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the Socialist

Issue 1239

24-30 August 2023

formerly **Militant**

CEO PAY UP 16%

TAKE ON THE CASH-GRABBING BOSSES

JOIN THE FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM

Profits are rising and bosses' pay is soaring. At the same time, energy bills reached record highs this winter, hospital waiting lists are at record lengths, and mortgage rates are surging.

Official government figures will tell you that wages are now growing quicker than prices. Believe that when you feel it in your pocket - the figures they use underestimate costs for working-class people.

CEOs of the largest FTSE100 companies have had a 16% pay rise. Their average salary is now £4 million - 118 times that of their workers.

A very small proportion of the population is doing very well indeed out of the cost-of-living crisis.

Hundreds of thousands will have received notification this month of another rent rise, many thousands more will be facing mortgage increases. Meanwhile, the big four banks have made combined profits of £29 billion for the first six months of 2023, up 77% on last year, according to a Unite the Union investigation.

2.1 million people used foodbanks in the year to March. Meanwhile, Tesco made £3 billion profits in the last two years as food prices rose 23%.

The rich just keep getting richer, at our expense. But the decades-long wealth transfusion from the working class to the super-rich bosses won't just simply stop.

The heroic strike wave has slowed the flow - millions of pounds have been won back from the bosses

and the government. Rail workers, now over a year into their dispute, continue to fight on to defend our services and their livelihoods from the profit-seekers' attacks. And doctors too continue their determined strikes.

According to bosses' newspaper the Financial Times, Labour refused to comment on the fat-cats' inflation-busting pay rises. The working class needs its own party that demands real pay rises for workers, and backs up trade unions striking to win them - that's not Labour under Keir Starmer. We need a new mass workers' party.

A universal, lasting transfer of wealth to working-class people means ending profit-driven capitalism. It means bringing the top 150 companies and banks that dominate the economy into public ownership,

under the democratic control and management of the working class, with no compensation to the fat-cat bosses. That way, production and distribution of all the things we need - energy, food, homes, transport - can be planned to meet the needs of all.

Join us to fight for socialist change!



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

FIGHT BACK AGAINST BUDGET BLACK HOLES >>> p4

MARTIN LUTHER KING'S LIFE AND LEGACY 60 YEARS AFTER HIS 'I HAVE A DREAM' >>> p15

GLOBALISATION vs THE NATION STATE: A CAPITALIST CONTRADICTION >>> p8-9

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Issue 1239
24-30 August 2023

DO YOU HAVE NEWS FOR US?

The Socialist is written, read, sold and bought by ordinary workers, trade unionists, young people and Socialist Party members. We want you to write for the Socialist.

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

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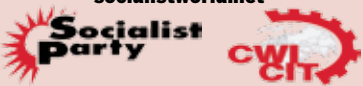
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."
Karl Marx

LOBBY THE TUC TO FIGHT THE ANTI-UNION LAWS!

The National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) says:

The NSSN agrees with fighting unions that are calling for action to ensure that no union is left isolated against the Tory anti-union laws. The NSSN believes that if workers take action together, the crisis-ridden Tories and their anti-union offensive can be defeated.

The FBU has called for "mass opposition" and for unions to "act together to build a movement to defy and defeat this law." At its recent AGM, the RMT passed a motion calling for a national demonstration against the minimum service levels legislation, and coordinated strike action. And Unite passed a motion at its July Policy Conference, to "call on the TUC to coordinate action, in the form of a 24-hour general strike.

Building support in Liverpool for lobbying the TUC

DAVE WALSH
LIVERPOOL TRADES COUNCIL

I moved the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) motion at Liverpool Trades Council in July. It had been agreed by my Unite construction branch in June.

It stimulated a good debate. The motion is well written and covers all the main actions that unions must take to fight the new anti-strike legislation, so the motion was not amended.

We also sent the motion to Unite's Merseyside Area Activist Committee where it was agreed, and will now go to the Unite North West regional committee.

The motion reflects the mood of many trade unionists, that the forces which have built up over the last year during the strike wave must now be brought together, with the main focus being to smash the anti-union laws and demand a programme of policies that end austerity and improve living standards.

We need the Trades Union Congress (TUC) to take action and lead an almighty struggle. But most rank-and-file trade unionists know that they will only act if they are put under enormous pressure. A big rally at Congress in Liverpool will be an important first step in that direction.

Get all the latest union news



NSSN bulletin: shopstewards.net

LET'S UNITE TO SCRAP THE TORY ANTI-STRIKE LAWS

LOBBY THE TUC 1PM, SUNDAY 10 SEPTEMBER

Premier Meetings
Liverpool Albert Dock,
Albert Dock Liverpool
Merseyside L3 4AD

Speakers confirmed so far:
UNITE general secretary SHARON GRAHAM
BFAWU general secretary SARAH WOOLLEY
POA general secretary STEVE GILLAN

More to be announced

The NSSN reports that the following are supporting lobbying the TUC. To add your union branch, trades council etc to the list, the model resolution can be found in the NSSN bulletin at shopstewards.net

Nottinghamshire, Nottingham and Mansfield Trades Council,
RMT Piccadilly and District West,
Hounslow Union,
Hounslow TUC,
Ealing TUC,
RMT LU Engineering,
Southwark Trades Council,
Waltham Forest Trades Council,
Unite LE1228 Waltham Forest Council Branch,
Unite Housing Workers LE1111,
Free Our Unions,
Liverpool Trades Council,
Unite NW 540 Howden supply division Runcorn,
Scotland CWU No2 branch,
CWU Highland Amal,
BFAWU Kernow,
Surrey County Unison,
Unite Community Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire branch,
Southampton and South West Hampshire TUC,
Cardiff Trades Council,
Cardiff General Unite branch WA1048,
Unite WM6050 Tom Mann branch,
Birmingham TUC,
Coventry TUC,
Unite NW127404 Branch,
Unite WM6030 South Birmingham branch,

Coventry CWU Telecoms,
Walsall TUC,
Birmingham UCU,
Hull Trades Council,
Sheffield RMT,
Sheffield TUC,
Swansea Trades Council,
South East Kent Trades Union Council,
Bristol Trades Union Council,
Leeds Trades Union Council,
Stevenage and District TUC,
Carmarthenshire Unison Local Government Branch,
Basildon Unison Local Government Branch,
Unison NCA Health,
Knowsley Unison Local Government Branch,
Caerphilly Trades Council,
Wakefield Trades Council,
Unison Mid Yorkshire Health Branch,
Unite Merseyside Area Activist Committee,
Unite Notts Area Activist Committee,
Unite EMNG32 Nottinghamshire Health Branch,
Brighton Trades Council,
Portsmouth Trades Council,
Carlisle TUC,
Winchester and Andover TUC,
Hampshire County Associations of TUCs

Labour U-turn on workers' rights pledge

DAN SMART
BRANCH SECRETARY UNISON SOUTH
GLOUCESTERSHIRE (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Following the Labour Party's National Policy Forum, Keir Starmer has copped out of Labour's promises to strengthen workers' rights, once again appealing to big business bosses.

Up to now, the Labour Party had pledged to do away with bogus self-employment, like in the so-called gig economy, and give workers full rights from day one on the job. This was one of the last remnants of the Corbyn era, calling for a 'New Deal for Working People' to end the poverty and precarity facing at least 3.7 million UK workers.

In a further attempt to assure the establishment they are a safe pair of hands, Angela Rayner announced that Labour would instead be undertaking a 'consultation period' once in power to create a 'simpler framework'. This won't provide any assurance however to Amazon delivery drivers having to urinate in bottles because they aren't entitled to a break, or Royal Mail posties threatened with a race-to-the-bottom in competition with other exploitative delivery firms.

Before the climb down at the recent National Policy Forum, Labour had committed to implementing a

single status of employment. This would have brought those in the gig economy, and other 'casualised' workers in areas like retail, in line with legally termed 'employees' with stronger rights. It also meant providing these rights from the date you start the job, such as the ability to claim unfair dismissal, a guaranteed wage, and parental leave. Shamefully, employees currently only have these protections after two years continuous employment. Meaning that, up to this time, we can be fired for no reason at all!

Having legal security and rights at work for all can back up trade unions organising and fighting to improve our livelihoods. The Labour Party was founded on these basic collective principles but criminally, Starmer, like Blair before him, is trying to show the Labour Party will reliably act in the bosses' interests.

Unite the Union has rightfully stood up and called Labour out on this, refusing to endorse Labour's policy programme. Socialist Party members fight for unions to be able to back candidates that will stand up for working-class people. The Socialist Party is campaigning for a workers' list of candidates in the next election, made up of trade unionists, campaigners, socialists, and others, that will actually fight for workers' rights.



People desperately fleeing war and poverty forced onto boats like these PHOTO: USNF

Migrant boat disasters – fight system which puts profit over lives

CALLUM JOYCE
OXFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

The deadly consequences of people driven into traffickers' boats, forced to leave their homes due to poverty or to escape war and environmental devastation, have been constantly in the news over the last months. These journeys are often extremely dangerous and require migrants to pay large amounts to traffickers, who care little for their safety.

Up to five hundred people are missing, presumed dead, after the sinking of a fishing trawler off the coast of Greece in June. And more than 60 people are presumed dead off the coast of Cape Verde, attempting to flee to Spain. The capitalist system creates the conditions that cause people to flee their homes, and is indifferent to the loss of life and desperate situations they face.

UK government

Following the chaotic withdrawal of British troops from Afghanistan in 2021, the government promised 'Operation Warm Welcome' for Afghans and their families who had worked with British forces. Hundreds remain stranded in Pakistan, separated from their families in Britain. The lack of resources and the wilful inaction of the Tory government has resulted in boats being left adrift in dangerous conditions; a recent capsizing of a boat in the English Channel resulted in the drowning of six people.

The Tories have increased their use of populist rhetoric around the issue

of migration to try to deflect attention from the economic crisis that their increasingly fractured government has overseen. This is a cynical attempt to tap into the anger that exists in society about the state of our public services, which have been cut to the bone by years of austerity.

It is correct that there are not enough high-quality homes and decent jobs for the people who already live here. But this does not mean that workers in Britain should be in competition with those fleeing here from abroad. Why couldn't the tens of billions of pounds in profit made by the energy companies and other big monopolies be used to properly fund services and launch a mass programme of council house building and job creation?

Workers and migrants must be part of a united struggle to fight for the resources that we all need. This should include fighting for asylum seekers and refugees to organise in

trade unions, for the right to work legally, with a minimum wage that all can live on.

The Labour Party has shown it will not take steps radically different to those of the Tories if it gets into power. Local Labour-run councils continue to implement Tory austerity, with no attempts to fight back and campaign for the resources we need. And they have also said that they would continue to house asylum seekers in unsafe conditions, including on the Bibby Stockholm barge.

It is clear that the working class needs a party of its own to fight for more resources - for jobs, homes and services for all, and to put forward a bold socialist programme that can take the wealth off the super-rich to pay for them. Only fighting to end the system of capitalism can ensure a decent standard of living, and put a stop to the endless wars and climate destruction that have led to such misery globally.

We reported in issue 1238 of the Socialist, 'Tory plan to house asylum seekers on dangerous barge' that "Migrants living in this confined space could also lead to widespread infection if disease breaks out, according to the government's own internal documents." The Tories since had to move those few housed on the barge within days after the deadly Legionella virus was discovered in the barge's water system.



Keir Starmer speaking at hustings in 2020, when he claimed to support Jeremy Corbyn's manifesto PHOTO: RWENDLAND/CC

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

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FIGHT BACK AGAINST BUDGET 'BLACK HOLES'

Birmingham council faces £870 million bumper bill

Fight for services we need

CORINTHIA WARD
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Birmingham residents are in a state of uncertainty about the future of local government public services. Birmingham City Council has announced a financial 'black hole' of £870 million. The Labour council's leadership claims a bill of £760 million to meet council workers' equal pay claims. And £100 million to fix a failing IT system, which the council moved over to despite concerns raised by council staff and trade unions that it was not fit for purpose. The IT system has resulted in bills not being invoiced and staff and residents receiving delays in payments.

The council has frozen all 'non-essential' payments, threatening jobs and services. School transport for children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities has been cancelled, leaving these vulnerable children unable to get to school. The council evidently doesn't consider this essential!

This year's financial crisis is in stark contrast to last year's Commonwealth Games, held in Birmingham, which cost the taxpayer £780 million with at least £250 million of that paid by the council. One year on and money which would supposedly be generated by this event is nowhere to be found, at least not in investment in public services or better pay for staff.

Funding needed

Rishi Sunak has said central government will not help bail Birmingham council out. Birmingham's funding from central government since 2010 has been slashed by nearly half - or £750 million.

It is clear this crisis is the result of a decade of austerity.

The Labour council is instead trying to blame council workers who are asking for money which they are owed. This divide-and-conquer tactic of council workers vs the community is an attempt to hide the fact that

for over a decade, the Labour council has implemented Tory austerity instead of fighting for the funding Birmingham needs.

If the Labour council is unwilling to fight for more funding, what Birmingham needs is a political voice for the working class that is prepared to fight. Candidates standing in elections on an anti-cuts platform offer an alternative to the status quo of making the working class pay with higher council taxes for worse or non-existent services. Socialist Party members have stood in elections in Birmingham on such a platform, alongside trade unionists and campaigners, as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

We campaign to end the cuts and restore lost services, to use borrowing powers and reserves to ensure no cuts are carried out immediately and to fight with trade unions, community groups and council staff to fight for the funding required from central government.



Lobby of Carmarthenshire council against cuts with Mark Evans (right)

Fighting council budget gaps in Kirklees

ANGIE WALLER
KIRKLEES UNISON BRANCH COMMITTEE, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Kirklees District Council has announced a forecast budget gap of £47 million for 2024-25. In order to achieve a balanced budget, the Labour council warned staff that there could be 750 redundancies.

They issued an HR1 notice on 8 August, stating that there will be initially 250 redundancies between 6 October 2023 and 29 March 2024.

However, there is no detail within the notice as to which posts will potentially be made redundant.

There is currently no agreed redundancy policy in place and the council is not even considering a council-wide voluntary redundancy scheme.

Kirklees Unison branch committee passed a motion unanimously. I put forward amendments to the motion that were unanimously passed. The main motion called for redundancies to be kept to a minimum and be voluntary. While I supported the demand for no compulsory redundancies, I warned about the impact on services and working conditions of voluntary redundancies and amended the

resolution to state that they should be avoided if we are to keep services fully provided.

Instead, the amendment added the demand that the council should set a no-cuts needs budget to defend all jobs and services and campaign for adequate central government funding to protect jobs and services in Kirklees. This is what the Unison Local Government Service Group Executive also supports.

The motion called for an industrial action ballot, to mount a campaign to oppose the council's proposals, and link with local trade unions and public to gain wider opposition.

Welsh Labour looks to make £900 million of cuts Working-class fightback needed

MARK EVANS
CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY UNISON BRANCH SECRETARY AND UNISON LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICE GROUP EXECUTIVE (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

The Welsh Labour government has threatened a new round of cuts to Welsh public services, incredibly including the already-on-its-knees NHS, members have stood in elections in Birmingham on such a platform,

alongside trade unionists and campaigners, as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. We campaign to end the cuts and restore lost services, to use borrowing powers and reserves to ensure no cuts are carried out immediately and to fight with trade unions, community groups and council staff to fight for the funding required from central government.

This all changed with the financial crash of 2007-08. While Labour leaders, including in Wales, have seen their role as making capitalism a little more palatable for the working class, this was only possible when capitalism had some crumbs to offer. Those days are long gone with the British and Welsh economy in long-term decline.

£900 million of cuts

Now according to Mark Drakeford, Labour First Minister of the Welsh government, Wales faces the "toughest financial situation since devolution". He has asked all ministers to spend their summer finding cuts to their departments. The £900 million of cuts comes out of a budget of £20 billion - a cut in spending of nearly 5%!

Mark Drakeford blames the scale of the cuts on inflation, mismanagement of the economy by successive UK governments and underfunded commitments made by the UK government particularly regarding public sector pay. He said: "The cabinet will be working over the summer to mitigate these budgetary pressures based on our principles, which include protecting public services as far as possible, and targeting support towards those at greatest need".

It will come as a surprise to most people in Wales that public services

5%

cuts in spending to be found across all Welsh government departments

have received any protection, as both the NHS and council services are in a parlous state due to Tory cuts and underfunding passed on by successive Welsh Labour governments. You will search or listen in vain for an alternative from Mark Drakeford or his party to Tory cuts. Indeed, "targeting support towards those in greatest need" means further rationing services in practice.

Change the game

While Mark Drakeford and the Welsh Labour government bemoan the cards they are dealt by the Tories, the financial settlement provided by central government, they accept capitalism and the cuts which come with it as the only game in town. Capitalism means the deck is stacked against working-class people and the vital services we use. Appealing to the Tories' better natures for more money will never succeed; trying to juggle an ever-decreasing budget only results in our class and the most vulnerable in society losing out.

The Welsh government should refuse to implement any further cuts, it should set a no-cuts needs budget, and use its reserves (and those of local authorities) and borrowing powers to maintain services while launching a mass campaign of opposition to Tory cuts, mobilising trade unions, councils and working-class communities.

The Welsh Labour government sees its role as dividing up a cake that gets smaller and smaller in real terms with each budget settlement. However well intentioned that is, it is failing working-class people who elected them. We need a new mass workers' party fighting in our interests with socialist policies. If this was in place now it would mobilise workers across Wales on a mass scale in defence of jobs and services.

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 about joining us today!



Liverpool Socialist Students marching in support of striking university workers

Students go to university without enough money to just pay the rent!

DEAN YOUNG
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST STUDENTS

With A-level results day on 17 August, many young people will be going to university unaware that they will be faced with tough decisions because of the student funding system.

Reported in the Financial Times, outside London the average annual rent is £10,227, whereas this year's maximum maintenance loan, given to students with the lowest family income, is just £9,978! Within London, the average student rent is estimated by the National Union of Students (NUS) to be an additional £1,200 per year.

For postgraduates studying a Masters degree the situation is even bleaker, the maximum loan available is £12,167 and the average Masters course fees, estimated by the NUS, are £11,000. This leaves just £1,167 to survive on for a whole year!

Because of this, students are forced to work jobs alongside their full-time studies to make ends meet, potentially even full time. This of course detracts from their ability to learn and succeed in their courses. And those that can't find a job or afford to keep studying often have no other option than to drop out of their studies with only debt to show for it.

How is it that higher education has come to this? How have we gone from having no tuition fees and debt-free access to maintenance grants in

England to annual fees of £9,250 and no grants or national bursaries? Pro-capitalist New Labour, Lib Dem and Tory governments introduced fees and marketisation at the expense of a publicly funded education system. They all ruthlessly gutted higher education funding to cut costs and saddle young people with a lifetime of debt.

Free education

What we need is a properly funded education system democratically run by workers themselves alongside democratic student organisations for the good of us all. An independent review, commissioned by the Boris Johnson government and published this year, called for a re-introduction of at least a £3,000 bursary for low-income students. While this would be a step in the right direction it would not be enough.

Grants shouldn't be means-tested, they should be universal. The maintenance loan system should be replaced by a fully funded system of grants students can live on, increasing in line with costs. Student debt should be cancelled. The access to free education for all must be fought for and paid with the wealth and resources of the banks, corporations and the super-rich.

Join the student fightback
JOIN socialist students
socialiststudents.org.uk/join

NHS waiting lists at all-time high Blame the Tories not strikers

RYAN LYDDALL
SURREY SOCIALIST PARTY

At the start of this year, Rishi Sunak announced his five key priorities as Prime Minister, one of which was to reduce NHS waiting lists. And yet eight months into the year, the number of people waiting to start routine hospital treatment has reached a new record high, with 7.6 million people waiting to start treatment at the end of July.

Of course, it isn't surprising that the NHS is suffering under a Tory government; if it wasn't for a fear of losing support they would have privatised it decades ago. But to add insult to injury, Sunak then went on

to blame striking healthcare workers for the record-high waiting lists - attempting to push the narrative that healthcare workers, and all striking workers, are greedy and just want more money. Pay is of course a part of these disputes, but they are about more than just pay.

Due to years of cuts, the NHS has been struggling with inadequate staffing levels and staff burnout. People weren't receiving the care they needed before the strikes started and that is, in part, why staff took strike action. They want to be given the adequate conditions to do their job and save people's lives - and the issue of pay factors into this. In 2021, nurses were paid up to 32% less than they

were a decade ago, with inflation. And that's before the high inflation that's hit workers' pay hard this past year.

Many healthcare workers have to work overtime or take on second jobs, which can make them overly tired and leave the profession. This means both staff and patients suffer.

The NHS isn't in crisis because of the strikes, it was in crisis long before the strikes began. We support workers striking for fair pay and to kick private profit out of our health service. Take the wealth out of the hands of the super-rich to give health workers decent wages and conditions, and give us all the healthcare we deserve.



NHS workers striking in February this year in Sheffield

Clapham homophobic attack consequence of Tory divide and rule



PHOTO: MARY FINCH

BEN GOLDSTONE
SOUTH LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

On Sunday 13 August, two men were stabbed in a homophobic attack outside The Two Brewers, a popular LGBTQ+ venue in Clapham, South London. The two men have since been released from hospital and, at present, no arrests have been made in conjunction with the attack.

This attack comes at a time when the Tories have been increasing divisive rhetoric against oppressed groups, including LGBTQ+ people. Lee Anderson, the deputy chairman of the Tory party, came out and said that the next election will most likely be fought on "culture wars and trans debate". Protests have erupted between far-right groups and counter-protestors over Drag Queen Story Time events, and the right-wing media was thrown into a frenzy after Costa Coffee included a cartoon depicting a trans-masculine character with mastectomy scars.

The increase of divisive ideas coming from politicians and the media

has real impacts, and increases the risk of violence for LGBTQ+ people. Home Office figures show, for the year ending March 2022, that there were 26,152 sexual orientation crimes, a 41% increase on the year before, with transgender identity hate crimes also rising by 56%.

Crimes against LGBTQ+ people have increased, and LGBTQ+ services, such as shelters and health, have been cut, further reducing safety and wellbeing.

In times of capitalist crisis, the ruling class is prepared to attack oppressed groups to try to foster divisions within the working class and distract from the real culprits responsible for our falling living standards - the bosses. There is enough money in the world to comfortably meet the needs of everyone, it's just in the wrong hands - this is why we need to fight for socialism. The Socialist Party fights for fair pay and services for all, for trade union campaigns against division, and for democratic community control of our safety.

Doctors on strike

Hospital consultants in the BMA will go on a second 48-hour strike on 24 and 25 August.

Junior doctors struck from 11–15 August, and are currently rebalancing, a requirement of the Tories' undemocratic anti-union laws.

'A jumbo jet's worth of needless deaths each week'

DR TAL ELLENBOGEN, EAST MIDLANDS BMA REPRESENTATIVE, SPOKE TO LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS.

Doctors have faced a 31.7% real-terms pay cut since 2008. It effectively means that doctors are working as much as four months a year for free. Yet we are not seeing 31% fewer patients, we're not doing 31% less work.

We often have to cover for two or three doctors because so many are leaving due to these pay cuts. We struggle to give patients the quality of care that they deserve in a timely fashion.

We now have 21,000 more members compared to when we last baled in January - a 50% increase. That makes us one of the most unionised professions, at over 90% of junior doctors. We're asking for those 90% to vote 'yes', to continue striking for pay restoration.

We had another pay cut imposed on us. The average 8.8% uplift is still less than the 11.4% rate of inflation. And it does nothing to put a dent in the last 14 years of real-terms cuts. We aim to get Rishi Sunak back to the table. And therefore, with a new mandate, we will continue striking through the autumn, the winter and beyond, if need be.

No doctor wants to go on strike, but when we have a prime minister that appears to be intent on burying his head in the sand until the next election, we have been left with no choice. Last winter, 500 people a week - a whole jumbo jet's worth - died in A&Es needlessly due to a lack of staff. If an airline had a jumbo jet go down every week, people would expect serious action.



Leeds Royal Infirmary JAIN DALTON



Royal London HUGO PIERRE

'Privatisation kills'

JUNIOR DOCTORS SPOKE TO READING SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS.

Thousands of NHS services are now run by non-NHS providers, and the links between 88 of our MPs (that are known) and the private healthcare industry is shocking. MPs are meant to declare their interests. But a loophole, or a murky underbelly, in the whole registration system of 'unincorporated associations', means that these 'associates' do not have to provide any public information.

Privatisation harms patients. Research by the University of Oxford published in the Lancet found conclusively that "private sector outsourcing corresponded with significantly increased rates of treatable mortality." It also impacts sustainable long-term relationships between properly-supported NHS staff and their patients.

The figures for what is spent by the NHS on for-profit organisations to run services are eye-watering. Private hospitals, private units within NHS hospitals, private GP services, private specialist clinics, private care homes. £92 million was spent in 2019 on private ambulances and taxis!

The government could provide the NHS with more resources so that it can train and employ more staff to provide a not-for-profit service for patients. It is in the interests of private companies - such as these who donate to MPs - that they don't. If funded properly, the NHS could provide services such as IT, recruitment, laboratories, diagnostics and pathology, cleaning, catering, maintenance etc.

Shareholders shouldn't be part of our public healthcare and private companies should not be skimming a profit from the NHS. Do we really want to end up with a US-style private healthcare system, where every year thousands of people lose their homes, suffer and die because they can't afford medication or medical insurance?

The private companies are interested in only one thing - profit! They see the NHS as a massive money-making machine, not as the greatest social achievement of the 20th century, where people are treated equally, regardless of wealth. We must stand up and fight for it!

St Mungo's homelessness charity forced to cough up more money

Workers vote on offer



Hackney LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

HELEN PATTISON
LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY SECRETARY

St Mungo's workers entered their thirteenth week of indefinite strike action, and are balloting on a slightly improved offer. Alongside that, they are making preparations to rebalancing the membership, as their strike mandate ballot is reaching the six-month cut-off set by Tory anti-union legislation.

The new offer means workers' strike action has so far won a £1,200 consolidated pay rise out of this rotten management. Between the pay increase gained by the strike and the national local government NJC award now being negotiated, it's estimated that St Mungo's has been forced to cough up over £6.2 million in extra wages. The offer includes a freeze on senior management pay, an issue that was very important to many strikers.

This has been a long struggle for

many workers who are taking action for the first time. It is a testament to their drive to get organised that so much has taken place. From strike rallies and lobbies, to pickets at newly organised St Mungo's workplaces.

If workers now decide to accept the offer, which is lower than the 10% they first demanded, they will be able to do so with their heads held high. They have shown the strength of collective action.

That said, neither the issue of pay, nor any of the other issues that workers have been discussing on the picket lines, can possibly be concluded by just this strike.

Hostile environment

Issues include pay disparity, with a senior leadership increasingly being paid six-figure salaries while frontline staff, with a whole number of important skills working with clients, are paid the lowest wages in the

organisation; and the charity's relationship with the Tory government over its hostile environment policies.

Whatever happens with this specific ballot, it is clear that there is a force in St Mungo's with the strength to take on CEO Emma Haddad and her intransigent management team.

The staff, unionised in Unite, have forced millions of pounds out of the bulging bank account of St Mungo's, and will continue to fight for the organisation to respect its staff and the important role they play supporting homeless people.

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PCS: Vote 'no' to continue the campaign!

Nominate Marion Lloyd for PCS general secretary and John Moloney for AGS



Liverpool SOCIALIST PARTY

PCS REP

PCS civil service union members have until 31 August to vote on whether they support the National Executive Committee (NEC) strategy in the national campaign, but the question in members' minds is: "What strategy?" Strikes have been called off; rebalancing has been postponed. Even the levy has been removed.

The £1,500 one-time, non-consolidated, pro-rated payment has made its way through to members, who have found that it doesn't cover a month's wage - and in many cases doesn't cover half a month's wage. Many members have seen their 2023-24 pay offer - which is being offered department by department - in most cases half of inflation, and in all cases below inflation. Let's call it what it is: a significant pay cut.

These sub-par offers have been enough for the NEC to disregard the demands posed by PCS Annual Delegate Conferences in 2022 and 2023. They have gone to the departmental negotiating tables with lapsing strike mandates and no plan to back up their words.

This doesn't even begin to deal with the outrage felt by many activists at how the question was posed in an utterly disingenuous way: "Do you agree with the PCS strategy to continue the campaign?" A true example of 'heads I win, tails you lose' - the NEC can scrap the campaign either way and declare a victory.

It is not enough to battle with individual employers, we need to be fighting against the 4.5% pay remit that stands in the way of our demands

of an inflation-proof pay rise for this year, and 10% for 2022-23.

As soon as the pay offer was received, we should have called strikes. We should have escalated by scheduling national, regional and targeted strikes. We should have rebalanced members in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), which only narrowly missed the Tory anti-democratic turnout threshold.

There is massive discontent over the 4.5% remit, especially when it was followed weeks later with a higher offer for senior civil servants, and over the £1,500 payment. There is discontent over the job cuts that are coming, and over our continued pension overpayments, that take money out of members' wage packets each month during a cost-of-living crisis and offer nothing in return.

Members need to vote 'No' in this ballot to reject the government's offer and to continue the union's national campaign on pay, jobs, pensions, and the redundancy compensation scheme.

General secretary

We desperately need a change in leadership. Mark Serwotka is standing down as general secretary and nominations for elections open in September. We need a fighting leadership that actually enacts conference policy rather than throwing it out weeks after it has been voted upon. A socialist general secretary at the head of a campaigning, democratic union could dramatically open the union up to the activist and membership base once more - which is why we are calling for all branches to nominate Marion Lloyd for general secretary, and to re-nominate John Moloney for assistant general secretary (AGS).

Serious strategy

The PCS Broad Left Network, the socialist rank-and-file body in which the Socialist Party participates, puts forward a coherent strategy that reflects genuine analysis about what is required to win our demands, including a £15-an-hour pay floor, to seriously tackle low pay in the UK civil service.

- National strike action across all civil service employers with a mandate

- Targeted strike action across those areas where sustained action will resume pressure on the government to come to the table to bargain

- Hardship support for all branches - we must target our resources to support those members in danger of defaulting on bills

- Reballots in all areas where the mandate has lapsed or is lapsing, including the DWP and Revenue and Customs (HMRC)

- A serious discussion on the potential impact of action short of strike action, in magnifying the industrial impact of strikes

Rail strikes: Workers stand firm

Rail workers in the RMT union who work for 14 Train Operating Companies (TOCs) will take two further days of strike action on 26 August and 2 September. 200,000 members have been in dispute over pay, jobs and working conditions for over a year. The employers come together in the Rail Delivery Group (RDG), but now the RDG says negotiations can only continue with individual companies. The RMT says that behind the scenes the Tory government, which compensates the TOCs for lost earnings every time there is a strike day, is preventing negotiations from continuing.

RMT members remain united in their strike action. Train drivers in Aslef will take strike action on 1 September, with an overtime ban the following day.

In a step up of attacks, the rail companies have announced the closure of over 1,000 ticket offices, with 2,000

jobs under threat. The public outcry has been such that the consultation had to be extended until 1 September. The day before, the RMT has organised a protest, assembling outside the Department for Transport at 5pm.

RMT members continue their determined fight to save their jobs. Their fight would be strengthened if Keir Starmer was to promise that a Labour government would keep ticket offices open. So far, Labour politicians have refused.

Privatised TOCs continue to profit by charging ever-increasing fares and attacking workers' hard-won pay, terms and conditions. The rail industry should be nationalised now, with no compensation to the profiteering bosses. Back in public hands and fully funded, the railways could be fully staffed with workers on decent pay and conditions, and expanded to meet need.



Birmingham SOCIALIST PARTY

Birmingham University support staff strike

CLIVE WALDER
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Support staff working in maintenance, estates, catering etc at the University of Birmingham, members of Unison, held a one-day strike on 17 August. They were protesting about the employer's proposals to force through changes to terms and conditions as part of pay negotiations.

Unison had been negotiating a new pay structure since last year, but the university bosses have failed to make an acceptable offer, and are now trying to pressurise members into sacrificing existing terms and conditions in exchange for a one-off taxable and non-pensionable payment of £700. The university is also bypassing the normal negotiation process and making individual offers to staff.

Workers are adamant that conditions shouldn't be traded for a one-off payment, and fear this could set a precedent. There are immediate threats of reduced rates of pay for weekend working, removal of

non-weekend rest days for staff who normally work weekends, and abolition of shift allowances for anti-social or extended shifts. This will make it less attractive to work evenings and weekends and staff fear that they will be forced to work them against their will in the future.

One striker said: "Working on catering used to be great. I love the team I work with and talking to the customers, but management are making the job unbearable."

Many pickets pointed out that the University of Birmingham is extremely wealthy; it owns a large amount of land in the affluent suburb of Edgbaston and has just built a campus in Dubai. They believe that the university cares more about lucrative international business than the workers who keep the university running.

Members are prepared to take action until they secure an acceptable deal. One picket said: "We need socialism! The bosses get big money, and we get nothing."

● Unison in HE national ballot

Unison members at 13 universities have met the 50% Tory turnout threshold in their ballot for strike action against the below-inflation 2023-24 pay offer of 5-8%. Workers at these 13 universities plan to go on strike in September. The result brings the total number of higher education institutions with mandates for action to 22. Nine other universities have seen strike action by Unison members over the summer.

Globalisation vs the nation state: a capitalist contradiction

NIALL MULHOLLAND
COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL,
INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT

For over three decades, 'globalisation' (capitalist world trade and production growth) has appeared to many, including some on the left, to be unstoppable – with the role of the nation state increasingly relegated. Now, as the trend towards globalisation has gone into reverse, some have concluded: "Globalisation is over".

Is it? What is the real relationship between the world economy and the nation state?

Ten years ago, there were around 10,000 protectionist measures in place globally. Now the figure has risen to 35,000.

The European Union, which was set up out of necessity by the main capitalist states in Europe, in competition with the US and other powerful economies, suffered the serious setback of Brexit in 2016 and is still fraying at the edges.

'Bidenomics', the economic policy of the Democrat administration in the US, is a vast intervention by the state, carrying out among other measures; increased investments in infrastructure and social security, an increase in taxes on higher-income individuals and corporations, increasing the national minimum wage, widening access to affordable healthcare, and bringing about 'forgiveness' of student loan debt.

At the same time, right-wing, anti-globalisation, populist nationalism has come to the fore in many countries in recent years, most notably that of Modi in India, Orbán in Hungary, Meloni in Italy, Erdogan in Turkey and the current coalition government in Israel – albeit with important distinct features in each case. Previously, Bolsonaro in Brazil, and the Trump administration, which could make a return to the White House after the next elections, played a similar role in deploying nationalist demagoguery.

The war in Ukraine shows that supposedly outdated methods of warfare between nations – involving many thousands of field troops, World War One-era trenches and artillery – are still essential for the ruling classes. The US, the European states and Japan are all vastly increasing their arms budgets and tooling up their national armies.

But do all these developments mean that the nation state has overcome the phase of globalisation that dominated the world economy over the last 30 or so years?

For Marxists, it is not a question

of either the capitalist nation state or globalisation completely overcoming the other. The capitalist system was founded on the contradiction between the striving of capital to expand globally, on the one hand, and the limitations imposed by the nation state, on the other – this contradiction gave rise to two world wars. It is an uneven and contradictory process.

Globalisation may have gone into reverse, to a degree, in recent years, but at the same time multinational companies that bestride the world have in some cases grown in power and influence and even formed their own private armies. The Wagner Group, which has a fractious, symbiotic relationship with the Russian state, has led fighting in parts of Ukraine, and operates in parts of Africa and the Middle East, attempted a coup against Putin's rule in July. This starkly revealed elements of a 'state within a state'.

The nation state

The capitalist nation state arose out of profound economic changes, bound up with trade and increasing use of money. The growth of capitalist production and the accumulation of capital required the development of a national market and the breaking down of guild privileges and local customs, barriers and tariffs. The development of capitalist production drew together villages and cities, and created a national market, together with a common language, laws and currency.

The creation of the modern nation state, based on the creation of new borders and barriers, defined the jurisdiction and authority of the capitalist class. However, as capitalist production developed further, it began to transcend the nation-state framework.

The capitalist system cannot

resolve this contradiction. It cannot do away with the nation-state system in which property is rooted. Nor can the productive forces be limited to national boundaries. The logic of capital and economic activity means that capitalism continuously transcends the nation-state framework and therefore undermines it.

Globalisation followed by 'de-globalisation' is not new. Between 1850 and 1870, trade and investment expanded sharply in Europe and the US under the auspices of British imperialism. This was followed by the economic depression of the 1870s to the 1890s.

Another wave of global expansion followed in the 1890s up to World War One. Globalisation declined through the Great Depression of the 1930s and up until World War Two (WW2). There was a new wave of global expansion under Bretton Woods (a negotiated monetary order requiring countries to guarantee convertibility of their currencies into US dollars) under US domination. However the boom was exhausted by the late 1960s and early 1970s and led to slumps and retraction.

From the mid-1980s and through the 1990s, the expansion of trade and cross-border investment was the largest in the history of capitalism. The dissolution of Stalinist states in the former Soviet Union and Eastern bloc allowed US and European capitalism to spread its influence further, opening large new markets and the exploitation of cheap labour. China, with its huge workforce and cheap labour, also entered global manufacturing and trading markets. However, the latest globalisation wave started to decline in the 2000s.

Despite claims by the evangelists of capitalism that the last wave of globalisation saw harmonious economic development and the more or less eradication of the role of the nation state, the process is much more complicated and contradictory.

Capitalism is a system with contradictions generated by the profit motive. As the main capitalist economies struggle, they start to compete more intensely, laying the basis for conflict and division.

Globalisation and free trade did not lead to a rise in incomes for all, as its supporters claimed. Using its own measurements, the World Bank says that in 1980 about 43% of the world's population lived in extreme poverty and today the number is about 8% due to globalisation. But this analysis excludes an explanation about the crucial role of the state in the Chinese economy, where more than 800 million people have been

taken out of extreme poverty since the late 1970s.

Increased inequality

The reality is that globalisation has increased inequality of wealth and income, both between nation states and also within national economies, as multinational corporations relocated their activities to cheaper labour areas and introduced new technology that requires less labour. Neoliberal policies have also vastly increased inequalities by attacking trade union rights, imposing casualisation of labour, repressing wages, carrying out privatisation, reducing public services, and attacking pensions and social security benefits.

Recessions and slumps have led to a significant loss of household income for the majority. The financial crisis and recession unleashed in 2007 and 2008, followed by weak recovery, the economic shutdown caused by Covid, and the war in Ukraine, have all hit global trade and capital movements, and global supply chains.

This does not mean that world trade and investment will disappear. It will continue, and can grow, to some extent. But current economic volatility and increased competition between the major capitalist economies will see protectionist tendencies of nation states and trading blocs continue to grow.

Supporters of Keynesian economics, sometimes also called advocates of 'mixed economies', call for a return to the heady days of the post-WW2 boom, and draw

attention to the fact that between 1950 and 1973 world GDP grew at the fastest rate in history. The United States and western European nations experienced relatively high rates of growth and low levels of wealth inequality.

But this was during an exceptional period for world capitalism. The world economy was emerging from the ruins of WW2 and Europe's economies needed to be rebuilt. With the extension of Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe (state ownership and economic planning that saw significant social gains for the working class, albeit under the rule of unaccountable bureaucratic elites), the US, the major capitalist power, had to shore up Western capitalism with the Marshall Plan and other instruments of massive investment. All this acted as a powerful stimulus for world capitalism and the 'post-war boom'.

The role of the state in capitalist economies went quite far in advanced capitalist economies. In the UK, the post-war Labour government nationalised key industries and created the National Health Service. US government spending more than doubled between 1950 and 1962. Meanwhile, the top marginal tax rate in the United States and the United Kingdom was close to 90%.

However, the economy started to sharply decline in the early seventies, with the oil embargo and the recession of 1973-74. It became prohibitively expensive to borrow money. By 1980, inflation was around 14%. Mass unemployment rates rose to double digits

in many countries. The American economy and other major capitalist economies were mired in "stagflation" (high inflation and low growth).

Capitalist governments flailed about to find a way out of the crisis. In 1980, Republican candidate Ronald Reagan was elected US President and set about breaking the air-traffic controllers' union, whose members, federal employees, had gone on strike. In Britain, the Tories under Margaret Thatcher undertook a similar attack on 'welfare-state economics'.

Deregulation of the airline industry, railroads, and trucking began under Democratic President Jimmy Carter and continued after Bill Clinton was elected, in 1992. "The era of big government is over," Clinton announced. Tony Blair and Clinton promoted a neoliberal approach to international trade, the beginnings of what became known as 'globalisation'.

In 1993, the US Congress ratified the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) – Canada, Mexico, and the United States. And in 1999 it repealed part of the Glass-Steagall Act, a Depression-era statute that prohibited commercial banks from joining together with securities firms ('investment banks').

NAFTA made it easier for American manufacturers to relocate plants to Mexico, where labour is cheaper, helping to create the 'rust belt' in the US. And the weakening of Glass-Steagall was partly blamed for the financial crisis of 2008 and the 'Great Recession' that followed (estimated to have cost the public \$23 trillion).

Deregulation, which was supposed to spur competition, did not stop monopolisation. Just three companies provide 90% of wireless services in the US.

Globalisation and neoliberal policies did not mean the nation state was redundant, as some of its most exuberant supporters argued. Pro-market policies were generally mixed with state funding and government direction. However, the last phase of globalisation did see an undermining of the nation state to a new level, as factories, commodities and money were able to move around the world.

The end result of decades of these pro-market policies is that inequality is omnipresent. In 1980, CEOs were paid about 42 times as much as the average employee; in 2016, they were paid 347 times as much. The three million people who make up the wealthiest 1% of Americans are collectively worth more than the 291 million who make up the bottom 90%.

The more astute supporters of capitalism see that the rise in inequality poses the most immediate threat to so-called 'civil society'. The Financial Times columnist, Martin Wolf, in his new book, 'The Crisis of Democratic Capitalism', doubts whether the United States will still be "a functioning democracy" at the end of the decade (reviewed at socialistworld.net).

'De-globalisation' and the rise of nationalism are causing new crises for capitalism and its institutions. As one commentator put it: "The sun has set on neoliberalism. Both parties [US Republicans and Democrats] have drifted closer to something like mercantilism; the language of the market has lost its magic. 'Bidenomics' entails immense government spending; meanwhile, a new cadre – protectionists, crony capitalists, ethno-nationalists, and social and cultural provincials – have been rewriting party platforms. Republicans eagerly lambast Big Tech and clash with 'woke' corporations, more intent on fighting a culture war than on championing commerce." ("The rise and fall of neoliberalism", Louis Menand, The New Yorker magazine, 24 July 2023)

The post-WW2 boom era that Keynesians hark back to cannot be repeated. Then, the multilateral capitalist organisations of the post-WW2 era, like the IMF and World Bank, were all under the dominance of US imperialism. Today the US is facing relative decline. The major capitalist economies are in a period of economic crisis. The decline of globalisation results not just in the US and its allies in struggles with Russia and China, and their allies, but also the possibility of a number of economic and military blocs competing with each other.

The vast changes in capitalist

production over the past three decades have had a major impact on the world capitalist economy and nation state, but also on the composition of the working class and the organised workers' movement. Following the downfall of the Stalinist regimes, traditional social democratic parties shifted dramatically to the right and embraced the market economy as their reformist programmes, based on the national economy, were significantly undermined by global capitalism. This does not exclude left parties coming to power and taking significant measures against capitalism during periods of intense economic crisis and under the pressure of the working class. But so far, left formations like Syriza in Greece or Podemos in Spain, have failed to bring about significant reforms for working people, let alone challenge capitalism.

Socialism

Yet the objective conditions for the socialist transformation of society on a world scale have never been better. The globalisation of production has brought about a vast expansion of the international working class. Globally speaking, the working class has become the numerically predominant social class in the past three decades. Most people on the planet are now urban dwellers.

In the advanced capitalist countries, ruthless downsizing carried out by major companies, and attacks by governments on the public sector, have seriously eroded the status and working and living conditions of wide sections of the middle class. Junior doctors, lawyers, teachers, nurses and head teachers, for example, have all been on strike in Britain in recent months or balloted for strike action.

Globalisation of production underscores the urgent need for the international cooperation of the working class in a common struggle against the bosses, and lays the basis for socialism across the planet. A planned socialist economy, on a world scale, would see the vast transformation of living standards, technology, education and culture, leading to the dissolution of borders and nation states, as we know them. To achieve this goal, the international working class needs its own political parties and other independent class organisations, like genuinely combative trade unions. These need to be armed with bold socialist policies, strategy and tactics, to take on and remove the disastrous, exploitive profit system, at both a national and global level.

Labour politicians refuse to stop tower block they know is dangerous

NANCY TAAFFE AND PAULA MITCHELL
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

The Save Our Square campaign in Waltham Forest, east London, has kept the developers at bay for seven years in the fight to stop the building of two monster blocks in the town square. However, the blocks are now going up, and many more local residents are contacting the campaign – not least because of fire safety.

Following the Grenfell fire inquiry, the Tories are going to change the law. Labour's London mayor Sadiq Khan has already changed regulations, so that blocks over 30 metres have to have two stairwells. But these monster blocks are going up with only one.

Our campaign met on 16 August. We agreed a big banner protest on 30 September at the foot of the tower – an act of mass trespass on our own land. And we will also take our big banner to the mayor's door at City Hall.

Feeling the pressure of local residents, the deputy leader of Waltham Forest Labour council has felt the need to publicly defend the new monster blocks. That's why we intend to hold a political debate in a community hall marked for closure, inviting all the ruling Labour politicians in the area to come and defend this model for housing – developments that nobody can really afford. If they don't turn up, we'll debate with a cabbage.

Below we carry a shortened edited version of a letter sent by a local resident and Socialist Party member Mike Cleverley to Sadiq Khan. The campaign has published this as a model letter, calling on the mayor to intervene.

The campaign has also launched an online petition calling on Labour MP for Walthamstow Stella Creasy to raise a question in the House of Commons to ask that the safety

recommendations apply retrospectively to new builds that were given planning permission before the rules were changed.

These kind of towers are littering London's skyline, while homelessness is increasing. So, in the future, we'll be campaigning even more for safe, secure council housing. We urge all Londoners to get involved in this fight, wherever you are.

Letter: People before profit

Dear Sadiq Khan,

We have had a Labour council for as long as I can remember. That and a Labour Mayor of London should mean that the wishes of ordinary citizens, like myself, are seen as more important than the profits of property developers.

At the heart of our community we have a town square, with both paved and grassed areas. It provides play space for the many children housed in cramped flats nearby, seating and resting places for the elderly, like myself. It's a haven from the busy High Street and market too.

This much-loved amenity is being taken from us. The lift shaft of the first of two huge blocks is rising above our square.

These new tower blocks are not being built to meet the needs of thousands of desperate families, trapped on the council waiting list. Or the thousands more who know it is pointless waiting for council homes, and languish in cramped flats exposed to damp and mould.

500 flats will be created to be let at market rents. That's simply beyond the budget of almost all NHS, retail and hospitality workers, and even the building workers who are involved in erecting these prefabs in the sky.



You have spoken about the Grenfell Tower disaster that killed 72 innocent people; men, women and children. You have assured Londoners that lessons have been learned. Many working-class voters expected that your words indicated that things would be better under your stewardship.

Apparently we were wrong! The Grenfell inquiry heard how the existence of only one staircase hampered the rescue attempts, and endangered the lives of brave firefighters.

Yet, here we are, watching in horror, as a tower twice the height of Grenfell; and a second tower, nearby almost as high, is erected in our midst!

These towers, and the accompanying buildings will have 500 flats, 1,000 people at least. Imagine the panic if a fire breaks out halfway up one of these towers.

The residents of Grenfell Tower were told that their homes were safe, that they complied with all the building regulations. Their concerns were met with contempt by the local authority supposed to act in their interests – a Conservative council.

Here we have a Labour council, and a Labour Mayor of London. Are these people acting in our interests? Clearly not! We feel just as the Grenfell residents felt prior to the fire that killed 72 of them – ignored and shoved aside.

You have ruled that, in the future, all buildings more than 30 metres high must have two staircases. But what about buildings like this, which have already been given planning permission, but are not yet built? That tells me that you and the council are well aware that these buildings are dangerous, and yet, the build is going ahead!

After Grenfell, the council and the developers, along with manufacturers, felt the anger of survivors and of the community. Rightly, they were blamed for their part in that catastrophe. You, Mr Mayor, and the Labour councillors in Waltham Forest, will be blamed, make no mistake, if such a catastrophe should occur here in our town square.

● Find the online petition to local Labour MP Stella Creasy at [change.org](https://www.change.org/p/stop-construction-on-freestanding-monster-blocks-in-walthamstow-town-square) – 'Pause construction on freestanding monster blocks in Walthamstow town square'

Sunak's reckless North Sea licences a recipe for further climate chaos



PHOTO: GARY BEMBRIDGE/CC

LUCAS GRANT
ABERDEEN SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND

Rishi Sunak's government has approved 100 new licences for oil and gas exploration, primarily within the fuel-rich North Sea. Environmental groups and opposition parties have been quick to criticise such a move, with the Green Party calling it "utterly reckless" and as leaving a "long and destructive legacy". Sunak's multimillion-pound weekend home in Yorkshire was targeted by Greenpeace in protest, draping black fabric over it.

The Tories have justified these moves in energy strategy as an attempt to cease reliance upon "aggressors like Putin for our energy". Additionally however, Sunak holds that this move is still accounted for in the UK's net-zero energy strategy. In reality this move is a further invitation for international oil and gas to reap the benefits of the UK's natural resources and beneficial tax rates. Undoubtedly many in government will also benefit from these contracts either directly or indirectly.

Previously, prior to the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow 2021,

the Conservatives received over £400,000 through official channels just before the approval of North Sea well licences then. As in any situation of this character, large donations from benefiting parties often "expedite" the decision making of capitalist governments.

The reality of energy supply and the inextricably linked environmental crisis we find ourselves in is that capitalism cannot manage these problems effectively. A system that places greed and profit over the welfare of human life is not capable of this.

Alternative means of energy will only become dominant over fossil fuels when it truly becomes more profitable to do so, regardless of the impact on the environment. For example, BP invested eleven times more into oil and gas than low-carbon energy in the last quarter.

A move like this under capitalism, as we have seen with other environmental policies, workers and working class communities as a whole are only an afterthought. The Scottish government's introduction of Low Emission Zones with a two-year grace period will undoubtedly impact the ability of working-class families to access city centres for work or any other reason.

A move to alternative energy will likely result in large numbers of layoffs for energy workers despite possessing skills that could be transferred with additional training. Allowing the international billionaire class to control this industry will always leave workers secondary to profit.

The 'This is Rigged' protest group have taken direct action not just against oil and gas companies but also against the SNP-Green government's impotence on the question of the new licences. They rightly call for a workers-led transition to renewables.

Socialist Party Scotland and Young Socialists are open to discussing with This is Rigged about the most effective protest methods, including linking up with mass trade union action. And what programme can win the support of the wider working class on climate action.

Calling for a socialist alternative

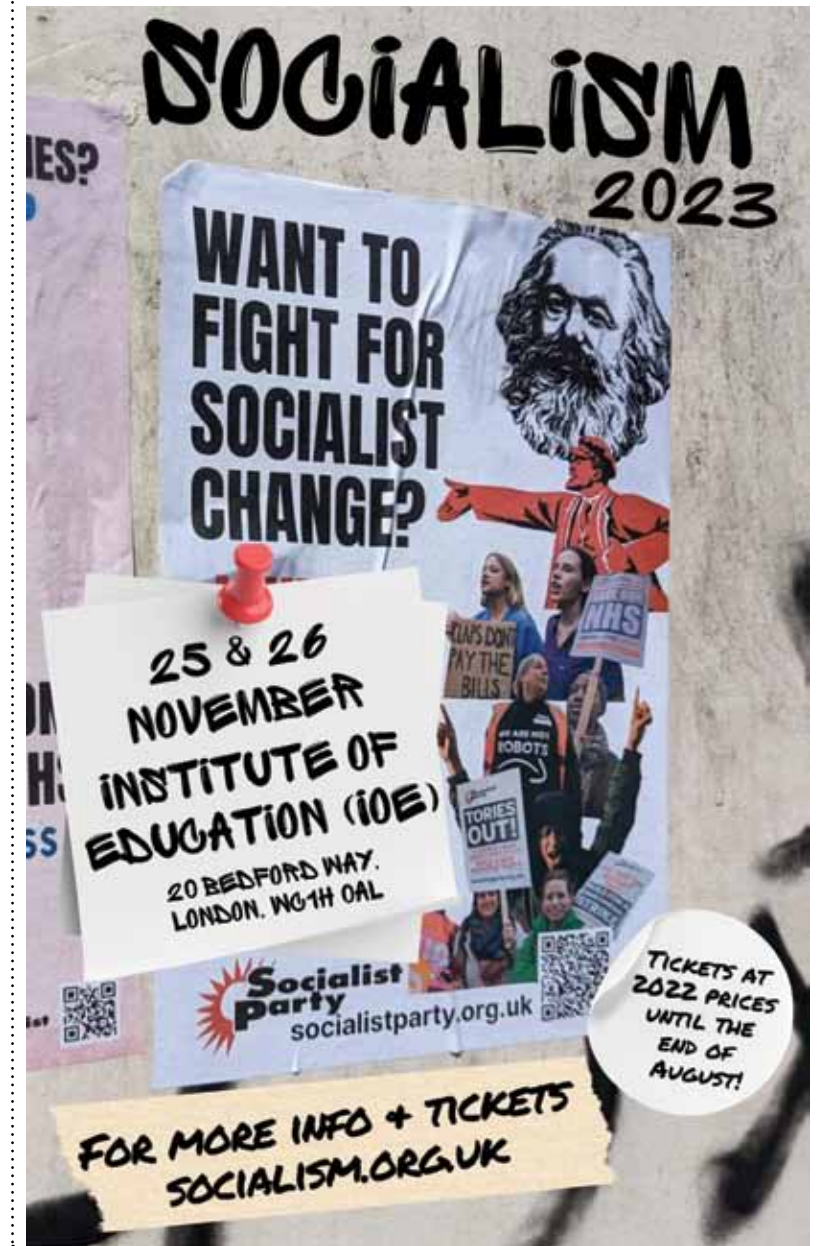
to capitalism is all the more essential given these developments. The corrupt profit-governed chaos of the capitalist system needs to be thrown out in its entirety and replaced by a socialist economy based upon the collective management of the economy by the working class.

Socialist Party Scotland calls for a workers-led socialist transition, democratically discussed and controlled by elected committees of workers in affected industries, that

guarantees better jobs and conditions in renewable energy.

Such a transition to renewable forms of energy protecting jobs and workers is only achievable through the nationalisation of the major energy companies.

Mobilising trade unions and workers into the creation of a new mass workers' party with a socialist programme is essential to bring about this and the socialist transformation of the economy.



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

The Socialist Party organises working-class people to fight against the attacks from this rotten system on our lives and livelihoods, and for a socialist alternative: a society which takes the

wealth out of the hands of the super-rich and is democratically run by working-class people to meet the needs of all not the profits of a few.

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

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

across the world. Our demands include:

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

- A £15-an-hour minimum wage for all, without exemptions. For the minimum wage to automatically increase linked to average earnings or inflation, whichever is higher.
- Share out the work. A maximum 32-hour working week with no loss of pay or worsening of conditions. The right to flexible working, under the control of workers not employers. An end to insecure working, for the right to full-time work for all who want it; ban zero-hour contracts.
- All workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness, parental and holiday rights from day one of employment. End bosses using bogus 'self-employment' as a means to avoid giving workers rights.
- No to austerity through inflation.
- For all wage rates to be automatically increased at least in line with price rises.
- Open the books of all companies cutting jobs or claiming they can't afford to pay a real living wage. State subsidies,

where genuinely needed, for socially-useful small businesses.

- For trade unions independent of the capitalist state, with members having democratic control over their own policies, constitutions and democratic procedures. For all trade union officials to be regularly elected, subject to recall by their members and paid a worker's wage.
- Reduce the state retirement and pension age to 55. For decent living pensions.
- Replace universal credit and the punitive benefit system with living benefits for all who need them.

PUBLIC SERVICES

- A massive expansion of public services including the NHS and council services. Reverse all the cuts, kick out the privateers. Bring private social care and childcare facilities into public ownership under democratic control, in order to provide free, high-quality services for all who need them. Expand services for all women suffering violence.
- For local councillors who are committed to opposing austerity and

all cuts to local services, jobs, pay and conditions.

- For a socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs, including dental and eye care – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out the private companies! Nationalise the pharmaceutical industry under democratic workers' control and management.
- Renationalise privatised utilities – including rail, mail, water, telecoms and power – under democratic workers' control and management.
- Free, publicly funded and democratically run, good-quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees and write off student debt, end marketisation, and introduce a living grant. No to academisation. For all schools to be under the genuine democratic control of local education authorities, school staff, parents and student organisations.
- The right to a safe secure home for all. For the mass building of genuinely affordable, high-quality, carbon-neutral council housing. For rent controls that cap

the level of rent. Fair rent decisions should be made by elected bodies of tenants, housing workers and representatives of trade unions. For cheap low-interest mortgages for home buyers. Nationalise the privately owned large building companies, land banks and estates.

ENVIRONMENT

- Prioritising major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels and nuclear power with renewable energy, and ending the problems of early obsolescence – where products are designed to 'wear out' and be replaced – and unrecycled waste.
- Nationalisation of the energy companies, under democratic workers' control and management, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need, in order to carry out a major switch to clean, green energy, without any loss of jobs, pay or conditions.
- A democratically planned, massively expanded, free to use, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.
- For a major, publicly funded,

insulation and energy transition plan for existing housing stock.

- Agrusiness to be taken into democratic public ownership. For a food processing and retail industry under workers' control to ensure that standards are set by consumers, small farmers, and all workers involved in the production, processing, distribution and retail of food.

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

- For united working-class struggle to end discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice and oppression.
- Repeat 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.

and activists from workplaces, and community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, socialist political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations!
- Take the wealth off the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and

management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need, not to the fat cats.

- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the EU bosses' club. Organise a campaign with European socialists and workers' organisations to use the talks on post-Brexit relations to tear up the EU pro-capitalist rules. For a real collaboration of the peoples of Europe on a socialist basis as a step towards a socialist world.

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

- 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!



LGBTQ+ youth angry about everything

● Swindon Pride – “Can I vote for you?”

SCOTT HUNTER
SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The event attracted hundreds of people of all ages, including many young LGBTQ+ people, and their supportive families.

When we introduced ourselves as members of the Socialist Party, a common response was: “Can I vote for you?” The complete alienation from the main capitalist political parties was a recurring theme in our discussions.

We found an excellent response amongst the crowd. Many people – especially youth – liked our programme for LGBTQ+ rights, and how these struggles could be linked to a broader movement for the socialist transformation of society.

Naturally, the LGBTQ+ youth we talked to were also concerned about housing, the NHS, jobs and education. The front page of the Socialist – ‘Health before profit: Kick private vultures out of the NHS’ – got a good response from several NHS workers at the event.

We had no trouble raising the idea of a new mass workers’ party, because the idea was already popular! And there were plenty of opportunities to talk about the Trade Union



London Black Pride LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), and what can be done to put up an electoral challenge to the Tories and Starmer’s Labour.

We distributed hundreds of leaflets, raised £109 for our campaigns, including 34 people who bought a copy of the Socialist.

● London Black Pride

JAY COWARD
SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

2023 has brought an unsettlingly high number of prominent attacks on Black LGBTQ+ people. Because of this, however, the reception to the Socialist Party’s demand at London Black Pride for a political alternative and a new mass workers’ party, was overwhelmingly positive.

Throughout the seven hours we spent there, it was a regular occurrence for queues to build up at the Socialist Party stall of people wanting to talk to us. We took the details of 87 people that wanted to know more about the Socialist Party.

We raised over £100 for our campaigns from donations, including from 40 people who bought a Socialist paper. And two people bought ‘Socialist Democracy’ – the paper of our sister party in Nigeria, the Democratic Socialist Movement.

The openness, eagerness and positivity of Black Pride showed that, along with hurt and insecurity, there is an ever-growing willingness to fight back and support for what the Socialist Party is fighting for too.



Swindon Pride SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY



Leicester

East Midlands youth fight for decent jobs and pay

SEAMUS SMYTH

EAST MIDLANDS SOCIALIST PARTY YOUTH ORGANISER

Over the summer, young socialists in the East Midlands have been campaigning against the cost-of-living crisis.

In Northampton, youth unemployment is considered low – 2.4%. But on our campaign stalls, young people have told us of their frustration around precarious employment, and the lack of decent working hours, terms and conditions.

While most young people are in work, there’s been a huge increase of Universal Credit claimants. One person came up to our stall anxious about the fact that they need to find another job, on top of the one that they already have, just to keep afloat. Like everywhere else

in the country, this is becoming the norm.

In Leicester, youth unemployment is slowly rising. In a pitiful response, Leicester City Council – which is controlled by Labour – has forced cuts to essential youth employment services, such as the ‘Get Inspired Youth Employment Hub’, even though the council has over £200 million in reserves.

Young Socialists campaigns to end job insecurity and low pay. We have meetings every fortnight in Leicester city centre.

We’re also campaigning throughout the rest of the region, linking young workers in building a mass campaign which fights for decent pay, jobs and homes for all. And the way to permanently win those things is to fight for a socialist transformation of society.

Sheffield council ignores residents to privatise free space

LEAH BYATT

SHEFFIELD SOUTH EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

The Socialist Party is involved with the campaign to save Hillsborough Park’s ‘multi-use games area’ from Sheffield City Council’s proposal to build a for-profit ‘activity hub’ on the current space. The plan would see the area significantly reduced in size, with its free-to-use space replaced by chargeable sports activities.

Community group Friends of Hillsborough Park raised concerns and created an online petition to garner the support of the community in standing against this privatisation of a well-used public space.

The council – a coalition of Labour, Greens and Lib Dems – claims that the proposal has the support of the majority of the community. Yet

their various misleading surveys have amassed a total of 571 supporters. Whereas, the petition against the council’s plans has almost 2,000 signatures!

Deliberately misleading

Concept images in the council’s consultation package do not match up to what is described in the plans, and many community members have described it as deliberately misleading.

Many community groups who currently utilise the space have not been approached for consultation on the project, including local disability support groups who use the area almost daily.

Socialist Party members have supported the cause by regularly attending Friends of Hillsborough Park’s

monthly meetings and activities. And we campaign against the proposal at our regular Socialist Party stall in Hillsborough. There we have logged a further 100 signatures.

In the past week, Socialist Party members have distributed 1,000 Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) leaflets – funded by Friends of Hillsborough Park – directing readers to the petition, and the email addresses of relevant councillors to object to.

The council’s ‘charity trustee sub committee’ will decide on 4 September whether to give the project the go ahead. The online petition is running until that time.

But, regardless of the outcome, the Socialist Party will continue to fight for the protection of the park, and all public spaces across the city.



Sheffield Socialist Party campaigning to save Hillsborough Park from council cuts and privatisation SHEFFIELD SOUTH EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

Selling the Socialist
Just some of the events where the Socialist newspaper was sold in the past week...

● Staines – people’s views are changing

On the Socialist Party stall campaigning for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate in the Ashford Town by-election, a few people asked for our opinions on difficult questions.

One woman asked: “What will you do with all the immigrants?” But, we explained that “the people in boats you need to worry about aren’t immigrants in dinghies, but the capitalists in mega-yachts”.

Housing was the main issue we were campaigning about. But the conversations we had were indicative of a change in the mindset of working-class people.

Some people asked fundamental questions: “What is socialism?” Others asked more nuanced questions about how we would nationalise certain industries.

For me, the most important takeaway from the day was that many working-class people are aware that Labour aren’t the solution. When asking people why they voted Labour, they could give no reason other than: “They’re not the Tories”. They agreed with us that we need to build a new mass party that actually represents the interests of the working class.

We raised almost £70 for the Socialist Party’s campaigns. And 12 people bought a copy of the Socialist.

RYAN LYDDALL

SURREY SOCIALIST PARTY

● Read about Paul Couchman’s campaign in Staines – see ‘By-elections: Back the TUSC challenge’ at socialistparty.org.uk

● Plymouth – working-class communities neglected

Socialist Party members held a series of simultaneous campaign stalls across the city. From our usual city centre spot, to new locations.

Mutley Plain is a popular student area, and Devonport, near the naval dockyard. We want to reach into

areas severely neglected by local and national governments.

The effect that neglect has had on the people of Devonport was summed up by one man: “I don’t know why you are bothering out here”. The reaction soon warmed to us, however.

Hearing our slogan ‘kick out the Tories’, we met three new people interested in joining the Socialist Party. Similarly, on Mutley Plain, people who were unsure of who we were soon warmed to us when they came over to ask what we stand for.

In the city centre, we are a regular sight against the backdrop of the dead trees, destroyed by the previous Tory administration. It’s a constant reminder how little the Conservatives care about people’s opinions.

We regularly get a thumbs up and approval for our message of kicking out the Tories. But, increasingly, more people are beginning to appreciate that Labour are no better. And that what we need is a real alternative to stand up for workers’ rights.

This attitude was encapsulated by one man who donated generously to the Socialist Party fighting fund, and said: “Thank you for keeping up the fight”. Which we fully intend to do.

ALEX SAMPSON

PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

● Worktop – save Wilko jobs

Hundreds of local jobs are threatened by Wilko closure. People coming to the Socialist Party stall were quite concerned over the news that Wilko’s – its HQ is based in Worktop – had gone into administration, with 400 stores and 12,500 jobs at risk.

Lots of people signed our Socialist Party ‘Save Wilko jobs’ petition. We raised £36 for the Socialist Party’s campaigns, 21 people bought a Socialist paper.

The article in the Socialist said Wilko’s finance books should be opened to trade union inspection. And that the company should be nationalised – under democratic workers’ control – to save jobs if necessary.

PAUL TOOLEY-OKONKWO AND JON DALE

MANSFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

● See ‘Wilko collapse: demand nationalisation’ at socialistparty.org.uk

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Oscar Parry (second left) campaigning with the Socialist Party MARTIN REYNOLDS

Why I joined the Socialist Party

I’m convinced that socialist ideas can be successful

OSCAR PARRY

SOUTH WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

I joined the Socialist Party following my disillusionment with the Labour Party’s treatment of Jeremy Corbyn after the 2017 election. Seeing the vicious attacks on him from Labour’s bureaucracy convinced me that Labour is firmly in the control of right wingers who are not interested in what the membership wants.

Starmer’s centralisation of power, and banning of any remaining socialist voices, has led to a membership drop of 170,000. There are plenty more people like me!

I was still hesitant about joining the Socialist Party after attending a few branch meetings. But after participating in a national trade union demonstration with the Socialist Party, I saw the appetite for our ideas, and support for the programme among union activists and the public.

I then realised that the reasons we have discussed on political theory and history is so we can understand

where our ideas come from, and draw lessons from the struggles of workers and young people around the world, and historically.

The Socialist Party’s attention to developing the confidence of members is very impressive. We are always encouraged to take the next step. Whether it’s speaking for the first time at a branch meeting or even at a national event.

The effect of this on new members like me has been dramatic. From not feeling confident enough to speak in a branch meeting, I can now make a 20-minute speech in front of hundreds of people!

The real sense of democracy at national events, like Socialism 2022, is palpable. Hearing how members from all areas of the party can have a real say in deciding the best approach, and discussing the programme, is inspirational. And we bring that sense of democracy into the campaigns we’re involved in, like the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN).

All contributions from comrades

Come to a Socialist Party meeting near you

The Socialist Party has regular meetings in towns and cities across the country.

If you would like to participate:
● Go to socialistparty.org.uk
● Or text 07761 818206 with your name and postcode.

young and old, new members and seasoned veterans are all valued and discussed equally. I’ve learnt more about the party’s history as Militant, and its leadership of the successful anti-poll tax movement, which brought down hated Tory prime minister Margaret Thatcher. This, and our current role, attempting to influence trade union conferences and pressuring union leaderships leftwards, convinced me that our ideas can play a major role in national politics.

Meeting members from all over the world, who are part of the Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI), and getting a real update on the political situation in different countries has been amazing.

Anyone who supports socialist policies should join the Socialist Party today, it will change your life!

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Iraq: Officials accused of stealing \$2.5 billion of public money flee to the West

JOE FATALLAH

On 5 August, the government of Iraq called for the extradition from the UK and US of four former officials accused of embezzling over \$2.5 billion of public money between September 2021 and August 2022, in one of the worst cases of corruption in the history of the country.

Five companies cashed 247 different cheques written by state employees, and the funds were then withdrawn from the company accounts. Most of the business owners concerned have also fled Iraq. Interpol red notices have already been issued for three of the suspects. These are Raed Jouhi, cabinet director for former prime minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, Ahmed Najati, al-Kadhimi's personal secretary, and Ali Allawi, who held the offices of finance minister and deputy prime minister. Jouhi and Najati hold American citizenship, while Allawi is a dual British national. The final suspect Mushrik Abbas, al-Kadhimi's media advisor, is believed to be in the United Arab Emirates.

Corruption is endemic at the top of Iraqi society. Former president Barham Salih claimed in 2021 that \$150 billion of money from the oil industry had been illegally exported from the country since the US-led invasion in 2003. Transparency International's corruption perception index scored Iraq 157th out of 180th countries ranked, with one being the least corrupt.

US president George Bush led the invasion of Iraq as part of the so-called 'War on Terror', but it was clear that US imperialism's main objective was to guarantee lucrative contracts to American companies in the oil industry, as well as in 'reconstruction' and private security. To achieve this, it was necessary to push political figures to the forefront who would co-operate in this process. Nouri al-Maliki was handpicked as prime minister in 2006 with close US

involvement, including an interview with the CIA! Almost by definition the occupying forces had to create a new corrupt political class in Iraq.

Since the invasion and occupation, Iraq has suffered from chronic political instability, with sectarian parties, representing different sections of the capitalist elite, vying for power. Current prime minister Mohammed Shia Al Sudani is the 7th since the most recent incarnation of the country, the Republic of Iraq, was founded in 2004. This series of corrupt, pro-capitalist regimes has offered nothing but insecurity and poverty to working-class Iraqis. In the period between 2014-17, much of the country's territory was overrun by Islamic State.

The Iraqi working class has a proud history of struggle. In the 1950s, the trade union movement played a key role in the overthrow of the British-backed monarchy, bringing to power the left-wing government of Abd al-Karim Qasim, which introduced reforms improving the lives of working and middle-class Iraqis.

For many years Iraq had one of the best organised, most powerful working classes in the Arab world, especially based in and around the oil industry. Iraqi trade unions are the only major institution in the country not split along religious-sectarian lines.

To escape from this impasse of instability and deep-rooted corruption, these traditions need to be rediscovered and built on, to fight for a socialist Iraq run by and for the working class, without corruption, poverty, and political repression.

Wildfires devastate Maui, Hawaii – capitalist climate chaos to blame



Maui community of Lahaina burned by wildfire PHOTO: STATE FARM/CC



SCOTT HUNTER

Over 100 people have died, with many more still unaccounted for, as wildfires have raged across the island of Maui, Hawaii, making this recent disaster the deadliest wildfire in the United States in a century. Thousands more have been displaced, their homes burnt to the ground. The infrastructure of the island has been severely damaged, leaving many without electricity or other basic amenities.

The area of Hawaii affected by wildfires has quadrupled in recent decades, as the effects of profit-driven climate change have made the climate both hotter and drier. This recent disaster is the result of a 'perfect storm', where vegetation - desiccated by drought - caught light and the winds brought by Hurricane Dora over the Pacific spread the flames with unprecedented speed. The public services on the island were under-equipped to deal with a fire on this scale. With only about 65 firefighters across the island and too few fire engines, they were especially unprepared for the fires to spread so quickly to urban areas.

Meanwhile, President Biden has already warned of a 'long recovery' for the island. Rebuilding alone is estimated to cost upwards of \$5 billion. Already, displaced residents have

reported receiving calls from 'investors' and property speculators offering to buy their land - of course, for a fraction of its worth. In Hawaii, land is at a premium and property developers make massive profits building holiday resorts with little to nothing going to local people.

Maui is not the only place to be affected by natural disasters this year. Record high temperatures have recently gripped Southern Europe and North Africa, which have experienced their own wildfires with Canada now joining them. The effects of the apocalyptic floods in Pakistan last year are still being felt by tens of millions. All throughout the world, the effects of climate change are becoming increasingly severe: extreme weather events and natural disasters are becoming more commonplace and are affecting places where they were previously unknown.

Not only is capitalism the driver of the climate change but it is also incapable of preparing adequately for the natural disasters that result from climate change. We have the science to tell us which areas are at risk of extreme weather but, in a world gripped by capitalist crisis, the world trend over the last few decades has been to cut public services. Driven by profit, the capitalist class - and the nation states they have built to serve their interests - will only maintain emergency services like firefighting and flood prevention at a 'bare

minimum' level, enough to deal with the expected but unwilling to invest any more, with the logic that there's no point in spending any more than they must 'on the off chance'.

It is not any of the polluting companies or super-rich capitalists which will pay for this disaster, but the people of Maui, who face the prospect of losing their homes and livelihoods for years waiting for rebuilding, or selling their land at a fraction of its value to try and mitigate a little of their losses.

By nationalising the energy companies and big polluters, under democratic workers' control, a rapid transition to renewable energy could be achieved, with retraining or alternative employment without loss of income for workers in fossil fuel industries. By taking the vast wealth off the super-rich and taking the commanding heights of the economy into democratic public ownership, public services could be fully funded not just for their day-to-day activities but to guard against the worst of natural disasters and mitigate as far as possible the existing effects of climate change. All the resources of the economy could be allocated according to need rather than greed, so areas affected by the fallout of climate change could recover swiftly with rebuilding efforts democratically controlled by local residents and trade unions. In short: we need socialist change to end climate change!



Martin Luther King's life and legacy 60 years after his 'I have a dream' speech

28 August marks the 60th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington by the US civil rights movement, at which Martin Luther King made his famous 'I have a dream' speech. To mark the anniversary, we republish a shortened version of an article about Martin Luther King, written by April Ashley, Unison national executive council, black members rep (female) (personal capacity), and originally published in the Socialist in April 2018 to mark the 50th anniversary of his assassination.

Martin Luther King Junior was shot and killed on 4 April 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee, while supporting striking sanitation workers.

He is now portrayed as a safe, noble and worthy figure in order to blunt his quite radical message, but at the time of the civil rights movement he was hated and feared by the Democratic Party in government.

The Democratic Party attempts to perpetuate the myth that it is the party of civil rights and that there is a straight historical line from Martin Luther King to Barack Obama. But King's radical vision and legacy is a world away from the capitalist establishment of the Democratic Party.

King, a Baptist minister, was the most important leader of the civil rights movement.

One-third of the southern protest leaders were preachers. The churches were the only places where the Black community could freely congregate, and where all the issues facing Black workers and youth were discussed. That is why non-violence was the main strategy adopted in the early period of the civil rights movement.

Radical

But King's advocacy of mass non-violent civil disobedience was radical and courageous at that time, in contrast to the more moderate leadership of the traditional Black organisation NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) which focused on legal action.

King and his organisation - the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) - organised mass demonstrations and boycotts against racial segregation, for voting rights and equality of employment. Black people faced down police attack dogs, fire hoses, police beatings, mass jailing of students, death threats and bombings.

The mass movement caught fire across the whole of the southern states. The struggle in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963 was a key battle with up to 3,000 students jailed as they continued the battle on the streets.

Peaceful protesters being savagely attacked was seen live by millions of viewers on the TV. It shocked the

nation and inspired the black freedom struggle in the northern cities.

It was pressure from the mass movement below that prompted the Democratic governments under John F Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson to pass civil rights legislation banning racial discrimination in voting and public facilities.

This was a triumph for King and the whole civil rights movement after years of struggle. As King said in his letter from Birmingham jail: "We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed."

King had many discussions with John F Kennedy on civil rights for black workers, and tried working within the confines of the Democratic Party to affect change. But this was ineffectual. It was the mass demonstrations like the march on Washington for jobs and freedom where King delivered his iconic 'I have a dream' speech at the Lincoln memorial in 1963, which forced change.

But the civil rights movement didn't just stop in the Southern states and King's ideas were evolving.

Black migration

King travelled to northern cities where the generation of black workers who migrated to the north in the 1920s and 1940s, especially after World War Two, to escape the rural poverty, white supremacy violence and Jim Crow (discriminatory laws), still faced segregation, police violence, poor housing, mass unemployment and poverty.

There were huge uprisings in Watts (Los Angeles), New York, Detroit and every major city with black workers struggling for freedom against racial discrimination and poverty. The movement raged across cities from the mid-1960s to early 1970s and evolved into the 'Black Power' movement.

King's tactic of non-violent civil disobedience was questioned by the many black workers and particularly black youth facing horrific police brutality. The Black Power movement was also inspired by the movements against colonial oppression and imperialism in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Black Power movement with people like Malcolm X, the Black Panther Party, and the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) provoked intense debate in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) on the questions of integration, consumerism, capitalism, imperialism, militarism and war.

The time spent in northern cities among radicalised workers and young people and their anti-war mood had a profound effect on King.

King eventually came out against the Vietnam War, which put him in conflict with the Democratic Party

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE/2003 AFP/CC



which had started the war and continued it under the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.

King was deeply disturbed by the increasing death toll of US soldiers and recognised that black soldiers were disproportionately placed in combat units. Between January and November 1966 almost 25% of army casualties were Black. In addition, half a billion dollars were diverted from community action programmes to war spending in Vietnam.

This was a huge break with the Democratic Party. The mass media, which now lauds him, denigrated and hounded him for demanding the withdrawal of American troops. President Johnson referred to him as "that goddam nigger preacher."

King's anti-war activism deepened

his radicalism and he began to question capitalism.

He said in August 1967: "We must ask the question: 'Why are there 40 million poor people in America?' And when you begin to ask that question, you are raising a question about the economic system, about a broader distribution of wealth. When you ask that question, you begin to question the capitalistic economy."

He increasingly began to turn his attention to problems of economic justice and inequality - as, although there was no longer formal segregation, the condition of black workers was still abject poverty. He believed a serious battle against poverty and oppression was necessary.

In 1968, King launched the Poor People's Campaign. He hoped to go around the country assembling

a "multiracial army of the poor" to march on Washington to abolish poverty in the US and internationally, and demand that the money being spent on the Vietnam War be redirected to provide jobs and income for the poor.

The Memphis sanitation workers' strike of 1968 epitomised the struggle for economic justice - to end the poverty wages earned by working people. As King said: "What does it profit a man to be able to eat at an integrated lunch counter if he doesn't have enough money to buy a hamburger?"

King politically and organisationally understood the link between the labour and civil rights movements. The 'captains of industry' and big business opposed both labour and civil rights, holding down wages and violently attacking strikes for union representation and better working conditions.

The US capitalist class and their political representatives have always used racism and sexism to divide the working class and deny human rights, economic justice, and social mobility to the black masses, immigrants, and women.

It was during the sanitation workers' strike after a demonstration through the city that King was shot dead on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel.

It was a severe blow and the mass movement was not sustained either by the official reformist civil rights organisations or by the Black Panther Party, which as well as being subject to brutal oppression and assassinations by the FBI, made strategic mistakes.

Black Lives Matter

Today, Black young people in the US have continued the black freedom movement through the Black Lives Matter (BLM) demonstrations.

Black workers still suffer high levels of unemployment, poverty and low-wage jobs, and poor housing. 50 years after the assassination of Martin Luther King and after a black US president, little has changed for the overwhelming majority of Black youth and workers.

The BLM movement has emulated the mass civil disobedience of the civil rights movement of 1950s and 1960s and the movement has been echoed internationally. But its programme is limited.

It needs to go further and draw some of the same conclusions of Martin Luther King that in order to seriously challenge structural racism and racist attitudes we need to build a mass movement of all those exploited and oppressed by capitalism. We need to create a new society that can end poverty and discrimination, a socialist society.

● Read April's original article 'The life and legacy of Martin Luther King' at socialistparty.org.uk

ANGRY AT WORK? ORGANISE AND FIGHT BACK!



Hospitality workers strike back! PHOTO: SCOTT JONES

JOHN WILLIAMS
UNITE WALES YOUTH COMMITTEE AND DELEGATE
TO UNITE HOSPITALITY COMBINE (PERSONAL
CAPACITY)

Angry at work? Then get organised and join a union!

That's what supporters of Youth Fight for Jobs have been calling for in our campaign on the streets of Cardiff.

Over the summer, hospitality and fast-food venues have been even busier, and the industry is already stretched to its limit due to labour shortages. And this means exploitation will continue to be rife. Recently, a toxic culture of sexual assault, harassment, racism and bullying

has been alleged by more than 100 current and former McDonald's workers, and this will just be the tip of the iceberg. But the best thing to do is to join a union, so workers can collectively challenge attitudes and make sure workplaces are safe from vile behaviour.

We've heard from many hospitality workers that the bosses think they can get away with anything. Deleting or changing the time of shifts with no consultation whatsoever, being told to go home early (but not being paid), holiday days being used for wages to save hours. There was even a case where somebody was forced to stay on longer, who missed her last train home, so had to fork out more than a day's wages

for a hotel for the night! It's clear that rogue bosses think bullying and unfair behaviour is acceptable. But many workers are saying enough is enough.

In Cardiff for example, as previously reported in the Socialist, the Glee club has 80% union membership, and is still facing a union-busting campaign, (even though the courts have ruled in favour of the union). And in Glasgow, The 13th Note Café workers took action with the first bar strike in Scotland in over 20 years.

We've had a positive response from young and precarious workers in Cardiff, who work in a broad range of workplaces, and are just beginning to think that something

needs to change. As part of a summer campaign, a public meeting was organised on 23 August. Speakers included bar workers, fast-food workers, recent graduates, students and leading trade unionists such as the secretary of the local trades council - bringing together all the local disputes and campaigns. There are outstanding issues that we need to tackle head on, and part of that is building the trade unions, and it needs more young people involved everywhere!

Youth Fight for Jobs says:

- End low pay. For trade union struggle for a £15-an-hour minimum wage. Abolish youth rates

- End job insecurity and underemployment. Scrap zero-hour contracts
- Establish democratically elected workplace committees to oversee tips, rotas, and workplace safety
- Provide free transport for workers coming to and from work
- Labour councils should refuse to implement Tory cuts, and instead pass no-cuts, 'needs budgets', which include the reinstatement and improvement of bus services so that workers can get home safely
- Make the 1% pay for the cost-of-living crisis - for democratic public ownership of major industries so they can be run in the interests of the 99%, not the bosses