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the Socialist

Issue 1234

6-12 July 2023

formerly **Militant**

TORIES OUT

A REAL PAY RISE, FULLY FUNDED SERVICES

AND A PARTY TO FIGHT FOR IT

Schools and hospitals crumbling. Young people without a future.

Sick people without adequate care. Health workers and educators forced out under relentless stress, pressure and shrinking pay packets.

All consequences of over a decade of Tory rule.

Asked to give any examples of success, Tory politicians can only lie. Something that for them is as

easy as breathing. They are hated, and for good reason.

The closer a general election gets, the greater the desire from most working-class people to be rid of them. But also, the more pressing the question: What can be expected from a Labour government led by Sir Keir Starmer?

The answers from the Labour frontbench so far include: real-terms pay cuts for doctors and teachers, no more promise of free education, no rent controls, no free childcare, and scrapping the planned investment fund to tackle climate change.

All pledges made to the capitalist class to demonstrate Labour will govern in their interests and not those of working-class people.

For their part, the bosses are piling all the pressure they can on Starmer and his frontbenchers. Long lunches, trips to Davos and financial donations have been gratefully received.

As much as the Labour leadership might try to ignore the hundreds of thousands taking part in the strike wave, now over a year old and showing no sign of stopping, working-class pressure has to be applied on Labour by the trade unions.

Approaching a general election, what an effect the unions themselves backing candidates independently of Labour, to fight for real pay rises and fully funded services, would have. Such a list of union-backed candidates could include Jeremy Corbyn and others barred from standing, alongside trade unionists and campaigners.

Over 100,000 trade unionists will march through Durham at the annual Miners' Gala on Saturday 8 July. Our class, the working class, needs its own mass party, not one that takes trade union money and backs the bosses' side.

We need a new mass workers' party, armed with a socialist programme to take the vast hoarded wealth off the capitalists, nationalise the banks and big business under democratic workers' control and management, and provide us with decent pay, services, homes, and a future for all.

● **Is Mick Lynch right that voting Labour is the only option at the next election? See pages 8-9**

● Unite conference set to debate working-class political representation, see page 10

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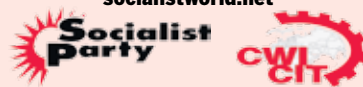
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."
Karl Marx

Thames Water crisis is capitalist failure laid bare

Fight for socialist nationalisation



The Thames Water crisis has shone a light on the crazy world of privatised water in Britain today.

It's just the latest example of how capitalism is systemically rigged - the rich get richer while we pay the price with a crisis of crumbling infrastructure and public services, and the rising cost of living.

The largest water supplier in the country currently hangs on the edge of collapse, with a debt pile of about £16 billion amid rumours that the government may have to step in and nationalise the company. But it is far from alone. All private water companies, and much of the other privatised utility services are, in most cases, 'debt zombies', kept alive by the ever-rising bills they are forcing on the suffering working class.

For the Tories and capitalist class, nationalisation would be an emergency temporary measure, only for the utility to be thrown back into the chaos of the free market for speculators and profiteers to continue racketeering.

Privatisation

The water industry was privatised in 1989, with £5 billion in debts written off by Thatcher in order to give a leg up to the new private companies. In the 30 or so years since they have managed to 'gear themselves up' with collective debts of about £60 billion.

Thames Water stands as the worst with a debt to equity ratio of over 80%. Only one of the 17 companies has a ratio of less than 50%.

Most of these debts are inflation linked and interest floating. Now of course, both have been rising at record rates. The cash raised was supposed to be used to invest in repairing infrastructure. Instead, the cash has been pocketed, all the while paying shareholders generous dividends.

Between 2007 and 2016, 95% of profits were paid out to shareholders while pipes burst and water pollution rapidly increased. Since privatisation, water profits total over £72 billion - for 13 of those years New Labour was in government!

Since the 2008 capitalist crisis, water companies and other privatised utilities have been seen by stock and bond investors as a secure big-returns bet, given their centrality to public infrastructure - easy public assets for them to leech off.

The end of cheap debt in the last year has seen interest payments



PHOTO: PHILAPRENZY/CC

skyrocket. Private companies have been all too keen to pass this on to the public, and working-class people have faced the largest increases in 18 years - jumping 8.9% in April. Since privatisation, household water bills have risen by 363% - over double the rate of inflation.

Even for the capitalist class, Thames Water's record is an 'environmental disgrace'. It currently loses 630 million litres of water - 252 Olympic-sized swimming pools a day! 20% of UK water leaks from the crumbling water systems each day.

The cost of sorting the sewage crisis is huge. A report by the Storm Overflows Taskforce raised that separating wastewater and stormwater systems would cost between £350 billion and £600 billion. Which, if passed onto households, would increase bills by as much as £999 a year.

On average, £1.5 billion a year has been paid out in interest on debts over 30+ years of private ownership, and new debts of £60 billion taken on, but little or nothing done about sewage treatment or drought resilience.

Under public pressure, the government has demanded water company shareholders invest to sort out the ever increasing wastage of water and raw sewage pollution.

Their solution - surprise, surprise - has been to turn to the debt markets once again to protect their profits and dividends!

Like something out of 'The Sopranos' or 'The Godfather', the combination of a public vital utility monopoly, cheap, easy-to-access debt and a weak regulator, made the water industry a perfect low-risk, high-return gamble for speculators. They have

given themselves a holiday from investing in pipes, infrastructure and pollution prevention measures.

Complex webs of multilayered ownership have been created (Thames Water is made up of eight levels of companies and owners). Water company ownership now includes sovereign wealth funds and private equity. They have then used 'whole business securitisation' to take on huge amounts of complex debt through bonds, loans and swaps, using the safety and security of a public utility to give handouts to shareholders and private investors. It's a wealth transfer from the working class to the rich.

The structures of debt are not dissimilar from the complex tranches of mortgage-backed securities and collateralised debt obligation, that stood behind the subprime mortgage crisis of 2008. They were based on the idea that people will always pay their mortgage. In this case, debt was sold and passed with confidence that they could get away without investing in water infrastructure, keep charging ordinary people, and pay themselves more than nicely.

Capitalist crisis

For the capitalist class, there is clear panic that this latest crisis is further eroding any confidence or belief in the very basics of their system. Combined with rising support for basic socialist policies like nationalisation, a Bloomberg article recently commented: "Discontent with the privatisation of state-owned industry, regarded as one of Margaret Thatcher's crowning achievements and copied all over the world, has mushroomed in the land of its birth. The latest opinion polls reveal that 70% of voters, and even a majority of Tories, would like to take water back into government control."

"At the last general election, voters decisively rejected the far-left Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, but polls show that in theory they approved of his socialist plan to renationalise huge swathes of private industry - water, the energy supply network, Royal Mail (privatised in 2013 after 500 years of state ownership) and the railways."

Unsurprisingly, nationalisation is not on the agenda of the Tory party at all, but neither is it for Starmer's New Labour Mark 2. After already abandoning plans from the 2019 Corbyn manifesto for nationalisation of energy and mail, a Labour spokesperson said on water nationalisation: "It's not something we are looking to do".

The workers in these companies, many no doubt low-paid, should demand that the company books be opened to inspection by democratically elected trade union bodies to see where the money is going. This would inevitably give rise to demands for a return to public ownership of water processing and distribution.

The huge support that developed for socialist policies, included in Corbyn's manifesto while Labour leader, created panic for private owners in water and energy in particular. As Bloomberg highlighted last week, Thames Water created a new clause covering £560 million of its debt that would enforce full repayment, including accrued interest, immediately after nationalisation.

This adds to the argument, often repeated by right-wing Labour politicians, that nationalisation would be

'too expensive'. But why would the fat cats responsible for this mess be compensated, why should such debt repayment clauses be honoured?

Not a penny should be paid to them, compensation should only be paid on the basis of proven need.

Capitalists claim that 'nationalisation means pensioners will suffer', as many pension fund investments depend on water company shares (the UK lecturers and BT pension funds are both invested in Thames Water, alongside many foreign public sector workers' pension funds). The value of these workers' pensions should be secured.

This disaster shows why gambling pensions on the stock and bond markets is madness. That's why we fight for a publicly owned and democratic, working class-controlled, nationalised banking system that includes democratic public ownership of the entire pension funds 'industry' to protect workers' savings and deliver living pensions for all.

For that reason, among many, it is not just the water system that needs nationalising. We need all public services, including the banks, to be brought under democratic workers' control.

But, as with all the other public industries and services swept up in the Tories' privatisation mania, the 'renationalisation' often talked about in the capitalist media in itself is not sufficient. In Scotland, water is a state-owned enterprise, yet the figure for untreated sewage is rising and the highest since records began!

Genuine nationalisation and public ownership must be combined with democratic management and control by the working class, so services and industries could be planned and run in the interests of working-class people. Not the 'nationalisation-lite' applied to the banks in 2008, that left all the power and control in the hands of the very bankers, spivs and speculators that sparked the crisis, while ordinary people were made to pay.

Only a minority of people think water should be in private hands - but all the major parties support this policy! Working-class people need a new workers' party that stands up for us.

That's why the Socialist Party is part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), set up to enable trade unionists, community campaigners and socialists to stand together at the ballot box against the pro-austerity establishment parties. It is a beginning, a step towards the kind of party we need to deliver a socialist alternative to austerity.

The dire water crises that have developed in Britain and elsewhere in the world make the fight for a socialist alternative to capitalism more urgent than ever before. The current system has failed to adequately address the issue of water scarcity across the globe, and it is only through a socialist system that we can ensure that everyone has access to clean water. A socialist system would prioritise the needs of the people over the profits of corporations, and it would invest in sustainable water management, treatment and distribution. Such planning could be combined with a revolutionised sustainable energy and food production, among many other things. It is time to build a socialist future that is based on justice and equality, and which ensures that everyone has access to the basic necessities of life, including clean water.

Work, pay, pensions, childcare - women hit by Tory austerity

HEATHER RAWLING
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

I read Corinthia Ward's article on childcare with interest (see 'Labour cave on childcare pledge' at socialistparty.org.uk). My daughter will probably return to work part-time, after her maternity leave ends, because of childcare costs.

Generations of women have joined the workforce. Working-class people have united to fight together against women's oppression. But now many women are being pushed back.

20% of women pensioners live in poverty - over 1.2 million. Under capitalism, the gender pay gap extends to our graves!

Workplace nurseries used to be more commonplace. Sadly, the few that are left are under threat of closure. For example, the nursery at University of Leicester is closing - a loss to staff and students.

We need fully funded council-run nurseries and crèches. Free, safe, and enjoyable places to leave our babies and children. Women should have the right whether and when to return to work, and confidence in any childcare provision.



PHOTOS: PAUL WAINMAN

Paltry fines for bosses paying below legal minimum

More than 200 companies have been found to be underpaying workers below the legal minimum. The Tories are under such pressure after millions of workers have received real-terms pay cuts for years. It's the government itself that has 'named and shamed' these dodgy companies this time.

The figures show 63,000 workers have been underpaid by £5 million. This figure is likely to be a massive underestimation of the amount of wage theft that happens.

The total potential fines for this shocking wage theft? Just £7 million in total.

The most guilty underpaying culprit, WHSmith, alone made £63 million profit. Subsidiary companies of supermarket chain Sainsbury's are also on the list. Sainsbury's made record after-tax profit of £677 million in 2021-22.

We can't trust the bosses or the Tories. The strike wave has shown that the working class has to get organised to win real pay rises.

And these giant profiteering underpaying companies should be nationalised, under the democratic control of the working class, so we can run them properly.



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● 'NHS creation probably saved my life'

Congratulations on the special NHS supplement in issue 1233, and on the reporting and analysis in the Socialist over the years.

In celebrating the 75 years of the National Health Service, I wish it was the same NHS which probably saved my life in Liverpool during my youth, and gave me my 87 years to date.

Prior to the NHS, the doctor told my mother that, due to my chronic asthma, she should be prepared for me to die young. She had to pay him on every visit for this sort of consoling advice. All the regular medicines cost more than working-class parents could afford. However, I made it to the age of 12, having missed over a third of my schooling.

The introduction of the NHS totally changed all that. Families could change doctors, I was put onto an expensive cumbersome inhaler, but one which I could keep with me, as I do with my small inhaler today. This, with the pills, was all free, as were the visits to the doctor.

The last two years of my schooling were ideal. I could participate in all sports, even getting into a school team, and started a job on New Year's Day 1950.

I am sure my experience was not unique. But I think it is an example of how much the establishment of the NHS meant to the lives of millions of working-class families, why it is so treasured today, and why this feeling has been passed down through the generations.

It contrasts clearly with the way this Tory government is privatising today, as explained by Jon Dale in the NHS75 supplement, and the current experiences of everyone including myself.

Having waited 'only' three weeks for an appointment to get a new mould for my hearing aid, I was then told the doctor could not proceed due to packed wax in my ear. He was untrained to clear it, as other doctors have in the past, and the Audiology Department no longer do it. I was told I would have to go to Boots or Specsavers to get it done, for around £55.

KEITH DICKINSON
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?
editors@socialistparty.org.uk



75 YEARS OF THE NHS

Tory fairytale NHS staffing plan



Junior doctors striking in Gooles PHOTO: HULLSP

BRENT KENNEDY
CARLISLE SOCIALIST PARTY

Only the gullible will believe Rishi Sunak's latest hyped-up "long-term plan" for more NHS staff. It is a never-never land wish list of figures which won't add up without proper funding, like past broken Tory promises of "5,000 more doctors" or "40 new hospitals".

154,000

unfilled vacancies in the NHS

The latest plan has been watered down by the Treasury by postponing its implementation until the 2030s. The Tories want our votes today for jam tomorrow. Even the new doctor training won't start for another two years, when the Tories will be almost certainly in opposition.

Despite the myth of 'throwing money' at the NHS, for ten years the Tories have starved it of investment, spending £40 billion less each year than comparative European countries, amounting to 18% less per head.

As a result we have comparatively fewer doctors, nurses, beds, CT and MRI scanners, below-average survival rates for cancer and heart patients, and therefore a shorter life expectancy than the other 18 similar economies, according to a report by The King's Fund.

NHS England is struggling with 154,000 unfilled vacancies, which on current trends would soar to 570,000 by 2036. This will not be solved with just £2.4 billion over five years.

They claim there will be 24,000 more trainee nursing places by 2031, but last year 40,000 nurses left the NHS. Doctors are leaving in droves. The Tories 'hope' to retain 130,000 staff who would otherwise leave, but how on earth will they - or Labour - achieve that without restoring their real living standards with an adequate pay rise? Both refuse.

None of this helps the 7.4 million patients desperately waiting for operations or treatment, 80% of whom support the principle of the NHS and oppose privatisation. Rather than suffer the pain or die, some are blowing their savings on private operations.

570,000

vacancies in the NHS by 2036 if current trends continue

The Socialist Party is fighting to save our NHS through the nationalisation of private health, social care, dentistry and pharmaceuticals; scrapping the PFI rip-off; a massive investment in hospitals, training, wages, scrapping student fees and reinstating bursaries; and bringing OUR NHS under the democratic control of the staff and users.

SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

July-August issue includes...

- Can the NHS survive Sunak...or Starmer?
- Tories after Boris Johnson's fall
- Marxism and the trade unions

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'It's not just the NHS that needs funding, it's the services that keep us happy and healthy too!'

ELLEN KENYON-PEERS
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

Recent figures emerged showing £14 billion a year could be saved if NHS patients were a healthy weight. It's all too easy for the anti-worker capitalist media to point the finger at chicken-shop dinners and 'lazy' individuals; how can we stay healthy when our local swimming pools are closing and there's a cost-of-living crisis?

Food inflation is currently sitting at 16.5%, with 'essentials' like pasta and bread increasing by as much as 49%. A damning report published by the Food Foundation showed healthy food choices are up to three times as expensive as ones high in fat and sugar - is it any wonder we're struggling with an obesity pandemic?

The Tories have had ample opportunity to increase free school meal provision - rejecting bills in 2020 and again in 2022 to extend the programme to more pupils. Starmer's

Labour has ruled out an extension to all primary school children.

It's not just access to healthy food, barriers to keeping physically fit are widespread, especially in poorer neighbourhoods. After years of cuts to local budgets, is it any wonder that 40% of council areas are at risk of swimming pool and leisure centre closures? Not to mention the cuts to after-school sports clubs, which is already having a massive impact on the physical and mental health of young people - who now have a 1-in-4 chance of developing a mental health disorder.

Housing

The rise in unsafe social housing, from slum landlords and increasingly unscrupulous housing associations, has come to light in recent months after the inquest into the death of two-year-old Awaab Ishak, following his exposure to deadly mould. Tories have taken measures

to pass the blame onto tenants. But how can we heat our homes when our energy bills have increased by thousands of pounds a year, all whilst energy company fat cats rake in £170 billion in 'excess' profits?

Widening the recipient pool for routine vaccinations for seasonal illnesses such as flu would also alleviate pressure on NHS beds, which sit at around a 95% occupancy rate in England. This is compounded by the huge number of hospital beds occupied by patients that no longer need them, but cannot be moved due to the ongoing crisis in social care.

The British Medical Association estimates that a further £7.9 billion is needed to keep up with cost pressures and demand, with approximately 47% of over-50s currently living with unmet care needs. As many as half a million vacancies urgently need to be filled, but poverty wages and long hours, coupled with Tory anti-migrant policies, are only

serving to drive more workers away from the sector.

We are also still facing the residual impact of a global pandemic which the capitalist economy failed to prepare for. Warnings were ignored and a decade of austerity undermined services' ability to cope. Socialist planning would have meant acting earlier, preparing better and conducting research without the goal of profit.

Healthy free school meals; free to access leisure facilities; ensuring everyone has access to a safe, healthy and warm home - all should be possible in the world's sixth-richest country. All could be paid for using even a fraction of the vast wealth hoarded by the super-rich.

Do you agree?
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Tories' Rwanda deportation plan ruled unlawful

LAWANYA RA CHANDRA

STOKE SOCIALIST PARTY, TAMIL SOLIDARITY AND REFUGEE RIGHTS

The Tories' plan to send desperate people seeking asylum to Rwanda has been ruled unlawful. A majority of Court of Appeal judges said Rwanda could not be treated as a safe third country.

The government has tried to claim the plan will deter people arriving in the UK through "illegal or dangerous methods", such as on small boats across the English Channel. But as Tory home secretary Suella Braverman admits, these people would be swiftly deported to Rwanda on a one-way ticket.

Protests

This scheme has been unpopular from the start. Protests took place across the UK to stop this scheme.

Tamil Solidarity and the Refugee Rights Campaign also organised a protest against the deportation of asylum seekers to Rwanda. These protests have helped push the government back and stop deportation flights.

Deporting asylum seekers to Rwanda is part of the Tories' hostile racist immigration policies. The government can't be trusted to offer a safe and prosperous future for anyone, except rich billionaires.

The Rwanda plan and the

government's failed attempt to stop small boats are yet more ways the Tories try to divide workers and blame migrants for the problems and crisis caused by this government's hated policies.

But it is the capitalists and their policies that are to blame. The government is interested in wasting more money on this scheme, instead of investing in the jobs, homes and services that we need.

Waste

The Rwanda scheme has already cost the taxpayer £140 million, without anybody having gone to Rwanda. And the Tories have admitted how much more money could be wasted on it.

The government estimates it will cost £169,000 extra to send each person to Rwanda. That's £63,000 more than if they were allowed to stay in Britain!

Even the figure for housing people here is inflated. The Tories waste millions of pounds giving money to private landlords and hotels. A mass council house building programme would mean a decent place to live for everyone, wherever you're born.

There are 500,000 homes currently sitting empty in the UK. Why can't this government provide houses for everyone?

Asylum seekers must be allowed to work in union-organised workplaces,



Lawanya (right) with the Socialist Party, Refugee Rights and Tamil Solidarity on a protest against Tory Rwanda deportations

and could then fight for the rate for the job with other trade unionists.

Rishi Sunak has promised to appeal the case in the Supreme Court.

Tragedy

The recent Greece migrant boat disaster claimed the lives of up to 600 individuals (see 'Greek authorities lie about preventable migrant tragedy' at socialistparty.org.uk). Migrants are struggling to reach a safe place to seek asylum.

Nobody wants to risk their life in dangerous crossings. They do so

because they have nothing to lose. These are victims of capitalist war, poverty and misery.

Immigrant workers, refugees and workers born here face the same struggles. Hundreds of thousands of workers have been striking for inflation-proof pay rises in the last year.

Trade unions that fight for their members hold great potential to incorporate migrant workers into the workers' movement, and ensuring fair remuneration for all employees.

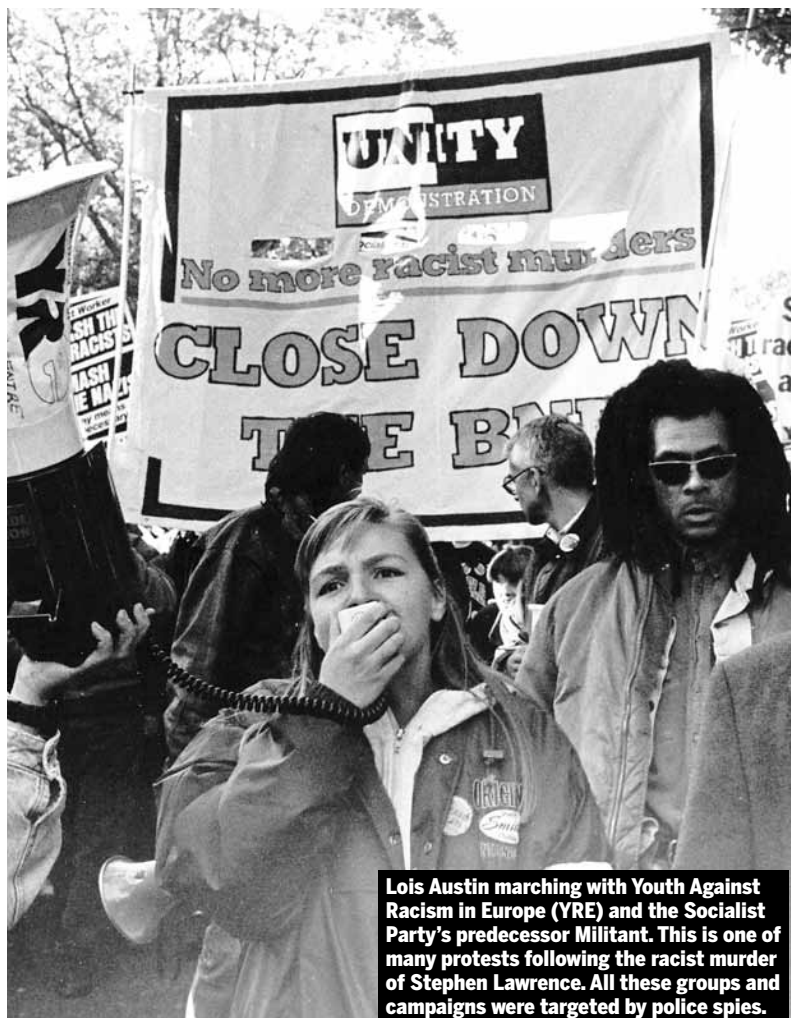
It's not enough to simply say 'refugees welcome here'. We have to fight

for a secure and dignified quality of living standard too.

The Socialist Party calls for mass investment into jobs, homes, and services for all. We must ensure that the wealth, major industries, and banks are no longer controlled solely by the super-rich, but rather nationalised, so they can be distributed democratically to address the needs of all.

● Read more "Divisive 'hostile environment' will not stop small boats" at socialismtoday.org.uk

Spycops 'unjustified' - The fight for justice goes on



Lois Austin marching with Youth Against Racism in Europe (YRE) and the Socialist Party's predecessor Militant. This is one of many protests following the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence. All these groups and campaigns were targeted by police spies.

LOIS AUSTIN

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER AND CORE PARTICIPANT IN THE INQUIRY

On 29 June, the media were locked into a Ministry of Justice building in central London to receive the interim report of Judge Sir John Mitting on the Undercover Police Inquiry.

The sustained campaign to expose the police spies scandal meant that, despite all the problems with the inquiry, and there are many, and while not assigning blame at this stage, Mitting had to recognise that:

"There were four crucial issues which should have alerted the Metropolitan Police [MPS] and Home Office to serious problems. They were: long-term intrusive and sometimes sexual relationships by undercover officers, the legality of entering private homes without a warrant or just cause, the theft of deceased children's identities by officers, undercover officers taking on positions of responsibility in the groups they were targeting and using that to report on personal details of people engaged in legitimate activities."

Highest level

He went on to say that these issues "should have been addressed at the highest level within the MPS and within the Home Office".

He concluded: "The question is whether the end justified the means

(...) I have come to the firm conclusion that, for a unit of a police force, it did not; and that had the use of these means been publicly known at the time, the SDS [Special Demonstration Squad] would have been brought to a rapid end."

The Campaign Opposing Police Surveillance, Police Spies Out Of Lives, Blacklist Support Group and the Undercover Research Group welcomed the interim report. We have only got this far due to the determination of campaigners. All the way along, the police have denied any wrongdoing and obstructed the inquiry. For years they would neither confirm nor deny undercover police had sexual relationships with women activists; they have had to fight every step of the way.

But the inquiry does have huge problems. Campaigners want their files, the cover names of all the 'spycops', the full list of all organisations spied on, anonymity orders for undercover police and secret hearings removed, and the inquiry fully resourced so that it can conclude sooner - before vital evidence is destroyed or key participants (state and non-state) are no longer with us.

Despite the inquiry running for seven years, so far it has only dealt with the years from the start of the Special Demonstration Squad in 1968 to 1982. It will take many years before the inquiry publishes its full

findings. Meanwhile, we have a government introducing new laws which strengthen police powers and gives undercover state operatives immunity from prosecution if they break the law while on duty at home or abroad.

Campaigners stress that the interim report is just the beginning; more shocking revelations will come out as the inquiry progresses. It is clear from the evidence so far that many undercover officers had sexual relationships and that activists were reported on in the most offensive way, with racist and sexist language regularly used to describe targets.

Secrets

There are many issues not dealt with in the report and campaigners are calling for them to be properly addressed. These include the central role of MI5 - just about all undercover police reports were sent to them; the role of those in charge of the Met - it is inconceivable that they did not know what was going on; government involvement; sexual abuse of women targeted; the targeting of family justice campaigns; blacklisting of trade unionists - not mentioned at all in this report; and the reporting on children.

Crucially, campaigners want to know what secret political policing spy units exist today, and we want them closed down.

Labour ditches rent control

Building a political voice to fight the housing crisis

UNITE HOUSING WORKERS BRANCH

As the housing crisis intensifies, how can we fight back? Our branch is campaigning for policies that would make a difference, and we engage in the debate on how Unite and other unions can forge an effective political voice.

Just 5% of private rentals are affordable for people on housing benefit. New figures come through every week showing the intensifying housing crisis across all tenures.

Housing associations recently told the Inside Housing website that rent arrears have now risen to a higher level than during the pandemic. Numerous commentators have warned that people with mortgages face a 'nightmare' as the Bank of England pushes up interest rates. In London, the number of people sleeping rough has risen by 1,700 over the last year.

More social housing is desperately needed, but housing associations are cutting back on development, and according to another survey just 17% of the new homes built are social rented rather than more expensive tenures. When the effects of regeneration schemes, tenure change and right to buy are taken into account, housing associations have been responsible for a net loss of social housing in recent years. This reflects how they have become increasingly commercialised.

As housing workers, this crisis hits us hard. We see the consequences on society in our work, and below-inflation pay increases mean many members live in fear of losing their homes or are poorly housed themselves.

Unite has excellent policies to address the housing crisis and our

recent branch resolution which will be put to the Unite Policy Conference in July seeks to update and strengthen Unite policy. But they stand in stark contrast to the policies of the main political parties, and unfortunately that includes Labour.

In a speech to the Chartered Institute of Housing conference, Labour's Lisa Nandy made it clear that the Labour frontbench is startlingly close to the Tories.

There is a desperate need for rent control, and it is a policy that has massive support, according to polling. The Thatcher government ended rent control and secure tenancies for the private-rented sector, Unite calls for their return. Nandy's comments only make any sense in the absence of a serious programme of council house building.

She also committed to retaining right to buy, which continues to erode the very limited supply of social housing, and she rejected calls for a temporary suspension of right to buy. Since the policy was launched in 1980, about two million council homes have been sold. An estimated 40% of them are now owned by private landlords who rent them out at much higher rates. She added that she "agrees with the government" that councils should keep receipts from sales to build new homes. But councils say this is nowhere near enough to replace lost social housing.

When Jeremy Corbyn launched his leadership campaign, one of the reasons our branch campaigned for Unite to support him was that he started from the idea that 'there can be no solution to the housing crisis

that doesn't start from a mass programme of council house building.'

As a branch we will continue to campaign on housing and to support the housing association tenant and resident campaign SHAC. We also participate in the debate in Unite on political representation. At the forthcoming rules conference, we have a proposed rule change which would mean that the political committees of the union would no longer require full Labour Party membership as a requirement of sitting on them. Currently, if Labour expels a member, they can no longer sit on these Unite committees - why should Labour choose the makeup of our committees?

For policy conference we have tabled an amendment to a resolution, which would instruct the union to carry out a referendum of the whole membership on political representation. Should Unite be able to support candidates for parliament who support Unite policy but are not Labour candidates? Currently the union can only support official Labour by rule. A possible example would be Jeremy Corbyn. The national party has said that he cannot be a Labour candidate, but local supporters want him to stand. Current rules would suggest that Unite could not support him.

There is a crying need for a party that supports the battles of workers defending their living standards and campaigns on a socialist housing policy. We need a serious debate on how we get one. Even a workers' list of candidates that support Unite policies would change the terms of debate at the next election.



PHOTO: HASSOCKS5489/CC

Socialist policies not prince's intentions needed to end homelessness

KATIE SIMPSON
NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Prince William has announced intentions to end homelessness, going so far as to offer some of his own property for such projects. What does a prince know about homelessness and what's needed to fix it?

As a drug and alcohol recovery worker for my local homeless community, I have seen the sharp end of the homelessness crisis. Certainly more social housing is a fundamental need, but the causes of homelessness are complex and link back to a broken system that values profit and 'efficiency savings' above the wellbeing of people.

Drug and alcohol abuse is a leading cause of homelessness, and homelessness exacerbates addiction, which continues the cycle. Addiction can stem from a number of issues, but a significant one is trauma. Yet mental health services have been privatised and cut year on year. For many, getting off substances also requires specialised services including detox and rehab, both of which are very expensive and have limited

government funding for those who are homeless.

Unemployment and low pay are also a major factor as many struggle to make ends meet, and those able to claim benefits have limits in regards to how much help there is towards rent costs. As long as pay continues to stay below inflation and rents skyrocket, there will be new people finding themselves homeless.

With war, domestic violence and anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric all still major features in capitalist society there will always be people finding themselves homeless and in need.

If Prince William truly wished to end homelessness, he would fight for a mass council house building campaign, fully funded drug and alcohol recovery services, refuges and mental health services back under the NHS. He would need to support rent caps, above-inflation pay rises, and the end of the gig economy.

While its commendable that the prince would consider such a project, why not let the working class decide how to achieve it? Give us a democratic say on how to use royal palaces, treasure and wealth!



PHOTOS: PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE OF UKRAINE AND PUBLIC DOMAIN

Teachers: Why we're still striking

STEVE SCOTT
NEU NEC, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The National Education Union (NEU) has called all its teacher members in England out on strike for the final time this academic year. This follows Tory education secretary Gillian Keegan refusing to release the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) report – an 'independent' body of 'experts' which makes pay recommendations to the government.

We know she has it, and we believe it recommends a 6.5% uplift, as leaked by the Times. The reason she is holding on to it is simple. She is not going to accept the recommendation.

Doing so could put an end to this system, as for years governments have conveniently hidden behind independent bodies when dishing out real-term pay cuts.

While we welcome direct negotiations with the government rather than submitting evidence to this 'independent' body of accountants, corporate HR and business consultants, we demand the government releases this report.

Even then, an offer of 6.5% is below the double-digit inflation we have seen in the past year, and does nothing to reverse the years of below-inflation pay rises education staff have been subjected to. And again, without a rise being fully funded, schools

would have to make tough choices on where to make cuts. This would mean more redundancies, larger class sizes, fewer resources and less help for the most disadvantaged pupils as more support staff are not replaced.

And it is not even a given that an offer will come. The Tories have been very clear that they are considering a very low, potential zero, pay rise for next year, as we've seen in the Telegraph.

Meanwhile, Labour's Rachel Reeves is talking about being 'fiscally responsible', and the Labour Party is offering teachers £2,400 after their second year. This ignores the problem! There is a recruitment and

retention crisis amongst teachers. A small bonus after two years will do very little to stem the flow of teachers out of the profession.

An inflation-proof pay rise, a reversal of ten years of pay cuts, full funding, and an overhaul of Ofsted and workload in schools, are needed to save education.

We will need to put pressure on the government in September, and the best way to do this is through coordinated action. The NEU is reballoting all members, including support staff,

alongside ballots in the other teaching and heads' unions, NASUWT, NAHT and ASCL. Unison and Unite are also balloting in local government, including schools. This means, if successful, all workers in school, regardless of their union, will be able to take action. Picket lines with headteachers standing shoulder to shoulder with cooks, teachers, cleaners and teaching assistants would show the government, whoever is in power, that we are serious about the fight that is to come.

Bristol strike
demo BRISTOL SOCIALIST
PARTY



Civil servants: The fight must go on!

PCS Broad Left Network opposes detrimental pay deal and agrees 2023 general secretary and assistant general secretary candidates - Elect Marion Lloyd

STATEMENT FROM PCS BROAD LEFT NETWORK

On Saturday 1 July, a special conference of socialist activists from across the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) trade union met to discuss the situation facing more than 400,000 civil servants on pay, redundancy rights, pensions and jobs.

The Broad Left Network (BLN) conference unanimously agreed that the government's sole meaningful concession, asking departments and agencies to stump up a £1,500 one-off non-consolidated payment to staff, from within existing budgets, was not good enough.

Activists from across PCS condemned the attitude of the current PCS leadership.

The PCS national executive, led by a group known as Left Unity, has

already taken steps to wind down the union's national campaign, by suspending strike action in key areas such as the Driver and Vehicle Licencing Agency (DVLA), and by indefinitely suspending reballots, including in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

BLN members have spent the last three weeks organising members' meetings to discuss the government's 'offer', which is already in the process of being implemented, regardless of what the union's leadership decides to do with our national campaign.

Saturday's conference heard clearly the overwhelming view from the union's members that the fight must go on – because we need an inflation-proof pay rise. We don't accept the Treasury's published pay remit of 4.5-5% for 2023-24. We need to force the Treasury to put new money on

the table, as so far all pay awards will come from within existing departmental budgets.

Several organisations have already announced that they can't afford the £1,500. Others have announced that meeting the terms of the offer and any consolidated pay award under the 4.5% cap is likely to result in job cuts. Activists are not prepared to trade off jobs for pay, and members are ready to fight.

BLN activists have agreed that the current leadership has not exhausted our campaign options – having delayed national strike action by three months, from November 2022 until February 2023, and only calling three days of this action. Other options such as action short of strike action must also now be considered, despite the continuing fervent opposition of the union's leadership.

Members' strikes have partially succeeded despite PCS leadership failures.

Leadership winding down the campaign

These actions taken by the current leadership of PCS, particularly outgoing general secretary Mark Serwotka and current president Fran Heathcote,

have demonstrated how thoroughly out of touch they are with the needs of members, who are overwhelmingly saying they want to fight on.

Under them, the union's leadership has resorted to scare tactics to avoid serious discussion about how we could continue the campaign. In DWP, this has involved asking members about "more unpaid action" and "doubling [their] payments into the levy for the remainder of the year".

From the beginning, BLN reps have been critical of the NEC for calling targeted action, punctuated by one day of national unpaid action per month, without ever analysing or making a case about how the action is contributing to forcing the government to retreat.

To jump straight to trying to frighten members about unpaid action or doubling a £3-5 levy, without concretely explaining why either option would help, is a deliberate attempt to elicit an unfavourable reaction. The union's leadership has begun its own 'Project Fear' and is not fit to lead.

Elect a fighting general secretary and AGS to continue our campaign!

BLN activists have agreed to stand candidates in the elections due later in 2023 for general secretary and assistant general secretary.

Marion Lloyd, currently union president in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), has been unanimously agreed as the BLN candidate for PCS general secretary.

Fiona Brittle, who currently serves on the national executive and on the union's Scottish government executive committee, has been unanimously agreed as our candidate for assistant general secretary (AGS).

Saturday's BLN conference instructed the elected BLN steering committee to continue to seek agreement with the PCS Independent Left (IL) on a programme that would allow us to fight the upcoming elections on a joint slate, with BLN AGS candidate Fiona Brittle standing down in favour of IL candidate for PCS AGS, John Moloney.

Fran Heathcote and Paul O'Connor have been announced as the Left Unity candidates for general secretary and assistant general secretary. They are part of the current leadership and its record. We need to stop their attempts to end the pay campaign and defeat them in the election for general secretary and assistant general secretary.

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



IS MICK LYNCH RIGHT THAT VOTING LABOUR IS THE ONLY OPTION AT THE NEXT ELECTION?

Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

This year's RMT general secretary's annual address, delivered by Mick Lynch to the union's conference (AGM) held in Bournemouth on 26-29 June, was an important marker of where even some of the most combative left trade union leaders are at politically, one year into a still-ongoing strike wave, and in a pre-general election period.

The strike action launched by the RMT transport union last summer touched the consciousness of millions of workers, in Britain and internationally. The government thought then "that the public would hate us and that we would be out of this fight quickly," Mick said, but that didn't happen and the strike wave spread.

Public opinion polling, although slanted in its methodology against the labour and trade union movement, has consistently shown sympathy to workers in action. This reflects the wide-scale anger at the cost-of-living crisis and an understanding that something has to be done, which the RMT's stand crystallised into a broader sentiment.

"We have a high profile, not just in the labour movement but in

society as well," Mick rightly argued. "Not everyone likes us, but we are widely respected".

"Some have said," he went on, that "the RMT has revived the trade union movement, putting our values and our politics back into the mainstream in this country. We can all be proud of that".

"It is our efforts that have ensured that policies of nationalisation are incredibly popular with the people of Britain," he said, as an example. "Even though we have not sought a leadership role, by the actions of our members, we have led the labour movement... Where we lead, others follow".

When the first RMT strike took place, Boris Johnson was still prime minister. Two prime ministers later, the Tories are stuck way behind in both opinion polls and real ballot boxes, winning a projected national vote share of just 26% in the May local elections.

Even though the Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer and shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves offer no substantive alternative to this second age of austerity, the prospect now is for, at the very least, a minority Starmer government, but possibly a 1997-scale Tory meltdown.

What is incontestable is that no post-war Conservative government has achieved, over an equivalent period, the swing required by Rishi Sunak to win a general election, including Margaret Thatcher's government after the 1982 Falklands/Malvinas war.



Mick Lynch
PHOTOS: PAUL MATTSSON

Nationalisation is popular – but how to win it?

Mick Lynch was right to say that the "policies of nationalisation are incredibly popular" – but they won't be on offer from either Rishi Sunak or Keir Starmer. In a recently leaked email, the chief executive of the FTSE100 Severn Trent water company, Liv Garfield, wrote that, "while it is clear Labour will not include nationalisation in its next manifesto, they are also not keen" on being seen to be "championing the status quo", suggesting a rebrand of the private utility firms as 'social-purpose companies'.

Under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, the last Labour manifesto, in contrast, did commit to bringing "our energy and water systems into democratic public ownership", and the renationalisation of Royal Mail and British Telecom.

And the railways. In his speech, Mick Lynch pointed out that: "November this year is the 30th anniversary of the legislation that privatised our railways". But he didn't say that for 13 of those years New Labour was in government, presiding over the privatised system.

Starmer, it is true, last year distinguished between the 2019 commitments to renationalise water and energy, and nationalisation of the railways, saying in a Daily Mirror interview: "Rail is probably different from the others because so much is already in public ownership" (25 July 2022).

But this is certainly not a commitment to immediate renationalisation. The remaining private train operating companies would be taken back into public ownership only as their contracts expired, with five franchises not ending until 2025 or later.

A mixed system would remain, potentially for a full parliamentary term, unless a Starmer government was forced "under extreme pressure" to act. "You can't cosy up to them and hope they will do you a favour", says Mick. But at the end of the day, what's the difference between 'cosying up' to pro-capitalist politicians, and leaving them unchallenged at the ballot box?

But what political conclusions has Mick drawn from all this? Above all, from the re-emergence of the working class and its unions as a leading force in society, a 'subjective actor' able to shape events?

A workers' list

In this situation it would be entirely possible to get a bloc of workers' MPs into parliament at the next general election, if steps were taken now by even a couple of the left-led trade unions to establish a new party, or, at least, organise an election coalition list.

Including Jeremy Corbyn, who will not be standing as a Labour candidate, even a small parliamentary group could rapidly develop as a pole of opposition to a Starmer-led government implementing its inevitable austerity agenda.

Workers' interests would have direct representation in parliament,

which they will not have through Starmer's Tory-lite party. The clearest foretaste of that is the role of the Blairite Labour London mayor Sadiq Khan, who is presiding over job losses and pension cuts in Transport for London, impacting on 17,000 RMT members. But what does Mick Lynch think?

Mick did argue in his speech that the movement should put "every politician" – from wherever they are – "under extreme pressure. You can't cosy up to them and hope they will do you a favour".

"The trade unions must now, in this time, and under a new government, exert themselves as an independent working-class movement," he said. But not, he advises, at the ballot box at the next general election.

Instead, he argued, the working class will have no other option than to line up behind Starmer's Tony Blair-style New Labour party against the

Tory party. "It will be Tory or Labour – that is the simple truth," he said.

There is no escape that this is a retreat from the position the union held since 2004, when the late Bob Crow was the general secretary, and when the RMT was expelled from Blair's original New Labour.

An opportunity for workers' politics

Mick is right that a government majority of workers' MPs is not on the agenda at this moment, after the defeat of Corbynism in the Labour Party, and the lack of preparations by the movement to date for an alternative.

But it was also true, for example, that a workers' government was not an immediate prospect when the Labour Party – then the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) – was founded in 1900. At that time, workers were also faced with a choice of two capitalist parties – then it was the

RMT backs Corbyn to stand

The resolution from London Underground engineering branch that was unanimously passed at the RMT AGM:

Support Jeremy Corbyn for MP

This RMT AGM notes:

- The announcement by Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer that Jeremy Corbyn will not be allowed to defend the Islington North seat, that he has held since 1983, at the next general election

This RMT AGM believes that:

- This is an utterly undemocratic act, removing Jeremy's right to take part in a selection contest
- Jeremy Corbyn has been a consistent supporter of RMT members taking action, and RMT policies such as renationalisation of the railways and the repeal of the Tory anti-union Trade Union Act
- As with Jeremy's suspension from the Parliamentary Labour Party, this is a political statement by the Labour leadership, moving the party to the right politically, proving its credentials to big business and the capitalist establishment. It follows the refusal of Starmer to support striking workers, and the sacking of Sam Tarry from the shadow cabinet for speaking up for union action from the picket line
- It is confirmation that, under Starmer's leadership, Labour does not represent the interests of workers and working-class communities
- Therefore, workers need political representation that supports their action against the cost-of-living squeeze, and stands for policies such as renationalisation, opposition to cuts, and for the repeal of the Tory anti-union laws

Therefore, this RMT AGM agrees to instruct the union NEC to:

- Give full support to Jeremy Corbyn, and to campaign for his re-election as the Islington North MP if he decides to stand in the next general election, including as an independent candidate

Conservatives and the Liberal Party – and the LRC, with just 15 candidates in that year's election, was only a modest start to the process of creating a new party of the working class.

Surely, however, Mick would not argue that the RMT's predecessor union, the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS), was wrong to play the key role that it did in bringing the LRC into being?

In fact, the very emergence of the Labour Party – the "extreme pressure" of the working class in an organised form, even though it did not have a clear socialist programme – was a major factor in compelling the 1906 capitalist Liberal government to introduce the trade union legislation and the social reforms that it did.

Today, in a situation where, as Mick says, "we lead, others follow", why couldn't the RMT play a similar role in getting at least a bloc of MPs to represent our class in parliament? Especially if Mick himself gave a lead?

For a start, under Britain's electoral system, a general election is not one all-UK-wide 'Tory or Labour' contest, but 650 different elections to elect an MP in each constituency. So, for example, in the Islington North constituency, Jeremy Corbyn, who won in 2019 with 64.3% of the vote (with the Liberal Democrats second), could stand for a trade union-organised list without any prospect whatsoever of 'letting the Tories in'.

The RMT AGM delegates recognised this and passed a resolution, from Bob Crow's old union branch – LU Engineering – giving full support to Corbyn if he does stand independently. But Islington North is not the only seat where a trade union-organised candidate could stand.

Time to act

The fundamental point is that the trade union movement, and the working class generally, should not be drawn into a stage-managed auction between different varieties of capitalist politicians seeking votes, but where it is possible should have its own candidates to support.

It suits some, even on the left, to exaggerate the prospect of a Tory victory – including, it seems, unfortunately Mick Lynch too – in order to avoid the conclusions the workers' movement needs to draw.

The most likely perspective is for a Starmer-led government. His revived Blairism will be operating without the cushion of the 'great moderation' of steady growth that characterised the world economy from the 1990s to the 2007-2008 financial crash, and will bring his government into bitter conflict with the working class. Workers will need their own mass vehicle to politically represent their interests in the events that lie ahead – and the steps to achieving that should begin now.

RMT conference discusses industrial and political strategy

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN THE RMT

RMT transport union's annual conference followed a year of political and industrial turmoil. It's more and more important that RMT members stand firm to defend our jobs, conditions and the right to withdraw our labour.

It was clear that there is still a strong appetite for the fight amongst our Train Operating Company (TOC) members. A motion to draw up proposals for a national industrial council for TOCs was carried, to coordinate across the passenger rail sector, although unfortunately this will potentially not take effect until after next year's AGM.

Delegates working for Network Rail raised the need for a review into their dispute following the acceptance of their deal, with many issues still remaining, such as the failure to halt 'Modernisation of Maintenance' and further cuts, as well as what was in effect a real-terms pay cut.

Our cleaning grades members' motion to campaign to bring outsourced cleaners back in-house, and to demand a minimum wage of £15 an hour, decent sick pay, travel facilities, and better pensions, was carried unanimously.

Following the announcement by Keir Starmer that Jeremy Corbyn will not stand as a Labour candidate in the next general election, conference agreed unanimously on the need to give Jeremy Corbyn our full support if he stands as an independent in the next general election.

However, the motion proposing a review, through the branch and regional structures, of the RMT's political strategy, and to place this back in front of a special AGM later this year in time for a general election, was unfortunately defeated, after it was argued that this was simply an attempt by the Socialist Party to launch a 'TUSC Mark 2'. The Socialist Party has long-argued for the need for a new workers' party, and has stood

alongside firstly the late RMT general secretary Bob Crow, and subsequently the RMT itself, in the launch of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

But this motion wasn't asking for that. It would have placed the important discussion on political strategy in the hands of the membership, as we did in 2018 in the Labour re-affiliation debate.

General Secretary Mick Lynch stated: "RMT will remain unaffiliated to any political party, but we will be fully engaged and involved in politics." He went on to state: "It is fully clear that it is in our class interests and the direct interests of our members to get rid of this Tory government and replace it with a Labour government."

The question still remains, though, that while Keir Starmer continues to distance himself from working-class struggles and from the working class in general, then in reality what political voice will the disenfranchised trade union movement have?



RMT passes resolution to defy and defeat new anti-union law

Tuesday lunchtime saw a well-attended fringe meeting, sponsored by London Underground (LU) engineering branch, entitled 'Fighting the minimum service level legislation'. The speakers were Rob Williams, chair of the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN), and Noreen Hayes, RMT London Transport region president. The meeting highlighted the urgent need for a united trade union resistance to these further restrictions on workers' rights.

An emergency resolution on the minimum service legislation, based on the NSSN model motion, was unanimously supported by conference.

This resolution laid out a clear strategy for fighting this legislation. Delegates fully endorsed the calls to organise a national demonstration, build coordinated strike action with other unions if work notices are enforced, and demand that Labour and non-Tory authorities do not use the law against their workers.

FBU

Fire Brigades Union (FBU) general secretary Matt Wrack has written to other trade unions to say there is "no choice" but to launch a mass campaign of non-compliance against the minimum service levels law "to make it unworkable". "This campaign cannot be won by any union acting alone. We must act together to build a movement to defy and defeat this law." The FBU calls for a conference of unions in the autumn to discuss putting a campaign into action. The union also backs a national demonstration in October against the new laws, as initiated by the RMT following this resolution at the AGM.

Model motion

Scan the QR code for the NSSN model motion



UNITE CONFERENCE: A CRUCIAL TIME FOR THE UNION

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN UNITE

The rules and policy conferences of Unite the Union, to be held in Brighton from 9 to 14 July, will be the last scheduled ones this side of the general election.

The conferences take place at a critical time for Unite and the rest of the trade union movement. We are in the midst of the biggest strike wave in years, as workers fight back against the Tory cost-of-living squeeze. Sunak's vicious new anti-union attack could be law within weeks. Unite has been to the fore in this upturn in struggle.

However, general secretary Sharon Graham's 'transformation agenda' in Unite is under threat from those who will see the conference floor as an opportunity to challenge the militant trajectory of the union. This must be opposed.

Transformation agenda

Since Sharon was elected almost two years ago, there is no doubt that Unite has been prominent in fighting back against the attacks of employers, and for pay increases at or above the rate of inflation - using the Retail Price Index (RPI) as a guide, which more accurately tracks the cost of living of working-class people.

So, as she has reported to regional reps meetings in recent weeks, Unite has been involved in over 800 disputes, involving 250,000 members, of which 81% have been successful, winning £350 million extra in their pockets.

Unite has been involved in strikes such as the Coventry refuse workers, taking on a Labour-run council directly, and suspending councillors who were members of Unite who acted like bosses. Hundreds of other local disputes, involving workers in many different industries, have taken place.

Where it has members, Unite has been involved in national disputes, including the NHS, where members have rejected the pay offer and are still in dispute; and local government, where members will be balloted shortly over pay.

Under Sharon's 'transformation agenda', industrial policy is focused around the organisation of combines in industries or companies. This has initiated direct contact with the thousands of reps on the union's books. It has allowed the development of militant struggles and could be able to more accurately reflect industrial reality. Conference should support this approach, and the union must continue to play a key role in the current strike wave against the cost-of-living squeeze.

Minimum service levels

But conference must also commit Unite to fight the attack on trade



If any union is taken to court or worker threatened, we should call for an immediate meeting of the TUC General Council to organise mass action

union rights which the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill represents. Conference should support the motion from LE1228 Waltham Forest council branch, which would commit Unite to fight for the Trade Union Congress (TUC) to organise a mass campaign against the anti-trade union laws, including meetings, local protests and a weekend national demo, for which unions would mobilise to maximise attendance.

If any union is taken to court, or worker threatened with dismissal, we should call for an immediate meeting of the TUC General Council to organise mass coordinated action including, if necessary, a 24-hour general strike. Our union should also demand that Labour should not only promise to repeal the legislation after winning the general election, but also to reverse fines and other action taken under the Act, and that every elected Labour authority should publicly commit now that they will not issue work notices.

There are also a number of resolutions on climate change. Unite has a big membership in the energy industry. Conference has to support resolutions which support a transition that guarantees jobs on the same or better conditions than now, with no loss of pay for workers in the industry, as we should with the defence industry, another sector where Unite has a large number of members. An

amendment from LE1228 to motion 51 says "The most effective way to do this is through public ownership and a socialist plan of production," and should be supported.

Political strategy

An important issue, at both conferences, will be Unite's political strategy, and particularly its affiliation to the Labour Party. At the London and Eastern reps meeting, Sharon Graham said that Unite had "got nothing" for 13 years of affiliation. Sharon meets regularly with Labour leader Keir Starmer. She says she puts over what Unite members want to see in Labour's manifesto. She has opposed profiteering and supported nationalisation of key industries, but nationalisation does not feature in Labour's policies now.

While Sharon has been active in promoting workers fighting for pay rises, Starmer has banned Labour MPs from visiting picket lines. The only sop to trade unions in Labour's policy statements is a pledge to repeal the minimum service level legislation. Labour is now presenting itself as a safe 'Second Eleven' for big business interests.

So what should Unite and other unions do? Continue to prop up a pro-capitalist party, or back those candidates who actually support Unite policy? None of the amendments on the rules conference

agenda actually call for disaffiliation from the Labour Party, but Socialist Party members believe the best amendment is from LE1228, which opens up the political fund to allow our union to choose who we wish to support.

At the first meeting of the new EC, Socialist Party member Suz Muna raised, without objection, that, as well as councillors, Labour parliamentary candidates would be asked to pledge support for Unite policies, including calling for Labour councils to refuse to implement Tory cuts and instead pass no-cuts needs budgets.

But why not ask workers' candidates of other parties, and none, especially Jeremy Corbyn, whether they support Unite's aims and objectives? Surely it would be better for Unite's political fund to support those candidates who would promote Unite's programme? As the rules stand, should Corbyn stand independently of Labour, Unite could give no support to him.

There is also an amendment tabled from LE1111 housing workers branch to policy conference that calls on Unite to organise a referendum of Unite members on whether the union should support election candidates who support the union's policies, regardless of which party they belong to. Supporting this amendment would enable members to give their opinion on our union's political strategy.

A new left needed

But which forces in the union can take the union forward on the industrial and political fronts?

The formerly dominant United Left group in the union is now the biggest defender of Labour affiliation, while sniping behind the scenes at the general secretary's industrial policy. Standing under the misnamed 'Members First' title, representing the committee reps and full-time officers rather than the hundreds of thousands taking strike action, they have taken the positions on the Executive Council (EC) while elections to the EC are still taking place (see 'Unite Executive - which way forward?' at socialistparty.org.uk).

A new left, fighting organisation is needed. Steps towards this will be taken at this important conference for Unite's future.

Socialist Party public meeting

Wednesday 12 July,
immediately after conference
ends (5.30pm)

Tudor Room, The Old Ship
Hotel, Brighton Seafront.

Speakers include Hannah
Sell, Socialist Party General
Secretary and Suzanne Muna,
Unite EC

St Mungo's fight at crucial stage

HELEN PATTISON

LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

As the St Mungo's strike by homelessness workers in London, Bristol, Oxford, Reading and Brighton enters its sixth week, the workers have forced an improved offer from management.

This offer is being discussed and voted on by members as the Socialist goes to press. This offer only exists because of the determination of St Mungo's workers, who have been getting organised in the Unite Housing Workers branch, and taken collective action across the service.

Pay disparity

St Mungo's is a charity with huge pay disparity between the lowest-paid frontline staff, who work closely with clients, and the CEO Emma Haddad, who was brought in after she left working for the Home Office. She is paid nine times the pay of many frontline staff, and more than the Prime Minister!

At one rally, a speaker highlighted that if there was total pay parity at St Mungo's, with the existing pay shared out, then all staff would be on £50,000! Clearly the money is there

St Mungo's picket line at Hither Green LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY



for the 10% pay rise which workers demanded at the start of the strike.

The offer that members are voting on currently is not for the 10% which they demanded. It is a consolidated offer which amounts to around

5-6.7% for the lowest-paid staff, as well as three days extra holiday for staff that don't already receive 28 days per year.

It is right that members are getting a chance to vote on this offer and to

make an informed decision. After all, this is a limited concession, but one that has been won by staff taking strike action, organising pickets, and convincing more workers to join the union and join the strike. The campaign on the vote itself helps to bring more members into the discussion and into the fight if the offer is rejected.

Haddad has also done her bit by losing her rag at a meeting with reps. This convinced more workers that the best way to defend the work they do, as well as decent pay for staff, is to join the strike. How can a charity which works with vulnerable adults be led by a senior management team which can't even refrain from shouting at its workers?

As the strike continues and members vote on the offer, the most important discussion to be had by strikers is how to continue to build on the impact they have had as a union.

Never the same again

Many staff will have been emboldened by the strike, and it's clear that St Mungo's is not going to be the same workplace, whatever the outcome of the current ballot. The Unite members have shown they are willing to fight to ensure the charity supports its frontline staff, keeps them out of poverty, and challenges bullies, to make sure staff have the best environment in which to work with clients.

But this whole strike has also exposed the issue of homelessness, service provision and funding. Many of the hostels are in Labour- or Green-controlled council areas, and are contracted by those councils to provide homelessness services.

That means alongside St Mungo's, these councils are also the employers. There have been numbers of Labour councillors on the strike demos, offering support. But frankly this isn't enough.

Imagine the effect

Imagine if all the Unite-backed and trade union-backed councillors signed a joint letter to Emma Haddad, and demanded a meeting to discuss ending the strike and meeting workers' demands.

Imagine if, instead of acting as individual councillors, they used their weight as the contractors of St Mungo's services to demand a real pay rise of 10% now. This could have had a huge effect on the strike and still can.

Labour councils nationally are sat on millions in reserves which could be used to help alleviate the cost-of-living crisis, while a struggle is waged against the rotten Tory government for the funding for local services that is needed. The St Mungo's workers don't need councillors who act as cheerleaders, but those who put real pressure on Haddad and the management team to fund a decent pay rise.

Steel emergency

ROB WILLIAMS

SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL AND WORKPLACE ORGANISER

Steelworkers from the Unite, GMB and Community trade unions marched down Whitehall to Parliament Square on Wednesday 28 June behind a #SaveOurSteel banner.

Protesting together with them were striking South London outsourced NHS workers in the GMB on their own demonstration, with both groups of workers joining in with each other's chants.

Workers had travelled from steelworks, such as Port Talbot, Shotton and Scunthorpe, to lobby both

the Tory government and Starmer's Labour about the threat to jobs. Unite launched its 'SOS Steel Emergency' campaign in Port Talbot and Scunthorpe, two plants under real danger of closure, which would devastate these working-class communities.

Nationalise

At the rally opposite parliament, Unite general secretary Sharon Graham demanded government intervention to save the steel industry.

She also said: "But quite frankly, we should own our own steel." Steelworkers would welcome that as a demand to renationalise the steel plants, in the same vein that Sharon has called for the profiteering energy companies be brought back into public ownership.

Such a demand would be vital to galvanise local communities in a struggle to support steelworkers, backing up militant industrial action that may well be necessary. In 2016, the National

Shop Stewards Network called a demonstration in Port Talbot when the steelworkers were facing closure. Marchers called on the Labour Welsh government to nationalise the works.

The immediate threat was faced down then, but the fight is on again. But knowing Starmer's pro-big business standpoint and opposition to nationalisation, an essential aspect will be the need for a political challenge from the unions as well as industrial struggle.

● Bosses call police on bin strikers

Police were called to a bin workers' picket line in Leicestershire on 29 June, and union officials were physically manhandled off the picket line by council officers, with the connivance of the police. The police had announced that anyone still on the road by 9am would be arrested.

GMB members at Blaby district council were taking their first in a weekly series of four one-day strikes, and had been blocking the exit of bin lorries from the depot. Management hired agency staff in an attempt to undermine the action.

Growing union

A large number of workers were on the picket line, and the union was recruiting new members at the gate in the morning.

Refuse and grounds maintenance workers are demanding a 15% pay



rise, and management have, up to now, not been prepared to negotiate.

The union reported Dave Warwick, GMB Organiser, saying: "Our members come home cold and wet after a day on the rounds and can't afford to put the heating on. Instead of dealing with low pay, our members have been advised to go to food banks if they can't afford the bills."

Dave spoke to the Socialist to say: "The strike is for a decent pay rise to keep in line with the cost of living. We're just asking to keep pace with the cost of paying the bills and feeding workers' families."

There will be a mass protest on Wednesday 5 July at the Enderby Road depot in Whetstone, Leicester.

STEVE SCORE

LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Blaby bin strike STEVE SCORE

● Sulzer Pumps strikers escalate action

Following five consecutive Friday strikes, Unite members at Sulzer Pumps are escalating the action. Monday 3 July was the first of weekly

Monday strikes, but they also plan to go out for the entire week from 17 July.

The company has refused to open negotiations confined only to this year's pay, but has offered to discuss a new deal if it was to go over two years. But the offer so far is for just £1,700 extra, or a 5% increase on the skilled rate.

Profit

As one rep explained to us: "This company makes £20 million in profits, mostly from this site. At the beginning of the strike they said we wouldn't get anyone on the picket line. But we know our action is starting to cause serious disruption, so hopefully they'll now negotiate properly with us."

As well as escalating the intensity of strike action, Unite members have also discussed sending a delegation to protest outside Sulzer's head office in Switzerland.

IAIN DALTON

LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

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Protest against Tory 'hostile environment' in Furnace Fight for jobs, homes and services not racism

SWANSEA AND WEST WALES SOCIALIST PARTY

Swansea and West Wales Socialist Party members supported and participated in the Furnace Action Committee's protest march against the Tory government's 'hostile environment' strategy of inappropriately housing 241 asylum seekers into just 77 rooms at the Stradey Park Hotel in Furnace, a small residential area of Llanelli. (See 'Tory Government wants to create a hostile environment for asylum seekers' on socialistparty.org.uk)

The protest march was called in support of the 100+ workers who have just been issued with redundancy notices from 10 July, to defend local services.

The Socialist Party leaflet was well received by the majority of participants and snapped up by residents supporting the march from their doorsteps en route to the hotel.

Inevitably, a small number of far-right racists were present, spreading their poisonous propaganda and holding a couple of home-made placards. In no way did they represent the views of most local

residents and the Action Committee organisers.

Despite a clear, prior demand from the Action Committee that "anyone intending on using racist or offensive attitudes is asked not to attend," three members of the racemongering 'Voice of Wales' a far-right media group, attempted to get video interviews at the beginning of the demo, and ran up and down the sides of the march intimidating protestors, who mainly refused to speak to them.

Another handful of racist and far-right supporters mingled in the march while a few stood pathetically with a racist placard outside the hotel car park.

When the hotel workers joined the closing rally in support of the demo they received a rapturous welcome with a promise of solidarity from the residents and trade unionists present to help them fight to retain their jobs against the millionaire hotel owners, whose only concern is making a profit out of the misery of asylum seekers!

To the credit of the Action Committee organisers, when the obnoxious

'Voice of Wales' reporters attempted to disrupt the rally at the end with their racist questioning, the main organiser not only dismissed them outright but the local residents also surrounded them and pointed the way out, to big applause from the crowd.

Trade unionists and socialists fight to defend all who are victims of this Tory government and their rotten, racist and divisive capitalist system. We also have a responsibility to address the genuine concerns of local residents, who have seen their living standards, jobs and services disappear down the plughole of a capitalist system in crisis. We fight against the cuts, for jobs, homes and services, the right for asylum seekers to work and join a trade union, and a mass council house building programme.

It would be a mistake to allow a handful of far-right activists to go unchallenged. The role of trade unionists and socialists is to offer concrete demands and to unite working-class people around a socialist programme that can end the ongoing misery of capitalism.



The Socialist Party leaflet included demands to

- Unite and fight for jobs, homes and services to defeat racism
- End Tory fearmongering and hostility to refugees and asylum seekers
- Workers' unity against any racist attacks on asylum seekers
- For the right to asylum, no to racist immigration laws
- Investment in services and housing that working-class people rely on
- Resist far-right opportunists sowing division
- Tories out! Build a new mass workers' party

London Pride: we're out, now it's time for the Tories

EMILY LYNDON
SOUTH WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY



You can order a copy of the newly reprinted Socialist Party LGBTQ+ charter by going to leftbooks.co.uk

London Pride took place on Saturday 1 July with over one million people attending across the city.

Socialist Party members from London branches and beyond came together to speak to attendees about the socialist alternative to the austerity and suffering being served to us by the Tory government. Throughout the day, people snapped up copies of the Socialist and donated over £100, 'end oppression, fight for socialism' badges were worn with pride. The atmosphere was angry and hopeful, with many people approaching the stall to start conversations, concluding that capitalism most certainly is 'not giving'. Once we peel back the insidious layers of rainbow capitalism, with huge corporations dominating the event masquerading as LGBTQ+ allies for profit, it was clear. There is an urgent need to end the suffering caused by Tory austerity.

People of all ages spent time talking to Socialist Party members about the ways their lives would improve if

there was a new mass workers' party. Throughout the day, people discussed with us the collective action needed to create a more just world for everyone.

Need for socialism

Parallels were drawn between the issues facing LGBTQ+ people during the Stonewall riots and the oppression that trans people face today at the hands of right-wing governments. Trans people are being failed by governments who are relentlessly encouraging harmful rhetoric, and restricting essential health care for people who need it. The lack of liberation for trans people over fifty years on from the first Pride shows the inability to achieve an inclusive society under capitalism.

Despite an unnerving police presence and the facade of corporate rainbows, one takeaway was clear: Pride will always be a protest, no matter how many millionaires use it for their own financial gain. Now more than ever we must continue our fight to end capitalism and ensure a safe future for all.



Thanks to all our readers, supporters and members of the Socialist Party who have helped us smash through this quarter's fighting fund target. Across England and Wales, workers and young people have responded to our regular campaign stalls by donating to the fighting fund and buying the Socialist. The range of different issues Socialist Party branches have been campaigning on underlines the mountain of attacks that the working class is facing. From campaigning for free school meals, to defending the NHS, supporting workers on strike, including Leeds bus strikers, opposing massive council tax increases in Croydon and campaigning against car parking charges in Coventry.

included £48 selling Easter cakes in Swansea, to the £238 raised at the Waltham Forest BBQ, and the Eurovision and Pride film socials in Northampton. On top of all this are the thousands of pounds raised at Socialist Party conferences in Yorkshire, the South West and Wales.

The Socialist Party has a target of £25,000 every quarter. The next quarter starts this week so we cannot afford to let up. We urgently need you to continue to donate and ask others you know to help make sure we can continue to get out our socialist message as widely as possible.

Fund the fightback DONATE TODAY

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SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND			
AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	%
South West	3,714	1,800	206%
Wales	3,202	2,300	139%
Yorkshire	2,793	2,550	110%
Southern & SE	2,496	2,350	106%
London	4,713	4,600	102%
East Midlands	1,842	1,850	99%
Eastern	1,187	1,200	99%
West Midlands	2,080	2,600	80%
Northern	544	750	73%
North West	799	1,150	69%
Other	6,942	3,850	180%
TOTAL	30,311	25,000	121%

Q2: APRIL-JUNE 2023

Swindon Socialist Party branch launches

ROB PETTEFAR
SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Swindon branch of the Socialist Party has held its inaugural meeting as a fully fledged branch, the culmination of over two years work building in the town.

I joined two years ago. Working with the Gloucestershire branch and members from across the South West region, the branch has doubled in size since.

We have organised Saturday campaign stalls in the town centre, supported picket lines, and got involved in the local community. We were able to build at a gradual rate by meeting people interested in socialism and convincing them of the need to get active and join the Socialist Party.

Over that time we have had our ups and downs. From handing out leaflets outside the local Amazon warehouse on the hottest day of the year, to successful paper sales in almost torrential rain.

Swindon is a working-class town

and the third largest in the region. With the recent memory of the closure of the Honda factory and the growth of the strike wave, the potential for working-class action is strong.

The recent flipping of the council after almost 19 years of Tory control to Labour is a sign of things changing within the town. However we have no trust in the Starmer-led Labour Party, so we are linking up with others to build a working-class movement to fight the council's cuts.

We have a lot of work ahead of us, organising for local and national events and continuing to grow the party. We are already looking at selling the Socialist at more locations and if we need a larger venue for our weekly meetings.

I look forward to the next chapter in the fight for socialism in Swindon.



Swindon Socialist Party campaigning

Sheffield council belatedly apologises for trees fiasco

JOHN BUNN
SHEFFIELD SOUTH EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

Sheffield Labour council's apology over the tree felling fiasco of 2014-18 is long overdue. It highlights that they lied to the media, the courts and, most importantly, to the people of Sheffield. During this period a £2.2 billion PFI (Private Finance Initiative) deal was signed to replace 17,500 trees, despite consultants identifying only 1,000 trees that needed replacing. The council continually denied these figures.

Soon after the start of the contract it became clear to people in Sheffield it was not going to benefit them. PFI contracts tie councils into many years of high payments and remove local control, on top of the scandal of the scale of trees being felled.

Local disputes started over specific trees that were felled. On my own

road, contractors came to cut down mature trees and replace them with saplings. A group of us got together, blocked the road and stopped the work. We demanded proper consultation over the plan. We were not against the replacement of infected trees but wanted to keep the majority of healthy trees that had many years of life left in them, keeping a mature canopy of trees in the road.

Over the next couple of years they turned up several times to carry out the tree replacements but were stopped by local people every time. We organised and had street meetings of up to 30 people. We stopped the actions by leafleting everyone in the street, giving updates on the dispute. We had a telephone tree and were able to mobilise people at short notice to stand under the trees, and to refuse permission to work over our properties. We only lost one healthy tree during the dispute.



John defending one of the trees on his street

These actions were happening city-wide and a coordinating group was formed - STAG (Sheffield Tree Action Group). Various tactics were used against the campaign by the council, backed up by the local police and private security. There were always police on duty when major work was undertaken and people were arrested using legislation designed to deal with 'flying pickets'. Seven of the campaigners had their criminal charges dropped and have been paid compensation, while some have been left with criminal records. Many of the people involved are still in positions of power in the council.

A pledge has now been agreed between representatives of organisations including Sheffield City Council, and campaigners in STAG to ensure the continued maintenance of street trees around the city. However, this should also have included representatives of local trade unions.

There are valuable lessons to be learned from this campaign. When organised, local people can be a force for change. The council, the police and the legal system could not stop the people of Sheffield once organised.

This could have been avoided if we had a genuine democratic say over how our city is run. And a party which would fight in workers' interests. During the campaign, Sheffield Council was Labour-controlled, but now a Labour-Green-Lib Dem coalition which, this year, has agreed cuts of £43 million to the social services budget.

We need a new mass workers' party that is prepared to stand up and fight for the resources we need.



Sheffield trees being felled. PHOTO: GRAHAM TURNBULL, STAG

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WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

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

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

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

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

- A democratically planned, massively expanded, free to use, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.
- For a major, publicly funded, insulation and energy transition plan for existing housing stock.
- Agribusiness to be taken into democratic public ownership. For a food processing and retail industry under workers' control to ensure that standards are set by consumers, small farmers, and

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

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

- For proportional representation and the right to vote at 16.
- For the right of nations to self-determination. For an independent socialist Scotland and for a socialist Wales, both part of a voluntary socialist confederation of Wales, England, Scotland and Ireland.

- Oppose the dictatorship of the billionaire owners of the media. For the nationalisation of newspaper printing facilities, radio, TV and social media platforms. Access to these facilities should be under democratic control, with political parties' coverage being allocated in proportion to the popular vote at elections.
- For a new mass workers' party, based on the trade unions, and drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplaces, and community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, socialist political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

- No to the EU bosses' club. Organise a campaign with European socialists and workers' organisations to use the talks on post-Brexit relations to tear up the EU pro-capitalist rules. For a real collaboration of the peoples of Europe on a socialist basis as a step towards a socialist world.

France: Against police violence! Against racism! Let's unite to fight and get rid of Macron and Darmanin!



TEXT OF A LEAFLET PRODUCED AND DISTRIBUTED BY GAUCHE RÉVOLUTIONNAIRE (CWI FRANCE)

Nahel: another 17-year-old dead, after so many others. Alhoussein, Zineb, Adama, Cédric, Zyed, Bouana... Nahel's death both shocks and revolts us. The policies of president and interior minister Macron and Darmanin (and Valls and Sarkozy before them) are constantly fuelling violence. In working-class neighbourhoods, this has been the case for a long time.

Repression is now widespread: trade unionists are treated as terrorists, the RAID [an elite police unit] in Mayotte gas undocumented migrants, a law making it easier for the police to use weapons, CRS [police reserves] and BRAV [a special motor-cycle unit] at demonstrations... And facial identity checks, insults and provocation, discrimination, mass unemployment and the closure of public services have all taken their toll. Unemployment, racism and discrimination: we've had enough!

These are the real causes of the current revolt. Anger is being expressed, with violence to match that of the government.

But will burning cars and smashing shop windows really change things? Not to mention destroying schools and social centres? No, on the contrary, it gives them a pretext for even more repression.

And with a state of emergency, they could go even further. And why? Because what they are really afraid of is people getting together to fight their racist, anti-youth policies, particularly in working-class neighbourhoods.

Cutting funding for education, hospitals, transport, and other services reinforces inequalities. The

government's policies benefit the big multinationals and the richest people. Racism and repression are tools to divide us and prevent us from fighting together against the real culprits. Behind its racist, repressive and neoliberal policies, it is the interests of the same social class that it is defending: the capitalists.

Everyone has had enough. But there is no plan or programme to unite this anger and organise to direct it against the real cause of all these problems: capitalism and its servants like Darmanin and Macron. The rallies and demonstrations organised to demand #JusticePourNahel must continue and grow against the government's racist and anti-social policies - to unite this anger and transform it into a massive struggle against Macron and capitalism. To achieve this, trade unions and left-wing organisations should be on the frontline, alongside the inhabitants of working-class neighbourhoods and young people.

There is no question of leaving them alone to face the police and the explosion in their neighbourhoods. The massive pensions' movement gave an idea of how powerful a mass mobilisation could be against Macron's policies, against violence, racism, racial profiling by the police, and in favour of tolerance among working class and youth.

The state is organised to allow the domination of a minority; with the help of the armed forces, in particular. Only a mass revolution will make it possible to really change society and build a new one; a socialist society for the benefit of all.

If you've had enough of this unjust system, if you're looking for ways to overthrow it, if you're wondering what system we can put in its place: contact us! Join us!

Spain regional elections: Failure of Podemos to offer alternative in government allows far-right to make electoral gains

FREDDIE CLAYTON
CWI SPAIN

In 2015, the Comunidad Valenciana celebrated the end of 16 years under the governance of the conservative People's Party (PP). The PP lost the absolute majority it had enjoyed in the region since 1999. Instead, a coalition was formed by the social democratic Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and left-leaning, regionalist Compromís, with support from new left formation Podemos. Together, they promised to defend 'Valencian identity' and to pursue progressive and 'eco-conscious' politics.

But eight years later and the region has swung back to the right. During May's local elections, the PP won 40 seats (21 more than in 2019), mainly at the cost of the liberal party, Ciudadanos, which lost 18 seats. Unidas Podemos, an alliance of leftist parties in the region, lost all eight of its seats.

The ruling 'left-wing' mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau (Barcelona en Comú), also lost out to a right-wing pro-independence candidate from Junts per Catalunya, Xavier Trias. Despite receiving more votes than any other candidate, a coalition of forces which even included the PP, managed to keep Trias out, by opting for PSOE to take the mayor's office, removing Colau from power in the process. This was only achieved by ensuring support from the PP, whose councillors agreed to vote for a PSOE mayor to keep out Junts per Catalunya. Despite those that argue that the 'left' managed to maintain control of the Barcelona city council, this is still a defeat for them.

Familiar picture

This was a familiar picture across many of Spain's autonomous regions, which enjoy enormous power and budgetary discretion over education, health, housing, and policing.

A nine-point increase from 2019 across the board saw PP dominate regions previously won by PSOE, including Aragon and La Rioja, while also stealing important cities like Seville away from PSOE, and achieving an absolute majority in Madrid.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez was forced to call a snap general election for 23 July after PSOE and their junior coalition partners were so badly defeated. But the way things played out in Valencia is the scenario they most want to avoid next month.

In Valencia, on 13 June, PP and the far-right Vox party sealed their first deal to govern in coalition, teaming up to run the region. Vox has built its campaign along clear lines: Spanish nationalism, the fight against Catalan identity, praise for the armed forces, signalling opposition to gender violence laws and the 'historical memory' law that condemns the repression



Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez and former Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias

PHOTO: PODEMOS YOUTUBE/CC

of the Franco regime. It now runs the Valencian region's offices for culture, agriculture, and justice.

This a scenario that may well play out on a national level in a month's time in an general election that is shaping into a choice between a conservative government supported by a far-right party, or a centre-left government supported by the ostensibly far-left party, Podemos. As in Valencia, the PP is the favourite to win the day, with support from Vox.

The rise and fall of Podemos over the last decade underpins this shift. In 2014, Podemos was a new force in left-wing European politics. In 2016, the party almost snatched the leadership of the government from prime minister Pedro Sanchez of PSOE, but settled for joining a ruling coalition that has governed Spain since 2015.

But Podemos' leading individuals, who promised to tackle austerity, appeared to disappear into the coalition and failed to deliver. While their popularity implied that there was a real demand for radical, serious,

socialist change, the coalition government instead produced nothing but right-wing policies, slashing pensions and wages, hiking the military budget, and giving bailouts to major banks and corporations. For those who voted for Podemos this was a betrayal that left a vacuum in support. And the right has capitalised.

Vox - which appeared on the scene with radical right-wing policies at roughly the same time as Podemos - has targeted the same working-class neighbourhoods that Podemos did, but this time blaming immigrants and Catalan separatists instead of austerity for their problems.

Vox has focused on a broad range of culturally progressive causes that had been championed by the coalition, namely LGBTQ+ rights, Black Lives Matter, and climate change. With images used by Vox representing these issues being thrown into the bin, a slogan reads "decide what matters".

On 18 June, just five days after the coalition had consolidated power in Valencia, many considered the first



The **Committee for a Workers' International** (CWI) is the international socialist organisation which the Socialist Party is affiliated to. The CWI is organised in many countries around the world. We work to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against capitalism, and to fight for a socialist world.
socialistworld.net

'unofficial' act of the party to be the removal of the LGBTQ+ flag from the city's town hall. Campaigns to reduce violence against women have also drawn scrutiny by Vox, who have labelled gender violence an 'ideological concept'. The PP has watched Vox in action and has won over the centrist vote by accusing the current coalition of focusing their energies on progressive policies at the expense of Spain.

This weaponisation of an imagined 'culture war' to swerve attention away from class issues, such as austerity, unemployment, housing, and fair wages, has worked because Podemos, when given power, failed to help improve these things by tackling austerity.

What is dangerous is that this approach gives the right a free pass to continue austerity, because its support is not built on tackling it. Whether it is the EU, immigrants, or trans people, poverty is their fault, not the government, not austerity - says the right. It is all smoke and mirrors, somewhere to look while the money continues to fly into the pockets of the ruling class.

Failure

And so, it is the failure of a left-wing party to act, when given power, that has opened the door for potentially the most right-wing government in Spain since Franco. The country is facing a blue tide that Prime Minister Sanchez is trying to get ahead of. A snap election could capitalise on the distaste many PP voters have for Vox, and the regional elections have shone a light on the party's keenness to jump into bed with it.

What is certain is that there is potentially strong left-wing opposition to the policies of the PSOE-Podemus coalition in Spain. But in the wake of Podemos' betrayal, these votes have been stolen by a right-wing party that offers so-called 'change'. When a right-wing government inevitably fails to bring real change to the lives of the working class, a genuine socialist movement must capitalise.

There is a chasm in Spanish politics crying out for it. Podemos has damaged that course, but its electoral rise showed the appetite for left, anti-austerity policies is present. This time, the gap must be filled by a party that will not disappear and disappoint when in power.

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JENIN INVASION

END ISRAELI STATE TERROR

AMNON COHEN

Thousands of Israeli forces, accompanied by drones and armoured bulldozers, have invaded Jenin in the West Bank, killing ten Palestinians, wounding dozens, and forcing thousands to flee their homes. Israeli forces are preventing ambulances reaching the wounded, which will mean that casualties can bleed to death before they can get medical treatment.

Immediately there have been protests against this invasion across the West Bank, with a march and demonstration in Dheisheh refugee camp and a general strike in Ramallah.

This invasion of the civilian population of Jenin by a regional military superpower is the most brutal since the 2002 battle of Jenin, when Israeli bulldozers flattened entire neighbourhoods. The years since

then have seen a collapse in the authority of the Palestinian Authority (PA), which is now correctly seen by many Palestinians as a corrupt collaborator regime that represses Palestinians on behalf of the Israeli occupation.

The collapse of the PA's authority has been greatest in Jenin and neighbouring Nablus, where the PA's security apparatuses has lost control to local militias, which are not under the control of any of the Palestinian factions.

The policy of the Israeli government since 1993 has been to use the PA as a tool to control the Palestinian territories. But the crazed actions of the ultra-nationalist Netanyahu government have accelerated the process of collapse of the PA, by embarking on populist verbal attacks against its leaders, starving it of funds, and not allowing any negotiations towards a Palestinian state. The

ongoing collapse of the PA, and with it, the 1993 Camp David treaty, illustrate the impossibility of achieving a lasting peace under capitalism.

The PA has called on the UN to implement resolutions 2334 and 904, and act to ensure the protection of Palestinian civilians. But the capitalist-dominated United Nations has shown time and again that it will not protect innocent civilians in Palestine or anywhere else. Similarly the PA itself, despite having over a dozen armed security forces, has failed to protect civilians against Israeli forces' incursions or settler pogroms. The Palestinian masses will not be protected by the UN or by the PA. They can only be protected by the struggle of the Palestinian masses themselves. A new socialist intifada, with a mass mobilisation of the entire population, along the lines of the first intifada is necessary.

While the Israeli government

invades Jenin, it also faces revolt from its own citizens. Israeli police arrested 51 anti-Netanyahu demonstrators on 3 July, as thousands protested at Israel's main airport against the prime minister. Massive demonstrations, often of over 100,000, have been held for 26 weeks running against Netanyahu's judicial reforms, while a general strike in March forced him to freeze his reforms. Netanyahu has condemned these demonstrators as "terrorists and anarchists", teaching increasing numbers of Israeli Jews that their enemy is not the Palestinians, but their own government.

Scandalously, the self-appointed leaders of the demonstrations have rushed to support Netanyahu's brutal military operation in Jenin. But a sizeable minority on the demonstrators wear T-shirts saying "there is no democracy with occupation". In reality, capitalism means endless war

and assaults on democratic rights.

Israel and Palestine urgently need new workers' parties, with a socialist programme which can link up the opposition to Netanyahu, whether in Jenin or in Tel Aviv.

This programme would include:

- Immediate withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the West Bank
- End the siege of Gaza
- Mobilise the Palestinian masses in a new socialist intifada
- Broaden the Israeli democracy protests. Bring down Netanyahu
- For new workers' parties in Israel and Palestine to lead the popular struggle
- Fight for socialism. End the occupation. For a solution agreed between the Israeli and Palestinian working class, which guarantees the democratic and national rights of all, and ends poverty and all forms of oppression

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



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