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the Socialist

Issue 1235

13-19 July 2023

formerly **Militant**

The fight is still on to

SAVE OUR NHS



HOLLY JOHNSTON
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY AND GMB NURSING
REP (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

The battle for pay in the NHS is set to escalate.

Junior doctors in England are striking for five days on 13-18 July. Consultant doctors will follow with a 48-hour strike starting on the 20 July, closely followed by members of the Society of Radiographers on 25-27 July, with no sign of talks at present.

Unite members who rejected the recent pay deal from the government are being balloted at some NHS trusts throughout England to expand its industrial action. Unite members at Guys and St Thomas' in London are striking for 24 hours on 13 July, and workers at Yorkshire Ambulance Service will on 14 July, between 3pm and 10pm. Outsourced GMB members continue striking in south London.

These strikes make it clear. The issues around pay and conditions in the NHS haven't gone away. The lump-sum payment received in June, granted as a result of strike

action, has been quickly eaten up by bills, rent, mortgages, and essentials as prices continue to rise.

The fight isn't over for the future of the NHS. The next pay rounds will begin in January 2024 and rank-and-file groups such as NHS Workers Say NO will be organising and fighting to help achieve the strike mandates needed to strike for the pay we deserve.

After over a decade of the Tories underpaying and understaffing our health service, striking doctors have the support of their NHS colleagues and the public. Their fight on pay is directly linked to keeping the NHS free from privatisation.

We know Rishi Sunak won't protect the health service, but Keir Starmer's Labour isn't much better. Labour frontbenchers aren't backing the strike actions and have openly said that they plan to halve the budgets for social care and see privatisation as an answer to the crisis in the NHS.

We need councillors and MPs that are willing to fight for real public ownership in the NHS and social care, and a party that fights for it.

If we imagine what an NHS would look like fully funded, without private companies leaching billions from it, where staff have enough

to live on and are happy enough to stay, where there are enough staff to keep our patients safe. There wouldn't be hundreds of needless deaths a week.

We need a new mass workers' party that will fight for this kind of health service, to kick out the profiteers and let the working class democratically run our health service.

To win our fight on pay and for the future of the NHS, we need to stay united as a workforce and fight for our unions to coordinate the fight for a fully funded, publically owned NHS.

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

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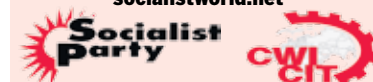
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Editor of the Socialist	Editorial staff
Josh Asker	Scott Jones
socialistparty.org.uk	Ian Pattison
Mark Best	Paula Mitchell
Circulation manager	Chris Newby
	Mark Best

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

Labour dropping Corbyn policies makes breaking 'class ceiling' harder

JOHN WILLIAMS
CARDIFF EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

In the so-called 'class ceiling' speech from Labour leader Keir Starmer, supposedly on transforming education, we heard baseless sound bites and no policies – just what we've been used to! The Labour leadership actually prides itself on saying it won't commit to any new funding.

In his speech, Starmer conveniently missed out that it was a Labour government, under Tony Blair, which first brought in tuition fees. Now they're more than £9,000 a year, riddling millions with debt. Under Starmer, Labour has U-turned on Jeremy Corbyn's previous policy for free university education.

Starmer has promised to bring 'child poverty reduction specialists' into schools. But if he was serious about ending child poverty, Labour would commit to providing free school meals for every child. This was Labour's previous policy under Corbyn, until it was changed by Starmer.

Labour will 'save' £400 million a year by scrapping its previous free school meals policy in England. But what a difference this would make to families.

Labour is in power in Wales, so could be showing a lead on this. But instead, Welsh Labour is failing to tackle child poverty just as much as



Starmer and Corbyn PHOTO: JEREMY CORBYN/CC

Starmer's pledges would.

In 2020, Welsh Labour's scandalously voted down a proposal in the Senedd (Welsh Parliament) to introduce free school meals for all children whose families receive Universal Credit.

Wales has the highest levels of child poverty in the UK. But under Welsh Labour, we also have the

lowest provision of free school meals.

But, under pressure, Welsh Labour has been forced to zig-zag on this issue. The Welsh government has now said it will eventually bring in free school meals for primary pupils.

Councils have been told they will be funded to give pupils free meals ahead of the painfully slow timetable. But only one council in the whole of

Wales is actually giving all primary school children in its area free meals.

Starmer says he wants to "improve teacher recruitment and retention". But it's clear that pay and conditions are the biggest factors in retention. This is what teachers in the National Education Union (NEU) in England are still striking for.

But, yet again, when Starmer was asked directly if Labour would meet the NEU demands on pay, or even implement the 6.5% pay rise suggested by the 'pay review body', he refused to answer. The exact same line as Rishi Sunak and the Conservative government.

The constant U-turning from Keir Starmer and Labour, away from the anti-austerity policies of Jeremy Corbyn has led to anger and disappointment, especially from young people. Some climate activists interrupted Starmer's speech, and unfurled a banner saying: "No more U-turns – green new deal now".

Beforehand, the two students had been invited on stage to stand behind Starmer during the speech. The group's spokesperson later said that if Labour "is going to use young people as props, [it] should be interested to hear what they have to say".

They've got every right to be angry, with Labour dropping its previous pledge of £28 billion for climate measures.

Ulez – charging poor for pollution created by rich

JOHN VINER
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

In London, 29 August is fast approaching. The Ultra Low Emissions Zone (Ulez) is due to be expanded to cover the whole of the capital.

Those with non-compliant cars will have to pay a £12.50 daily charge if they wish to keep, or cannot afford to replace, their ageing vehicle. There's a £100-a-day charge for non-compliant lorries, buses and coaches.

As far back as 2007, Transport for London (TfL) estimated that there were 1,000 premature deaths, and a further 1,000 hospital admissions, annually, due to poor air quality from all causes.

Gases produced by car exhausts have a detrimental effect on our airways, and can exacerbate existing conditions, such as asthma and bronchitis. Diesel vehicles, in particular, even more modern 'cleaner' versions, are particularly problematic.

Tragically, nine-year-old Ella Kissi-Debrah died in 2013 from a severe asthma attack. It was directly attributed to the illegally high levels of air pollution in Lewisham, south London, where she lived with her family. Ella was the first person in the world to have air pollution listed as a cause of death.

But London's Labour mayor, Sadiq

Khan, is expanding Ulez at the same time as attacking public transport. He's not serious about tackling pollution and traffic.

Khan is in a battle with Unite the Union with his plan to reduce London bus provision by 4%. He is also coming after jobs and pensions on the tube. One of the reasons transport union RMT is striking on London Underground from 23 to 28 July.

And we know we can't trust the Tories either. Tory central government agreed the dodgy deal with Sadiq Khan to cut London transport.

Many workers rely on their vehicles for work, particularly for early shifts, or where public transport isn't available. The cost-of-living crisis compounds this.

The Competition and Markets Authority found that supermarkets made an extra £900 million by overcharging drivers for fuel in 2022 alone. There are also those who, like my late father, felt they can't use public transport, due to risk of infection in a crowded bus or train.

The hypocrisy of some Tories' opposition to Ulez is evident in that it was the Tories who originally introduced it. The Socialist Party calls for a democratically planned, massively expanded, free-to-use, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan to tackle both the cost of living and environmental pollution.



PHOTO: CHRIS SAMPSON/CC

Hottest month ever

Only socialist planning and working-class organisation can reverse climate crisis



WHAT WE THINK

It came as disturbing news that June was the hottest month ever recorded in the UK and the planet had its two hottest days ever at the start of July. What did the Tory government say about these latest consequences of climate change? Nothing; its silence was deafening.

Then, when Tory environment minister Thérèse Coffey answered questions in parliament on 6 July she didn't mention climate change and not a single MP questioned her about her government's lack of action on it. The closest it came to it was a Tory MP asking what steps are being taken to plant trees, which prompted Coffey to point to a few planting projects and farcically add: "Vote blue, go green".

In reality, the Tories are as divided on the environment as on all other key issues. Tory peer John Gummer, outgoing chair of parliament's climate change committee, declared last month that there was no satisfactory progress being made against climate change. Among his committee's criticisms was the government's present handing out of 100 new licences for drilling North Sea gas and oil.

That was followed within days by another Tory peer, Zac Goldsmith, writing a scathing letter of resignation from his ministerial post as international environment minister, in which he said that prime minister Rishi Sunak is "uninterested" in climate change. Among other complaints, he pointed to the government's withdrawn commitment to give £11.6 billion of foreign aid for environmental purposes.

'Fiddling while Rome burns'

The phrase 'fiddling while Rome burns' comes to mind, although much of the planet is in peril, not just a human domain. The urgency for far-reaching action is clear from the temperature graphs. Despite over 40 years of international climate conferences, global warming is heading rapidly towards the maximum increase of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels that was set in the 2015 Paris agreement.

It is not technological potential that is absent. For instance, the International Energy Agency has said that, if all planned projects are deployed, solar panel manufacturing capacity would exceed levels needed to meet net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Rather the failure stems from fundamental obstacles in the



PHOTO: LUCAS G/CC

capitalist system.

Capitalist governments won't commit to the massive investment needed, for changes such as enabling power infrastructure to fully use renewable energy. It would mean increasing already very-high levels of public sector debt, which they want to keep within the limits that will be tolerated by the top financial institutions.

It was one thing to increase it to bail out their system in the 2007-08 financial crisis, and later in the Covid pandemic, but for them, the worsening climate crisis can be shunted into the hands of future governments and generations. Neither will the necessary amounts of investment come from the private sector, with its focus more on short-term profit opportunities than the needs of society.

Adding to the 'status quo' reliance on fossil fuels are the links the governments of major capitalist powers across the globe have with fossil fuel industries – as well as with big business overall and its interests.

Capitalist competition

Another barrier to stopping climate change under capitalism is the impossibility of achieving the necessary global cooperation. Supply chains cross many borders, but the top manufacturers and service providers are based economically and politically in nation states, which they use as a base to defend their interests while competing with other companies globally. Competition is inherent in the system rather than cooperation.

"Climate change is out of control", lamented UN Secretary-General

Antonio Guterres in response to the start of July heatwave. Climate change is out of control because capitalism is out of control – and cannot be controlled. As a system it has been in existence for less than 400 years, a pinprick in the timeline of humanity on the planet, yet in that short time it has outlived its usefulness, caused escalating damage to the environment, and is rotten ripe for removal.

Keir Starmer's Labour Party, as with the Tories, treats climate change as an issue to be juggled around with other issues they view as concerns of voters. The Sunday Times (9 July) reported on moves by Starmer, along with his close supporters in the shadow cabinet, to shift Labour's stance away from a so-called 'green agenda' in order to focus more on 'economic change'.

An indication of this came in their recent decision to delay implementation of a pledge to spend £28 billion a year on green initiatives from the start of a Labour government. However, Labour has no real economic change on offer either (see pages 8-9) and the pressing issues faced by working-class people certainly include the environment. They are in the frontline of vulnerability to extreme weather events and pollution; and most have great concern about the planet and all life on it.

Starmer and Co have made it crystal clear that they won't take any significant steps towards the far-reaching action needed: decisive measures to utilise the colossal wealth hoarded by the super-rich, along with nationalisation of the banks, energy firms, transport, infrastructure, agribusiness and other key companies – together with calling on workers' movements internationally to build towards doing likewise.

Socialist solution

The solution to climate change is through building mass, democratically organised, working-class based forces that can challenge and remove this rotten system, and replace it with socialist societies based on need, not profit.

While these forces are being built, struggles will inevitably take place – as many already have – to fight for resources to reduce the impact of temperature extremes, fires, floods, storms, etc, on ordinary people. Capitalist governments will continue to try to pass the burden of funding those resources onto working-class and middle-class people, and will no doubt use environmental issues, among others, when propagating division to try to undermine workers' unity.

In these class battles, workers' movements and new workers' parties will need programmes that can bring workers together. Regarding the environment, this means advocating the raising of living standards for the poorest in society without it being at the expense of better-paid workers. It also means insisting on the creation of well-paid, skilled jobs to replace those lost during the phasing out of polluting or potentially dangerous industries – including nuclear power.

No guarantees from capitalist bosses or their political representatives can ever be trusted on these issues. Only democratically based decision making by representatives of the working class will make socialist measures in the interests of the majority in society possible, together with a sustainable environment.

Radiographers join the fightback

UNION REP, SOCIETY OF RADIOGRAPHERS

The vast majority of radiographers working in the NHS have voted for strike action. In 43 NHS Trusts the majorities were high enough to breach the anti-union thresholds required to gain a legal strike mandate.

Like nurses and doctors, we would not choose to be on picket lines instead of treating patients, but conditions have become intolerable. Our pay has not kept up with inflation for years, despite heavy workloads, chronic staff shortages, and turning up every day through the Covid pandemic!

In a week when we should have been celebrating the 75th anniversary of the NHS in my Trust, we have instead been planning a 48-hour strike. This will have a massive effect. Most patients will need our services when they come into the NHS, from diagnostic X-rays and scans, to radiotherapy and cancer treatments.

Leaving in droves

Like other health professionals, radiographers are leaving the NHS in droves, either to the private sector or leaving the profession entirely. This is not just about pay - it's the pressure of long hours and workloads, and the stress of not being able to provide the service people need.

This is part and parcel of the Tories running down our NHS. It's nonsense to suggest the private sector can help - they cream off easy procedures or care services that will return a fat profit, but cause chaos when they dabble in diagnostics. We need an inflation-proof pay rise, but we also need a massive injection of funding to provide the care at the point of need that the NHS was founded on.



Radiographers during their last strike in 2014 LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

Please support Society of Radiographers picket lines at hospitals near you - 48 hours, 8am Tuesday 25 July to 8am Thursday 27 July.

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Underpaid overworked uni staff spend two minutes on student 'personal statements'

MATTHEW TRENAMAN
READING SOCIALIST PARTY

Student 'personal statements' hold an important role in the university application process. They present the opportunity for prospective students to show their love for a subject.

They allow the student to speak directly to the university. However, this vital part of the application process has unfortunately also become victim to the ongoing collapse of our country's education system.

Less and less

Universities spend less and less time reviewing the personal statements of applying students. On average, universities now only spend two minutes per personal statement, according to the Higher Education Policy Institute.

The 'prestige' Russel Group universities spend on average only one and a half minutes on each statement. There is no other word to describe this than a disgrace.

How many students have been completely overlooked as their statement was rushed over? How many potential great scientists, mathematicians, or engineers will not be able to contribute their skills to help create a new, fairer world, because their statement was rushed over?

It would be easy to blame the staff who are not spending enough time on each statement. However, this would be a very shallow approach. Overworked staff simply do not have the time.

Last year, over 320,000 students applied to universities - a 5% increase from the previous year. But the staff numbers have not been rising as quickly.

And no wonder. University workers' pay has been cut by over 25% in real terms since 2009.

To make it worse, government funding has been falling too. Government university funding in 2021-22 was 78% below 2010-11 in real terms. And extortionate tuition fees have not plugged the funding gap.

The answer to this issue is clear. Universities must be funded by the government, not tuition fees.

Universities should be seen as a public service due to the great role they play in equipping us with the skills needed to pursue our goals. Universities should be properly publicly funded.

The fee system is outdated. No student should come out of university with debt. This is what the Socialist Party and Socialist Students recognise.

Free education

Replacing the current system, with free and publicly funded education, that is democratically run by staff, students and the community will help universities properly fulfil their goal of being a place where anyone can become educated, a place where people can freely research, and put forward their ideas.

This might seem far away. However, it is completely possible. Only by mass organising and mass action will we be able to achieve this.

Blaby bin workers vote on the picket line to escalate

STEVE SCORE
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

On their second of weekly one-day strikes, refuse collection and ground maintenance staff, GMB members, at Blaby District Council in Leicestershire, voted to escalate their action at a picket line meeting.

The picket line was large and lively. This week had more supporters in solidarity, from other GMB branches, the Leicester trades council, Socialist Party members and others.

Not enough

The strikers concluded that one day a week wasn't enough, as management was ordering staff to cover that work over the course of the following week.

Management had learned from last week's blocking-in of bin lorries at the depot by the pickets (See 'Bosses call police on bin strikers' at socialistparty.org.uk) and had moved some lorries offsite the previous night, in an attempt to get round the picket line.

The strikers then played a cat-and-mouse game with the small number of workers that were trying to get to wherever the lorries were.

One of the pickets told the Socialist: "Today we successfully disrupted the attempt to run scab operations. They were running them offsite. They had four drivers, being directed by management to go to various meet-up points. We would turn up, then they would disperse; that happened numerous times over the course of the morning."

"Eventually, we spoke to a couple of them who stopped and had a chat with us. They said that whatever the plan was, it wasn't working, and they had enough of it."

"They're also running a scab operation out of the Biffa depot in Beaumont Leys to pick up the garden waste."

Come to the senses

Dave Warwick, GMB organiser, said: "The members have decided that we're going to serve notice for two weeks of continuous industrial action."

"We are going to close the depot for two weeks solid. Hopefully that will bring the council to their senses, and they'll come to discuss and put an offer on the table for our members."

Blaby bins the day they voted to escalate their strike STEVE SCORE



Royal Mail: CWU members vote to accept deal

CWU members in Royal Mail have voted to accept the bosses' offer, ending a dispute that has lasted a year.

Socialist Party members campaigned for a 'no' vote (see 'CWU Royal Mail ballot: vote no!' at socialistparty.org.uk). More to follow in next week's issue of the Socialist.

Stop callous and corner-cutting train ticket office closures

JOSIE SHELLEY
STAFFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

For far too long this government has shown its utter contempt, not only to working-class people as a whole, but especially to disabled people. From vicious work capability assessments to their latest closures of railway station ticket offices.

I fully support transport union RMT in its ongoing industrial action. After talking to various RMT members who have assisted me on my journeys over the last few months, I know they are fighting for far more than just pay.

So, I was heartened to hear Mick Lynch, the general secretary of the RMT, defending the need for ticket offices, and how they are vital to people such as those who are visually impaired. As a registered blind person, it was nice to finally feel heard.

With just a small amount of sight, I rely heavily on public transport. As bus services have been cut in my area to the bone, I have relied more heavily on rail services.

Over the years, I have noticed a decline in the number of staff on hand at stations. Consequently, my reliance on the staff at ticket offices has increased.

This isn't only to purchase a ticket. But also to ask for train times and platform numbers etc. If I book passenger assistance, the ticket office is often my point of contact so they know I've arrived.

"What about...?"

People reading this may ask: "What about booking online or using digital ticket points?"

- Smartphone transport apps very rarely allow for accessibility modifications. So, for me, are unusable
- Digital ticket points are the same - no accessibility enhancements
- Also, ticket points are quite often very low down to cater to people

As I can't see the schedule boards either, if I want up-to-date train information, then the ticket office is often my go-to place, as it is easier to find than a staff member on a lot of occasions

If ticket offices were to close, then travel for me would be so difficult that I would be further isolated than I already am from going to different places. So, I urge everyone to support



Activists from RMT, Hull and District Trades Union Council, and the Socialist Party campaigning against ticket office closures on 10 July HULL SOCIALIST PARTY

the RMT in its ongoing industrial action.

● Privatisation is about making money for rail companies

PETE MCNALLY
HEREFORD AND WORCESTER SOCIALIST PARTY
MEMBER AND FORMER RAIL WORKER

No one thinks this is about improving the service. It is about saving the rail companies money.

The Rail Delivery Group says only 12% of ticket sales are now at stations. But that was still 119 million ticket sales in the year to March 2022.

And the main impact will be on the elderly, those with sight or mobility problems, and disabled people.

The official consultation on closing

ticket offices lasts until 27 July. But the rail trade unions all oppose these plans, and will be campaigning against them too.

Mick Lynch, general secretary of transport union RMT, said: "It is clear that the whole enterprise of closing ticket offices has got nothing to do with modernisation, and is a thinly veiled plan to gut our railways of station staff."

The big lies of rail privatisation are now clear. We're supposed to submit to any plan that the bosses come up with in the name of profits for the shareholder. Ticket office closures will do nothing to improve the rail industry, but plenty to improve the bank balances of the companies.

The railways should be renationalised, under the democratic control of the rail unions, passengers and the rest of the working class. And there must be no compensation for the

fat-cat shareholders who suck profits out of the rail industry every day.

● Campaign starts now

MICK WHALE
HULL SOCIALIST PARTY

Activists from transport union RMT, Hull and District Trades Union Council, and the Socialist Party were out leafletting outside the train station together against ticket office closures.

Gaz Jackson, regional RMT organiser, said: "This latest attack on our ticket offices is just the thin end of the wedge. The Tory government are on a war footing with the RMT. They have a plan to dismantle any organisation that dares stand up against their ironfisted political agenda."

RMT to strike for a week on London Underground



Gospel Oak tube station picket line a year ago during the RMT's strike CAMDEN AND HARINGEY SOCIALIST PARTY

GARY HARBORD
RMT LU TRAIN GRADES SECRETARY, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The RMT transport union dispute on London Underground (LU) is entering a new period, with a week's worth of strike action from 23 July.

Members across all grades will be taking rolling action, in an escalation of the dispute over terms and conditions, job losses and attacks to our pensions.

Coordinate

Aslef, the train operators' union, has announced coordinated strike action on 26 and 28 July.

At a time when management are being awarded a £12 million bonus by the Labour London mayor Sadiq Khan, LU is unleashing a wholesale attack on all tube workers that will make the job unrecognisable in the future.

Passenger numbers are back to

pre-Covid levels and there is no excuse for these detrimental changes. Fleet, stations, trains and engineering are all facing attacks to their terms and conditions, and job losses.

In a separate development, Transport for London is trying to impose an attendance policy that wouldn't go amiss in Victorian Britain, giving managers a wish-list to harass and bully workers off sick.

Unanimous

A mass meeting of reps voted almost unanimously to escalate the action, and this was agreed by our national executive.

Crucially, this dispute will be member-led. These attacks are due to the £600 million cuts demanded by the Tory government, and pressure will continue to be put upon the mayor to demand that RMT members should not pay for the crisis created by the Tories.

Unison ballot in local government: A strategy to fight



South Glouc Unison strike ROGER THOMAS

JAMES ROBINSON
SECRETARY OF UNISON IN KNOWSLEY, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The ballot of Unison members in local government has finished and as we go to press the results are not yet public.

However, it is clear that there is a sizeable 'Yes' vote for action. The ballot was conducted on a disaggregated basis, by employer.

Socialist Party members and

others in the union are arguing for a strategy to mount a serious fight, including:

- Taking strike action in all schools which meet the threshold as coordinated action with teachers in the autumn

- Taking targeted action in the councils that hit the threshold

- Reballoting any council that has 40% or above, and pool resources to assist them to get over the Tory-imposed 50% turnout threshold

Teachers' strikes: escalate and coordinate

300,000 teachers in the National Education Union (NEU) in England went on strike again on 5 and 7 July as part of the fight for fully-funded inflation-proof pay rises. Once again lively picket lines, demonstrations and rallies took place.



One striker in Plymouth told **Ryan Aldred**: "It feels like this is gearing up to some big action in the autumn. With support staff balloting and even headteachers preparing to come out, it feels like this is only going to get bigger!"

At a strike 'picnic' in Keswick, Cumbria, filled with home-made banners, one teacher told **Martin Powell-Davies**: "It's been hard these last strike days, but we can't give in now."

Simon Robinson, Leicester NEU assistant branch secretary and Socialist Party member, spoke at the Leicester rally:

"We have heard that the GMB members in Blaby on the bins have escalated their action to two solid weeks of strike. We have heard from Unison members at Ashfield Academy about their determined strike, who have also voted for escalation. I think that we in the NEU should do the same.

"We need to start to work together with other unions in dispute. Why don't we demand that the TUC coordinate all of us to be out. Let's all unite together to come out in the autumn!"

Speaking to the Socialist, Simon added: "We have been in dispute since January and the Tories are under pressure, but although we've forced them to the negotiating table, our demands have not been met by the government. We have had big vibrant picket lines and we've recruited thousands of new members to our union in Leicester and Leicestershire alone, and tens of thousands around the country.

"We have more and more young teachers and support staff getting involved in the union. That's because we are a union in dispute. But I think the mood for next term is to escalate. Sister education unions are balloting for strike action in the new term, and if they are successful in their ballots then we will be standing side by side on the picket lines."

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



Bristol demo 5 July BRISTOLSP

Make 3 October a massive day of action

At the rally in Parliament Square following the march of 10,000 teachers and supporters through central London, it was announced from the platform that the NEU will be calling a mid-week demonstration on Tuesday 3 October at the Tory party conference in Manchester.

If the NEU is successful in its current rebalot, this day could become a huge strike day. Other teaching and heads unions are also balloting. Daniel Kebede, who takes over as NEU general secretary in September, called from the platform for an "education general strike".

This is an opportunity to call on all education unions currently balloting - and all unions with live ballots, including the NHS and rail unions - to come together to make it a historic day of coordinated strike action, and a massive mid-week demonstration demanding inflation-proof pay rises and against the Tory anti-trade union laws.

During the strikes, current joint general secretary Mary Bousted told the press that if the government paid and funded the independent review body's recommendation of 6.5% for 2023, the strikes would "stop". This has not been agreed by the union executive nor members consulted.

6.5% is not enough
During the strikes, current joint general secretary Mary Bousted told the press that if the government paid and funded the independent review body's recommendation of 6.5% for 2023, the strikes would "stop". This has not been agreed by the union executive nor members consulted.

Lily Douglas, Waltham Forest Socialist Party

Throughout the NEU strikes, myself and Kevin Parslow have been attending the Leytonstone School picket line. During our most recent visit, Kevin, who is secretary of Waltham Forest Trades Council, coordinated with Len Hockey, the branch secretary of Unite in Barts Health Trust, who works in Whipps Cross hospital near to the school, to come down to the picket line to give solidarity.

Alex, the BMA junior doctors' rep at Whipps also visited the picket. The strikers talked about coordinating a NEU delegation to go to the junior doctors' picket line. This would be a really good show of solidarity between the two unions and will hopefully lead to further links being made in the future - an example of how trades councils can help with local coordination.

London demo 5 July LONDONSP



Unite conferences

Rule conference debates political strategy: Workers' political alternative still needed

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN UNITE

The highlight of the conference was a whole number of rule amendments which sought to open up Unite's political strategy, so that its support for electoral candidates isn't restricted to the Labour Party, of which Unite is the biggest affiliate.

Socialist Party members supported a number of the proposed rule amendments, including number 53 to rule 22.2 from LE1228 Waltham Forest Council Branch. This would have enabled Unite to "give support to the candidates of any political party... that the Executive Council deems support the union's members, policies and objectives."

However, as happened under the previous leadership of Len McCluskey, the Unite Executive Council (EC) presented a statement moved by General Secretary Sharon Graham that, by being passed, resulted in all the related rule amendments falling.

After the debate, which saw the EC statement passed, Unite's press release claimed: "Unite overwhelmingly rejects disaffiliation from the Labour Party."

But the rule amendment wasn't to disaffiliate; instead it was to open up the political strategy to enable the union to decide, rather than Sir Keir

Starmmer, which candidates it wants to support.

He is addressing Unite policy conference on Thursday. In moving the EC statement, Sharon took a combative tone to Starmmer: "Labour must be Labour, and the union must push them into that position. We must make them take different choices. We will not make the same mistakes of the past - there will be no blank cheques for Labour until we see tangible results."

But imagine if she had the weapon of being able to warn Starmmer that the union could support candidates against his New Labour?

It would have far more pressure than now, when Starmmer can ride roughshod over union affiliates, knowing that whatever he decides, their support for him is guaranteed.

It is understandable that with her militant industrial leadership of Unite, Sharon was able to win the debate at this particular time, as the general election nears.

But many of the delegates, despite the vote, have major concerns about the pro-capitalist policies of Starmmer, Wes Streeting and Co. This debate will have helped harden that stance and prepares the ground for when a likely Starmmer government acts in the interests of big business not workers.

And there are many questions left unresolved, such as whether the union will, alongside the RMT rail union, back Jeremy Corbyn if he decides to stand independently of Labour. The fight for working-class political representation will continue.

Nonetheless, the mistaken position put by the executive majority will have given confidence to the right wing in the union, who want to retreat from Sharon's whole manifesto. That's why a new fighting left organisation in the union is more urgent than ever.



In 2022, Coventry's Labour council spent £9 million trying to break the strike of bin workers, members of Unite COVENTRYSP

to organise a mass demonstration and to coordinate action, including in the form of a 24-hour general strike.

Stop Press: Policy conference agrees to fight anti-union laws

The motion was moved by Kevin Parslow of Waltham Forest Council branch and a member of the Socialist Party. In his speech, Kevin made clear the potential power of the working class against a weak, divided Tory government. He reminded the conference of the mass movement of general strike proportions in 1972, when members of a forerunner of Unite, the Transport and General Workers' Union, forced the release of the 'Pentonville 5' dockers and decisively defeated the Tory government.

In his speech, Kevin reported that the National Shop Stewards Network motion had been passed unanimously at the RMT transport union conference, and the TUC agreed to call a demonstration in the autumn. He said Unite must work with other unions and support that demo.

Keir Starmmer is due to address Unite conference on 13 July. Kevin called on the union to demand that where Labour is the employer, they should refuse to issue work notices, which they are not legally compelled to do. David Oladele, convenor of Unite at St Mungo's, on indefinite strike, also spoke in the debate.

● A fuller analysis of the conferences will be in next week's Socialist

Workers at St Mungo's homelessness charity across the south of England have embarked on indefinite strike action and voted to reject the latest pay offer from management.

St Mungo's strike: Ramp up the heat on wobbling management



St Mungo's strikers march with striking teachers in London IAN PATTISON

Below is the text of the latest Socialist Party leaflet.

The recent offer, which has been rejected by members, is evidence that the strike is working.

Under pressure from the continued action, senior management found an extra £700,000 per year for pay. Emma Haddad's 'outburst' (see 'St Mungo's strike at crucial stage' at socialistparty.org.uk) also shows the pressure they are under from the action.

So as the strike continues, it's important that members turn up the heat to force a better offer.

From reports at the rallies, and speaking to strikers, it's clear that there are still more people joining the strike.

When staff see large and loud pickets at the different projects, that's when they have renewed confidence in the strike and join themselves. No one wants to feel like they are taking action alone - and they aren't!

Haddad and the rest of senior management are wavering, and the strike continuing to grow is the biggest source of pressure on them.

To Labour councillors - solidarity is welcome but the strike needs action not words

The strike has lots of support from the wider labour movement, as well as giving support to the NEU and other workers in their actions. This includes support from a number of Labour councillors. Some councillors have even asked what they can do to support the strike.

The first thing is they should wholly support the demand for 10%. The strikers can discuss what other action they want from councillors.

The strikers could demand that all union-backed councillors write to Haddad and demand she meets with them as a step towards meeting the workers' demands.

The councillors could demand that Haddad opens up St Mungo's financial accounts to scrutiny by Unite the Union representatives and the councils which have contracts with the charity.

One councillor from Brent said, at a rally, that they would not support a pay rise that would bankrupt the charity. Is this councillor under the impression that 10% would bankrupt St Mungo's? If they are worried, they should demand to see the full financial statements - including the pay of all senior management! We're sure this would alleviate any fear. A 10% pay rise will not bankrupt the charity but will be a big step forward for frontline staff.

Given that St Mungo's has so many contracts with local councils and a

large part of its work is funded with public money, it's only right that there is accountability about how that funding is used. Is it being used to line the back pockets of a few? How does this serve the interests of people experiencing homelessness, or frontline staff?

Ultimately the growing housing crisis must also be fought. Partly, staff members need a pay rise because of sky-high mortgages and rents. If Labour councillors were really serious about tackling homelessness in their boroughs, they wouldn't just contract St Mungo's to support homeless adults, they would take measures such as rent controls in the private sector, and push forward with council house building to reduce waiting lists.

St Mungo's workers see first-hand the impact of the housing crisis and the broken housing model. Let's fight to end the housing crisis, with decent, affordable housing which meets the needs of all.

A Starmmer-led government is likely at the next general election, but the radical housing policies which were put forward in Jeremy Corbyn's manifesto have been removed.

Thanks to a motion by Unite Housing Workers branch, the Unite conference will be discussing opening up the political fund so that the union can back candidates from other political parties which support Unite policy. This could be an important step in fighting for a genuine political voice for the workers' and trade union movement in the future.

Four decades ago, Tory prime minister Maggie Thatcher declared that Britain was going to be a "home-owning democracy", where support for capitalism would be underpinned by working-class people getting to own their own bricks and mortar. Today, 63% of households are homeowners, but the Tories are hated and support for the capitalist system they defend is in decline.

As interest rates soar, the average increase in mortgage costs for those coming off fixed-rate deals is an eye-watering £2,900 a year. Meanwhile, for the big majority of young people, homeownership is an increasingly impossible dream. The average first-time buyer is now in their late 30s, and before then young people are among those trapped in private-rented, insecure, and often substandard accommodation. Higher interest rates are also feeding through into higher rents. In Greater London, for example, rents have increased by an average of 17% in the first half of 2023.

Alongside the housing crisis, real wages have fallen more than at any time in half a century. In 2022 they fell by an average of 3%, with the real pay of nurses, for example, falling by an average of £1,800. While Tory prime minister Sunak and his wife have a combined wealth of £529 million, one-in-seven adults now regularly skip meals due to poverty.

In the 1930s, a famous photo of Eton school boys towering over much shorter working-class kids illustrated the depth of the class divide. Today, almost a century later, poverty can again be measured by children's heights. On average, Britain's five-year-olds are getting shorter - among the shortest in Europe, while the average ten-year-old boy in the most deprived areas is 1.3 cm shorter than in the richest areas.

The so-called 'cost-of-living squeeze', in reality brutal austerity, that this government is presiding over is the root cause of its huge unpopularity. As a result, this 'home-owning democracy' is going to give them a beating at the next general election. Of the 50 seats with the most mortgage holders, 48 are currently Tory, many with narrow majorities. Overall, this government's 'net satisfaction' rate is now an almost unprecedented minus 68, only one point less than the record unpopularity achieved by Liz Truss.

Starmer on his way to Number 10

As a result Labour leader, Sir Keir Starmer, looks set to become the next prime minister. Millions will cheer to see the back of the Tories, but Starmer has been doing his utmost to lower expectations that an incoming Labour government will act in the interests of the working-class majority. From refusing to promise to meet the pay claims of any of the public sector workers currently in dispute, to ruling out free school meals for all primary school-age children, to reneging on the promised £28 billion Green Prosperity Plan, to rejecting kicking the blood-sucking profiteers out of the

Rates rises, mortgage turmoil and drowning in debt...

BRITISH CAPITALISM'S FOUNDATIONS CRUMBLING

water industry via nationalisation: Starmer's programme for government is a long list of things he won't do, rather than positive proposals. Nonetheless, hope springs eternal. It is inevitable - having finally got rid of the Tories after 14 years and five prime ministers - that there will be widespread anticipation of life under a Starmer government being better than under the Tories. Unfortunately however, under the next government, like now, the workers' movement will have to fight every step of the way to defend, never mind improve, the lives of the majority.

Capitalist New Labour II

The fundamental reason that a Starmer government will not transform the lives of the majority is because it will be wedded to slavish defence of the capitalist system. Globally, capitalism is a system increasingly in crisis, with the working class and poor expected to bear the brunt of the consequences. British capitalism is, however, right at the bottom of the league table of major economies. It is the only one of the G7 economies that is still smaller than pre-pandemic and has the highest inflation.

For decades the capitalist class in Britain has led the world in only one thing - restoring profits by driving down wages. By 2020, the median household income per person, in real terms, was lower than the US, Canada, Australia, Germany or France, and was already falling markedly. According to the Institute of Fiscal Studies, real household disposal income is now a third less than the pre-2007 trend. While the majority suffered, the wealth of Britain's richest 250 people increased by 5.3% in the course of 2022.

Measuring the success of an economy by the enrichment of a few, Britain might top a few leaderboards. It cannot be considered a success by other measurements, however. Levels of investment are at historic lows, and productivity growth is the worst in 250 years! Britain has the highest current account deficit - which shows by how much the total value of goods and services a country imports exceeds

the amount it exports - of any of the G7 countries.

Meanwhile government debt has exceeded 100% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the first time since 1961. Over the next few years, the scale of UK government debt means that the Treasury will need to sell an average of £240 billion of gilts (government bonds) each year for five years. That eclipses all previous records, other than the vast borrowing during the pandemic. At that stage, however, the Bank of England bought the majority of them as part of its quantitative easing programme. Now 'quantitative tightening' means the Bank of England is seeking selling them too!

When he was Governor of the Bank of England, Mark Carney described Britain's government as being "reliant on the kindness of strangers" to finance its debt. At the time, in reality, the bank he headed was financing the bulk of it. Now however, his assessment is accurate, but the vultures of the bond markets are never 'kind', they are only interested in their own profits. So far, UK's gilts are having to be sold at a bargain-basement price compared to others, reflecting the world financial markets' lack of confidence in British capitalism.

Bowing down to the markets

The Tory government's response to the crisis of their system is clear. Chancellor Jeremy Hunt has been giving interviews that promise yet more misery - a continued pay squeeze and no pre-election tax cuts. But Starmer's Labour has also made clear that their overwhelming priority will be "financial stability" and that they will do nothing to risk upsetting the markets. As devastating climate change gathers pace, it would be "reckless", according to shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves, to keep Labour's promise of a £28 billion Green Property Plan, because it might upset the bond markets!

But who are the bond markets? They are not some kind of independent arbiters of sensible financial policies; they are driven by the gambling of super-wealthy speculators and managers of financial institutions



across the world, interested only in their own profits.

Capitalism has created enormous wealth, and incredibly powerful science and technology, but it is increasingly incapable of harnessing it to meet the needs of the majority. A New Labour government that is driven by defending that system will inevitably continue the Tories attacks on the working-class majority, albeit with some details changing. This will be far more the case today than under New Labour Mark I, when stronger economic growth meant the effect of Blair's policies to open up public services to private hands was obscured by the increased spending going into them, the NHS in particular.

Strengthen the fightback

So what is the way forward for workers and young people in Britain? Firstly we need to build on the experiences of the last year. The highest level of strike action in three decades has enabled a new generation to see the importance of collective working-class action in fighting to defend and improve our living conditions. Struggling to increase the fighting capacity of our movement - increasing the number of workplace reps, democratising and transforming unions into fighting bodies - will be a vital task to prepare for the struggles that are coming under the next government.

We also, however, need to start building a political voice for the workers' movement which does not accept the tyranny of the markets, but instead puts forward socialist policies. We need a party that is prepared to take measures to end the housing crisis, unlike Starmer's New Labour. The first draft of its policy forum platform for the general election only says that they will "build more high-quality homes across the country and ensure more of these are genuinely affordable" - a promise so vague as to be meaningless.

Contrast that with the policies in Jeremy Corbyn's 2019 manifesto that pledged that every year, 100,000 homes would be "built by councils for social rent in the biggest council-house building programme

in more than a generation." In addition they promised to introduce a "new zero-carbon homes standard for all new homes, and upgrading millions of existing homes to make them more energy efficient". These proposals were too modest. Between 1949 and 1954 an average of 230,000 council houses a year were built - under Labour and Tory governments! Nonetheless, Labour under Jeremy Corbyn did propose measures which, if implemented, would have begun to overcome the housing crisis. Other pledges on housing that Starmer has ditched include the introduction of rent controls for private renters.

The shadow 'levelling-up' secretary Lisa Nandy tried to justify these retreats because Starmer's Labour allegedly has a focus on homeowners. Yet Starmer has actually proposed nothing that would deal with the current crisis facing mortgage holders, only telling them "there is no quick fix" and promising to tell banks to allow "flexibility" with repayments.

This is barely distinguishable from the Tories meeting with the banks to get agreement to delay repossessions. What is needed is not just 'flexibility' and delays to the pain, but the protection of people's right to keep their home on an affordable and secure basis.

A starting point to achieving this would be to nationalise the banks. Actually, New Labour Mark I showed nationalisation of the banks is possible when it effectively stepped in and nationalised NatWest during the 2008 financial crisis. They did so, however, in order to prop up the capitalist system rather than to meet the needs of the majority.

What is needed is nationalisation of all the banks, with compensation paid only to those who are in genuine need, and on the basis of democratic public ownership - run by representatives of banking workers, trade unions, and the wider working class, as well as the government. That would immediately allow the provision of cheap loans and mortgages for all who need them. It would also require measures to be taken to enforce the protection of the

rights of tenants in buy-to-let properties including, if necessary, councils taking over the mortgages in order to allow secure tenancies and fair rents, a policy that Labour-led local authorities could implement now.

This is only one element of the policies that a new party - founded by the trade unions - should fight for. It gives a glimpse, however, of the possibilities to meet the needs of humanity by adopting socialist policies. Others include living wages and pensions, for all. It is true of course that 'the markets' would scream blue murder if a government came to power and implemented such policies. For any left government to implement its programme it would therefore require extra-parliamentary action, that is, the mobilisation of the working class in support of the government's policies. This could win important victories. However, as long as the levers of power remain in the hands of the capitalists, policies implemented under that mass pressure would face sabotage by the capitalist class.

Fight for socialism

That is why the Socialist Party stands for not just the nationalisation of a few companies, but the major monopolies and banks that dominate the economy; around 150 in the case of Britain, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need. This would be vital to breaking the power of the capitalist class, and laying the basis for the development of a socialist plan of production, which could really meet the needs of humanity while protecting the planet.

A socialist plan would create the basis to transform people's existence. Hunger and poverty would quickly become a thing of the past. The science and technique created by capitalism could be harnessed and developed to meet the needs of all.

The experience of capitalism over the last 15 years, and even more the last two, is already leading to a widespread questioning of the existing order in Britain, and worldwide. Traditionally, people are expected to become more right wing as they get older, but today's 40 year olds are more left wing now than they were at 20, because of what they have lived through. There is no possibility of Starmer's Labour demonstrating that capitalism can deliver for the majority, and thereby reversing the conclusions that have already been drawn. On the contrary, it is going to drive home that capitalist governments, no matter what the colour of their rosettes, offer no way forward for the majority.

There will therefore be greater opportunities to win mass support for socialist ideas, but the Socialist Party is doing vital preparatory work for that now. We are campaigning for the transformation of the trade unions into fighting, democratic bodies and we are arguing for, at least, a workers' list standing on socialist policies in the general election. If you agree - join us!

Join the fightback

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

- Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join
- or call **020 8988 8777**
- or text your name and postcode to **07761 818 206**

to find out more today!



HOW TRADE UNIONS CAN FIGHT FOR TRANS LIBERATION

ADAM HARMSWORTH
NAPO EXECUTIVE AND DELEGATE TO TUC LGBT+ CONFERENCE (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

The important steps made so far on transgender rights in Britain are the result of decades of courageous struggle by trans people and their supporters. It has taken a great deal of effort to have trans people recognised in law but now a challenge is needed to the rise in attacks on trans people's rights and existence.

The trade unions must take a leading role, and almost every trade union in the UK is discussing, in some capacity, how to advance the rights of trans people. This is a fight for all the rights, resources, and public services needed for trans and non-binary people to live free from discrimination, poverty, and oppression. This is part of the fight for all of us - against the cost-of-living crisis and to get the Tories out!

Trans people, especially in the working class, still face great difficulties as a result of transphobia, including direct threats to their lives and safety. Stonewall's "LGBT in Britain: Work Report" states that one in eight trans people have been physically attacked by customers or colleagues in the last year because of being trans.

The shocking murder of trans teenager Brianna Ghey in February has been linked to the rise in transphobic news stories - appearing sometimes daily in right-wing newspapers. The Tories want to use a 'culture war' to distract workers from the horrendous policies of their government, and from growing crises in capitalism, unable to offer a decent future.

The rise in attacks on trans people is not separate to wider homophobia. The origins of these forms of bigotry lie in attempts by big business bosses, the capitalist class, to maintain their system based on economic exploitation of the majority and the private ownership of the means of production by a handful. They have always sought to divide the working class along lines of gender, sexuality, race, for example, to try to prevent collective action, including the fight for a socialist alternative.

It is no accident that, with the strike wave bringing hundreds of thousands of workers together on picket lines, the Tories are trying to use transphobia to sow division. Defending trans rights is therefore a task for the whole trade union movement.

Trade union bodies have been responding to the rise in transphobia with a wave of motions expressing support for the trans community and declarations of solidarity.

The trade unions, as main organisations of the working class, have a central role in standing up for oppressed sections of our class. In recent decades British trade unions have made great strides in combating



Trade union banners on Newcastle Pride PHOTO: ELAINE BRUNSKILL

sexism, racism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination from the bosses and the capitalist state itself.

Everyone who wants to fight to improve the rights, lives, and safety of trans people should get involved in the trade union movement. It is here that over six million workers in Britain come together to fight for a better future.

The ongoing strike wave has demonstrated the power unions have to push for inflation-proof pay rises. Alongside mass strike action, there has been a new wave of workers joining unions and starting to become actively involved. This is absolutely crucial for fighting for trans rights in the workplaces and in wider society.

Opposing transphobia, especially from individual bosses, means union shop stewards and activists campaigning in the workplaces. Because they bring together workers from different backgrounds to fight together against the bosses, unions must be central to the unified struggle for trans rights, and rights and resources for all.

For the unions to fight effectively for trans liberation means having an active and mobilised membership, engaged in a democratic discussion to determine policies and programme, and putting the ideas into practise, campaigning on them throughout the working class.

Unions must be at the centre of building support for trans rights as part of a unified struggle for better rights and resources for all. Unions have made great first steps in declaring clear and open opposition to

transphobia, and committing to work together to defend trans people from the Tories' horrendous attacks. At the 2023 Trades Union Congress (TUC) LGBT+ Conference, most motions submitted were about or referenced the alarming rise in transphobia in Britain.

The new 'Trade Unions for Trans Rights Network', launched by the TUC, came about after 2022 congress delegates voted for an alliance to be established. This could be an opportunity to co-ordinate policies defending and advancing trans rights across unions. Greater coordination is a necessary part of building unions that can fight for members on all issues - including on pay, women's rights and trans rights.

Fighting socialist programme

With a weak Tory government and a trade union movement stronger than it has been in decades, there is real potential to not just defend but advance the rights of trans people alongside all other workers. In our republished LGBTQ+ Charter, the Socialist Party gives suggestions of the sort of bold demands that could be fought for by the working class.

One example is a fully funded NHS, with proper pay rises, decent staffing levels, privatised sections brought back into public ownership, the pharma giants that make money off our health needs nationalised, and the whole service democratically controlled by the working class. These measures would help trans people by ensuring gender-affirming healthcare is done in a timely manner, and delivered on the basis of what trans

people want, rather than Tory ideology deciding if you have 'earned the right' to be seen as transgender.

Another is housing. This was a major discussion at the 2023 TUC LGBT+ Conference. There, some workers in housing and poverty charities admitted there is only so much they can do to challenge government policy and openly illegal housing discrimination. Fighting for better housing generally and for LGBTQ+ people is down to the working class.

Some 25% of young homeless people are LGBTQ+, often because family reject them for being LGBTQ+, because employers are less likely to hire LGBTQ+ people, or because landlords just refuse to rent to LGBTQ+ people. Union demands on housing could include: more shelters, including LGBTQ+-specific services; a mass council house building campaign with affordable rents; a £15-an-hour minimum wage that rises with inflation.

What is at the core of this fight is the need to take on capitalism itself. We need to replace capitalism and its chaos, greed, poverty, and oppression, with a democratic socialist system where the working-class majority, including trans workers, can plan to use the vast wealth and resources of society to provide what we all need. This would open the way to building a society free from bigotry, proscriptive gender norms, and the discrimination of capitalism. The trade unions, as the main organisations of the working class, hold the key to fighting for improvements in trans rights and moving towards trans liberation through socialist change.

Socialist politics welcome at Bristol Pride

TOM BALDWIN
BRISTOL SOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Party members joined thousands of others on the Bristol Pride march in a vibrant display of support for LGBTQ+ rights.

The organisers' website rightly stated "Pride is a protest!" and was about using "our political voice to amplify, maintain and further LGBT+ human rights". However, in the week before the event they put out a statement saying political parties would not be allowed to participate in the march as organisations. They cited "party leaders and MPs who are unwilling or unable to stand up for their LGBT+ constituents and drawn into bad-faith rhetoric, partially about the rights of trans people."

That description is accurate for the main parties. Hypocrisy and divisive politics are meat and drink for capitalist politicians. However, banning them does nothing to take

up and challenge those ideas. And it ignores the fact that the Socialist Party is completely different in our approach.

We decided to send the organisers an open letter defending our right to participate in Pride and putting on record our consistent support and campaigning for LGBTQ+ rights. We pointed out that "We fight for the right to self-identify of trans and non-binary people - and also the funding of the public services and resources needed to live all our lives fully."

Socialist ideas

We also made clear the importance of socialist ideas in the struggle for LGBTQ+ liberation, saying: "We stand for a socialist society, based on collective ownership and not on profit for a tiny minority. We believe that this is the only way in which the oppression and exploitation of LGBTQ+ people can be ended for good." We've consistently participated in

Bristol Pride over many years. Our political, campaigning approach has stood in contrast to the growing commercialisation of Pride events and has always been welcomed.

That proved to be the case again on the day. We didn't have a single person who questioned our presence. Our slogan of 'Tories Out - build a socialist alternative' was widely supported and every leaflet we had was taken. We joined the march behind our banner emblazoned with 'Pride not profit' and 'Socialist change to end oppression'. We were greeted with applause and raised fists in solidarity.

The struggle for LGBTQ+ rights is political and socialist politics are vital to winning it. The Socialist Party will continue spreading the message of socialism and solidarity on Pride marches, as we do every day - on the streets, in the workplaces, in the trade unions, in the communities and on campus.



Time to get the Tories out at Trans Pride

MARY FINCH
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

Thousands of people turned out for Trans Pride in London, despite starting in the middle of a literal thunderstorm. The march showed how much anger there is at the attacks on trans people, which in recent years have increased as the Tories whip up transphobia.

There was enormous support for socialist ideas and the Socialist Party's programme for LGBTQ+ liberation was snapped up by attendees. We say that the fight against trans and LGBTQ+ oppression means fighting the cuts and kicking the Tories out. We raised over £150 in fighting fund.

The deep funding crisis in the NHS, under-resourced and understaffed by the Tories, means that accessing gender-affirming healthcare is almost impossible for most people. Mental health problems and suicide rates are disproportionately high amongst trans people, but again, it's almost impossible to access adequate mental health support. We

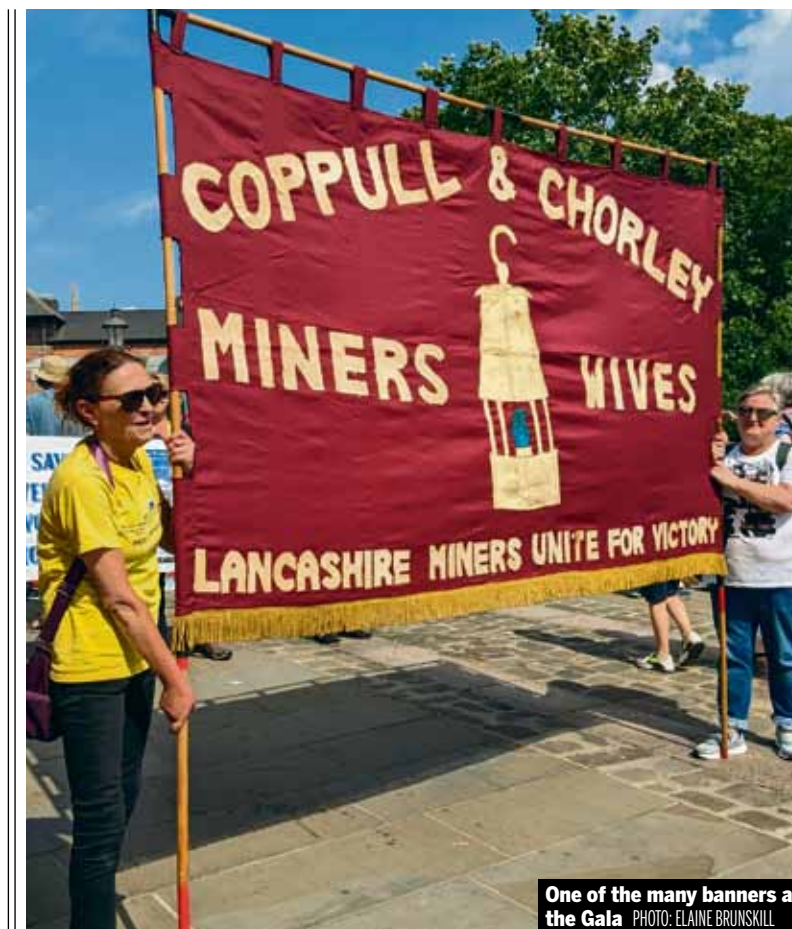
fight for the resources needed so all can access healthcare, including trans-specific and mental health services.

Women, including trans women, have also been under attack. Rates of violence against women are skyrocketing, without the services to adequately protect and support them, and they are some of the worst affected by the housing and pay crisis.

The Tories have tried to blame the lack of services for women on trans people. It's no coincidence that they've been trying to reignite the "debate" during one of the biggest strike waves in decades. The Tories want to pit women and trans people against each other to divide workers, making out that groups have to fight between themselves for dwindling resources instead of uniting and fighting for more.

There was clear support for our call of 'Tories Out' - Labour will almost certainly win the next general election, but won't bring the improvements needed to the lives of ordinary people. Starmer echoes

the Tories anti-trans rhetoric and has been appealing to the bosses that he will act in their interests. There was widespread support at Trans Pride for our call for a new workers' party that will unite workers, stand up to all the cuts, and fight all forms of oppression.



One of the many banners at the Gala PHOTO: ELAINE BRUNSKILL

Durham Miners' Gala: Working class tradition of fighting back

DEAN YOUNG
LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT SOCIALIST PARTY

The Durham Miners' Gala is one of Britain's proudest trade unionist traditions, and as someone attending for the first time it was striking. Socialist Party members mobilised from across the country to discuss with the workers and young people attending.

I met several storied figures from the labour movement, including someone who was the very last one up from his pit in a small village in south Wales, and don't worry we sold him a paper! Our mobilisation and interaction with workers bore fruits, selling hundreds of copies of the Socialist,

raising hundreds of pounds for the fighting fund and literature selling like hotcakes.

Young Socialist Party members spent the day talking to people about a socialist alternative to the broken capitalist system (See page 16). The public meet-up provided me with hope seeing people of various generations interact and discuss the potential for working-class struggle and the growth of socialist ideas.

The speeches were scathing of the Tories, but also of the meekness of Starmer. What was missing was the conclusion of the need for a new mass workers' party, which Socialist Party members are fighting for.

Join the fightback
JOIN THE SOCIALISTS
• Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join or call 020 8988 8777
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to find out more about joining us today!

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

Book review: 'The Future of Geography'

Will capitalism's crises follow us into space?

SCOTT JONES
NEWHAM AND EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Space: the final frontier. Just as humans have explored and conquered land, sea and air on Earth, space has for decades been next on the list, and a new 'space race' is under way. But space is the new 'Wild West', with little in the way of law, governance and agreement, and with a lot up for grabs.

This is the subject of the new book 'The Future of Geography' by Tim Marshall. Marshall previously wrote the bestselling book 'Prisoners of Geography', and now turns his sights upwards.

Wars in space, bases on the moon, lasers, space metals worth more than most countries' GDP, people on Mars. Even in the years following Yuri Gagarin's feat as the first human in space, and people on the moon, most of this has remained science fiction. In reality it's 'astropolitics'. And the world is set to take 'earth-politics' into space.

The book shines a light on the huge proliferation in recent years of public sector space agencies, private sector growth and plans for space, driven by capitalism's interest in the potential wealth on offer, and also for control of those resources and key strategic areas in space, such as the moon and the satellite belt.

The moon is full of potential resources, including one million tons (far more than on Earth) of Helium-3, which could solve the Earth's energy

problem for generations. Passing asteroids which could potentially be mined contain billions of pounds' worth of the metals needed for 21st century technology. Meanwhile, satellites are now crucial for almost everything.

Another aspect is the role of space in war, which the book ponders in detail. The military has played a huge role since the beginning of space exploration during the Cold War, when astronauts and cosmonauts alike were all air force pilots, and were blasted to space on rockets designed for also firing missiles.

The race for those resources could obviously lead to conflict, and it's in the interests of rival nations to use and target satellites for military purposes. And this is in the here and now. A battle between the Russian state and American companies, over Ukrainian internet and satellites, was an early clash in the Ukrainian war in 2022. As far back as the Iraq War in 2003, the US military sliced through the Iraqi army and defences using satellites to hit targets.

There is also potential for conflict in space, as the space race reflects the multipolar world of capitalism in the 2020s. The USA and China dominate the world economy and also increasingly dominate the space race, with even Russia forced to become a junior partner of China.

Marshall discusses the creation of the Artemis Accords, put forward by the USA and signed by its allies to try to formulate some ground rules for space. But crucially not by China

and Russia, among others. In 2020, the then head of the Russian Space Agency described the Accords as akin to an "invasion" of the moon that could turn it into "another Afghanistan or Iraq."

As for the Accords themselves, they still give the US licence to do what it wants, with Marshall saying: "You could drive the starship Enterprise through the gaps in this legalese."

Another player in the space race is the private sector. Especially billionaire Elon Musk's SpaceX company, which while working with NASA and other state space agencies, also has its own designs and interests in space. Marshall raises the question of what laws govern their activities and possible settlements on the moon or Mars. He raises the example of the East India Company as to what it could look like. He quotes a space academic, Dr Bleddyn Bowen, who says: "Will billionaires run their 'colonies' the way they run their factory floors, and treat citizens like they treat their lowest-paid employees?"

To prevent and combat all these potential problems and points of conflict in space, Marshall says: "A new set of treaties is required to deal with these new realities." But he himself points to how lacking current ones are, and how previous ones are ignored.

And there are plenty of international laws and treaties that fail in their attempt to govern the world, because capitalist nation states, blocs and private companies ignore them and circumnavigate them at every turn. To prevent the problems of the world following us into space, we need to get rid of capitalism on earth and apply socialism here and in space, to ensure an end to war and the use of resources for all. A socialist world is possible, and so is a socialist universe.

- *'The Future of Geography: How Power and Politics in Space Will Change Our World'* by Tim Marshall, published by Elliott & Thompson is on sale now
- Read more: 'Mars awaits: capitalism's designs on the cosmos' in *Socialism Today*, July-August 2019, at socialismtoday.org/archive/230/mars



PHOTO: NASA/ASKEW/CC

Opposing the far right at Stradey Park Hotel

MARK EVANS
SWANSEA AND WEST WALES SOCIALIST PARTY

On 8 July, a protest was called in Llanelli by the far-right group Patriotic Alternative (PA), supposedly for 'boots on the ground'. Only a handful of PA members turned up. Socialist Party members played a central role in the counter protest against PA, organised by Swansea Trades Council, alongside Carmarthenshire County Unison local government branch members and other anti-racist groups.

The PA protest was a cynical attempt to exploit the anger of local people at the Tory government's plans to house 241 asylum seekers at the Stradey Park Hotel, as part of their strategy to create a 'hostile environment' for asylum seekers. As a result, around 100 workers at the hotel will lose their jobs and already stretched local services will be put under even greater strain. Meanwhile, the hotel owners laugh all the way to the bank as a result of their contract with the Home Office.

As a result, there have previously been two protests in support of sacked hotel workers organised by Furnace Action Committee, a group set up by local people to oppose the Tories' plans, which Socialist Party members have attended (see 'Protest against Tory 'hostile environment' in Furnace, at socialistparty.org.uk).

The Furnace Action Committee made a clear call that "anyone

intending on using racist or offensive attitudes is asked not to attend" their protests, but nonetheless the far right are trying very hard to ingratiate themselves with the campaign. Making sure that the far-right gets no hearing in our community requires fighting for working-class unity to win jobs, homes and local services for all. Unfortunately, Stand up to Racism has been too quick to label people as racist, ignoring the legitimate concerns of local people, even when their own material states that asylum seekers should not be housed in the hotel.

The Socialist Party opposes housing asylum seekers in the hotel as it is not suitable for asylum seekers or the community. The council has a strategy to house asylum seekers across the wider community; why doesn't the government fund the council to do this? Why doesn't the council put up a fight for this money? If council services and other public services had not been cut to the bone since 2010 by the Tories, the council and the health service would be a far better place to provide housing and services for all.

We mobilise against the far right where ever they raise their heads. Our approach is to win local people to a fight for jobs, homes and services to defeat racism, for the right to asylum, no to racist immigration laws, and workers' unity against any racist attacks on asylum seekers.

IT upgrade appeal smashed Keep donating to boost Socialist Party tech capacity

In May, the Socialist Party launched a £15,000 special appeal to fund the upgrade of our IT and data storage system. This was necessary in order to replace the current system, which is no longer supported and will cease to function.

That target has been smashed! £24,084 has already been paid in, with more pledged to be paid in July. Payments will be accepted until the end of July - and, although the target has been hit, these are needed given that costs have risen since the initial budget.

This response to the appeal shows confidence in our party and our ideas. The new IT and data system is necessary for the Socialist

Party to be able to play our vital role in helping to cohere the working class around a programme for socialism. It will allow us to continue to produce the Socialist paper, Socialism Today magazine, and all the leaflets, posters, strike bulletins and other material we produce, to help get socialist ideas out to workers and young people looking for a way to fight back.

We strive, to the best of our ability within the limits of capitalism, to also safely store and preserve our Marxist analysis - to arm current and future generations in the struggle against capitalism.

Visit socialistparty.org.uk/donate or scan the QR code and put 'IT upgrade appeal' in the comment box when you make your donation



In May, the Oxford Union Debating Society, with its £150-a-year membership fee, met to discuss the class basis of politics.

Dave Nellist, former Labour MP and now a member of the Socialist Party's national committee, took part. Alongside him was Financial Times columnist Simon Kuper and Labour's Shadow attorney general, Emily Thornberry MP.

The other side included the 8th Earl of Carnarvon - the real owner of Downton Abbey! Dave was introduced to the university audience as the MP who, for nine years, took only a worker's wage. Dave's side won decisively. We print below a condensed version of his speech.

Marxists argue that in a class society based on the market - capitalism - the two main classes are those with ownership and control of production, the capitalist class, and those who only sell their labour power, the working class.

The first is tiny - tens or hundreds of thousands at the very most. The second and main class in society, the working class, is huge, with nearly 60 million people. There's a third, smaller, middle class of perhaps 5-10 million in between. The trick for the ruling capitalist class is to mould British politics to act predominantly in their interests when they are such a numerically small section of society.

Office of National Statistics (ONS) figures indicate that the richest 1% of the UK population, some 700,000 people, have a total wealth of almost £3,000 billion. The bottom 70%, some 48 million people, share £2,000 billion.

Fifty years ago, Britain was one of the more equal countries on the planet, with the gap between the rich and the rest at its narrowest during the 20th century. In 1973, roughly 65% of the country's annual output went to working-class families. That was because of several factors, including a much larger trade union movement.

After Margaret Thatcher and a succession of prime ministers who have essentially maintained her path, that proportion is now down to around 50%. In today's figures, that's an extra annual transfer of over £300 billion a year from ordinary families to the richest layers of society.

Maintaining that disparity and the structures which keep it in place is the job of a system of politics that essentially represents the interests of the ruling class.

Institutions such as private education and Oxford and Cambridge universities (Oxbridge) have a particular role in the preparatory ground for that politics. They provide a homogeneity of outlook and a cohesiveness of shared values. Essentially, they defend the status quo, the continued



PHOTO: OXFORD UNION YOUTUBE

existence of an unequal society, against any ideological or organisational challenge.

29% of current MPs attended private schools (four times the rate of the general population). For Tory MPs, the figure is 41%. Three-quarters of all MPs - nearly 500 - went to Oxbridge or other Russell Group universities (the top 24 universities in the country). Almost every prime minister over the last 75 years who went to university, went to Oxford.

£1,000bn

The richest 1% in Britain has a total wealth of £3,000 billion - £1,000 billion more than the bottom 70%

The figures for MPs have changed over time. Forty years ago, 73% of Tory MPs were privately educated, compared to 41% today. For Labour MPs, the decline is less, from 18% in 1979 to 14% today. But while the percentage of Tory MPs who went to Oxford or Cambridge fell over that period, the proportion of Labour MPs rose. Arguably, the British elite's talent base has expanded as more MPs across the parties share a background that leads them to naturally defend the current market system, not fundamentally challenge it.

While capitalism remains the foundation of our society, the elite who mainly benefit from it will seek to bring on the next generation who will maintain it.

That's why the establishment hated Jeremy Corbyn so much. His radical policies gained the support of millions, including many young people, criticising the system. But that same establishment, however, is politically relaxed about the current Labour leadership, as long as it's wedded to the profit system.

21 years ago, at a Conservative fundraising dinner in Hampshire, Margaret Thatcher was asked "what was her greatest achievement?" and she answered: "Tony Blair and New Labour - we forced our opponents to change their minds."

That success - from the establishment's point of view, a reliable second eleven to take over when the preferred government is in distress - is matched again today with the sharp move to the right of the leadership of the Labour opposition. There is an essential overlapping of key policies between the Labour and Tory parties. In their attitudes to protecting the relatively low tax rates on serious wealth, or the extent within the economy of planned public ownership, Rachel Reeves and Jeremy Hunt have an overlapping agenda and strategy.

There is an essential overlapping of key policies between the Labour and Tory parties. In their attitudes to protecting the relatively low tax rates on serious wealth, or the extent within the economy of planned public ownership

A Labour challenge under Jeremy Corbyn was different. It was radical, from abolishing tuition fees to the public ownership of essential industries. In 2017, it brought the largest rise in the popular vote for any political party since Clement Attlee 70 years earlier.

It was a brief period when Labour was seen, paraphrasing Shelley, as "for the many, not the few"

- fundamentally different from the Tories, and promoting a political alternative for the working class.



My argument is that it is class interests which dominate politics

That period - the Corbyn experiment inside the Labour Party - is decisively over. As Keir Starmer said at the British Chambers of Commerce global annual conference, after three years where he and Rachel Reeves have had meetings with every one of the CEOs of the 250 largest businesses in the country: "Labour is now not just a pro-business party; we're a party proud of being pro-business."

So, those of us who want to see a socialist, anti-austerity political agenda, that talks unashamedly about planning the economy through public ownership and transferring wealth far more equally across society, have a problem. We are in a similar period to the last quarter of the 19th century, when radicals looked at the Liberals and the Tories, saw no essential difference, and decided that they had to start afresh and build a new political voice for working people.

That is our job today. And it can only be successful if a new party is built and rooted in the organisations and communities of the working class.

My argument is that it is class interests which dominate politics. The current political choice serves the interests of the minority, capital-owning class within society, not the majority.

Our side isn't currently on the pitch. Something new needs to be built, so that the interests of the working class can shape British politics in its favour and end the domination of the ruling class, which currently defines British politics.



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

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

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

France: Mass strikes and street revolt as Macron attacks workers and poor



PHOTO: GAUCHE RÉVOLUTIONNAIRE

EDITORIAL OF ÉGALITÉ (NEWSPAPER OF GAUCHE RÉVOLUTIONNAIRE - CWI FRANCE)

Despite the mass strike and June's explosive revolt, French president Emmanuel Macron is continuing to roll out his programme. The substance has not changed: attacking the living conditions of the majority of the population to allow the top bosses and big shareholders to reap maximum profits in this context of global crisis.

After ramming through the pension reform with all the brutality and repression possible, from forcing through of legislation with the 49.3 articles in parliament, to CRS police attacks on demonstrators - he is continuing.

The break-up of public services that leads to so much social inequality goes on. Insecurity for all workers is reinforced by the 'France Travail' legislation (a huge attack on the unemployed, and by extension all workers). Public budgets are to be cut by a further €10 billion, particularly affecting housing and employment, while insecurity in those two areas has soared since Covid. Education is once again under attack, especially at the expense of the children of workers, who Macron wants to "bring into contact" with companies "from year eight", so if you're the child of a worker? Go to be exploited at the age of 12!

And that's not all: companies that aren't making enough profit for their liking are planning thousands of job cuts, such as in retail. While we're struggling, the stock market has risen by more than 11% since the beginning of 2023. It's those people, the big shareholders, the top bosses, who are plundering the wealth produced by workers, but from which we never benefit, while asking us to make "sacrifices"!

Anger at an entire political programme

These policies are strongly rejected by a majority of the population. Macron and his government may appear to be in control, but it has been extremely weakened by the powerful movement on pensions: almost five

months of mass struggle with five million people involved. The revolt that exploded in neighbourhoods following the murder of young Nahel at just 17 years of age, also expresses the rejection of this society that promises young people nothing but hardship and police harassment, especially if they come from the suburbs and are of immigrant origin (real or assumed).

It's no coincidence either. For years, Macron, Valls, Sarkozy and others before them, have been treating young people, trade unionists and demonstrators, with the most ferocious violence. To attempt to divide us, they encourage racism with propaganda and anti-immigrant laws.

Tackle the root of the problem

This anger will have to be unified and organised to target the real root of the problems. As long as capitalism is in place, there will be exploitation and misery, and governments will use racism to divide young people and workers, and repression to prevent us from fighting back. That's why we need to organise against capitalism.

The capitalists dominate the institutions, they have their parties and their media. We too need to get together and organise. We need a fighting party to organise ourselves in the neighbourhoods and in the companies, to lead joint struggles against the government, for pay rises, for jobs. But also to fight in the trade unions, and prepare a mass strike against all the government's policies.

A new party bringing together young people and workers would make it possible to fight for socialism, the only real alternative to capitalism. Because to satisfy social need, it's necessary to have an economy that is rid of the law of profit, democratically organised by workers to satisfy the needs of all. By nationalising industry and the banks, transport and distribution, under the democratic control and management of workers, it would be possible to begin to eradicate the misery, unemployment, racism and sexism that capitalism brings.

Israel: New upsurge of anti-Netanyahu democracy protests

ANNON COHEN
COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL

After 27 weeks of mass demonstrations, the anti-Netanyahu democracy movement is experiencing a new upsurge, with daily protests outside the homes of MKs (members of parliament), as well as thousands demonstrating in Ben Gurion Airport, and talk of a new general strike. The Israel state forces' assault invasion of Jenin refugee camp, killing 12 Palestinians, was a transparent attempt to detract from, and head off, the protests. But it did not stop this process.

Tel Aviv police chief Ami Eshed, who has led a relatively restrained approach to policing the protests, resigned on 5 July. He was effectively forced out by ultra-right security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, who was demanding more brutal policing.

Eshed told a TV press conference: "I pay an unbearable price for my choice to prevent a civil war." But elements of civil war are developing. Eshed's resignation was met with thousands of demonstrators blocking the main Ayalon motorway, and clashing with police - who used water cannons, injuring a dozen protesters, including one Udi Ori, an air-force pilot who required eye surgery. A right-wing motorist drove his car at high speed into the crowd, injuring two more protesters.

Udi Ori was the opening speaker in the mass Saturday rally in Tel Aviv three days later. Setting the tone, he said that if he ends up losing his eye, it will be a small price to pay

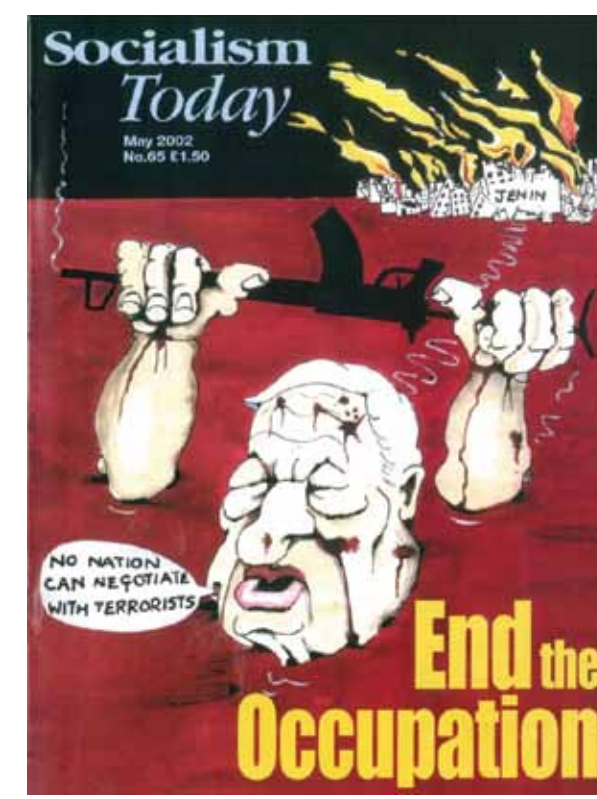
for defending democracy. 180,000 protesters attended, and representatives of the doctors and students announced a strike on 11 July if the government passes the next stage of its legal reforms.

A tech CEO also announced that the tech companies will shut down and encourage their staff to join the demos. A large demonstration is planned at the airport that afternoon. A retail conglomerate has announced that it will shut down its shopping malls. And Yair Lapid has called on the Histadrut trade union federation to call a general strike.

The leaders of the protest movement have announced that they plan to intensify the protests and move them to the next level, described by protest leader Skimha Bressler as "impolite protests". Thousands of army veterans held an all-night protest outside the home of defence minister Yoav Gallant, calling on him to speak out against Netanyahu's attacks on democratic rights, as he did in March. Elite army and navy reserve units have again announced that they will refuse to serve if the high court's powers are curtailed.

But there is a lack of discussion about what the demands of the movement are. At the previous Saturday demonstration, members of the 'Brother's in Arms' military veterans group physically attacked members of the anti-occupation bloc who unfurled a sign saying: "It is obligatory to resist settler terror".

The endless cycle of Israeli state terror



The latest assault on the West Bank city of Jenin was the most brutal since the eleven-day siege of the refugee camp there in 2002.

In 2002 *Socialism Today*, the monthly magazine of the Socialist Party, featured the Alan Hardman cartoon on its front cover, a graphic condemnation of Israeli state terror.

Then it was the Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon who orchestrated the butchery, today it's Benjamin Netanyahu, but the conclusion is the same: there is no way out of the Middle East conflict on the basis of capitalism.

A comprehensive collection of Alan's cartoons is currently in preparation, charting his unique contribution to the struggles of the workers' movement in Britain and internationally.

Details of its progress will be reported in the Socialist.



Protest at Ben Gurion Airport on 3 July PHOTO: UZID



Protest leaders have argued that raising the occupation is a divisive distraction and that the protests need to focus on the main aims.

But there is no clarity what the main aims of the movement are, what its demands are, and what, concretely, it means by the slogan "Democratia".

The protest leaders have set up an organisation to mobilise the core of activists and stewards called 'Kaplan Force', and thousands have answered the call to join, donned its T-shirts, turned up to its actions, and joined its WhatsApp groups. But only administrators are allowed to post messages on these groups, with no explanation of who these administrators are, and how they were appointed. There are no forums where members can discuss the tactics, the strategy, and the demands of the protest movement, or elect its leadership.

Like the democracy movement as a whole, it lacks any kind of basic democratic structures. The movement is directed and bankrolled by capitalist grandees, banking and tech CEOs, former politicians, generals and secret service chiefs. These representatives of the capitalist establishment (many with dubious democratic credentials) hide behind innocuous 'leaders' with no political backstory, who have popped up to front the demonstrations.

The slogan 'democracy' is designed to be sufficiently abstract to appeal to the wider masses, while not threatening the profits of the capitalists. But the capitalist establishment

is mobilising the masses, because they do not have the power to rein in Netanyahu and his ultra-nationalist coalition partners. So Yair Lapid, the capitalist opposition leader, who had no time for workers' issues when he was prime minister last year, is calling on the Histadrut to call a general strike. But his party, Yes Atid, offers nothing to workers who are being crushed by the cost-of-living crisis and rising mortgage payments.

The Histadrut leadership is, in effect, being pressured by the capitalists to launch a general strike! The Histadrut should say: yes we will strike, but our strike will be the decisive factor in this movement. So from this point on, we will lead the movement and organise democratic debate and decision-making within it, to ensure that it fights for the interests of our members and other workers, rather than for the interests of sections of the capitalist class and the judicial establishment.

• This article was written on 9 July, before the 11 July actions

Maisoon Assadi (1963-2023)

Maisoon Assadi, a Palestinian activist and Committee for a Workers' International supporter, sadly passed away last month. Amnon Cohen pays tribute to her at socialistworld.net



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the Socialist

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formerly **Militant**

CAPITALISM IS BROKEN

Fight back with Young Socialists

Across the world, capitalism is broken. Putting profit ahead of all else, it is totally incapable of giving us a decent standard of living.

Britain is in decay with cancelled trains, late buses, and massive NHS waiting lists. Infrastructure, including schools, hospitals and roads, is crumbling. This is despite the best efforts of workers who face understaffing, and are underpaid and overworked.

For the capitalist class - wealthier than ever before - it's more profitable to gamble their money on the stock markets, or simply hoard it, than it is to invest in what society and young people desperately need.

Meanwhile, the cost-of-living crisis is further eroding the possibility for the majority of us to live an independent future.

Crippling rent increases force us into overcrowded, slum housing. Energy companies hike our bills and pocket record profits. At work we're faced with low pay, insecure contracts, and bullying bosses.

That's not to mention the threat of climate change which capitalism's ruthless pursuit of profit poses. All while capitalist politicians whip up racism, sexism, and transphobia in attempts at divide and rule.

In response, workers are fighting back across the globe and in Britain. The ongoing strike wave shows that the bosses and the Tories can be beaten back.

But what political alternative do we have to the Tories? Keir Starmer has been fighting to erase every last remaining shred of Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity manifesto within the Labour Party.

He opposes inflation-proof pay rises for workers, promotes the role of private companies in the NHS, and has ditched Corbyn's pledge to scrap tuition fees. Starmer is trying to assure big business that a Labour government will be a 'safe pair of hands' to represent their interests, and will carry out the attacks on wages and living standards that entails.

That's why, alongside our struggles in the workplaces and the streets, we need a new workers' party which can fight for workers' and young peoples' interests.

It is vital any such party is armed with a socialist programme. The struggle for inflation-proof pay rises, proper funding for our NHS, mass council house building, and decent and well-paid jobs will be fought against by the bosses.

That's why we need to build a mass movement which fights to replace capitalism with a socialist society! We need to take the major parts of the economy - including the banks, transport, the energy companies, and industry - into democratic public ownership, under workers' control and management.

On that basis - a socialist basis - it would be possible to introduce a democratic plan of production to meet the needs and wants of all in society, and to build a world free of all oppression, division, climate destruction and war. Get involved with the Young Socialists this summer to discuss how we can fight for a socialist transformation of society and organise to fight for our futures!



Get in touch:

Text your name and postcode to **07747 174 833**

youngsocialists.org.uk

