideas and welcomed responses that indicated TUSC would be the only party that could be trusted to stand against council cuts.

Three of our candidates, myself included, also attended the 'sham' hustings hosted by Sheffield Students Unions where we were excluded from speaking by the organiser - who it later transpired is a Labour councillor in Warrington. (See 'Anti-cuts

council candidates excluded from hustings' on socialistparty.org.uk)

We addressed the room anyway, challenging the Labour-Lib Dem-Green coalition on the £43 million cuts to public services that they passed, and were then removed by security.

The 'sham' hustings in particular gained TUSC a lot of support from my own colleagues who were outraged to hear about the political censorship we have to battle against to get our ideas out.

Public ownership

We campaigned to bring public transport back into public ownership and to protect public spaces from further commercialisation and privatisation.

This included our efforts to protect Hillsborough Park's multi-use

games area from the council's plans to replace the current free-to-use facilities with a privately owned leisure centre.

Dave Nellist, TUSC chair and former Militant Labour MP, commended this campaign in his speech at our election-eve rally, which attracted 70 attendees and gained positive feedback from new supporters in attendance, who stated that the event offered "credible solutions to the current issues faced" and provided "hope for a new way forward".

The hard work our supporters put into the campaigning meant we more than doubled our vote from last year!

We've attracted a new layer of people ready to organise and build a working-class fightback - a huge achievement all round that we should all be proud of, and which we will continue to build on.

TUSC STAND A MODEST BUT IMPORTANT STEP TOWARDS A MASS WORKERS' ELECTORAL ALTERNATIVE



WHAT WE THINK

The 21,696 votes won by its candidates in May's local council elections is only a modest step forward for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) electoral alliance. But in many ways this was the most significant campaign that TUSC has conducted since the relaunch of the coalition in September 2020.

Co-founded in 2010 by the late Bob Crow, the then general secretary of the RMT transport workers union, it reached its electoral zenith - to date - in 2015, when TUSC candidates in the general and local elections in May that year polled a combined total of 118,125 votes.

The situation changed, however, with the unexpected victory of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader in September 2015, a development that was warmly welcomed by all TUSC participants.

In the coalition's founding statement, TUSC had acknowledged that there were "different strategic views about the way forward for the left in Britain, whether the Labour Party can be reclaimed by the labour movement, or whether

a new workers' party needs to be established". With the possibility of a Corbyn-led government at play, TUSC recalibrated its electoral activity and did not contest the 2017 and 2019 general elections.

But the situation has changed again. It is clear that with Sir Keir Starmer's leadership, and the ruthless purging of the personnel and policies of the Corbyn era, the capitalist establishment has regained decisive control of the Labour Party.

Yet building after a defeat is not always the easiest task, with activists without a clear socialist perspective sometimes weighed down by negative aspects of the experience and unable to see a way forward. Support for the idea that trade unions or working-class community campaigners could take their own initiative at election time and stand themselves against the capitalist politicians is only now starting to revive, after almost a year of struggle against the cost-of-living crisis has shown again the latent power of the organised working class.

That's why TUSC's 2023 campaign was important, the propaganda of the deed. With no elections this year in Scotland or Wales, or the big cities of London, Birmingham and Bristol - for the first time since the relaunch - it was an achievement in itself to get 256 candidates across 65 councils onto the ballot paper. The reports included here give a glimpse

of the impact of the different campaigns, which all left a mark. Candidates in nearly one sixth of the wards contested by TUSC reached the 'five percent' benchmark this year, compared to one tenth of the candidates in 2021.

And there are signs of a wider preparedness to challenge Starmer and his local agents at the ballot box. To the fore were the former Liverpool Labour councillors, suspended and subsequently expelled from Labour for voting against the council's cuts budget in 2022, two of whom were re-elected, along with another supporter, as Liverpool Community Independent councillors. The former leader of the Portsmouth council Labour group, excluded as a Labour candidate in January for his support for the left-wing Momentum group, was also victorious.

All these steps are important but the situation is really crying out for a decisive intervention by the left-led trade unions, and Jeremy Corbyn with them.

The Socialist Party will be arguing for TUSC to continue its pioneering work of providing a unifying umbrella for trade unionists, community campaigners and socialists of different organisations or none, to fight together at the ballot box in the 2024 local elections and the general election to come.

But more powerful forces also need to step up to the plate.



TUSC campaigning in Bromsgrove

Anti-cuts stand cuts through Leicester Labour turmoil

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

Without the benefit of national recognition, or the election machines the main parties have, TUSC in Leicester achieved 2,173 votes in the Mayoral election, as well as 1,540 votes in the nine council seats we stood in across Leicester.

Voters had plenty of other alternatives to register a protest, at either the Tory government or the long-standing rule of Labour in Leicester. But our vote was much more a conscious vote for anti-austerity and socialist ideas. We got across the idea that councillors can lead the fight against cuts. TUSC's 'no-cuts budget' position was also adopted by four independent candidates.

There was plenty of anger at the Tory government's cost-of-living crisis, but also against the cuts made by the Labour mayor and city council, not least the 108% increase in the council's district heating charge on six estates (only reduced from a proposed quadrupling by a campaign).

Everywhere we were able to explain our ideas we got a good response, in the live-streamed debates organised by BBC Radio Leicester and the Leicester Mercury, and in the meeting organised by a Muslim education organisation. We received many messages of support, including from trade union reps whose picket lines we had supported over the last few months.

We pledged to abolish the undemocratic mayoral system if elected, but despite the election to build support for anti-austerity politics.

While the Tories were being hammered across the country, something different was going on in Leicester. In the last all-city elections in 2019, Labour won 53 of the 54 city seats, and Sir Peter Soulsby got 61% of the vote for City Mayor. After this election there are now 17 Tories, three Greens, and three Lib Dems with 31 Labour councillors. Soulsby won the mayoral election, but with his vote collapsing to 39.3%.

Days before the nominations opened, a national executive-imposed panel, which had superseded any democratic votes by local Labour Party members, summarily removed 19 Labour councillors and replaced them with new candidates, causing turmoil among many Labour Party members. Three of those councillors revealed their lack of principles by joining the Tories, and some had been part of a group who, days before the last general election, had publicly condemned Jeremy Corbyn for opposing right-wing Indian Prime Minister Modi.

Labour purge

The purge enabled the party leadership nationally and locally to remove Labour councillors who had criticised and opposed the City Mayor. This included councillors who had opposed cuts and the district heating charge hike. At least one councillor, Gary O'Donnell, had already resigned from Labour for attacking working-class people before the purge and had decided to stand in his ward.

TUSC's All-Britain steering committee wrote to the deposed councillors offering them the opportunity to be part of the TUSC umbrella, but there was very little time to discuss before the election began. One purged councillor, Ruma Ali did join the TUSC slate, which already included two former Labour councillors. Many of those councillors ended up standing as independents.

Unfortunately, none of those independents retained their seats, despite getting good votes. There is scope to build alliances against the cuts along the lines that TUSC proposes, and more discussions will take place. One of the ousted councillors switched to the Greens and did win his seat, along with two new Green councillors in that ward.

There is an opportunity to build working-class unity, especially around the struggle against austerity. TUSC has advanced the cause of a working-class political alternative during this campaign.



Leicester TUSC candidates



TUSC candidates in Southampton

TUSC

Plymouth needs councillors that are accountable to the working class

ALEX SAMPSON
SOCIALIST PARTY PLYMOUTH

Local politics in Plymouth have been under the national spotlight in the last few months, thanks to the unstable nature of the council make-up and the appalling decision of Conservative leader Richard Bingley and now ex-councillor Jonathan Dreaan to use executive powers to order the destruction of 110 mature city centre trees in the face of massive local objection (See 'Over 250 TUSC candidates to take on cuts councils' on www.socialistparty.org.uk). Bingley was forced to resign shortly before a full council meeting where he faced

a vote of no confidence. Meanwhile, Dreaan, who was the portfolio holder responsible for the regeneration scheme, which included the tree felling, was unanimously nominated as Lord Mayor by a select committee of Labour and Conservative councillors just days after the destruction of the trees.

While the Armada Way campaign made national headlines, Plymouth has many more examples of councillors overriding local dissatisfaction with planning issues over the last year, including the demolition of a thriving small business to make way for a health centre, promises not to erect a new mobile phone mast in a local park abandoned, and other building projects around the city destroying even more mature trees.

The flagrant disregard to opposition in all these cases has left Plymouth residents disgusted with the political process, as was reflected in the average turnout of just 32% for Thursday's election.

'All as bad as each other'

This frustration with the parties represented on the council is shared by Socialist Party members. On the many stalls and canvassing events held through April and early May, we regularly heard the phrases "they are as bad as each other" and "I don't trust any of them" about career politicians who run this city.

To counter this, TUSC candidates stood in all 19 wards in the city for

the first time since 2016. The programme TUSC candidates put forward of no cuts to services, no council tax rises, and full funding for local services was met with more support than during previous election campaigns.

Even more heartening was the number of people who genuinely desire a socialist future and stepped forward as new Socialist Party members. We have welcomed former Labour activists, trade unionists and students into our ranks, all ready and willing to take up the struggle for a fair and socialist future.

People voted Tory-lite (Labour) to punish the Tories, with the Conservatives only managing to hold onto one seat. But Labour hardly increased its vote share, and, in its traditional areas of support, is losing votes to parties and candidates seen as an alternative, such as the Greens and 'Independent' Alliance of ex-Tory councillors.

The increased number of votes going to TUSC candidates, from 626 last year to 882 this year, despite the increased number of candidates from other parties in each ward spreading the vote, and voter suppression due to a lack of acceptable photo ID, was heartening.

This campaign has given us a boost as we go into the next period of strike waves, increasing inflation and austerity, and the last death knells of the current Conservative government.



Plymouth TUSC

Tory Voter ID farce and disenfranchisement

I had the most unnecessarily strenuous and exasperating experience voting in the May local elections. It took far longer than any other time I've voted, probably longer than every time I've voted put together!

I walked into my polling station, met by four volunteers. One took my license and stared at it in silence for maybe 15 seconds - longer than any bar staff ever have! After another volunteer prompted her, she finally concluded: "Yeah that's Adam. Let me find your address". She looked at the address on my twelve-year-old license! I didn't live in Coventry twelve years ago, and eventually she realised this. She informed me my address isn't in Coventry.

She looked at her colleagues with a worried face then, as she was about to speak to me again, her colleague standing next to me asked for my current address then I finally gave my address, twice!

After another long pause to find my name and address, the woman opposite asked me to confirm my name! I stared, confused, wondering how to confirm it and why I need to when it's on the license in front of her. After another five seconds, the woman on my right, satisfied with the right address, then read my full name and address out loud.

Finally, she crossed off my name, double checked the number next to my name, and gave me my ballot. Is the right to vote meant to be this much of a bloody pain? Some wards in Coventry had turnout of just 21%. The experience I had would be well enough to drive more voters away, alongside the two million who don't have a valid ID.

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

I was somewhat surprised to discover that I do not need to present photographic ID to attend an election count as a TUSC counting agent. Apparently the count is far less sensitive than voting itself!

Do we need any clearer evidence that photo ID is designed to prevent those least likely to vote Tory from voting at all?

CLIVE WALDER
BIRMINGHAM SOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY



Mansfield TUSC on May Day protest

'Working-class people deserve to vote for a party that will fight for them'

PHOEBE COX
MANSFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

TUSC candidates, Socialist Party members and supporters held a public meeting in Mansfield on election eve - as we spoke about support for striking workers, and advocated for working class-led politics and anti-austerity policies.

TUSC candidates standing across the North Nottinghamshire area, including, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood, and Bolsover, introduced themselves and shared why they decided to stand for election.

They all called for fully funded services and spoke about the need to have elected representatives from the working class, fighting for the working class.

Socialist Party member Karen Seymour ran for Mansfield Mayor and received 420 votes, 2% of the total.

She said: "We are the only ones to have mentioned the need for more jobs, council homes and services. I'll stand on a workers' wage, with the rest of the salary being donated to community projects and services. We would also campaign for a referendum to scrap the undemocratic position of executive Mayor."

We were asked by an attendee: "What does TUSC say to those who feel you are splitting the left vote and enabling the right wing?"

We said the two main parties, Tories and Labour, do not stand for working-class communities, support striking workers, or actively oppose cuts and

austerity. Without TUSC, there is no viable left-wing alternative on the paper.

A member of the public who attended the meeting also pointed out that Labour had lost trust of the working class and that people had a right to vote for an alternative option. He thanked our candidates for standing and said we were the only party fighting for people and our communities.

Denise Tooley-Okonkwo, Socialist Party member and TUSC candidate, said: "There is another way and another option. Working-class people deserve to vote for a party that will fight for them. We campaign all year round, not just at election time and we fight all forms of oppression. We need a new mass workers' party that works for all. That's why we do this every day."

NEU: Education workers elect new union leadership



PHOTO: ELAINE BRUNSKILL

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS ON NEU NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

Hundreds of thousands of teachers in the National Education Union (NEU) have just returned an overwhelming mandate to reject the unfunded pittance offered by the government. Members have now also voted in a ballot to decide the union's future leadership, electing a new National Executive.

In the last four months, we have taken six days of industrial action that has been widely supported, with nearly 60,000 new members swelling the numbers on picket lines and joining their voices to the fight. The typically low turnout of 7% in the Executive election does not mean the membership is divorced from the call for a fighting union.

Most NEU members see a union prepared to take action. They see a union that listens to its membership, with leaders who make stirring speeches to mobilise and motivate to win on pay and funding. This is great, and certainly the type of union Socialist Party members have been fighting for since five of our members got elected to the National Executive two years ago.

Behind the scenes, National Executive meetings have been hot with debate about the way forward. Some of those debates have been discussed in the pages of the Socialist.

Socialists on the executive have had to fight to have a ballot. We had to fight to have national strike action. And we're still fighting four months later to re-ballot support staff. It has often felt like our role has been to motivate and boost the confidence of other National Executive members to lead strikes, and sometimes to even speak to their electorate! We hope these members continue to support and lead on action, while continuing to fight for more socialist, fighting voices on the executive. We have been proven correct with every step taken and we hope to continue to

have this influence with the re-ballot of teachers and support staff needed this term to continue our fight.

We have been able to put forward correct ideas due to our base among the membership. With Socialist Party activists in different roles and regions, we meet regularly to ensure we put forward a socialist programme and strategy that can take the workers' movement forward. If you work in education, consider joining the Socialist Party to help us in this fight, including participating in our NEU caucus. All Socialist Party members in education are welcome and encouraged to be involved; join us to build the fightback needed in education.

We will have three Socialist Party members on the executive from September. Changes to rules mean that each area's four seats have been cut to three, two of which must be women. We have two fewer executive members than last year, but maintain roughly 10% of the body.

We support increasing representation for all equality groups at all levels of union and the working-class movement. However, the way to do this is by removing barriers placed there to prevent those groups taking part, not by preventing other class fighters from holding positions. In one of these seats, there were 480 (roughly 25%) of ballot papers that were considered 'spoilt'. This clearly raises the need for this ballot to be re-run in such a way that it is transparent and democratic.

We will continue to build our strong base in the NEU. We will push for a strong strike re-ballot that allows for maximum unity across education unions and roles, while making sure that we don't lose momentum by waiting for other unions to join the fray.

We will continue to argue and build the fight for decent pay, funding and conditions in education, within a union that mobilises its membership by fighting from the front and building from below.

RMT rail workers win third massive vote for strikes

Unions must coordinate action on the railways

MIDLANDS RMT MEMBER

The results are in and the members smashed it once again.

RMT members in all 14 Train Operating Companies (TOCs) have delivered resounding 'yes' votes, some as high as 96%.

The Tories hoped that, nearly a year into the dispute, and with Network Rail members having settled, TOC members would have lost their appetite to fight to defend our jobs, terms and conditions.

How wrong they were. We have delivered our third clear mandate for action, so now we must set out a clear strategy to push back the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) and force them to ditch their atrocious plans to drive down pay and make us lose precious terms and conditions.

It is no use calling the odd day of strike action here or there. This only serves to irritate the travelling public without significantly increasing the pressure on the bosses and the government.

Now that ASLEF, our sister union representing train drivers, has called three days of strike action and an overtime ban, we have an opportunity to coordinate our action despite the longstanding difficulties in forming a united front in the past. Rank-and-file ASLEF members are crying out for the leaderships of our unions to work together. This would give us the best chance to defeat the RDG and their Tory government backers.

• RMT TOC members will strike for 24 hours on 13 May. ASLEF members will strike on 12 and 31 of May, and 3 June



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

NUJ conference debates coordinated strike action

CWI SUPPORTERS AT NUJ DELEGATES MEETING

There were important steps forward for the left at the first in-person National Union of Journalists (NUJ) Delegates Meeting (DM, conference) since lockdown, which took place on 28-29 April.

The conference saw general agreement on many issues, including the pressure on wages and deteriorating workplace conditions, opposition to many Tory government policies, media freedom, international issues, and the safety of journalists.

A heated debate on how journalists should report trans rights underlined the need to approach the question of oppression and rights from a class perspective.

There were also a number of clashes between many on the conference floor and the dominant wings of the National Executive Committee.

A motion from Derry North West to introduce a rules change to mean NEC members cannot attend DM as delegates, in order to hold the NEC

more to account, was passed, despite NEC opposition.

South Yorkshire put forward a motion calling for NUJ support and solidarity action for other unions' strikes. An amendment from London Magazine branch, moved by Niall Mulholland, and seconded by Bob Miller, from Belfast branch, called for: "NUJ to work with other unions and the TUC to prepare for the maximum coordinated industrial action, up to and including a general strike, if the current Tory government moves to implement new anti-union laws and restrictions".

This was opposed by the NEC, which argued it was illegal and would put the NUJ in jeopardy. Niall anticipated these arguments by pointing out that several unions have already balloted separately on pay and then taken action on the same day, on 25 March in England, and on 26 April in Northern Ireland. A 'general strike' can involve a similar process that involves as many unions as possible.

The amendment vote was lost with 33 votes to 50.

A motion outlining an alternative to the NEC's proposals for yet another membership subs rise, which disproportionately hits lower-paid NUJ members, was ruled out of order. However, the DM agreed to hold a special conference later in the year to discuss the union's income and subs rates in a thorough and transparent manner.

Anton McCabe, Militant Left member (CWI Ireland) and outgoing NEC member, spoke passionately on a motion about the loyalist paramilitary killing of investigative journalist Martin Hagan, in Lurgan, 2001. Anton and delegates from Ireland pointed out that allegations in a BBC documentary aired a few years ago, indicated British state collusion in the killing of the NUJ activist. "The fight for justice continues," Anton told the DM.

All in all, progress was made for left policies and for a more democratic and combative union.

BRITAIN'S CRUMBLING INFRASTRUCTURE

STEVE SCORE

SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Sewage and pollutants pour into our rivers and coastal waters. Hospitals and schools are literally crumbling because of a lack of investment. Many trains are over their age limit. Bridges and roads are collapsing. Regular weather events seem to constantly surprise authorities - resulting in flooding, fires and rails buckling.

You would think this list was enough to show the dire state of Britain's infrastructure, but it is far from comprehensive. The dictionary definition of economic infrastructure is "the basic systems and services that are needed in order to support an economy, for example, transport and communication systems (including broadband) and electricity and water supplies." This leaves a lot out, such as flood defences and 'social infrastructure' like housing, hospitals, and schools.

All these things, and more, are in desperate need of massive investment. The failing infrastructure impacts the quality of people's lives, levels of poverty and regional inequalities, the lack of action to deal with climate change, sustainable growth and, particularly important to British capitalism, the level of productivity and therefore international competitiveness of the economy.

Approximately a third of all government investment in infrastructure is allocated to local government - devastated over a decade of austerity. £15 billion was wiped from council finances between 2010 and 2020. Inflation is hitting funds too; the County Councils Network estimates costs could rise £3.5 billion in the two years to 2024.

One example of what is needed is that local councils say that 3,200 bridges need repair, at an estimated cost of £1.2 billion, but only a fraction of that work is planned over the

next five years. Over the year 2021, the RAC reported that 100 council-maintained bridges were declared unfit for the heaviest vehicles, with 17 bridges collapsing entirely and 37 partially. The required repair bill for school buildings alone is estimated to be £11 billion.

This doesn't mention the housing crisis and the desperate need to build millions of council homes to solve it, the libraries, youth clubs and other community services that have gone. Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidates in May's local elections put forward a strategy to reverse council cuts using reserves and borrowing, and to build a mass campaign to force the money needed from the government. We raised the example of Liverpool City Council in the mid-1980s, led by Militant, the forerunner of the Socialist Party. It forced Thatcher back and built over 5,000 council houses, six new nurseries, six new leisure centres, and more.

Years of austerity meant stagnation in national infrastructure investment, even before the pandemic hit the economy further. But now, it also faces the problem of further escalating costs due to inflation. The price of construction materials in July 2022 was 46.2% higher than it had been in January 2020, according to the Office for National Statistics. The cost of borrowing rises with interest rates too.

It will also cost more to ensure sustainability and reduce the impact of climate change. Budgets for any major investment planned now will inevitably be exceeded by the time they



come to fruition.

The Tory government regularly promises money to go into infrastructure schemes and has talked of a "levelling-up" agenda, particularly with reference to more investment outside the southeast to deal with regional inequality. In March the Financial Times reported the Department for Levelling Up was set to spend £2.42 billion less than planned for the year 2022-23.

Last year they promised £650 billion investment in infrastructure over the next decade, at least half of which they hope will come from the private sector. But will the reality match up to the rhetoric?

According to the government's own infrastructure commission, last year saw just 55,000 heat pumps installed, the target being 600,000 a year by 2028. 300,000 electric vehicle charging points should be available by 2030, but there are currently just 37,000. In September 2021, just 6.3% of homes had full fibre-optic broadband compared to 53% in Romania and 21% in Kazakhstan.

HS2 was trumpeted by the Tories as being a key investment that would link London, the Midlands, and the North with high-speed trains, enhancing business and bringing money to more deprived areas. It was never planned to serve every area and didn't deal with the lack of investment across the

whole rail network, just 38% of which is electrified. It has since suffered from delays, escalating costs and parts of the route ditched. Local buses have seen cuts to route subsidies, and have deteriorated under privatisation and deregulation.

Take another example, hospital buildings. The UK backlog on maintenance just to keep the existing ones from crumbling is at least £10 billion. It has been revealed that many hospital roofs were built with 'aerated concrete', which have now passed their 30-year life spans - threatening imminent roof collapse!

Boris Johnson famously promised "40 new hospitals", but the only actual hospital construction since then has been in projects approved before the announcement. The six hospital trusts that at that time were allocated potential funding were later asked to revisit their plans to reduce the costs. They are still waiting to see if they get approval.

There needs to be a huge increase in hospital bed numbers and overall capacity, beyond the cost of simply maintaining or replacing crumbling buildings. This is of course 'capital expenditure' and doesn't include the need for extra funding on running costs - not least the necessary increase in NHS pay as part of measures to recruit and retain more staff.

The government plans for over half

of infrastructure investment to be private. The Tory and Labour reliance on private sector money has failed in the past, and it will again. Private Finance Initiative schemes financed £11.8 billion of hospital buildings across England but are costing the NHS £79 billion in repayments over 30 years.

Privatisation is part of the problem. While water companies have failed to invest in new infrastructure to reduce water leaks in the system, and to deal with sewage overflow, they were making billions in profits and handing them out to their shareholders.

The energy crisis in Britain has been exacerbated by the inadequate investment in storage ability for gas in times of surplus to allow it to be used in a crisis. Of course, even more important has been inadequate investment in renewables, energy conservation and sustainable planning. But Centrica (owners of British Gas) announced the tripling of its profits in 2022 to £3.3 billion and decided to give a £3.7 million bonus for the year, on top of his £790,000 annual pay, to its boss Chris O'Shea.

Some left-wing parties and

politicians globally advocate increases in infrastructure investment as part of Keynesian spending plans, including as part of a 'Green New Deal'. The Socialist Party supports investment to address climate change and improve infrastructure and working-class people's lives.

But even capitalist governments, like the Tory Westminster government, have been forced to promise increased investment in infrastructure to try to deal with the dilapidated system - not motivated primarily to meet the needs of the population, but to generate economic growth and a more profitable environment for the capitalists.

A feature of Liz Truss and Kwasi Kwarteng's brief time in Downing Street was pledges to speed up investment in infrastructure in a frenzied bid for 'growth'. Their programme

was thwarted by the capitalist markets, record levels of public debt built up since the 2008-09 economic crisis, the pandemic, and high levels of inflation.

Joe Biden's much publicised \$1.2 trillion (£900 billion) "decade of infrastructure" investment plan is another example. His plans however, as a proportion of US GDP (national income) amounts to just over 0.5% a year over the 10 years and is woefully inadequate.

The Socialist Party called for a vote for Jeremy Corbyn's 2019 manifesto which promised to "launch the largest-scale investment programme in modern times" Corbyn, promising to extend taxes on higher earners and close tax avoidance loopholes, mobilised hundreds of thousands of young people. The opportunity to seize the time and transform the Labour Party from an out-and-out capitalist party into a mass democratic party of the working class - as the Socialist Party campaigned for - was lost.

In defence of the capitalist class, whose profits would be threatened by such a party coming into existence, the Blairite right-wing of the Labour Party assisted in undermining Corbyn's leadership and is now taking steps to drive all elements of his influence and support into the dust.

The Tories, assisted by the Blairites, whipped up press stories of 'magic money trees' and Corbyn's Labour 'bankrupting Britain'.

The subsequent Covid crisis resulted in far more expenditure by Boris Johnson's Tories. However, that was aimed at propping up capitalism itself, and some of the sizeable increase of spending was filtered off by private profiteering by PPE and 'Test and Trace' companies, for example.

Ultimately it is the failure of capitalism itself to overcome the short term demands of profits and its own economic crisis that results in a rotting infrastructure. A left party, looking to carry out large-scale investment in the interests of the working class, would need to mobilise mass support and be armed with a socialist programme.

To seriously deal with the investment needed in Britain's infrastructure, a first step would be the renationalisation of the privatised utilities and services - energy, water, post, telecommunications, rail, and transport. A socialist government could use the profits of those companies to finance dramatic improvements.

But a socialist plan would go further. Despite the cost-of-living crisis facing most of the population,

research by Unite the Union showed that profit margins for the top 350 FTSE companies were 89% higher in the first half of 2022 compared to the same period in 2019. The wealth of the UK's billionaires has risen by over 1,000% in the last 32 years, to £653 billion in 2022.

Nationalising the banks and big construction companies would enable rapid investment into long-term projects. Taking the top 150 companies into public ownership, with compensation only on the basis of proven need, would do more than just allow the necessary finance. It would allow a socialist plan to be developed and would mean that the chaos of the private profit motive and the markets could be replaced by a national discussion on what was needed and what should be prioritised. It would be necessary to have genuine democratic working-class control and management of those industries and sectors to conduct that discussion and develop that plan.

Then such things as a genuine 'green new deal' could be developed, investment in an environmentally sustainable way, a massive expansion in improved and subsidised public transport, including free buses, and communication systems, and greater investment in renewable energy, its storage and conservation.

To achieve these things a socialist transformation of society is needed, and a mass movement led by the organised working class is required to make it happen. Clearly Starmer's Labour Party has no intention of doing that. The creation of a new mass workers party would be the start of a discussion on not just defending our living standards and services currently under attack, but also long-term planning to create a better world - a socialist world.





WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

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 to 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.

The Socialist debates way forward for strike wave

The Socialist welcomes correspondence from readers, including that which is critical. On this occasion we felt it useful to respond to Jerry's letter, as an opportunity to explain the Socialist Party's approach to some of the serious questions about strike strategy and pay campaigns being discussed in the trade unions.

27 April 2023

I bought your propaganda newspaper yesterday for the first and last time.

Ok your statement about what you stand for is totally acceptable to me.

However, I took the time to read the various articles as follows.

Helen Perriam (a mental health nurse and Royal College of Nursing member) on why nurses need a fighting leadership. She has the audacity to state that what is needed is for the National Health Service leadership to get a backbone and lead a campaign in support of the nurses. What does Perriam think Pat Cullen has been doing for the past year? Does Perriam represent your views?

In a second article by Adrian O'Malley (Unison Health Service Group Executive) talks about the right-wing leadership of Unison union.

Does this idiot think that the brilliant

Sharon Graham is right wing? Again does this pathetic individual represent your views?

And finally we have the Socialist Party member, Marion Lloyd, who desires to become President of the Public and Commercial Services Union. Does she seriously believe that Mark Serwotka is doing a bad job? She is not fit to tie the shoelaces of Mark.

So all in all you are determined to divide the left in this country by attacking the unions which represent working people.

Your party will get nowhere as you will not receive widespread support and without such support you will not gain power and without power you are a waste of space. So carry on selling your divisive propaganda.

JERRY HARRINGTON
EX-MEMBER OF THE LABOUR PARTY AND NEW MEMBER OF THE GREEN PARTY.

JOSH ASKER, EDITOR OF THE SOCIALIST, RESPONDS

Our paper is a workers' paper written by activists in the trade union and socialist movement. Helen's article about the NHS pay offer expressed her opinion, that the Tory government's offer was insufficient and that RCN members should vote to reject, an argument the Socialist Party agreed with.

But what were Jerry's views? Does he agree with the majority of RCN members who voted to reject the offer, or with RCN leader Pat Cullen who recommended that members accept?

In fact, Pat Cullen has been pushed back into the fight by the preparedness of RCN members, like Helen, to refuse to uncritically accept everything the union's leadership says, as Jerry seems to suggest members should do.

Across the unions, members' refusal to accept being made poorer is piling pressure on trade union leaders to call and maintain strike action.

That includes putting demands on the trade union leaderships, and contesting trade union elections with a socialist programme.

We will continue to sell the Socialist to the increasing number of workers looking to help develop the trade unions into the democratic, fighting organisations we need.

The working class in the UK have seen our energy bills rise astronomically since the cost-of-living crisis began, yet oil and gas giants like BP have candidly published updates on their websites to show their annual profit margins.

Unite members in the NHS voted 'reject'.

PCS is yet to receive an improved pay offer from the government. It achieved its strike mandate on 10 November 2022. It took from 10 November until 1 February for PCS to bring all its mandated members out on strike together. Since, there have been just two more days of nationwide action.

Socialist Party members standing as part of the Broad Left Network in the PCS elections are standing for a fighting alternative to the current 'Left Unity' leadership of which Mark Serwotka is a part. Marion is standing for President of PCS, against the incumbent Fran Heathcote. Mark Serwotka's post of general secretary is not up for election.

We think most readers will strongly disagree with the suggestion that the Socialist 'attacks unions'. In fact we are the most strident defenders of workers in struggle and are serious about building the strength of trade unions.

That includes putting demands on the trade union leaderships, and contesting trade union elections with a socialist programme.

We will continue to sell the Socialist to the increasing number of workers looking to help develop the trade unions into the democratic, fighting organisations we need.

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?
• editors@socialistparty.org.uk
or, if you're not online, write to the Socialist Inbox, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT

Build council homes to fix chronic overcrowding

NANCY TAAFFE
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

It is difficult to underestimate the consequences of the housing crisis we are living through; it's so profound, it's everywhere. Everyone has a story about the inability to find safe, secure, and affordable housing, if not for themselves then for family members.

One hidden expression of the housing crisis is chronic overcrowding. Two million children in England live in overcrowded accommodation. This can be from intergenerational living, where young families don't have their own space, to those in temporary accommodation.

Tenants in temporary accommodation are at the sharp end of the housing crisis, often forced to live with a family in a room full of mould, with the windows virtually falling out – sometimes waiting years for a council home. Every day the news carries reports of these living tragedies. Such reports almost always end with no solution offered up.

Chronic overcrowding can also be expressed by the shrinking in space in the newbuilds that now litter our cities and towns. Living has well and truly got tiny. In my area, an ex-Labour council leader pioneered



the idea of "pocket living". This led to a raft of high rises being built with micro-studio flats with the aim of attracting 'young professionals' with the change to 'get a foot on the housing ladder'.

Now, many of these blocks have increased fire risk cladding, the funky communal areas that were meant to provide 'social spaces' are ill-maintained, and many include extortionate and growing service charges. Those who have bought the flats can be left stuck with them. We used to joke that these flats were called 'pocket living' because the politicians who pioneered them were in the pockets of the developers.

Humans need space to thrive. When you look at the way cities and homes are built, you sometimes wonder why this basic idea is not applied to housing. The simple answer is profit. Property developers want to make as much money as possible from every square inch of land. The more homes, the more rooms, the more they can charge. The quality of life of those who will live in the homes they sell is of no concern to them.

The Socialist Party campaigns for council housing with lifetime secure tenancies, planned and built using the expertise of architects and town

planners, and with the democratic involvement of communities and future tenants. That was the approach taken by the socialist Labour council in Liverpool in the 1980s - led by Militant, the Socialist Party's predecessor.

Thousands of council homes, with front and back gardens, replaced tenement blocks in disrepair. The council was prepared to do what needed to be done, and mobilised a movement to stand up to the Tory government. It won millions from Thatcher.

Socialist Party says

- **Build council homes with lifetime secure tenancies. Take over empty property for council housing**
- **End all housing privatisation and commercialisation. Take housing associations into democratic public ownership**
- **Introduce democratic rent controls, determined by elected bodies of tenants, housing workers and trade union representatives**
- **Nationalise the big property developers, land and the banks to ensure good standard council housing and cheap mortgages**

BP: record profits and climate collapse



TOWER HAMLETS SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

The working class in the UK have seen our energy bills rise astronomically since the cost-of-living crisis began, yet oil and gas giants like BP have candidly published updates on their websites to show their annual profit margins.

According to BP's first quarter 2023 results webpage, they record \$5 billion (£4 billion) in the first three months of 2023. In 2022, their annual profits more than doubled to \$28 billion (£23 billion).

If only this was bad enough, after reporting these record annual profits, BP has also announced that it is cutting back on its climate goals and emissions pledge. BP has announced greater production of oil and gas over the next seven years compared with

previous targets. They previously announced a pledge to cut emissions to net zero by 2050, promising that emissions would be between 35-40% lower by the end of this decade. However, in February BP announced it was now targeting a 20-30% cut, highlighting they need to keep investing in oil and gas to meet current demand.

Price rises

While BP bosses are swimming in oil and openly talking about plans to continue destroying our planet, the rest of us are struggling to pay energy bills, being refused a cost-of-living pay rise, and experiencing huge rises in the cost of everyday grocery items.

Already unaffordable, another energy price cap rise is on the horizon

for July 2023. Many are having to take more drastic measures to keep their heads above water. Parents skip meals to make sure there's enough for their children and think twice about using gas and electricity at home. Just how much more can we take of this capitalist climate?

The Socialist Party calls for nationalisation of energy companies like Shell and BP, with no compensation for the current fat-cat, profiteering, polluting owners. Publicly owned and under democratic workers' control, the energy industry could make an urgent switch to green energy while securing workers' rights and livelihoods.

Join us in our fight for a workers'-led climate strategy and a socialist plan to end climate catastrophe and cost-of-living misery.

NHS dental crisis

DEJI OLAYINKA
SOUTH WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Struggling to get an NHS dentist? You're not the only one. More than 300 people queued to register with an NHS dentist in Kings Lynn, Norfolk. Many had been queuing from 4am to snap up the first new NHS patient spaces in the area for three years. Norfolk has been described as a "dental desert", but it is just one example of Britain's dental crisis.

An inquiry into NHS dentistry found that 9 in 10 NHS dental practices across the UK were not accepting new adult patients for treatment. Across a third of the council areas, no dentists were taking on adult NHS patients, and 8 in 10 NHS practices were not taking on children.

This has contributed to the disastrous situation where more than 6.5 million children in England have not seen an NHS dentist for at least a year, an increase of a third since 2019. While adults should visit every two years, under 18s should see the dentist at least once a year because their teeth can decay faster. Despite the importance of early dental care for children, one child in Sheffield waited for dental treatment for over two and a half years.

The British Dental Association described the 300-person queue

in King's Lynn as "belonging in the Soviet bloc", yet these issues are a consequence of the ongoing privatisation and defunding of NHS services under capitalism.

In 2006 the Labour government changed the contract with dentists so there's a cap on the number of NHS patients they get paid to see. This has made being an NHS dentist financially unviable and led to a broken system where, despite their being more qualified dentists than ever, the number doing NHS work has fallen significantly.

A recent poll showed that 75% of NHS dentists are considering early retirement, changing careers or going fully private. While MPs have suggested a new dentistry school in Norfolk could help improve the situation, there's little hope that new graduates with massive student loans will want to fill the gaps in the NHS. Even reverting back to the pre-2006 dentistry model would leave many people still putting off dental visits out of fear of the costs.

A woman in neighbouring Suffolk recently made the news by crowdfunding her dentures. She had resorted to pulling her own teeth, unable to afford treatment.

We need a fully funded and nationalised NHS dental service with completely free service and prescriptions.

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Fight Hackney Council victimisation – defend library services

Labour-run Hackney Council is executing cuts; among them, six library workers are being made redundant. One is Hackney Union branch chair and Socialist Party member Brian Debus.

Socialist Party members will support Hackney Union's lobby of the full council meeting on 17 May, 6-7pm. Join us outside Hackney Town Hall, Mare Street, London, E8 1EA. Below we publish an edited extract of Hackney Union's leaflet.

Hackney Council's 'restructure' of libraries – slashing staffing in an already struggling service – has become a cover for management to victimise trade unionists and force unnecessary redundancies. Unison branch chair Brian Debus, plus five other library workers, are being made compulsorily redundant

– despite there being more than enough posts for everyone.

It is our view that these members of staff have been targeted as not fitting in with management's views on the restructured service.

There are now more jobs available at 'Scale six' than have been filled by existing staff! The list of vacancies includes five full-time and 29 part-time (18-36 hours), making a total of 19.5 full-time equivalent posts currently being advertised externally. And still the union branch chair and five other workers are to be forced out!

The council will spend almost £1 million on redundancy payments and recruiting new staff, and all for what?

A clear-out of the experienced staff, to be replaced with new staff with a lot less knowledge and experience. Of 99 people employed at the beginning of the process, the council has lost nearly 70% of staff, either through voluntary or compulsory redundancy, or alternative employment.

The service is now reliant on staff on casual, zero-hour contracts, paid at a much lower rate, to keep the library doors open. We fear that library services are being set up to fail – as seen in flagging staff morale and declining well-being, including low confidence in matters of personal safety – which may well result in future cuts on the grounds of a failure to deliver services properly.

Join us on the lobby and let Hackney Council know that we will not let our members be victimised on the altar of cuts to services.

You can now buy your ticket for Socialism 2023!

Tickets are now on sale for Socialism 2023! The annual event, hosted by the Socialist Party, brings together hundreds of the best class fighters, socialists, trade unionists and young people from across the country. It's a chance to debate, discuss and map out how we can fight back, win and change the world.

This year the event is back at the Institute of Education, London, just a short walk from Euston station. Over the course of the weekend, 40

different sessions on a whole host of topics will be covered and discussed.

From 'Is a general strike on the cards?' 'Is another financial crisis beginning?' and 'Fighting for a workers' voice at the next general election', to '40 years since the miners' strike', and '100 years since Trotsky's Left Opposition formed!'

The Saturday night will see another inspirational 'Rally for Socialism' in Logan Hall, with a whole host of speakers, representing the power of the working class across the globe.

Tickets are at 2022 prices until the end of August, including the popular 'golden' tickets that include accommodation bed at the nearby hostel, with other people going to Socialism 2023.

SOCIALISM 2023 Tickets at 2022 prices until the end of August!

25 & 26 November, Institute of Education (IOE)
20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL

For more info and tickets: socialism.org.uk

Socialism 2023 is the place where hundreds of workers, socialists, trade unionists and young people discuss how we can fight back, win and change the world!

Includes 40+ different session topics and the Saturday night 'Rally for socialism'.

- How can we win inflation-proof pay rises - is a general strike on the cards?
- How can we save the NHS - what would a socialist NHS look like?
- Lessons: 40 years since the miners' strike
- Is another financial crisis beginning?
- 100 years since Trotsky's Left Opposition formed
- Can we change the world? Tasks for revolution today
- What is Marxism?
- Met scandal - Racism and the police

Socialist Party
Hosted by the Socialist Party



Protest against brutal Sars police DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST MOVEMENT NIGERIA

Speaking tour: the struggle for socialism in Nigeria

Visiting from Nigeria, Hasan Soweto, a leading member of the Democratic Socialist Movement - the Socialist Party's sister party - is taking part in a speaking tour organised by Socialist Party in England and Wales and Socialist Party Scotland. Printed below is the text of a leaflet being used to promote these meetings.

Nigeria is a country of huge natural and human resources. Yet under capitalism it provides huge profits for Western oil companies and a corrupt elite at the top of Nigerian society, while the majority of its population suffer terrible poverty, hardly functioning infrastructure, corrupt politicians, and growing conflicts.

One of the two biggest economies in Africa, its population is already estimated at over 210 million, making it the seventh most populous country in the world. By 2050 it is predicted to surpass 400 million. More than half of all Nigerians, and two thirds of the young, are unemployed or under-employed. The recent elections took place amid widespread currency shortages, causing enormous hardship for the majority.

Following the elections, Bola Tinubu has been declared as the new president, who was the candidate of the current ruling party, the All Progressives Congress (APC). However, the deep disillusionment with all the establishment politicians was reflected in the very low turnout of only 27% of registered voters. This means, even according to inaccurate official figures, Tinubu was elected by less than 10% of those with voting cards.

Another indication of the huge discontent was the numbers who

voted for a candidate outside the 'duopoly' of the two main parties. Peter Obi, candidate of the Labour Party, came a close third with over six million votes. In the megacity of Lagos, which has been Tinubu's powerbase, Obi came first.

Many young people, who took to the streets against police corruption in the 2020 EndSARS movement, saw Obi as different to the other corrupt capitalist politicians. However, his programme was not fundamentally different to that of the other two candidates and, contrary to the image he projects, he was named in the 'Pandora Papers' as a result of his involvement in offshore tax havens.

The Democratic Socialist Movement, while it sympathised with young people enthused by Obi, did not therefore call for a vote for him in the election. Instead it gave critical support to the smaller left campaign of Omoyele Sowore standing for the African Action Congress.

Preparing for mass struggles

The Nigerian working class has a proud history of struggle, including numerous general strikes. Now the Democratic Socialist Movement is campaigning to urgently prepare the workers' movement for the struggles to come.

Tinubu has pledged to increase petrol prices, impose higher tuition fees, introduce loans for students, and implement other attacks on the living standards of the majority.

The trade union movement, working people, youth and pro-masses' organisations have to be prepared to resist his anti-poor economic policies.

Most importantly, such a struggle against Tinubu's anti-poor capitalist plan has to be linked with the building of a mass working people's party on a socialist programme, to harness the enormous potential wealth of Nigeria to meet the needs of the majority rather than the profits of a corrupt few.

This is an urgent step that the working masses must take if Nigeria, which is embroiled in ethno-religious crisis and insecurity, is to be saved from going down the road of barbaric violence and turmoil.

- **Birmingham** – Wednesday 31 May, 7pm, Top floor of The Wellington, Bennetts Hill, B2 5SN
- **Brighton** – Tuesday 23 May, PCS Conference fringe meeting, 5pm/end of conference, The Old Ship Hotel, 32-38 Kings Rd, BN1 1NR
- **Cardiff** – Wednesday 24 May, 7:30pm, Cathays Community Centre, Cathays Terrace
- **Glasgow** – Thursday 1 June, 7pm, Red Rosas, 195 London Road, G40 1PA
- **Leeds** – Monday 29 May, 7pm, the Adelphi, 1-3 Hunslet Road, LS10 1JQ
- **Leicester** – Tuesday 30 May, 7pm, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, LE1 1WB
- **London** – Friday 19 May, 7pm, Portsoken Community Centre, 20 Little Somerset Street, E1 8AH
- **Paisley** – Thursday 1 June, 4:30pm, UWS Paisley Student Union, Level two, Storrle Street
- **Swansea** – Thursday 25 May, 7:30pm, Dyfatty Community Centre, Chapel Street, SA1 1NB

Starmer scraps free education pledge

Open letter to supporters of free education

SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Keir Starmer has finally confirmed that his Labour Party will drop its pledge for free university education for the next election. Socialist Students invites all supporters of free education to join us in fighting for a new mass party for workers and young people.

The recent local elections have underlined just how hated the Tories are. Rather than any enthusiasm for Labour, it is this 'get the Tories out' mood that will in all likelihood deliver Starmer to Number Ten at the next general election, which must be called no later than December 2024.

This leaves millions of young people facing yet another government that will refuse to end the marketisation of higher education, 25 years on from the introduction of tuition fees by Tony Blair. By underfunding higher education and pushing universities to compete for students' fees, a series of pro-capitalist governments have facilitated cuts to jobs and services on campus, and led to the piling-up of student debt and a growing layer of impoverished staff and students. This is the course that Starmer is set to continue on.

So, what should supporters of free education do in preparation for a general election and the likely election of a Starmer-led government?

Abandoned

Starmer has abandoned his 2020 pledge to scrap fees on the basis that Britain is now in a "different financial situation". Using this same argument, he has refused to back workers striking for higher pay, and dropped a number of other Corbyn-era pledges, barring Corbyn himself from standing as a Labour candidate. Instead, Starmer and his frontbenchers have promised "fiscal responsibility". That means protecting the profits of big business, which have almost doubled since 2019, and making ordinary people pay for economic crisis.

The scrapping of tuition fees and the restoration of maintenance grants would cost well over £10 billion. Only the building of a mass movement could force a Starmer government to provide such funding. Supporters of free education must answer how such a movement can be built.

The largest-ever movement for free education in Britain was around the anti-austerity programme of Jeremy Corbyn in 2017. Corbyn raised the basic idea that the wealth existed in society for a decent life for all, but that it was concentrated in the hands of a tiny minority. Hundreds of thousands of young people queued at polling stations to vote for his radical programme, including free education.

The Corbyn era showed the



Students protest to scrap tuition fees and for free education PAUL MATTHEWSON

potential for a mass struggle for free education to be built as part of a society-wide fightback against the 1%, to win the resources we need for our futures.

A political force challenging Starmer at the ballot box in a general election, with a programme for free education, real pay rises and fully funded services, would strengthen our fight.

If even a handful of anti-austerity, pro-worker MPs were elected outside of Starmer's Labour at the next general election, they could become a lightning rod for a new mass movement against the 1% and for free education. It would force Starmer to 'look over his left shoulder', and free education.

party for workers and young people

to develop, as a real alternative to Starmer's Labour.

Socialist Students is fighting for steps to be made towards building such a political formation, including calling for a trade union-organised workers' list of candidates at the next general election. This could include Corbyn as a candidate in Islington North, and others exiled by Starmer.

We want to discuss and debate with other groups and individuals who support free education, about the way forward.

Would you be interested in organising a meeting with Socialist Students members to discuss how we can build a new mass party for workers and young people, to fight for free education, for decent homes and jobs for all, and for socialism?



JOHN WILLIAMS
CARDIFF EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

700 people protested to say 'not my king' in Cardiff on the day of the coronation. People were joining as we marched. "We don't want to be poor anymore", was the cry from some young lads who saw us go past – similar to the headline on the front page of the Socialist paper we were carrying (see 'We won't accept being made poorer' at socialistparty.org.uk).

Being able to protest is a fundamental right. But in London, over 50 anti-monarchy protesters were arrested, including six organisers of the group 'Republic'.

Blocked

And at one point, the police blocked all entrances to Trafalgar Square, where the protest was. Protesters reported that the police were seizing placards too.

Worse still, police arrested three volunteers with the Night Stars programme in the early hours of the day of the coronation, while they were out working. Night Stars works with Westminster council and the police to promote women's safety at night, handing out rape alarms, for example.

All this comes less than a week after the Public Order Act received royal assent. These new laws are a draconian, undemocratic piece of legislation that give the police more power to clamp down on our right to protest. The Tories are trying to

undermine the working class when we take to the street to protest against their hated policies.

The response from the Labour Party has been utterly pathetic. Labour shadow ministers have refused to say in interviews that a Labour government will scrap the new anti-protest law if it wins the next election.

Keir Starmer wants to make it clear to the capitalists and big bosses that Labour will refuse to meet any of the demands from the strike wave and, instead, will defend the interests of the rich and well off.

It's correct that the Trades Union Congress (TUC) is now seeking legal action against the Public Order Act. But it needs to go further, mobilising the trade unions' seven million members against it and the new anti-strike bill.

We need a new political party that supports our right to protest and will repeal all the anti-democratic and anti-union legislation.

Fund the fightback
DONATE TODAY

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AREA	\$ RECEIVED	\$ TARGET	Q2: APRIL-JUNE 2023	DEADLINE: 30 JUNE 2023
Eastern	889	1,200		74%
Wales	1,609	2,300		70%
South West	761	1,800	42%	
London	1,393	4,600	30%	
Southern & SE	651	2,350	28%	
Yorkshire	610	2,550	24%	
East Midlands	352	1,850	19%	
Northern	136	750	18%	
West Midlands	335	2,600	13%	
North West	137	1,150	12%	
Other	880	3,850	23%	
TOTAL	7,752	25,000	31%	

Nakba 75 years on - fight for socialist change to end Palestinian oppression

15 May is Nakba Day, marking the creation of the Israeli state in 1948, known also as the 'Palestinian Catastrophe'. Protests will take place internationally including in London on 13 May. Below we print the text for a leaflet Socialist Party members will campaign with.

The 75 years since Nakba and the creation of the Israeli state have been full of bloody conflict, oppression, insecurity and poverty for the Palestinian masses.

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics puts the number now registered as Palestinian refugees at 6.4 million.

Israeli air strikes on Gaza on 9 May killed 13, three of them children.

Gazans today are under a brutal Israeli-Egyptian imposed blockade. The Israeli government - now in its most aggressive form ever against Palestinians as it includes the far right - continues to encourage and approve expansion of Jewish settlements and destruction of Palestinian homes, atomising Palestinian land in the West Bank. Teenagers armed with just stones are routinely shot by the Israeli state forces. Eleven Palestinians were killed when Israeli troops raided

Nablus in the West Bank in February.

Palestinians in the West Bank and east Jerusalem also face violence from right-wing Jewish settlers. A recent brutal expression was the pogrom carried out in Huwara in February. Hundreds of settlers attacked Palestinian villages, torching homes and schools, and shooting one man.

The cycles of armed conflict, with military means and ammunition weighted overwhelmingly in favour of the Israeli state, have taken thousands of lives. 260 Palestinian lives were lost in the May 2021 war.

The forces of the Israeli state are divided. The Netanyahu-led coalition government staggers on, shaken by a series of mass protests and a general strike. Even sections of the state apparatus - pilots and military reservists - have refused to carry out duties.

While capitalist politicians at the head of that mass movement try to limit its cause to preventing judicial

reforms, workers taking to the streets are motivated by repulsion at the reactionary government and want an end to the rising cost of living.

Mass protests and strikes of the Palestinian people, like the demonstrations and general strike in response to brutal beatings at the Al-Aqsa mosque in April, would help further to build the forces that can grow to challenge the Israeli state.

Coordinated days of strikes and protests, between the Israeli mass movement and that of Palestinians, against a common enemy - the Israeli capitalist state - would be hugely significant.

The pro-capitalist Palestinian organisations, including Fatah and Hamas, have proved themselves incapable of leading a struggle to win liberation and a safe and comfortable life for Palestinians.



Palestinian refugees 1948, Israel



The Fatah-led Palestinian Authority (PA) is toothless as Israeli state forces override it and impose heavy repression, and millions of Palestinians in the PA areas remain in poverty.

Hamas in Gaza, with its armed resistance, is seen by some as a staunch defender of Palestinian rights. But actions which indiscriminately hit Israeli civilians, whether the rockets of Hamas and other Palestinian militias, or the car rammings carried out in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, do not progress the struggle for liberation. They are expressions of anger, frustration and a desire to strike blows against the occupation, but they push working-class Israeli Jews into the arms of reaction and towards supporting even greater repression and loss of Palestinian life.

Socialists support the right of Palestinians to use arms to defend themselves and fight the occupation. But this should be in the form of mass actions, democratically controlled by their communities and targeted at the occupying forces and infrastructure, rather than by small groups or parties and aimed at Israeli civilians.

The development of democratically run local committees to organise action and defence is an urgent task. Linking these organisations would be an important step towards building a mass Palestinian, independent working class-led party.

In Israel, it is necessary for the working class to assert its leadership of the anti-government mass movement, and to develop a political alternative to the pro-capitalist parties. The building of an Israeli mass workers' party, independent of capitalist interests, is needed.

This year marks 30 years since the Oslo accords - establishing the Palestinian Authority in Gaza and parts of the West Bank. The ongoing expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, and the blockade on Gaza, underlines the failure of those accords.

A Palestinian state was never on offer in them. But any capitalist two-states 'solution', Palestinian and Israeli, would mean a continuation of conflict over many issues, because capitalism is a crisis-ridden system that can't offer decent living standards to either side.

Achieving the national aspirations of Palestinians and Israelis, and meeting people's needs on both sides, necessitates a struggle for two democratic, socialist states.

It is also the case that on the basis of capitalism a peaceful co-existence of Israeli Jews and Palestinians in one state is ruled out. The capitalist ruling class of such a state would create continued conflict by using discrimination and repression. Also, present consciousness on both sides is to defend the national right to self-determination.

A coordinated struggle of Palestinians in the occupied territories and the Israeli working class, and the development of mass democratic organisations independent of capitalist interests, would be the basis on which two socialist states could be achieved, and agreements reached on issues such as the sharing of Jerusalem, access to water and other resources, borders, rights for minorities, and so on.

An end to 75 years of Nakba means waging a struggle against capitalism and for socialist change in Palestine, Israel, the Middle East and internationally.

German government prepares for attacks on working class

'Traffic light' government quarrels and quarrels and quarrels....



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz struggles with squabbling coalition PHOTO: WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM/CC

SASCHA STANIC
SPOKESPERSON, SOL (CWI IN GERMANY)

When the first ever three-party coalition formed a German government in autumn 2021, big words were said. It would be a 'progress coalition' that would face the great challenges of the time, such as climate change and automation, and would not just tinker with small things. There is not much left of that. Instead, the 'traffic light' coalition of social democrats SPD, Greens and the liberal FDP is in a permanent dispute. But behind this is more than just different party political positions.

Finance minister Christian Lindner's refusal to present so-called budget benchmarks to the deliberations on the 2024 federal budget is a unique event. Bids for additional spending totalling €70 billion from the individual ministries are being countered by an estimate of a 2024 deficit of €14-18 billion - excluding the hoped for €70 billion.

Lindner is therefore preparing the people for spending cuts: "This budget gap must be earned by doing without. If you then want to set additional spending priorities, for example in defence and education, then you have to cut more elsewhere."

Not giving the ministries any guidelines in this regard is an expression of the acid test which these budget discussions could lead to, and possibly also of a hope that the

tax estimate expected for this May could predict a somewhat smaller deficit.

'Debt brake'

The debate also expresses a fundamental conflict within the coalition. While for Lindner, and probably also Chancellor Olaf Scholz, (re)observation of the 'debt brake' is a holy grail. The 'debt brake' is a law which from 2009 has strictly limited government borrowing; while it was lifted during the Covid pandemic it was reimposed this year. However the SPD and the Greens now see it differently. SPD co-leader Lars Klingbeil says: "If in the end I'm faced with the question of whether we invest in security, social justice and economic awakening or cling to the 'debt brake', then I have a clear priority there."

But given the rising record national debt of €2.5 trillion and the bleak economic outlook, no government - on a capitalist basis - will be able to continue as it has in recent years, when both the previous grand coalition and then the 'traffic light' government spent billions to cushion the effects of the pandemic and inflation, and to arm the military.

There could only be much higher revenues if there was either significant economic growth or drastic taxation of private profits and assets. Even though the opposition conservative CDU has recently expressed thoughts of raising the top tax rate and reforming inheritance tax, both are more than unlikely. What

remains? Cut government spending. That is what it will come to, sooner or later. And the later that comes, the more drastic it will be.

Pro-capitalist priorities

The dispute over €12 billion additional expenditure for the planned basic child security is symbolic of the priorities of this pro-capitalist government. €100 billion extra in special funds for the military (and thus for the arms companies!) were decided with a stroke of the pen. Yet €12 billion for children is out of the question for the neoliberal firebrand Lindner.

In fact, however, many billions more are needed to get the ailing health and education systems back in shape, to effectively combat climate change or to bring people who depend on social benefit out of poverty. A pro-capitalist government will never mobilise this money, however, because it would require significantly touching the enormous profits and fortunes of corporations and the super-rich - 2022 was the record dividend year for shareholders.

However, as much as the SPD, the Greens and the FDP agree on not really asking the rich and powerful to pay, their differences are real and make this government a weak and unstable representative of the ruling capitalist class. These differences express partly different pro-capitalist ideas on how to deal with the tendency towards an economic crisis, partly the different social base of

each party and the different fractions of capital they represent. However, there is no difference in principle on the question of which class interests they represent.

On the backs of the masses

So it is not surprising when the minister of health, Karl Lauterbach, proclaims a hospital reform that, despite some glossing over, will not fundamentally change the profit orientation of hospitals and may even lead to the closure of many clinics.

Nor is it a surprise when the state ministers of education want to worsen the working conditions for teachers. Or even when the head of the health service doctors' association, Andreas Gassen, demands patients should pay a fee for visiting the emergency room in hospitals. Although this proposal was rejected by the government, it indicates which direction the course is to be set: the burdens of the crisis are to be dumped on the backs of the mass of the working population.

In this sense, the current budget debate is a warning light for sharp attacks on the rights and living standards of the working class in the future. When this will happen, no one can say. It cannot be said right now whether the capitalists will need another government for such attacks or whether the traffic light coalition will break apart before the election due in 2025. But that it will happen sooner or later is certain, and then there will be a reaction.

Read online at
socialistworld.net

France: Mass mobilisations continue against raising pension age



The mood of outrage across France at the pension age being raised is not subsiding. This is despite president Macron desperately trying to put it in the past, following it being pushed into law using special constitutional powers without a vote in parliament.

Now, the eight largest trade unions in France have called a further day of national strikes and demonstrations for 6 June.

Read online translations of two articles published on 27 April 2023 in issue 216 of the paper L'Égalité, the paper of Gauche Révolutionnaire (Revolutionary Left, CWI France).

Turkish President Erdogan faces tough elections test



After being in power unchallenged for two decades, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan will be facing his toughest polling test in the upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections on 14 May...

Can India replace China?



India's emergence as a major economy in the world is linked to US-Western tensions with China. Previously, India linked with the former USSR against China and Pakistan, while also keeping a distance from the US. This combination of the USSR's collapse, the weakening of Russia, and huge growth in China, led India to be more open to the US...

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the Socialist

Issue 1226

11-17 May 2023

formerly **Militant**

NATIONALISE THE RAILWAYS

BACK THE RAIL WORKERS' STRIKES



PHOTO: PAUL MATTHEWSON

SCOTT JONES
EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Departure boards at train stations will once again be showing 'Nul Points' on 12-13 May as Liverpool hosts Eurovision and rail workers continue to strike over pay.

RMT members will walk out on 13 May after the union rejected the latest pay deal from train operators, and train drivers in

Aslef strike the day before. The current offer to the RMT is a measly 4%, when inflation is running at over twice that (see p6-7 for more). It will kick off again on 31 May and 3 June - the day of the FA Cup final - when Aslef and the RMT strike separately on those days respectively.

RMT and Aslef members in the Socialist Party say that we must fight for maximum co-ordination of action against the bosses and the Tory government, especially between

striking rail unions and also other workers in struggle.

Even if they were running, regular users know that they would pay a fortune for an unreliable service, crammed in, on mostly old trains. And that's just the rolling stock. A leaked Network Rail report recently admitted that more delays are inevitable in the coming years because current funding will not let Network Rail "operate, maintain and renew" its tracks, bridges and earthworks infrastructure.

The train operating companies are also angling to close ticket offices in the future - anything to boost profits.

Although striking over pay, rail unions have campaigned and walked out over safety and staffing too, fighting for a safe, affordable, reliable rail network. The best way to guarantee that is to demand renationalisation of our railways under democratic workers' control and management now, with compensation only to those who can prove they need it.

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on page 10



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