

TORIES OUT

And their policies

- Starmmer keeps Tory two-child cap
- We need to organise a workers' alternative

Things cost, on average, 11.3% more than they did this time last year, according to the government's own RPI inflation rate. The cost of renting a room has gone up 17%, and if you have a mortgage coming to the end of its fixed term, annual payments are set to go up by thousands.

But not everyone is struggling to pay the bills in this rigged and rotten profit-driven system. Britain's top companies are making bigger profits - 89% higher at the start of 2022 than three years earlier, according to Unite the Union.

By refusing to accept the Tories ruling out even talking about pay last autumn, workers in the trade unions have forced them back by striking, winning improved pay offers.

More still can be won. The junior doctors' union the BMA has already rejected their pay offer, which is still below inflation and without extra funding. Teachers are voting too on whether to settle. It's not over yet. (see pages 2-3)

By refusing to fully fund the new pay offers, the Tories are promising more cuts to services, on top of 13 years of austerity. There's nothing left to cut! Socialist Party members are fighting for fully funded, inflation-proof pay rises, and to kick the Tories out.

But, would a Labour government spend more on public services? That was the question BBC journalist Laura Kuenssberg repeatedly asked Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer - with no response.

Starmer is at pains to demonstrate his so-called "fiscal responsibility", that is what is behind his long list of dropped pledges. The latest: Labour will no longer scrap the Tories' two-child benefit cap which, as it stands, keeps 250,000 children in poverty.

We need a working-class, political alternative. One which is prepared to back workers' strikes for pay rises, fully fund services, and fight for a socialist alternative to profit-driven capitalism. A step forward would be trade unions organising a workers' list of candidates to contest the next general election. It could include Jeremy Corbyn and others barred from standing by Starmer, such as Jamie Driscoll in the north east (see page 5).

NEU members – Vote No! Reject 6.5%!

Fight on for inflation-proof pay rises

NEU NEC MEMBERS SEAN MCCAULEY, SHEILA CAFFREY, LOUISE CUFFARO, NICKY DOWNES, STEVE SCOTT (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

website as “another huge real-terms pay cut”.

6.5% for 2023 is yet another pay cut

With RPI inflation currently running at 11.3%, this is effectively another 5% pay cut. Even the government’s own CPI inflation measure is more than this, at 8.7%.

The general secretaries are claiming the deal should be accepted as it is the “largest-ever recommendation” from the School Teachers’ Review Body (STRB). But we’re also facing the “largest-ever” inflation rates since the STRB began! It’s a lot less than teachers in Scotland have won, leaving their main scale £7,000 better than ours.

At the same time, the Tories have announced that they will be accepting the pay review bodies’ recommendations in all sectors where they exist. That includes police and prison officers being offered 7% and doctors 6%.

But this has only happened

The National Executive (NEC) of the National Education Union (NEU) has voted, by 44 votes to 22, to recommend acceptance of the government’s latest pay offer, a 6.5% increase for September 2023. There is now an online consultation of members running until 28 July.

The five Socialist Party members on the executive voted against this recommendation and are campaigning for a ‘No’ vote in the consultation.

Accepting the deal means accepting two more years of pay cuts.

NEU members have taken determined strike action for good reason. Teachers’ pay in England has fallen by over 20% in real terms since 2010.

Nothing more offered for 2022

We started this dispute because last September’s award was just 5%, still correctly described on the NEU



East Riding YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

because the Tories have been put under massive pressure. So now is the time to increase that pressure – we can win more!

Not fully funded

The deal is being sold to members as ‘fully funded’ but we are yet to see figures which show clearly what the funding position is. The Tories are ‘reprioritising’ to fund 3% – and Sunak proposed increasing racist charges on migrants to pay towards it – but schools are expected to find the rest out of existing budgets. That will mean further cuts in many schools. The Tories know that, which is why they’ve also announced a £40 million ‘hardship fund’, but that’s just a few hundred pounds each when divided up over thousands of schools.

Members should vote reject and join us in arguing at the NEC and throughout the union for a bold, serious, escalating fight in the autumn! The majority grouping in the current leadership of the NEU is the ‘NEU Left’, whose members have split over this issue. However, this development shows that it is now necessary to start to build a new left in the union, to campaign for a fighting programme and hold the leadership to account.

The junior doctors, hospital consultants, radiographers, rail workers and others are still fighting. The strike wave is not over and we can win more from this crisis-ridden Tory government.

Rebuild the PCS national campaign

Vote ‘No’ in the consultation

Elect Marion Lloyd as a campaigning PCS General Secretary

DAVE SAMPLE

PCS BRANCH SECRETARY WIGAN, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The PCS civil service union’s National Executive Committee (NEC) met 12-13 July and agreed to the attempt by the ‘Left Unity’ majority to end the union’s national campaign on pay, pensions, redundancy rights and jobs for 2023.

Broad Left Network (BLN) supporters on the NEC, along with Independent Left (IL) members, voted in opposition to these proposals, insisting that the NEC must carry out its mandate.

Our view is very simple. The PCS national campaign must continue – there is more to be won!

Annual Delegate Conference (ADC) in 2022 and 2023 issued instructions to the NEC to demand a 10% pay rise for 2022-23, to fight to recoup the 2% we have overpaid on our pensions for years now, to defend the civil service compensation scheme (for when there is redundancy) and to demand a jobs guarantee. In addition, the NEC speaker at the 2023 conference gave a commitment to the demand put forward by the BLN, for an inflation-proof increase for 2023-24.



Cabinet Office on strike LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

As we stand, very little of this has been achieved.

Members will have suffered an average real-terms pay cut in the last two years of approximately 10%. On pensions, not an iota of progress has been made. On our redundancy rights, the government is continuing to run their public consultation on cuts and plainly intends to implement those cuts in 2025. On jobs, no guarantee was achieved.

As recently as May 2023, the NEC won a renewed mandate for strike action in an all-members ballot. ADC also instructed the NEC to re-ballot DWP, which just missed the threshold.

Despite this, when news broke in June that the government would offer a £1,500 non-consolidated, pro-rata, one-off lump sum payment to Westminster civil servants, president Fran Heathcote and her NEC allies immediately suspended strike action, including calling off in-progress strikes in the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, and called off the reballots.

The ‘Left Unity’ leadership argued that we now needed to see what departments would offer, so they voted for pay bargaining to begin department by department. They knew that would not entail departments offering inflation-proof rises, as pay across all Westminster areas is constrained by the Treasury insistence that average pay rises live within a cap of 4.5%.

That is why this fight is a national one, with the Tory government.

Outgoing general secretary Mark Serwotka called the 4.5% cap “insulting”. Yet it is precisely with this cap still firmly in place that Serwotka’s

choice to succeed him as general secretary, Fran Heathcote, wants to declare victory.

The leadership is now balloting members from 3-13 August. The ballot is not on whether the pay ‘offer’ is enough, but is on whether or not members “endorse the NEC strategy”. Many members will ask, “what strategy?!”

Members should vote to continue the campaign by voting ‘No’ in the ballot.

Change the leadership

It is clear that a change of leadership is needed. BLN supporters have endorsed Marion Lloyd as our candidate for PCS general secretary, and have agreed a joint platform with IL members to support incumbent Assistant General Secretary, John Moloney.

The statement by PCS BLN and IL says:

“The announcements from the NEC majority to try to end the campaign to improve our pay, protect jobs and defend pensions demonstrate how urgent it is to change the leadership of PCS.

“It is now crucial we build activity and support to mount a serious and meaningful challenge to beat the leadership’s candidates, Fran Heathcote and Paul O’Connor – neither of whom have the inclination nor the capability to build and deliver the necessary campaign to win on jobs, pay, pensions, office closures.

“Our candidates stand on a programme which will, working with members and reps, rebuild the union into the campaigning body that members deserve... We can win more!”

STRIKES FORCE TORIES BACK MORE CAN BE WON

WHAT WE THINK

The Tories have been forced to make concessions on pay as a result of determined strike action – that’s the main takeaway from their announcement that they will honour the recommendations of public sector pay review bodies.

In the autumn, Rishi Sunak’s government would not negotiate with the public sector unions about pay. Then following strike action he was forced to. Just a month ago he would not honour the pay review body 2023 recommendations – still well below inflation but higher than the government wanted. Now he says he will honour them in full. That means offers of 7% for police and prison officers, 6.5% for teachers, and 6% for doctors.

Now he says this offer “... is final. We will not negotiate again on this year’s settlements and no amount of strikes will change our decision.”

Well, we’ll see about that! He was attempting to dig his heels in, not because the Tories are tough and strong, but because of their fear of opening up the floodgates to demands from other workers. As soon as this announcement was made, NHS workers in unions that had just accepted 5%, such as Unison, took to social media to say ‘What about us?’

Workers will be looking at this turnaround and correctly drawing the conclusion that striking works!

And the other takeaway has to be that more can be won. Now is not the time to release the pressure but to step it up.

As the BMA said regarding the offer to doctors, it “represents yet another pay cut in real terms and serves only to increase the losses faced by doctors after more than a decade’s worth of sub-inflation pay awards”. The same is true for the other workers fighting over pay.

These inadequate pay increases will be imposed anyway, so workers can bank them and fight on for more.

Now Sunak is desperately trying to assuage his fractured and restless party that this about-turn is ok because apparently, contrary to all the propaganda thus far, suddenly these wage rises won’t lead to inflation or affect borrowing.

Trying to appease the Tory right, he is even suggesting that the only people who will be adversely affected are migrants, who will have to pay



National trade union demo 18 June 2022 at the start of the national strike wave SOCIALIST PARTY

higher visa fees and pay more to access the NHS.

We oppose any attempt to divide workers against each other using racism or any other methods.

That is why the question of funding for public sector pay is so important. In the case of teacher pay, for example, the government claims that it is providing funding for 3%, but the other 3.5% will come from existing budgets. That inevitably means cuts.

Cuts to resources, perhaps cuts to the ‘nicer’ aspects of school life such as trips, and potentially cuts to the jobs of support staff. That’s why Socialist Party members are campaigning for the fight to continue – for inflation-proof pay rises and full funding.

In the life of this issue of the Socialist there will be national strike action by hospital consultants and rail workers in the RMT and Aslef, as well

as action on London Underground and in multiple local disputes, such as St Mungo’s homelessness charity. In recent weeks there has been action by bin workers and Amazon workers, to name just a few. This is testament to the extraordinary resilience of the strike wave – both in terms of workers keeping on going, and of more layers coming in to action.

Leadership

That determination is what has driven forward the strike wave, pushing leaderships from below. Leaders who in many cases not only underestimated the willingness of their members to fight, but also continue to overestimate the strength of the Tories, attempting to wind down disputes in the mistaken belief that more cannot be won.

Leaderships are tested by these

£1,500 lump sum, but again, members are campaigning, with Socialist Party members and the Broad Left Network taking a lead. In Unison, Socialist Party members have fought for the Time for Real Change grouping to take a bold fighting lead.

Unlike others – such as the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), who are now campaigning to say ‘no’ but are in alliance with these leaderships and have provided a left cover for the last period – in all of these cases, Socialist Party members have worked with others to put forward a fighting programme.

In the case of the Unite Union, it is vital that the gains made under Sharon Graham’s leadership are defended against those in the ‘United Left’ ‘Members First’ group who want to undermine them. These developments all pose the need for new rank-and-file lefts to be built that can campaign among the members and hold leaderships to account, and for fighting socialist candidates to stand for election – as in the upcoming PCS general secretary and assistant general secretary elections.

Anti-union laws

The pressure is also being applied to union tops to urgently prepare to act together, decisively, against the Tories’ planned minimum service levels anti-union laws – to defy and defeat these measures. RMT and Unite conferences have agreed motions put forward by Socialist Party members. That’s what makes the model motion and the lobby of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) called by the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) on 10 September so important.

In response to demands from trade unions for inflation-proof pay rises, Keir Starmer will only commit a Labour government to “improving public service workers’ living standards throughout the parliament”. He has repeatedly warned of “tough decisions”, while shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves promises “fiscal discipline”.

That’s why the debates that have taken place at union conferences about political representation and workers’ candidates in the general election are a key part of continuing the fight on pay and funding.

• For more on the battles in the different unions involved in the strike wave see pages 2, 6, 7, 10 and 11

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AI AUTOMATION

WHAT IMPACT WILL IT HAVE ON WORKERS AND THE ECONOMY?

MARK BEST

SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

The latest developments in Artificial Intelligence (AI) - the impact they might have on workers' jobs, livelihoods and our day-to-day lives - are being discussed in the press. Recent advances don't mean we are about to develop machines capable of human or superhuman thought, but have brought forward the potential automation of a wider array of jobs and tasks. The race between different companies to produce ever bigger and more powerful models in the hope of capturing the lion's share of future profits has some capitalist politicians worried about the economic, social and political impacts these new technologies may have.

At a time when capitalism across the world limps from crisis to crisis, what consequences could AI implementation have and how do we fight to make sure the potential gains of new technology don't come at the expense of workers' living standards?

The impact of new technology isn't inherent within the science itself but will be determined by the outcomes of battles between workers and the bosses, dependent on the organisation of both sides. How could society be organised in a way that science and technology is developed for the good of us all instead of what makes a profit for a few at the top?

What can the tech do?

Artificial Intelligence in the broadest terms refers to machines and computer programs able to react to conditions and complete tasks. This includes computer programs that can play chess, recognise images or check your spelling and grammar, and even, in a way, many of the mechanical systems that make up robotic production.

The explosion in the capability and availability of generative AI

algorithms - programs which when given an input will output text, images, computer code, music and so on - has thrown AI and its implications for the capitalist system under the spotlight.

Open AI's ChatGPT, Google's LaMDA and other generative algorithms can take part in human-like conversation, produce realistic photographs and video, and write convincing articles.

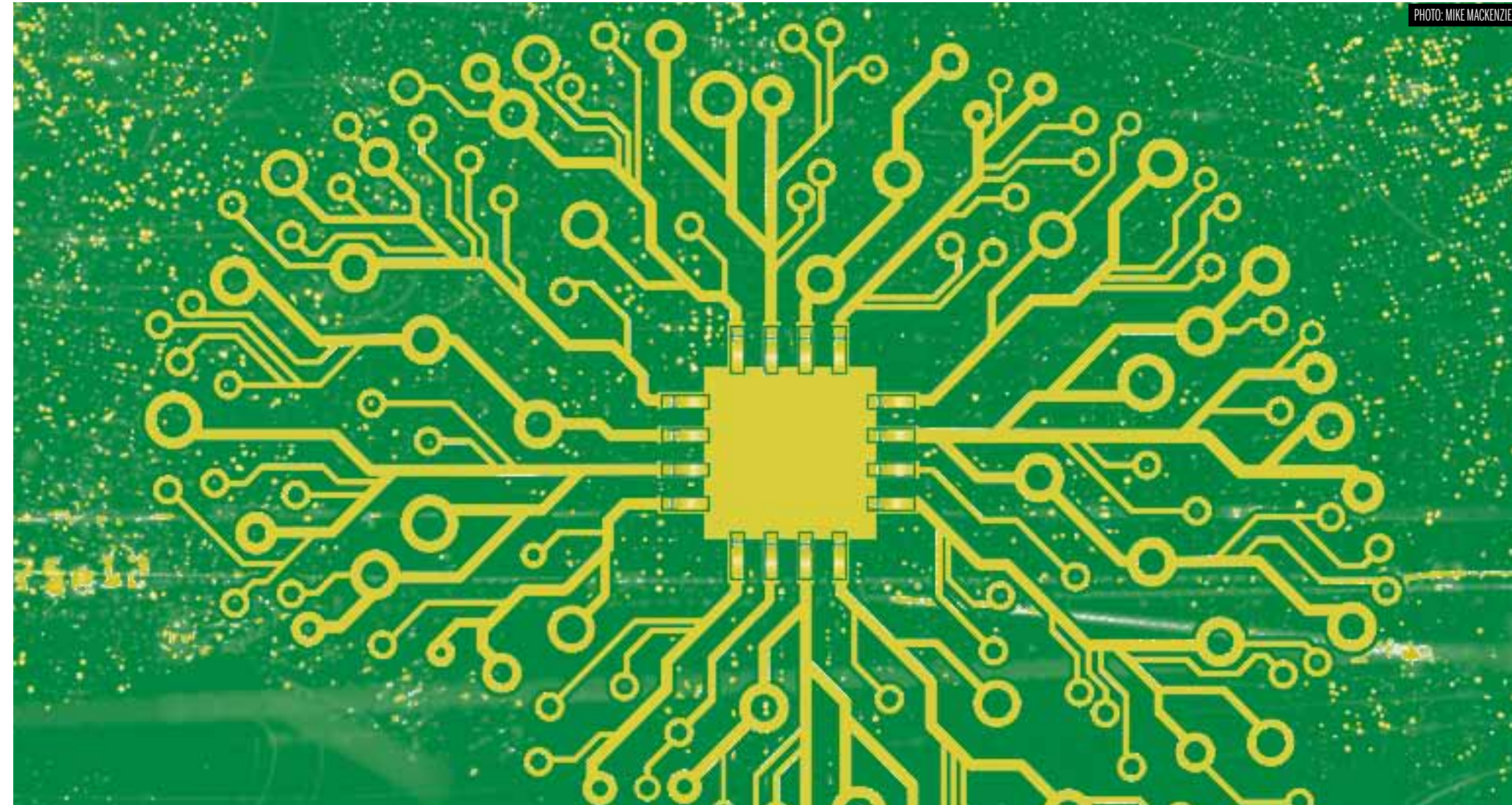
Algorithms able to mimic human writing and art may give the impression that there is a thinking, intelligent being behind them. But there is still a large jump to so-called Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) with the capability to think and reason as humans can, and beyond.

AI technologies are developed by machine learning; algorithms that have the ability to modify themselves to 'learn' by checking if their output matches what is expected and making internal changes to approach an ideal response.

In the case of the large language models that produce text, vast amounts of written material from books, text from the internet, computer code, etc. have been plugged into a model which processes and refines itself. Similarly, image generators have been trained with thousands of images. Advances in computing, allowing for more processing of testing data, have enabled these powerful algorithms to be developed.

These algorithms have been trained using the results of hours of human creativity, sometimes seemingly without the permission of the creators themselves. Some image-generating algorithms produce new photos with watermarks of popular stock image sites already baked in, hinting where the training data may have originated from!

Hollywood's ongoing Writers Guild of America strike for better pay and rights includes demands related to generative AI. It calls for a ban on



writers being made to work on or edit scripts created by generative AI, and to not allow language models to be trained on material produced by scriptwriters.

It's not just in the creative industries, the automation of a number of jobs in a wide range of fields is posed. Goldman Sachs, the investment bank, predicts that two thirds of jobs in Europe and the US are exposed to some degree of automation and that a quarter of work could be replaced. It estimates this would mean 300 million full-time jobs automated by algorithms, with an unknown number of new jobs created as the technology is implemented.

Although the exact impact new avenues of automation will have on jobs is unknown, individual capitalists are compelled to shrink their wages bill to look after their profits and keep up with their competitors.

Responding to lower than expected profits, BT has announced it plans to cut 55,000 jobs from its global workforce by 2030. While many of these come from the ending of the rollout

of fibre broadband, the company promised 10,000 of these jobs will be replaced by generative AI. Is this technically feasible or does it represent an attempt to reassure investors that although BT is not profitable now, AI will make it so in the future?

BT workers in the Communication Workers Union recently took strike action, extracting an improved pay deal from the bosses. And attempts to make tens of thousands of redundancies in the future will be met by resistance from a unionised workforce.

Mass job losses won't develop without resistance from the working class. Any attempts to make workers pay for advances in new technology must be resisted by collective action. Trade unions should demand that gains in productivity aren't used to sack workers or drive down wages. The demand should be put on bosses who argue such measures are necessary to open the books to trade union inspection.

Companies which proceed with attacks should be nationalised to save jobs, with compensation only on the basis of proven need. Publicly owned

and run democratically by the working class, measures can be agreed to share out remaining work without loss of pay. High-quality education and training on full pay, and with a guaranteed job at the end for those who want it, must be fought for too.

Entry level, less-skilled jobs will be at risk of automation. Many already are with the introduction of things such as self-service checkouts. But traditionally better-paid professionals, which the capitalist class has been able to draw some social support from historically, losing their jobs to automation can further undermine support for the capitalist system. Already, attacks on pay and conditions have forced lawyers and doctors to take strike action, pushing them closer to working-class methods of struggle.

For some sections of the capitalist class, including some of those involved in the development and monetisation of AI, the risks of continued unregulated, unplanned advances in AI come in many forms. Individual capitalists worry their capital and ability to make a profit may

be adversely impacted by new developments, or they may have already missed the boat and the existing AI industry leaders have already won out.

These developments are another source of instability in an increasingly chaotic global situation.

Already malicious computer programs have caused real damage to physical infrastructure. The Stuxnet virus which spread around the world is believed to have been designed to disrupt Iran's nuclear programme, reportedly damaging up to 1,000 centrifuges. Computer programs generating viruses, either by design or accidentally, could have real economic consequences.

Automated stock-trading programs already exacerbate instability in the financial markets, in some instances causing stock values to rapidly collapse and recover within minutes. Far from creating these crashes, new technology has merely sped up transactions, feeding into stock markets used by bankers to gamble trading increasingly complex things divorced from economic reality.

Calls for regulation from the developers of these AI research companies have been presented as attempts to minimise the 'damaging impact' the new technology may have. It is actually primarily an attempt to lock in the handful of companies currently ahead in research as the leaders of the field, with the profits that will come with it. States, acting in the interest of their nations' capitalists, may regulate the development of AI to protect their position and profits on the world scale.

AI models will continue to be developed and released in an unplanned way in attempts to capture parts of the market, as has already been done. This is the way the capitalist system works. The drive for profit pushes individual capitalists down this road, even if it has the potential to destabilise or damage the capitalist system as a whole. As Geoffrey Hinton, called a 'godfather of AI', who recently resigned from Google and warned about the impact of AI, said: "The problem is, in a capitalist system, if your competitor then does do that [develop and release larger, more powerful models], there's nothing you can do but do the same." The direction AI is heading, as has happened with new technologies in the past, is of a few companies monopolising knowledge under lock and key, stifling the free and open development of science and technique.

Capitalist automation

Over the course of its development, capitalism has enabled the replacement of manual jobs in production with machines. Driven by higher profits, capitalists replaced workers with machines, implementing advances in technology to compete with rival producers. Through the socialisation of production, advances in science and technology were able to be used to take society forward and improve overall living standards, while increasing the gap between those at the top and bottom of society.

This trend, of increased automation in production, cannot be taken to its conclusion by capitalism. Capitalists only invest in implementing new technology when they can be sure of realising a profit. This means that new technology will be implemented if the capitalists think society is stable enough to justify investing large amounts of money now to realise a profit over a number of decades, and if there aren't other more profitable opportunities for them to use their capital in the short term. The production of semiconductors, a vital component in the chips in all modern electronics, requires \$15-20 billion of investment for a new factory. Capitalists have to

be persuaded to invest in new infrastructure with government subsidies, even though profits for these are likely to be guaranteed over their years-long lifespan.

Already automatic factories, in which raw materials enter and finished products leave, exist. That they are not implemented on a wide scale indicates that in many industries paying and attempting to drive down workers' wages as far as possible is more profitable than full automation.

The struggle over the impact of new technology is class struggle, with workers fighting for jobs and wages on the one side and the bosses who own the factories, the patents and the infrastructure on the other. Under capitalism, technological advances will be used in ways to maximise profit.

A democratically planned socialist society, based on public ownership of big business and the banks, would be able to use technology in a different way. Instead of hunting for profit, production could be planned with other priorities in mind, such as reducing the necessary time for people to have to work, alongside protecting the environment and the wellbeing of workers.

In a number of fields, the potential for technology to be used for the good of us all is there. The advances in electronics and computing which have fuelled the gig economy contain within them the potential to be used to improve the lives of workers across the world.

Automating jobs with generative algorithms could mean some of the drudgery of life is abolished. Workers in call centres, admin staff processing forms and workers doing jobs only necessary for the maintenance of capitalism, could have a real choice about what they want to do. Whether that is to use their current skills or to do something completely different.

A socialist society, in which the resources and knowledge of society are owned and directed democratically by workers themselves, would mean technology is freed from the narrow interests of the capitalists. Technology which under capitalism condemns workers to lower wages and unemployment could be utilised for the good of us all.

Come to a Socialist Party meeting near you

The Socialist Party has regular meetings in towns and cities across the country, in which we discuss socialist ideas, past events in working-class history and how we can apply those lessons to the fight for socialism today. If you would like to participate:

- Go to socialistparty.org.uk/join
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- Or scan the QR code:



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NO

TICKET OFFICE

CLOSURES

NATIONALISE RAIL

A MIDLANDS RMT MEMBER

In the latest instalment of their scorched-earth plans for our railways, the Tories have announced the closure of all but a handful of England's 1,007 ticket offices.

Passengers have been granted a mere 21 days in order to take part in the 'consultation' and posters have been placed in stations informing of 'changes' to ticket offices with the actual closure of the facility being buried deep in mountains of text.

This is one of the most brutal elements of the assault on the railways, which will hurt vulnerable and disabled people hardest.

The government claims that only 12% of tickets are now sold through ticket offices. But that includes individuals who are unable to use self-service machines or would like

assistance from a trained member of staff.

Likewise, staff employed in ticket offices are on hand to assist disabled passengers on and off trains, with luggage, and can be a deterrent against antisocial behaviour.

Tory cuts

But this all counts for nothing to the Tory government, which directly contracts and subsidises the largely privatised, for-profit train operating companies (TOCs). It is trying to force the companies to ram the policy through to de-staff the railway and save costs.

Rail union RMT is striking again on 20, 22 and 29 July, as part of our long-running dispute with the TOCs over issues of 'modernisation' and pay. Aslef, the train drivers' union has a week-long overtime ban starting 17 July, with

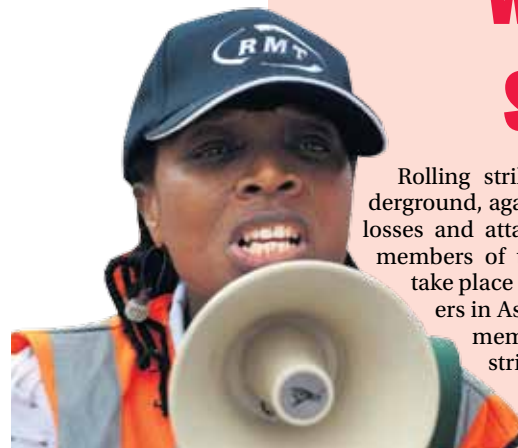
another week announced from 31 July.

Anyone expecting a fightback from Keir Starmer's Labour will have had their hopes dashed. Neither Starmer nor Louise Haigh, shadow transport secretary, have said they will reverse the Tories' disastrous proposals if they take over after the next general election. They simply criticise the "rushed" nature of the plans.

Further managed decline of the railways is all that is offered by the Tories, and Labour.

To fight the cuts, the working class urgently needs political representation. For that we need a new party of our own - one which will end the disaster of privatised rail by renationalising the whole network under democratic working-class control and management, and fund a fully staffed, high-quality rail network.

Tube workers' week of strikes



Rolling strikes on London Underground, against plans for 600 job losses and attacks on pensions, by members of the RMT union, will take place 23-28 July. Train drivers in Aslef will also join RMT members in London on strike on 26 and 28 July.

• Read more on page 7

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on p12

