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# the Socialist

Issue 1233

29 June - 5 July 2023

formerly **Militant**

# SAVE OUR NHS



PHOTOS: PAUL MATSSON

# FOUNDED BY WORKING-CLASS STRUGGLE, WORKERS' ACTION NEEDED NOW TO SAVE IT

# HOW WE CAN SAVE THE NHS



## WHAT WE THINK

**A**s we go to press, Rishi Sunak is trumpeting his upcoming 'big' announcement on the NHS. The idea that this out-of-touch millionaire head of a dysfunctional government and a party tearing itself apart can save the NHS is sick.

A new report by the King's Fund found that the Tories are killing the NHS. Comparing the NHS to other countries' care systems found that it had fewer key resources. The cost of decades of Tory - and New Labour - governments' underinvestment, privatisation, reorganisation and cuts is falling life expectancy, poorer health, and people's lives lost. The Royal College of Emergency Medicine found that long A&E waits contributed to 23,000 excess deaths in 2022.

The King's Fund reported that the UK compares badly in terms of physical resources and capital investment. It has 'strikingly' low levels of clinical staff, whose "remuneration... also appears to be less competitive". Greece has 6.3 doctors per 1,000 people while Britain has just three. The report also found that the pandemic hit treatment waiting times far harder in the UK than in other countries.

As a result the NHS has become synonymous with waiting lists and crisis. A return to a pre-NHS situation is posed: healthcare only for those who can afford it, and sickness, poor quality health and stunted life expectancy for the majority. The health bills bankrupting US workers and Big Pharma's opioid pandemic tell us what could lie ahead.

But the National Health Service is the biggest social reform the British working class has won so far. Health worker strikes point to what is needed to defend its existence.

The 75th anniversary must be seized as an opportunity for discussion and debate, among campaigners, trade unionists, socialists and all defenders of the NHS, on how to organise the working-class collective action necessary to save our health service - and to rebuild it.

### The NHS is a product of mass workers' struggle

War and economic crisis dominated the years preceding the foundation of the NHS in 1945, exposing the capitalist class's inability to provide the promised 'land fit for heroes'.

Huge waves of workers' struggles included the general strike in 1926. There were also international examples to inspire workers to get organised and fight back.

In the 1917 Russian revolution, the working class broke with capitalism - a system aimed primarily at realising private profit, not satisfying the needs of society or the planet. The working class in Britain gained confidence



Working-class struggle forced Labour to create the NHS. Health minister Aneurin Bevan, seen here on the first day of the NHS, 5 July 1948 at Park Hospital, Davyhulme, near Manchester. PHOTO: UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL/CC



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

and built the trade unions and the Labour Party.

In 1945, the working class found an expression of its unwillingness to continue paying the price for the bosses' crisis in voting Labour. Fearing the working class's appetite would grow with the eating, and workers would build a movement which could threaten their right to rule, the capitalists were forced to make concessions - including the NHS.

Alongside the founding of the NHS, council housing was built, welfare benefits were introduced, and coal, oil, gas, electricity, transport, the Bank of England and, later, iron and steel were nationalised.

But the economy and society generally were left in the hands of the capitalist class. Therefore these historic gains faced and continue to face constant attack.

### Build a new workers' party to fight for NHS

The need for the working class to organise, build its own party and develop its programme for ending poverty and exploitation - key factors in ill health - is also a feature of the situation today.

From its inception up until Blairism, Labour was a contradictory party. On the one hand, Labour's leadership was not in favour of breaking with capitalism - which in the end means the working class must pay the price. But Labour's working-class base could organise to put pressure on the leadership. Socialists played a leading role in fighting for this.

Under New Labour, Labour became an out-and-out pro-bosses party. This is Keir Starmer's model too. A Labour government will not

resuscitate the NHS because Keir Starmer is determined to prove his party will act in the interests of the bosses. That means a continuation of the policies that are killing our health service.

Starmer doesn't support workers' strikes. Jeremy Corbyn's supporters and policies are being purged. Corbyn's manifesto pledges, including public ownership, raising funding and expanding "healthcare free at the point of use: free dentistry, prescriptions and car parking in NHS England", are gone.

Instead, shadow health minister Wes Streeting has said that it would not be "responsible or credible" for Labour to say it would "pour more resources in" to the NHS. Saving the NHS will require mass collective action, including the building of a workers' political alternative.

The Socialist Party campaigns for a new mass workers' party, and calls on the trade unions and Jeremy Corbyn to take steps towards its creation. The Socialist Party's participation in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is an important part of that fight. That includes standing TUSC candidates at the general election, if preparations are not made in time for a union-backed stand with more authority.

### For a socialist NHS

The weaknesses that were built into the NHS, concessions to capitalism, must not be repeated. Pharmaceutical medical supply and hospital construction industries were left in private hands.

The extraction of massive profits still undermines the health service. It is necessary to fight for the nationalisation of these industries under democratic workers' control, with no compensation to the fat cats. All the profiteers must be kicked out of the NHS and care services.

The King's Fund report concludes that the inability of healthcare services to meet people's health needs is a universal phenomenon, just to varying degrees of crisis. But this is part of a general picture of capitalism's failings.

One third of the world's population do not have enough to eat. Even in the richest countries in the world, the living standards of the majority have been falling, or at best stagnating, for many years.

Ill-health is a product of all the attacks on working-class living standards - including low pay, poor housing, unhealthy food, stress, poverty, inequality, and all the ways big business pollutes and abuses our environment. The fight for the NHS is therefore inextricably linked to the fight to transform society in a socialist direction.

The Socialist Party fights for a new party to have a socialist programme to be capable of liberating humanity from poverty, inequality and exploitation. This could unite all the sections of the working class against the Tory attempts to divide us along lines of race, gender, age, etc.

Taking the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy into public ownership under democratic working-class control and management would be a good start. This could lay the basis for establishing a democratic socialist plan for the economy, based on the interests of the billions not the billionaires, and of protecting the environment.

## SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

July-August issue includes...

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# How privatisation is destroying the NHS

JON DALE

SECRETARY, UNITE NOTTINGHAMSHIRE  
HEALTH BRANCH

**T**ory MPs voted against setting up the NHS in 1948, but it immediately proved so popular they were forced to accept it. It proved useful to private business in the following years of low unemployment, treating workers so they could return to work. But as the post-war economic boom ended, Tory opposition re-emerged.

In 1974, Tory MP Sir Keith Joseph (later in Margaret Thatcher's cabinet) called for an end to state involvement in 'micromanaging' the economy, including public services.

A confidential 1982 Tory memo suggested government aiming to end state provision of healthcare over an extended period, with those unable to pay for private insurance having their charges met by state rebates.

In 1985, Tory MPs Oliver Letwin and John Redwood (both later cabinet ministers) proposed moving slowly through a number of options: making the NHS an independent trust, increasing joint ventures with the private sector, extending charging, introducing a system of health credits (or vouchers), and finally moving to an insurance scheme. Letwin wrote in 1988 that such ideas are "in origin a political rather than an economic or financial act".

The Tory party has been itching for decades to get healthcare back in the private sector, so its big business backers could profit from the NHS's huge sums of public money. But, although large chunks have been privatised, most of the NHS is still publicly owned and run.

Tory ambitions have not been fully realised because of the enormous opposition they run into. Threats to close hospitals or community health services are so unpopular that even local Tory MPs, supporting cuts and privatisation, are pushed to oppose the plans - often trying to shift the axe elsewhere.

Tory governments from 1979-97 moved towards their goal, in particular by introducing the 'market' into the NHS. This began turning health care into a commodity to be bought and sold, instead of a public service

to meet need.

Faster travel down this route came with Tony Blair's New Labour government. Foundation Trusts, billions of pounds of PFI debt, Independent Sector Treatment Centres, and other roads opened up, funnelling public money into private coffers.

Profit-making healthcare providers spread still further under the Tory-Lib Dem coalition and Tory governments since. Private providers delivered just 0.02% of all NHS-funded non-emergency treatment in 2003-04, but 5.2% in 2020-21.

This figure would be much higher if it included mental health services, care of the elderly and adults with learning disabilities, dentistry and many other areas of healthcare now mostly run for profit.

Spending on non-NHS providers has increased 70% since 2012-13 - from £10.8 billion to £18.3 billion after adjusting for inflation - while total planned Department of Health day-to-day spending increased just 42%.

How much further can privatisation go before the NHS stops providing healthcare directly, instead awarding contracts to profit-seeking companies to provide services?

A big problem for privatising

zealots is that healthcare can be very expensive to provide - private companies like to cherry-pick. Simple operations like eye cataracts can be performed relatively cheaply without needing overnight stays. In 2016, 11% of NHS cataract procedures in England were delivered by private companies. Five years later that had grown to 46%.

200 specialist eye doctors signed a letter warning that "the accelerating shift towards independent sector provision of cataract surgery" is having a "destabilising impact" on safe provision. The loss of training opportunities for junior doctors and loss of trained staff to the private sector risks future treatment of complex eye conditions the private sector is not interested in.

On 20 June the government announced the award of a £25 million contract to US data firm, Palantir, now in pole position to win a £480 million contract running the new NHS Federated Data Platform. It paid £1 for its first NHS contract, awarded by ex-health secretary Matt Hancock during the pandemic without having to tender.

Palantir's billionaire founder and chair, Peter Thiel, donated \$1.25 million to Trump's election campaign. Earlier this year he said the NHS "makes people sick" and it needs "market mechanisms" to fix it.

Controlling all the health information currently held by the NHS, including GP and social care records, potentially gives the company a priceless resource. Palantir, set up with CIA money and with military contracts, uses FTI Consulting to lobby the UK government for its interests.

A member of Labour's National Executive, Abdi Duale, is an FTI



director, as is Gemma Doyle. She is also a director of Progressive Britain, the right-wing Labour group with shadow health secretary, Wes Streeting on its Advisory Panel.

It's clear whose interests a Labour government will be 'progressing' - and it won't be patients, health workers and all those wanting a publicly owned, fully financed and democratically run NHS. A new mass workers' party with a socialist programme must be built if the NHS is to be saved.

## 1 to 43k

**While only one person in England waited longer than 12 hours to be seen in A&E in August 2010, by October 2022 more than 43,000 people suffered a 12 hour wait**



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

The Socialist Party has regular meetings in towns and cities across the country including public meetings to mark the anniversary of the NHS. If you would like to participate:

- Go to [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)
- Or text 07761 818206 with your name and postcode

Kick out the privatisers! PHOTO: MARY FINCH

# How we saved Glenfield children's heart unit

**STEVE SCORE**

FORMER CHAIR OF SAVE GLENFIELD CHILDREN'S HEART CENTRE CAMPAIGN

In the summer of 2016 NHS England (NHSE), and behind it the Tory government, threatened the existence of three of the eleven congenital heart centres across the country. One of those was at the Glenfield Hospital in Leicester - the only hospital in the whole of the East Midlands that carried out operations on children's hearts. These include babies whose hearts are no bigger than a walnut. It was literally a life-and-death struggle.

18 months later NHSE announced a climbdown in the case of two of those where there had been campaigns to oppose closure.

As a father of a son who had heart surgery there, I had a personal stake, but was able to use the experience and campaigning methods of the Socialist Party to build, alongside many others, a huge campaign.

We organised an initial small public meeting, but through it got contact with other families, trade unionists and NHS campaigners. At it, we proposed the establishment of a broad campaign that included families,

campaigners, staff and, importantly, the trade union movement. The first public meeting of the Save Glenfield Children's Heart Centre campaign had 150 at it.

Over 18 months we held demonstrations of up to 2,000 people at a time, mass meetings and lobbies. 130,000 signed a petition and 7,500 engaged in NHS England's complex online consultation. We organised a series of public meetings across the region to go through these arguments in detail.

We got backing from a series of local and regional trade union bodies. We even had Len McCluskey, then leader of Unite the Union, speak at one of the demos. After the campaign we broadened it out to 'Save Our NHS Leicestershire', to keep the fight going on wider issues.

Alongside other successful campaigns it proves if you fight you can win!



Huge march through Leicester in 2017 PHOTO: LEICESTER SP

# Barts strike victory against privatisation



Bart's strikers in 2022 PHOTO: ISAI MARJERLA

**LEN HOCKEY**

BART'S UNITE BRANCH SECRETARY

**“W**ho's got the power? We got the power! What kind of power? Union power!”

These were the words often chanted by Bart's health workers in east London in an historic win that secured our return to direct NHS employment, with increases in pay and conditions, and the departure of out-sourcer Serco.

Porters, cleaners, back-of-house catering staff, security and reception staff walked out for two weeks of action at the beginning of 2022. The action by 600 Unite members across three hospitals - Royal London, St Bartholomew's and Whipps

Cross - followed a paltry offer from Serco Bart's, and then the announcement by Serco that it was serving notice to quit the contract, leaving it 18 months early on 30 April 2023.

The inspiring action by the overwhelmingly migrant workforce included daily mass picket lines of up to 180-strong, singing, dancing, and marches to each other's hospitals and rallies.

The victory has seen the return in-house of each service, starting with security and reception in November 2022, porters in February 2023, and lastly cleaners and caterers on 1 May 2023. In all, over 1,700 workers across five hospital sites in the second biggest trust in England have returned to direct trust employment as a result of the magnificent, united action of these strikers.

# Fight for a future for NHS workers

**CHARLIE KENNEDY**

ICU NURSE IN THE NHS

It is the 75th birthday of the NHS, but it is closer to disappearing into history than ever before.

Throughout my time in healthcare I have learnt a lot about the struggles of the NHS. The NHS workforce projections for 2022 predicted a 38,000 shortage of nurses alone. The British Medical Association states that we need 46,000 doctors just to be at the average number of doctors per 1,000 inhabitants among developed European countries.

We are seeing the standards of care continue to fall as funding is cut short and staff are under pressure, with higher and higher patient workloads. By December 2022, A&E

waiting times had skyrocketed to at least four hours for 50% of people. The NHS is in crisis, and the only way to address this is to organise for substantive change.

Nursing and medical education needs to be free of charge, and living costs should be supported with a fair and inflation-adjusted bursary. This will encourage more workers to train for NHS jobs and help solve the staffing crisis.

The pay for NHS workers needs to be increased to at least match inflation rates and previous loss of pay. By doing so, we will retain more NHS staff as well as encourage new professionals to train up. The pension system needs to be updated to provide more security in the long term for NHS workers and ensure that

workers are not left behind after they retire.

A focus needs to be placed on improving GP services by offering incentives for doctors to train in family care and creating more nationalised practices rather than wholly relying on privately funded practices.

And, importantly, the funding for NHS trusts needs to have a large overhaul, focused on giving hospitals the equipment and resources they need to run effective and safe services, under democratic control.

Neither the Tories nor Starmer's Labour Party are offering policies to save the NHS. The only way to secure a lasting future is to fight for socialist change, and that includes the building of a new mass workers' party as part of that struggle.



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON



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## Prices up. Mortgages up. Rent up.

# WE CAN'T AFFORD THE TORIES

## ORGANISE TO

# KICK THEM OUT

## ■ Starmmer's Labour won't fight for us

## ■ Build a new mass workers' party

KATIE SIMPSON  
NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

**T**he cost of inflation is falling on the shoulders of ordinary people. Now, with the latest Bank of England interest rate rises, those with mortgages are paying the price. And workers face a recession to protect the profits of the rich.

On average, each individual with a mortgage is paying £280 a month extra. And young people are paying even more. 1.4 million people face losing 20% of their disposable income.

For many who were already pinching pennies to afford soaring food prices, this is a push too far.

The Tories are refusing to offer any kind of help or support. The most people can hold out hope for is some 'flexibility' from the bank.

Before this recent interest hike people were already struggling. Many weren't able to make mortgage payments even before this.

As a result, people are downsizing, subletting or having to return to the oversaturated and overpriced rental market. Many wealthy

landlords are happy to take advantage of this situation by increasing rent, and applying stricter rules for tenants - plunging us into poverty. Other landlords are selling up because they can't afford the new payments, leaving more tenants out in the cold.

The grand sell-off of public housing by Tory and Labour governments has helped create this crisis. And they have refused to build the council housing we need.

Even people working full-time can now face homelessness. Yet hundreds of thousands of properties in the UK remain empty as property developers and wealthy individuals opportunistically hold on to them as assets.

The government and the

biggest banks, representing 75% of the mortgage market, say nobody will be evicted if they can't pay for one year. This isn't good enough.

People can't afford their mortgages, and the rest of the cost of living, now. Mortgages and prices should be frozen. We need to continue and coordinate the strikes for higher pay. Benefits should be increased.

And local Labour councils should step in with emergency measures to help people now, using their reserves and borrowing powers. Then launch a campaign for the funding from central government.

Councils should take over empty properties and provide emergency support for people struggling with mortgages and the cost of living.

They should also use their power

to build council homes on a massive scale, cap rents to make them genuinely affordable, and set up a compulsory register of landlords to hold them to account.

The banks, food and energy companies, and big supermarkets shouldn't be profiting from this crisis.

They should be nationalised, under democratic workers' control. That should be part of a democratic plan for the economy to meet the needs of ordinary people, not the super-rich.

The Tories need to go. But Starmmer's Labour won't fight for this programme.

That's why working-class people need a new mass party of our own that will.

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

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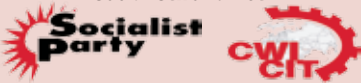
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."

**Karl Marx**

# Rich getting richer, but our pay isn't going up

JOHN WILLIAMS

CARDIFF WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

**T**ory prime minister Rishi Sunak has told people to "hold their nerve" during the cost-of-living crisis. I think we best remind him which party has been in government for 13 years!

How long do workers need to hold their nerve for? We've been told to tighten our belts virtually since 2010, and even before that with the 2008 economic crisis. And in that time, the average annual earnings of each worker in Britain has gone down by about £11,000 in real terms.

The Tories want to show that inflation is coming down. But it's staying stubbornly high. And even if the rate of inflation drops by a little, prices are still going up!

#### My rent

Rent is going up. My rent is going up by £195 a month in August. I'm not going to get any help with that. Even if I do get a pay 'rise', it will get eaten up instantly.

But some have done quite well. According to the Office for National Statistics, the best-paid have had the highest wage hikes. But that hasn't stopped the governor of the Bank of England wrongly blaming the crisis on the wage increase demands of ordinary workers.

Analysis from the Trades Union Congress (TUC) found that the top 1% of workers have been paid 7.9% more this year than last year. While people on low and middle incomes saw the rate of their wage 'rises' fall.

The Bank of England's latest interest rate rise is making people worse off from rent and mortgage increases. People haven't got enough to save nowadays anyway. So the argument that a rise in interest rates will stop people from spending to curb inflation falls flat.

#### Tories

The Tories claim they're trying to help. But everyone can see everything they do is making things worse.

The working class needs more money in their back pockets. But Labour also says it's opposed to inflation-proof pay rises for workers.

If Labour is concerned about how this will effect inflation, why don't they commit to tax the rich and nationalise industry to invest in production? We all know the answer to that. They don't want to upset their millionaire mates.

That's why the unions should stop finding political candidates who sing to the Tories tune, and back others who will fight tooth and nail for the pay rise we all desperately need.

#### RCN nurses striking in Derby



Marching against Tory austerity in the years before Covid PAUL MATTSSON

# Austerity was worst way to prepare for Covid pandemic

JOHN DOLAN

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CARE WORKER, 2007-2022

Former Tory prime minister David Cameron and former chancellor George Osborne – both 2010-2016 – denied to the Covid Inquiry that their government's austerity policies damaged the UK's ability to cope with Covid.

The British Medical Association (BMA – the doctors' union) has said that this 'denial' is "staggering". The Trades Union Congress (TUC) also attacked Cameron and Osborne's claims. The TUC pointed out:

- By 2020, waiting times had worsened.
- Compared with similar countries, the UK was at the bottom of the table for numbers of doctors, nurses, beds, IT units and ventilators per 100,000.
- Between 2010 and 2020, the number of nurses per capita in the UK grew by less than 1% – despite demand for care rising by one-third.
- In 2019, the average NHS worker was earning £3,000 less in real terms than in 2010.
- In 2020, government spending per capita was still lower than in 2010 in social care, transport, housing, childcare, schools, higher education, police, fire services,

and environmental protection. This limited the ability of public services to contribute effectively to civil contingencies, and to continue essential activities effectively.

- Local authority core spending power was cut by a third between 2010 and 2020.
- In 2019, capital investment in health was 10% below 2010 levels.
- Benefit cuts increased poverty levels. Living in poverty was associated with greater risk of exposure to Covid, and greater vulnerability to more serious health consequences from being ill with Covid.

#### Experienced workers quit

Many experienced public sector workers left under austerity job cuts, pay restraint and increased workloads. Bursaries to cover the cost of tuition for nursing students were also scrapped by the Tories, leading to lower staffing levels.

As well as Tory austerity attacks, it's worth us all remembering that at the 2010 and 2015 elections, before Jeremy Corbyn became leader, the Labour Party was also promising cuts. Both parties expect the working class to pay the price of economic crises. That's why the working class needs its own political party.

# Millions can't find somewhere they can afford

Only 5% of rental properties are 'affordable' to people getting income-related support. At least 13 million get extra support because their pay is so low or non-existent – a quarter of the adult population.

And the government doesn't reveal the exact figure. So the reality is even higher.

Housing benefit has been frozen

for over three years. But rents are rising rapidly.

Rents on new lettings on property-search website Zoopla have been rising by 10% or more for over a year.

The Tories boast they'll spend £30 billion on housing benefit this year. But this is going straight into the pockets of greedy overcharging landlords.

Even people in this situation that

can find somewhere to live are moving to areas with more crime, higher energy bills, and far away from friends, family, school, work and their support networks.

Millions of workers have been striking for inflation-proof pay rises, so fewer workers need to claim benefits. And benefits need to rise with the cost of living too.

Rents should be capped so they're actually affordable. Council homes should be built so we actually have control over the housing stock.

And if we nationalise the house-building giants, the banks and the land, without these leeches making profit, we can have affordable places for people to live.

# Teachers' pay: Capitalist politicians say 6.5% is too much

Staff rooms and WhatsApp groups of teachers have been alive with discussion in response to Labour's announcement on teachers' pay.

For decades, Tory and Blairite Labour governments alike have hidden behind the School Teachers Review Body (STRB) recommendations on pay, instead of entering negotiations with teachers' unions. The STRB is a government-appointed 'independent' body of 'experts'.

## Soaring inflation

Even last year, as inflation soared, the Tories insisted they could offer no more than the measly 5% recommended by the STRB. Teachers might be forgiven for thinking that when the 2023 recommendation was released, the government would be true to form and stick to it.

But no.

In the face of the strike wave, the STRB appears to have shown more independence than ever before. Though the Tories are refusing to publish the report, it has been leaked that it recommends 6.5% for 2023. This still falls short of the NEU's claim for an inflation-proof pay rise, but is higher than the 4.5% the Tories offered.

The Times reported that Tory prime minister Rishi Sunak is preparing to reject this recommendation, as it is allegedly too high and would set off a 'wage spiral'.

But outrageously, that is also the response of Labour's Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves! She refused to say she would honour 6.5% and told the



National Education Union teachers on strike in Hackney

Press Association that "I've always been very clear that Labour's fiscal rules are absolutely non-negotiable".

This is a clear warning that a Starmer government has no intention of paying workers decent wages either.

One Socialist Party member commented: "This has opened up a lot of discussion on the local reps chat. Gave me an opportunity to mention the TUSC" (Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition - the anti-austerity

electoral alliance in which the Socialist Party participates)

It is the massive strike action taken by teachers this year that forced the Tories to the negotiating table, and that can win acceptable pay rises

from whoever is in power. But this underlines once more the importance of union's developing a political strategy too: we need a party that will fight in our interests!

**James Ellis, NEU member, said:**

"Both Tories and Labour have shown that they want to prioritise profiteering businesses over education. A 6.5% offer would still be a real-terms pay cut based on current inflation levels - but they won't even commit to that! The Tories follow the STRB recommendations when it suits them, but are happy to ignore the 'independent advice' when it doesn't. It proves what we've always known - cutting public sector pay is a political choice.

## Greedy profiteering

"The idea that our wages need to be suppressed to tackle inflation is ridiculous. Our wages are 20% lower in real terms since 2010 - yet inflation is rocketing! Greedy profiteering capitalists are causing inflation, not public sector workers. The government should be taxing profits and the super-rich to fund education - not the other way around. The funding and recruitment crisis in schools is only getting worse - any decision to inflict yet more cuts on pay and budgets will directly affect our most vulnerable students.

"Labour shows absolutely no sign of supporting education workers. They are more interested in trying to show the boss class that they are a 'safe pair of hands' for capitalism. How about instead showing our profession that they care about our students' futures?"

# CWU Royal Mail ballot: Vote no!

- Reinstatement of victimised and sacked reps and members
- Renationalise Royal Mail

## SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN CWU

Ballot papers have gone out to Communication Workers Union (CWU) members for the vote by postal workers on the Royal Mail/CWU Business Recovery, Transformation and Growth Agreement.

Socialist Party members are arguing for a 'no' vote.

## 18 days

Royal Mail workers have taken up to 18 days of strike action, which was a real sacrifice.

They recognised that this was an assault by senior management against the CWU, and its right to organise in Royal Mail and represent its members. And what started as a 'normal' pay dispute quickly developed into a general attack on postal workers' hard-won terms and conditions and working practices.

The fight by the CWU and its 115,000 postal members has undoubtedly pushed back Royal Mail

bosses and forced out the brutal boss Simon Thompson.

The outburst of members' anger, that forced a delay in the ballot on the deal, has won an extra £900 - although there is concern about where it is coming from, seemingly from our pensions.

But the question is: does the deal still take too much from members? Have we pushed Royal Mail back far enough? We have forced concessions from management, but can more be won?

The attack on sick pay and ill-health retirement is still in the deal, and there are too many doubts over the future of the Universal Service Obligation.

And how can we make a deal when there are still hundreds of CWU reps and members sacked or suspended?

Members have shown that they are prepared to fight over the last year, but momentum was lost following the last strike action on Christmas Eve. The union's leadership has

allowed the mood to ebb, and Royal Mail has deliberately dragged this out.

It has also been a mistake by the CWU leadership not to take on management's false claim that these changes are needed because of Royal Mail's financial situation. It is the parasitic ownership since privatisation which has plunged the company into this position. The fat cats have got rich on dividends while postal workers are under attack.

## Keir Starmer

Yet the union leadership has refused to raise renationalisation of Royal Mail, despite it being union policy! Moreover, they should have demanded that Keir Starmer publicly commits to taking the company back into public ownership - a policy agreed at last autumn's Labour Party conference, and celebrated by CWU leaders at the time.

This would have put huge pressure on Royal Mail and its political



Leyton posties on strike MARTIN REYNOLDS

backers, the crisis-ridden Tory government.

We argue that this deal should be rejected. If it is, the CWU should launch a new campaign, which will need to be both industrial and political.

To restore members' confidence, there would need to be a clear fighting programme, with the real launch of a strike fund.

The CWU should then also take the lead in calling for coordinated action across the union movement against the Tory cost-of-living squeeze and their anti-union legislation.

And alongside that has to be the demand to take Royal Mail out of the hands of the privateer vultures and into socialist public ownership - vital to defend jobs, pay, terms and conditions.

# University workers taking action

## Leeds Uni: Action works!

UCU MEMBER AT UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Despite union members requesting a meeting with the vice-chancellor of the University of Leeds, Simone Buitendijk, when putting in the two-week notice for the beginning of all-out strike action, it took almost a week into that action for senior management to concede to a half-hour meeting.

Yet the pressure of the University and College Union (UCU) action is working. Within a few days, concessions were made on the 100% deductions from the pay of those taking part in the marking and assessment boycott. These deductions will now be limited to 21 days' pay.

This offer was accepted at a meeting of UCU members, with around 70% of the meeting in support.

While the marking boycott is ongoing, staff whose work remit does not include such marking can contribute to the funds for those members who are facing the deductions, thus helping to sustain the action.

While understanding why many UCU members wanted to accept the offer, Socialist Party members in Leeds UCU thought that more could have been won. It would have been better to have more time than 45 minutes at the members' meeting to discuss the full implications of acceptance.

It is crucial that UCU members continue to link up with Unison

members striking over pay (and Unite, if successfully re-balloted) and support picket lines.

While the number keeps rising of vice-chancellors who have signed letters to the University and Colleges Employers Association calling for re-opening of negotiations over pay, Simone Buitendijk is not one of them.

Indeed, on the picket lines she has been repeatedly described as totally out of touch.

If the vice-chancellor continues to refuse to meaningfully engage with the trade unions and support a decent pay rise for staff to resolve the national dispute, then, like Royal Mail chief Simon Thompson, she must go!



LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

## Leicester Uni lecturers walk out again against wage theft

HEATHER RAWLING  
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

It's a sign of the times that college lecturers are now veterans of the strike wave.

University of Leicester University and College Union (UCU) members are out on strike again. Strikers say: "We are striking because UCU members participating in a national marking and assessment boycott will lose pay amounting, in many cases, to over a month's salary."

The university management has said that there will be

further withholding of pay later in the summer.

The feeling among union members is that their management is being particularly 'difficult', intransigent and cruel. Even if someone failed to mark just one exam, approximately 20 minutes' work, they could lose a whole month's pay! UCU members quite rightly say that these pay deductions are punitive.

In what seems to be a pattern in the current strike wave, management has walked away from negotiations, leaving members no option but to strike against this wage theft. It's not

that the university can't afford to pay its staff. According to the UCU, it has an income of £340 million, with £49 million in the bank.

Picket lines have been important in keeping up morale and building cross-faculty unity. There have been discussions on union strategies to win as well as social, political and economic issues. Open-air meetings have been held. Pickets are ending with teach-outs.

The further strike programme is:  
● 26, 27, 28 and 29 June  
● 18, 19, 20 and 21 July

## Trades councils: Coordinate the fightback at local level

KATRINE WILLIAMS  
PRESIDENT CARDIFF COUNTY TUC, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The national conference of trades union councils took place on 16-17 June. Trades councils are local groups of trade unionists, elected from union branches whose members work or live in the area.

It was very clear in the debates, the central role that trades councils can play in bringing trade unions together at local level, to coordinate support and solidarity for strikes and picket lines.

The conference took place against the backdrop of the National Education Union (NEU) calling further strike action of teachers in England

in July, ongoing strike action by health unions and the rail unions, and many key disputes like GMB members taking strike action at Amazon in Coventry.

While local strikers have always appreciated the support from trades councils, there is a wider recognition across the unions of the key role we can play, and a new impetus to get more trades councils established in areas without one.

Delegates also debated the anti-union minimum service level bill and made clear that any attempts to attack our right to strike will be met with opposition. In Wales we are demanding that the Labour Welsh government should publicly commit to refuse to use it.

Discussions included fighting the far right, and climate change. The conference recognised how important it is for trade unionists to be in the lead in mobilising opposition to the far right wherever they threaten to show up in our communities, rather than outsourcing this work to others. Similarly, we need to be at the forefront of campaigning against climate change, to fight for the concrete measures needed and ensure that demands for a 'just transition' include for good quality, well-paid local jobs.

A number of delegates were Socialist Party members, reflecting the work we are doing on the ground to build and mobilise trades councils in the strike wave.

## Leicester academy school workers escalate strike for better pay

STEVE SCORE  
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Staff at Ashfield Academy special school in Leicester, members of Unison, have been taking strike action since mid-May and are now escalating their action.

Despite having reserves of £2.75 million, the management claims it cannot give staff a pay rise that keeps up with the cost of living, and closes the gap between the pay of its staff and those in local authority schools.

Socialist Party members have been down to the picket lines regularly to give support. We spoke to Unison member Chris Fryer:

"We are now escalating the strike. We did one day last week, two days this week, we are out three days next

week and four days the following week, and four the week after that. "So far there are regular negotiations with management still after each round of strikes. We have made a bit of progress on the pay scales, but it's a war of attrition at the minute.

"Since we went to academy status, we have fallen behind local authority pay scales by about £1,000. We're trying to address that. With the level of inflation, all the offers are effectively pay cuts. We are low-paid, and we don't want to be even lower-paid."



# St Mungo's strike: 'More people are joining us'



LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS REPORT

Homelessness charity workers at St Mungo's, already on strike for four weeks, have made their strike over pay indefinite.

Talks on Tuesday 20 June ended abruptly. Reps and officers reported that chief executive Emma Haddad shouted and swore at them, leaving them no choice but to walk out. She was compelled to issue a 'half-apology' in writing.

St Mungo's convenor Jacob explained to an emergency protest outside head office the next day: "What is happening now is that people who have been working throughout this dispute are so disgusted by Haddad's behaviour that they are coming out and joining us on the picket lines. It's us staying out on strike and more people joining us on strike - that is what is going to inspire them to come up with a serious offer."

Another striker added: "The example of Emma's behaviour just goes to show: the mask is slipping, the pressure's on. It's even more important to turn up at the pickets."

Unite branch organiser Nick asked: "Is she now going to apologise for the poverty wages?" A striker at Waterloo commented on management pay: "We've seen that this new member of staff has been given £130,000 a year. That could be 30 members' pay rises. The money is there for the things they want to spend it on, but not for the things that benefit the workers."

### Defending homelessness services

Several St Mungo's strikers attended the conference of the National Shop Stewards Network (see pages 6-7) and spoke about their dispute. One said: "The CEO explained her behaviour by saying she's only human."

Well, frontline workers are only human!"

Another explained: "We don't want a one-off lump sum, and then go back to being poor. We need an increase in our salary."

They reported that the strike has galvanised and energised a whole new layer of union members and reps. "Our battle is not only for our own pocket, but for homelessness in the UK."

Rough sleeping has risen by 74% since 2010. So much for the government's pledge to end rough sleeping by 2024! Homelessness workers on the street deal with the sharp end of this crisis on a daily basis.

● A solidarity message from Unite NE/403/15 branch struck a chord with strikers: "If all the CEOs on six-figure salaries disappeared, we'd get on and do the work because that's what we do. They need us, we don't need them."

## St Mungo's and the Home Office

St Mungo's workers are proud of their increasingly stretched services, but complain bitterly that senior executives are pulling the organisation in the wrong direction.

When the CEO, recruited from the Home Office, spent a negotiating meeting shouting at Unite reps, strikers commented that she was introducing a toxic culture of fear and bullying from the Home Office to St Mungo's. The recent addition to the highly paid executive team of a close colleague of hers at the Home Office strengthened concern.

St Mungo's reputation was badly damaged when its role in sharing confidential client information with immigration enforcement teams was

exposed. Clients found themselves in detention centres and forcibly deported. Bosses of other charities, such as Crisis, spoke out about the sometimes tragic consequences.

The deportations were found to be unlawful, but what lessons did the St Mungo's board learn? There was an apology, and an admission that they had misled the press and campaigners. But an internal review failed to explain why senior executives were apparently unaware of the disgraceful practices. It didn't even mention that their own staff, through Unite, had campaigned against this role. There was no independent review, and now senior staff are being recruited from the Home Office.



## Junior doctors: No choice but to up the fight

Junior doctors in the BMA have announced five days of strike action in July.

The three days taken in June included protests as well as big picket lines. The plan then was to take strike action monthly.

The five days in July will be the

longest strike in NHS history, from 7am 13 July to 7am 18 July.

A BMA survey shows that 82% of junior doctors surveyed report they have support from their patients.

As picket after picket has explained: this is a fight for the future of the NHS

## Consultants vote to strike!

As we go to press, the BMA has announced that 86% of consultants have voted 'yes' in their strike ballot, with a 71% turnout. Strikes are planned for 20 and 21 July. "The profession is united" they say.

## Nurses just miss Tory anti-strike turnout threshold

Also as we go to press, the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) has announced that the turnout in its strike rebalot was 43% - just shy of the 50% required by draconian anti-trade union laws. 84% voted yes to strike action.

The fact that a rebalot was necessary is itself one of the many obstacles placed by the Tories in the way of democratic strike action. A strike mandate has to be renewed every six months.

This was even the case when RCN members had just overwhelmingly voted to reject the latest paltry government pay offer, against the recommendation of their own leadership.

Many must have wondered why they were being asked to ballot yet again - their intentions had already been made crystal clear!

This rebalot was conducted on an

aggregated basis. Previous RCN ballots were disaggregated, meaning that all trusts which got over threshold could strike, whatever the total national turnout. Had it been disaggregated again, there is every likelihood that the bold action nurses have taken so far around the country would be continuing.

But the fight to save the NHS is very far from over. The huge anger of nurses has not abated despite these obstacles placed in their path. Junior doctors are striking in their thousands. Consultants have voted to strike. Unite members still have a strike mandate.

And all workers in the NHS can back up the strike action, demonstrate, and campaign hard to win the pay rises and the funding the NHS needs and to end the privatisation that sucks it dry.

## 'Pay us what we deserve' Cleaners and caterers at South London and Maudsley NHS Trust strike for seven days

BERKAVY KARTAV  
LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Low-paid cleaners and caterers employed by outsourcing company ISS at South London and Maudsley NHS trust (SLAM), a trust that specialises in mental health services, started a seven-day strike on 24 June.

Members of the GMB union have already taken six days of strike action in a fight for a £14.34-an-hour wage and to be on NHS terms and conditions.

Workers are paid £11.05 an hour, which is 90p an hour less than the London Living Wage, despite the agreement between ISS and SLAM. Socialist Party members were on

picket lines to support the strikers. Adrian, the rep at Lambeth Hospital, said: "With inflation the highest in over 30 years, our wages mean nothing. ISS UK and Ireland made 8.2% growth in the first quarter of 2023. We are just asking for what we deserve to be paid for the care that we have for patients."

Strikers are also demanding the Covid bonus they were never paid, and equal rights to paid sick leave with NHS staff.

Coordination with other health unions will be important to win an inflation-proof pay rise. The Socialist Party says bring all outsourced workers back in-house with decent pay, terms and conditions!



# NATIONAL SHOP STEWARDS NETWORK CONFERENCE: A 'COUNCIL OF WAR'

**'Brilliant. And serious.' 'Exactly what's needed at this point in time - now we need to get out there!'**

executive members and general secretaries. Young workers just joining unions, bringing the energy of a new generation of workers getting organised; longstanding militants drawing on years of experience.

Serious issues were debated, and serious strategies put forward, in two main sessions: 'Building the strike wave' and 'fighting the Tory anti-union laws'.

Everyone went away armed, both with arguments - for escalation, coordination and a political strategy - and with concrete steps. A model motion was unanimously agreed on combating the minimum service levels (MSL) legislation. This should now be taken to every branch, regional and national body possible.

Flyers are now available for the NSSN rally and lobby of the conference of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) on 10 September.

These words were echoed by many of the hundreds in attendance at the conference of the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) on Saturday 24 June.

Strikers from the national and local disputes that have shaken the government and bosses over the last year, in both public and private sectors. Elected trade union leaders at local and national levels, from workplace reps and branch secretaries, to

## A fight we can win

Extracts from NSSN national chair Rob Williams's opening speech



Rob Williams  
PHOTOS: MARY FINCH AND NSSN

"We are in the midst of the biggest, broadest and most prolonged strike wave for a generation. An uprising of workers, with a new generation brought into action, fired by the most brutal cost-of-living squeeze in living memory.

"Sunak and co. will rue the day when they refused to talk to public sector workers, including nurses. We think more can be won, but whatever is won, hundreds of thousands of nurses on their first action will have learned a valuable truth that all workers are learning, that action works and gets results.

"Within weeks, the minimum service level bill could be law, unions could face fines, and workers could be sacked if they don't organise their own scabbing operations. This is class law, to protect bosses' profits by hamstringing unions. It gives a weapon to employers - but they have no legal obligation to use it.

"So we demand of Starmer, and where Labour is the employer, tell Sunak right now that you will not implement his law. And that in government, Labour will reinstate any worker sacked, or reimburse any union fined. Against this shambling Tory government, it would make Sunak's law unworkable.

"Likewise, he should promise to implement the policy passed at last year's Labour conference to renationalise Royal Mail - what a support for

the CWU that would be!

"But he is too interested in proving to big business that he is safe for them. He shouldn't go cap in hand to the banks, he should be promising to nationalise them! We want them taken into socialist public ownership under workers' control - then workers could have cheap mortgages.

"The Tories are rocking. Boris has gone ... but don't kid yourself that Sunak is any less cruel. On the day that the Covid report into Johnson was published, Rishi was on an early anti-immigrant raid for the TV cameras. Just like his 'small boats' policy, this is crude racist scaremongering. It's not migrants who are responsible for spiralling inflation, and increasing rents and mortgage payments.

"Our answer to the Tories and their further attack on our right to strike, and their attempts at divide and rule, is 'Unity is Strength!' That's why we call on the TUC and the unions to come together to prepare for mass joint action to defeat this weak and divided Tory government. That's why we are again lobbying TUC Congress in September.

"We have no illusions in a Starmer government, only demands. And a promise that we'll strike back against any cuts from him as well. But if in the next weeks Sunak's Tories go for our movement, then this is a fight that we can't shy away from, but one that we can win."

## Resistance to capitalist crisis

The top table speakers included representatives of some of the unions affiliated to the NSSN

Unite the Union national lead officer, Onay Kasab, gave apologies from general secretary Sharon Graham, as she was unable to attend. He reported that there have been over 600 disputes since Sharon was elected general secretary. 80% of them have won, with a £300 million transfer of wealth from employers' bank accounts to the pockets of workers. That includes bus drivers in Abellio in south London winning 18%, and between 15.5 and 17.5% for security staff at Heathrow. Unite is rebalancing 26 NHS employers. Just one in four shifts in the NHS have the planned staffing levels. Kaz said "We want proper staffing levels every day!"

He demanded that every piece of anti-union legislation be repealed by Labour. And that Labour councils must not wait for a general election - Unite's policy is for needs-based, no-cuts council budgets.

Carmel Gates, Nipsa general secretary, gave greetings via video. For the first time in its history, Nipsa, the main public sector union in Northern Ireland, has all of its sections in dispute, including education, health, civil servants and local government.

A video message from Sarah Woolley, BFAWU bakers' union general secretary, told conference that she represents workers who "feed the nation but don't earn enough to survive". But in this strike wave, "workers are inspiring a generation."

Annoesjka Valent, national official of Napo, gave apologies from general secretary Ian Lawrence. Napo members hadn't been part of the strike wave so far, having accepted last year's pay offer, but the strike wave is giving confidence to members, who are going back into negotiations for a 12% pay rise for 2023-24 and a £2,500 one-off sum.

Conference was especially inspired to hear from Garfield Hylton, GMB rep at Amazon. To huge applause he explained how they have recruited on the picket line: going from 50 to 850 members! He reported Amazon's efforts to undermine the union's recognition claim by taking on 1,300 more workers, which is being met by more

action, chipping away at the new hires, and taking the battle to warehouses around the country.

Jared Wood, RMT London Transport regional organiser, said that 2023 saw more days lost to strikes than any year since 1989, though no individual day has yet exceeded N30 - the 30 November 2011 public sector pension strike. The objective isn't to strike in itself, but to defend jobs, conditions, pensions and pay. "We don't want glorious defeats, we want victories." He said that means coordination, and a discussion about the best ways to escalate - to give the employers a problem they cannot get around.

"The bosses know the working class is back and are becoming more combative against us. The dispute is about who will pay for the historic crisis of capitalism." He pointed out that this is the second time governments and the public sector have bailed out the capitalists, following £900 billion in quantitative easing after the 2007-8 crisis. "They bail out the capitalists with endless resources but we have to accept loss of wages and services... We need a generalised resistance to capitalist crisis, with a political as well as industrial alternative."



Garfield Hylton

## Building the strike wave

In the discussion about the strike wave we heard from a whole range of strikes and ballot campaigns. Many more spoke than can be reported here, including Surrey Unison members fighting a Tory county council for a pay rise, union reps of barristers and solicitors, young workers, '50's women' pension campaigners, and many more



St Mungo's strikers

St Mungo's strikers reported on the "cacophony of chaos" at the homelessness charity (see page 5). As they embark on indefinite strike action, they know that "Mungo's will be a different workplace, for staff and the bosses."

Marion Lloyd, president of the BEIS (business) group in civil service union PCS, in a personal capacity, praised the new young workers in PCS on strike for the first time and stepping up as reps. The government is in a mess and this is the opportunity to drive home the advantage. But the leadership of PCS is ratcheting down the campaign. The rank-and-file socialist group in PCS, the Broad Left Network, of which Marion is the chair, is fighting for the campaign to continue. "It's the members that have pushed the action, and it's the members who decide if this dispute ends."

Dan Smart, striking social worker, spoke about the Unison adult social care strike in South Gloucestershire, the first strike of social workers in this strike wave, taking action against a Labour-Liberal Democrat council. Brian Debus, library worker sacked by the Labour council in Hackney, said: "This is an indication of what a Labour council is prepared to do on the Tories' behalf."

Over 200,000 teachers will be on strike again in July, reported Sean McCauley, NEC member in the National Education Union (NEU), in a personal capacity. He explained that strike action has forced the government to talk for the first time since the 'independent' pay review body was established in 1986. He argued:

"We need escalation in the autumn, and coordination across the whole trade union movement. We want to get rid of the Tory government - but will still need to fight under a Starmer government."

Eve Miller, a Unison rep in health, spoke of her solidarity with her colleagues in the Royal College of Nursing and Unite in their ballots, and was disappointed Unison members would not be joining them. "We need socialist policies," she said. "£15-an-hour minimum wage. Abolition of tuition fees. Scrap outsourcing and PFI. Nationalise care services." And to achieve these demands: "We cannot rely on Labour. We need a new party."

Dave Nellist, chair of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), took up this point: "We need something new". He explained TUSC's call for trade unions to initiate a workers' list in the general election, and the preparation for a 'Plan B' of socialists and trade unionists standing under the TUSC umbrella. He also pointed out TUSC's call on the Green Party not to stand against Jeremy Corbyn if he stands.

Lawanya from Tamil Solidarity, on the NSSN steering committee, argued that Tories use refugees and migrants to blame for a crisis which is caused by capitalism. It's not enough to say 'refugees are welcome' - we have to fight for jobs, homes and services for all. Arif, from Day-Mer Turkish and Kurdish community centre and the Unite migrant workers branch, pointed out, in reporting on developments in Turkey, that capitalist governments work together - so must workers!

## Defeat the anti-union laws

Len Hockey, Unite branch secretary at Bart's Health Trust, moved the NSSN model motion on resisting the Tory Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill. Workers will face this new demand after already jumping through the hoops of the most undemocratic union legislation in Europe. "They have the nerve to say it's about services. Strikers want well-resourced staffing levels every day - that's why they're striking in the first place."

Gary Harbord reported that the motion had been passed at his London Underground RMT branch and was going to the RMT Annual General Meeting (starting the next day). "If the TUC won't step up to the plate, we have to build a coalition of the willing." He drew on the example of the general strike action that grew from

below in response to the jailing of dockers in 1972 (see '1972: Dockers face down the Tory government' at socialistparty.org.uk).

April Ashley, recently re-elected to Unison's national executive (NEC), reported in a personal capacity from Unison conference that Labour's Lisa Nandy had made it clear "Labour wouldn't be the cavalry coming over the hill to rescue local government". April said it was clear we cannot wait for a Labour government - we must demand now that Labour councils don't implement the MSL work notices. She pledged she will raise the motion at Unison's next NEC.

Mark Evans, on Unison's local government service group executive and from Carmarthenshire Unison, also in a personal capacity, reiterated the demand that the Labour Welsh government must refuse to use the MSL measures.

Luis Bertolin, a UCU member at the University of Birmingham, described the university bosses' imposition of 'mitigations' relating to the marking and assessment boycott as "a rehearsal of the MSL!". Judy Griffiths, CWU member, stressed: "All trade union laws are designed to protect the bosses' wealth. Union members are the ones who should decide on action."



Eve Miller, Unison rep in health

The NSSN model motion can be found here: 'NSSN 2023 conference model motion' at socialistparty.org.uk

The central demands are:

- All unions and the TUC urgently call a national Saturday demonstration against the new law
- Keir Starmer pledges an incoming Labour government to reverse fines and other measures taken against any union under the terms of the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act
- All employers refuse to use the provisions of the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act and that a lead in such non-compliance be given by any government, council, fire authority or other employer led by the Labour Party

- If any union is taken to court or worker threatened with dismissal, an emergency demonstration is called and an immediate meeting of the TUC General Council be convened to organise mass co-ordinated strike action, including a 24-hour general strike
- The repeal of all anti-union legislation
- We support the rally to be held at TUC Congress in Liverpool on Sunday 10 September lobbying for this programme of action

What participants said:  
**'A total breath of fresh air'**

Attendees at the conference spoke to Oisín Duncan



"Having seen the leadership in Unison shockingly advise acceptance of a bad deal for their members, I want to see more unity in fighting for members' interests. Hopefully, this conference can help to build a united voice to fight for coordinated action for health workers' pay." Neil, Unison Health

"I haven't been able to get to every picket line or every NSSN conference, but I'm glad I came this time. It really helps in building links across the unions. The speakers have been really inspirational, especially from the PCS on how they're fighting for a better leadership."

Jason, RMT, London Underground



"We need to unite and fight to get anything from this government. As weak as they are, we have to work together to achieve our demands. It's encouraging that potentially four education unions could be striking together. We need as much coordination as possible."

Dan, NEU



"It can be easy to feel isolated in your branch, without seeing firsthand the rest of the movement. Events like this are great because you get to see the solidarity across the whole trade union movement."

Louie, Leeds

"Coming to NSSN from watching my union's NEC decision is a total breath of fresh air!"

Michelle, PCS, Wigan



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# RUSSIA: AFTER PRIGOZHIN'S UPRISING, CRISIS DEEPENS FOR PUTIN

NIALL MULHOLLAND

COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL (CWI)

In a dramatic turn of events over the weekend of 24-25 June, the Russian mercenary leader, Yevgeny Prigozhin, staged an armed uprising, only to turn his Wagner fighters back from a march on Moscow after a truce was struck with Vladimir Putin's regime.

Although Putin has seen off this coup attempt, his authority has been hugely damaged, and the deep divisions within the Russian military and state apparatus revealed to the world. Putin's humiliation will be seen as a sign of severe weakness by enemies and allies alike. The potential for the collapse of the Putin regime, if unrest and armed resistance were to erupt again, is starkly posed.

Putin had vowed to crush the Wagner paramilitary force for "treason". But instead, it appears, Prigozhin has been allowed to go to Belarus after launching the first coup attempt in Russia since 1991. The deal was brokered by Alexander Lukashenko, the president of Belarus, and an ally of Putin. It seems that the Kremlin has dropped plans to disband the Wagner group, and Wagner soldiers that took part in the rebellion will be spared from prosecution.

However, on Monday 26 June, the Kremlin struck a somewhat different note, perhaps in an attempt to reassert its authority. Russian state media reported that Prigozhin is still under investigation. And in an attempt to present an image of 'business as usual', the Russian defence minister was shown meeting soldiers on state television.

## Unfolding crisis

The crisis began on Friday 23 June, after Prigozhin claimed that scores of his troops had been killed in aerial attacks by Russian military forces, following months of tensions between Prigozhin and Russian military chiefs. Prigozhin was also reacting against reports that Russian generals intended to send less resources to his Wagner group, and that his forces would be made to accept the command of Russian army chiefs by 1 July. This was after the Wagner group seized control of Bakhmut, in east Ukraine, in May.

Prigozhin instructed thousands of armed Wagner fighters to cross the border from occupied Ukraine, and seized control of the southern city of Rostov-on-Don, early on the morning of Saturday 24 June. He claimed that his forces shot down several Russian military helicopters as they took over the headquarters of Southern Military District in the city, which is key in coordinating Russian forces in Ukraine.

Prigozhin declared he had 25,000 fighters and was organising a "march for justice". He demanded the removal of the Russian defence minister, Sergei Shoigu, and Valery Gerasimov, commander of Russia's invasion



Vladimir Putin (left) and Yevgeny Prigozhin (right) PHOTO: GOVERNMENT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION/CC

force. The fact that Wagner forces managed to move 700 kilometres towards Moscow largely unhindered poses questions about the morale and cohesion of the Russian army. It appears that with large sections of the army stationed in Ukraine, the Russian police and FSB secret service floundered in dealing with the Wagner threat.

In his statement announcing the armed rebellion, Prigozhin stated that Russian generals had misled Putin into the invasion of Ukraine. This was an incredible turnaround. Previously, Prigozhin was one of the most bellicose supporters of the conduct of the war. Some commentators have speculated that these contradictory claims indicate a signalling by Prigozhin to Nato and the West that he is open to discussion or has already established back channels. This can reflect the thinking of a section of the oligarchs and ruling elites in Russia, who have concluded the bogged-down war in Ukraine is

becoming untenable, and not worth the huge cost in human resources and treasure to continue without an end in sight.

We still do not fully know what Prigozhin's aims and intentions were. Did he really intend to march on Moscow for a possible bloody showdown with the Russian army and the Putin regime, or was it a bluff to force the ousting of Shoigu and Gerasimov? On Monday 26 June, Prigozhin released a video denying that he had intended to overthrow the Russian government and his 'march' was to 'prevent the destruction of the Wagner [group]... and to hold to account those who made a huge number of mistakes during the special military operation [the official euphemism for the invasion of Ukraine]'. Although Prigozhin's forces took control of Rostov relatively easily, and there were reports of fraternisation with regular soldiers and support from civilians, it appears Prigozhin was not assured he could win wider

support amongst rank-and-file soldiers and the general population, to which he made a populist 'anti-corruption' appeal, in order to successfully march on Moscow.

## Putin undermined

Although Putin has seen off the coup attempt, this crisis has hugely damaged his authority and prestige in Russia and internationally. He has ruled in a 'Bonapartist' manner for decades, acting as a supreme arbiter-in-chief between contending oligarchs and different factions of the military and the state apparatus. After the blundering start to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Putin allowed the Wagner group - a mercenary army formed in 2014 and utilised as part of the Russian military annexation of Crimea - to play a leading role on the front line. Prigozhin bolstered his military forces by giving Russian criminal prisoners the option of release if they signed up to his paramilitary force.

However, the monster that Putin helped to cultivate in the form of Prigozhin and his Wagner group finally turned against him. It remains to be seen the details and full outcome of the deal struck by Lukashenko. Will Putin sack Shoigu and Gerasimov as demanded by Prigozhin? To do so, might stem opposition, at least in the short term, including from disgruntled regular army soldiers at the conduct of the Ukraine war, but it would also show further weakness by Putin.

Putin will also have to consider what to do with the Wagner group. If it is disbanded entirely this can lead to new resentments and opposition. Although exiled to Belarus, Prigozhin can act as a figurehead for opposition to Putin.

With more than a dozen paramilitary outfits formed in the last decade or so, after Prigozhin's short-lived rebellion the Kremlin announced that private military contractors will be brought under the control of the Ministry of Defence, and that only the army can recruit convicts. But this will do little to lessen the threat to Putin of new revolts. Sections of the oligarchy and state machine will be considering a post-Putin arrangement, and all sorts of court intrigue can take place.

Deepening divisions among the ruling class can be expressed in increased regionalism, as local political bosses and capitalist interests look to save their skins. And many have their own forces, as various regions in Russia formed paramilitary outfits to join the war effort in Ukraine over the last year.

## War in Ukraine

The background to last weekend's extraordinary internal crisis in Russia is, of course, the disastrous course of the Ukraine conflict. Apparently badly advised by his intelligence services, Putin blundered into the war in an adventurist manner, assuming that Russian forces marching on Kyiv would be enough to overthrow the Zelensky regime, and force Nato countries to reach a deal about spheres of economic and security interests in the region.

Putin underestimated the degree to which the Ukraine army was armed, modernised and trained by Nato since 2014, and by the mass opposition of the Ukraine population to an invading army. Over the last months, Putin has had to change his tactics, and moved to expand and consolidate control of the Donbass region, as well as Crimea. The war has dragged on at a huge cost in human lives and resources on both sides.

The much vaunted 'Spring offensive' by Ukraine forces in the east of the country, after months of Nato rearmament, so far has failed to make much headway, and is costing many lives against well dug-in Russian defences. The Ukraine military is reportedly now launching new attacks, as it tries to exploit the confusion and disarray on the Russian side following the coup attempt. The hope being that demoralisation is spreading throughout Russian army ranks.

Facing a renewed Ukrainian army assault, and to try to bolster support at home, Putin may ratchet up his nationalist rhetoric, trying to rally the populace around the threat of outside forces and fifth columnists, and by making new threats of deploying 'weapons of mass destruction', including 'strategic nuclear arms'.

The conflict has potentially entered a more unpredictable and dangerous phase, with global implications. The more sober Western analysts cautioned last weekend that if Prigozhin had managed to overthrow Putin it would not necessarily have lessened the West's problems, as it posed the scenario of a gang of mercenaries and criminals taking power and getting their hands on nuclear arms.

While the ruling elite in Russia would move might and main to ensure an unpredictable and volatile figure like Prigozhin does not have control of the nuclear button, for obvious reasons, these recent events will have greatly shaken the oligarchs and ruling strata of the state, and deepened divisions amongst them. Some will push for more determined action to 'win' the war in Ukraine, while others may be open to a truce and negotiations, sooner rather than later.

However, there is no sign from Zelensky or Nato countries that they wish to enter talks, particularly as Putin is now badly weakened. The EU committed another three and a half billion euros to fund Ukraine on 26 June. This means more bloodshed in eastern Ukraine and impoverishment of the entire country.

These latest events reinforce the fact that the working classes of Russia and Ukraine have nothing to gain from the war or from the rule of reactionary gangster-oligarchical regimes. Only working-class internationalism can show a way out of the horrors of war and poverty.

The CWI supports genuine independent actions of the working class in Ukraine against brutal Russian armed invasion, and against the anti-democratic and anti-working class Zelensky regime. Nato is no friend of the working masses either - it will fight to the last drop of Ukrainian blood for Western capitalist interests, as shown in many parts of the world where the imperialist military alliance has intervened.

And the events of the last few days have underlined that there is nothing progressive about the rotten Putin regime or any section of the ruling elite

in Russia. Building a mass anti-war movement, alongside independent mass working-class organisations, like genuine trade unions and workers' parties, with a political programme to oppose a reactionary war and the ruling elite, is vital to stop the carnage in Ukraine and to remove the scourge of the oligarch-gangster regime.

Internationally, the workers' movement must regard the events of the last few days as an urgent wake-up call, as the conflict can move into ever more dangerous directions, and adopt an independent stance that campaigns for an end to the war, for immediate Russian withdrawal from Ukraine, opposition to Nato, and full support for the building of a powerful movement of the working class in Ukraine and Russia. A socialist federation of the region, on a voluntary and equal basis, would fully guarantee the rights of all minorities, including the people of east Ukraine and Crimea, and all across Ukraine and Russia.



PHOTO: SERGE SEREBRO/CC

On Saturday 24 June, Putin made a television broadcast furiously condemning the coup attempt and implicitly compared it to the Bolsheviks leading the working class to take power in October 1917. Putin made the ludicrous and historically incorrect claim that Tsarist Russia was on the verge of victory in the First World War until the revolutionary events of 1917. In reality, the calamitous war conducted by the Tsarist generals had led to mass disaffection among Russian troops on the front, and to bread shortages and other privations in Russia.

The provisional government which arose from the February Revolution in 1917 continued with the war, which over several months led to mass opposition from the working class and the peasantry, and to the Bolshevik socialist revolution

in October 1917. This ended the war for Russia and also hastened the end of the slaughter in the trenches.

Just as Putin condemned Lenin's sensitive and democratic approach to the rights of oppressed nations to self-determination in a rambling speech (and document) to justify the launching of the invasion of Ukraine - that included the claim that Lenin assisted in creating the 'artificial' nation of Ukraine - his latest historically ignorant comments are testament to the completely reactionary motivations of the ruling elite in Moscow and the oligarchs.

Like the Tsars of old, Putin won the support of the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill, against Prigozhin's coup attempt, as well as that of generals and politicians. Ramzan Kadyrov, the Chechen leader, denounced Prigozhin as a traitor and said he would send battle-hardened Chechen fighters to quash the mutineers.



## WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

### WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

### PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

### ENVIRONMENT

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

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

### DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

### SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations!
- Take the wealth off the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need, not to the fat cats.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No 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.

**Do you agree? Join the fightback!**

## JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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Sheffield Socialist Party campaigners

## Never too old to join the Socialist Party!

**JOHN BUNN**  
SHEFFIELD SOUTH EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

I joined the Socialist Party a year ago after coming across a campaign stall and talking with Alistair, a local organiser. I was 69 and very angry at the political situation. I had rejoined the Labour Party to vote for Jeremy Corbyn but had become disillusioned with Starmer's attack on the left of the party and since resigned. My family had suggested I get involved in politics again as I was becoming unbearable at home, especially when the news was on, so meeting Alistair was an opportunity to do this. I was unsure what role I could play but I was encouraged to join and see how I got on, and what a year it has been!

I have been on several picket lines and, as a retired nurse, was pleased to support striking nurses. I have

assisted Socialist Party campaign stalls at least weekly. I am part of the local Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition organising committee, and stood in the local elections, speaking at a hustings, leafleting and canvassing my local area.

I got 78 votes in the election in a strong Liberal Democrat area and I am now looking for some of those 78 socialists.

I look forward to the weekly Socialist Party meetings which have grown massively over the last year. The Socialist Party has a clear perspective and understanding of the political situation both nationally and internationally, which gives me hope that there is a future for my children, and that it will be socialist.

So all you old retired socialists out there, get out of your chairs you have nothing to lose but your chains!

## TUC LGBT+ conference

## Workers' action can beat the Tories and fight LGBTQ+phobia

## SOCIALIST PARTY LGBTQ+ GROUP

**T**he Tories offer no solutions to the problems facing workers and young people. While workers are fighting back against the cost-of-living crisis, in the run up to the general election we can expect to see greater attempts to whip up division and hate.

The TUC, whose LGBT+ conference takes place on 29-30 June, can be an important factor in organising a collective working-class response to this division. But a fighting approach aimed at maximising unity in struggle, and a bold socialist programme are necessary.

The unions, six million-strong organisations of the working class, must mobilise their strength. That includes fighting LGBTQ+phobia - discrimination, oppression, harassment and bullying of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer people. It impacts the lives of every LGBTQ+ person and, if unchallenged, threatens our class's ability to unite and fight the bosses and the Tories.

LGBTQ+ workers and young people have a proud history of fighting back against oppression. Legal improvements have been won, such as health provision, the equalisation of

the age of consent, equal marriage, and other laws that improve LGBTQ+ rights. Working-class organisations have played important roles in this.

But no gain is permanent under a capitalist system in crisis. In Britain today, austerity and crisis-ridden capitalism threaten the gains won through struggle in the past. While austerity hits all working-class people, those groups already discriminated against under capitalism can be particularly hard hit.

In recent years, issues around discrimination, particularly transphobia, have been on the rise. This is a result of the Tories and their policies, and also shows the need to build a movement to fight cuts and division with mass action and a socialist programme. This includes the need to build a new workers' party to answer Tory lies, often echoed - or at least not challenged - by Keir Starmer.

A Tory lie that needs to be answered by our class is that the struggle for rights and resources in society is between different groups who face discrimination and oppression.

Tory propaganda attempts to place the blame for the oppression and lack of services, rights, and support, suffered by women and lesbians on trans people - the Tory playbook. But ending women's oppression means

ending cuts and privatisation of public services, big business's domination of society, and capitalism.

Capitalism is an unequal, oppressive and discriminatory system, based on exploitation of the working-class majority by the tiny capitalist class. To maintain capitalism, workers face attempts to divide us on the basis of race, gender, sexuality, etc. But class exploitation unites workers. Together we have the potential power to transform society, and in the hands of the working class society could be organised, through democratic discussions and planning, to meet all our needs.

**Tory 'culture war'**

For the Tories, the rights of trans people are weapons for their 'culture war'. It is likely that 'cultural issues', under which they include trans rights, will be to the fore in their programme in the next election.

But the Tories are weak and divided themselves. By building the collective struggle against cuts to public services, attacks on the right to strike, and the cost-of-living crisis, we can defeat the Tories, their division, and the crisis-ridden capitalist system they defend.

The strike wave over the last year has given a taste of the power of the



Reclaim Pride PHOTO: MARY FINCH

working class when it is united and taking action. Because of this, it is essential to link the fight against all forms of oppression including racism, sexism, homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, to the fight against class exploitation, austerity, and capitalism.

A new workers' party, with a socialist programme of fighting for jobs, homes, services and rights for all - including all the rights and resources LGBTQ+ people need, would also allow different struggles to come

together in solidarity, and to develop that programme.

Until we end the rotten capitalist system, oppression and discrimination will be a part of everyday life for millions across the world. Socialism would open the way to building a society free from the bigotry, gender norms and discrimination of capitalism. In order to live in a world where human beings can be truly free, we have to fundamentally transform the way society is organised.

## Why I joined the Socialist Party

### To fight for a world where people's full potential is realised



PHOTO: TOMMY LIVERPOOL

ALEX PHILIPS,  
SURREY SOCIALIST PARTY

In 2017, as a sixth former, Jeremy Corbyn seized my attention with a campaign for a manifesto that proposed real change to our society. I felt my first taste of political hope.

And the wave of popularity around Labour that election made it clear that this was a feeling that went beyond just me, particularly with other young people.

Unfortunately, the 2019 general election results were a brutal exposure of the extent to which the establishment will work to maintain the status quo. And now, the purging of democracy and socialism in Labour has made it clear to me that the bosses and their parties will never again make the mistake of letting in someone that promises real, sustainable, social change.

I wanted to be in a political environment where I felt like I had a voice, and where that voice would have the chance to cooperate with many of those like it. The Socialist Party has exposed me to some people that give me genuine hope, both from other members and with those I interact with when campaigning. I have seen young people like me, fuelled by their passion and determination, stand up in hustings and give outstanding speeches whilst facing down the institutional behemoths

that are the mainstream political parties.

I joined the Socialist Party because I no longer wish to stand and turn my cheek on the relentless attacks on my workplace, my environment, and my future. I am a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics) graduate, burnt out from a harsh four-year degree.

I pushed through with the hope that at the end I would be promised a job where I could pursue my passion. But the STEM graduate of today faces an unfortunately reality. Despite the publicity pushing for young people to pursue STEM, there is a shortage of genuine scientific jobs that enable students to make the full use of their hard-earned training and knowledge.

And many of those that do get a job using their skills soon find out that there is little room under capitalism for curiosity and research when every decision must be justified on the basis of its profitability.

I joined the Socialist Party because, like many others, I no longer see a way to pursue my dream within the system, and so I want to work towards changing it for the better.

Do you agree?  
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# the Socialist

Issue 1233

29 June - 5 July 2023

formerly **Militant**

# FIGHT FOR LGBTQ+ LIBERATION

## For socialist policies to end oppression

**RACHEL COX**  
OXFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

**T**he situation facing LGBTQ+ people - denoting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer and other identities - today is dire.

The Tories' attempts to deflect the anger at the cost-of-living crisis with divide-and-rule politics have real effects. They blocked the limited Scottish Gender Recognition Reform Bill, which would have given the right to gender self-identity. New attacks are being prepared against LGBTQ+ school students and teachers. And in the US and across the world, there is a ratcheting up of violent rhetoric by various politicians and in the media.

One third of LGBTQ+ people don't feel safe walking down the street holding their partner's hand. 40% of trans people have experienced a hate crime in the last 12 months.

With these high stakes, we need united struggle for socialist politics.

It's true that we managed to win reforms in the past. But reforms, including legal and more available resources, aren't enough to fix the fundamentally broken capitalist system.

Take housing. LGBTQ+ people are 20% less likely to own their own homes. And, especially for young people, our chances of being homeless are at least double the base rate. Double! This is on top of the existing housing crisis facing all workers. Personally, I have been denied housing by bigoted landlords in Oxford.

Capitalism barely sustains the majority of us, while a lucky few at the top make massive profits at our expense. Any gains we make under this system can be taken away to maximise profits. Division and oppression are inherent in capitalism.

There is a rich history of LGBTQ+ campaigners who saw this and fought to overturn

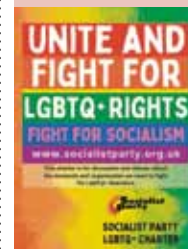
the structures that oppressed them and us, in many cases in explicitly socialist ways. They fought to dismantle the systems of oppression and exploitation, and build something new in their place. Reforms were won out of fear from the bosses of more radical change, but gains won under capitalism will come under attack when it suits them.

A few LGBTQ+ people rising to the top of the hierarchy and who don't challenge the capitalist system is far from the same as freedom for all. So why should we continue to uphold this vile system that is willing to try and sell more products with rainbow logos one month a year and is prepared to attack our rights the rest of it?

We need to build fighting socialist organisations to defend and win LGBTQ+ rights. We need political Prides that are non-corporate and focused on the fight to defend ourselves, as well as being celebratory. They need to be

tied into the trade union movement to fight alongside other workers - fighting for mass housing, democratic control in workplaces and fully nationalised healthcare. And we need to fight for socialism - a democratic system based on cooperation as an alternative to capitalist division.

You can order a copy of the newly reprinted Socialist Party LGBTQ+ charter by going to [leftbooks.co.uk](http://leftbooks.co.uk) or by scanning the QR code.



WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on p10

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