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# the Socialist

Issue 1241

7-13 September 2023

formerly **Militant**



# Everything's crumbling

# TORIES OUT!

PHOTO: MARCO BERNARDINI/CC

# Fight for a new mass workers' party

ALEX GILLHAM  
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

**S**everely underfunded schools built with aerated concrete have been told to close due to dangers of building collapse (see page 5). Other vital services across the UK continue to crumble due to decades of cuts and rampant privatisation, carried out by Tory-led governments and New Labour before them.

State schools, faced with a funding crises due to rocketing energy bills and cuts, are on their knees, and it is often low-paid support staff, needed to educate our children, who face the axe.

A similar situation can be seen across all of the UK's public services. The NHS, once seen as the best healthcare system in the world, has been torn apart by Tory austerity. Many services have been cut and privatised beyond recognition. The UK's lifeline is in permanent crisis.

Firefighter numbers are down by over 20% since 2010, and fire and rescue demands are at an all-time high as the climate crisis deepens.

Over 1.2 million people are on council housing waiting lists and so-called affordable homes are being built at a pitiful rate.

Social care services, essential for protecting the most vulnerable in society, are also woefully neglected (see page 4). One-in-five adults in the UK are classed as unpaid carers, unable to access the qualified services they need.

The truth is, the UK is the sixth wealthiest country in the world, with the resources needed to ensure a comfortable life for all, supported by well-funded public services. But that wealth is in the wrong hands - in the banks and coffers of big businesses, who put profit above all else.

On offer from the vultures in the Tory party: more cuts and pain. But Sir Keir Starmer and the Labour Party also offer no solution, U-turning on a weekly basis on pledges for further funding.

There have been strikes in many of these public services, as workers from teachers to civil servants and nurses have fought for the pay and resources needed. Overworked junior doctors and consultant doctors will continue their strikes for pay (see page 7).

The only way to reverse the collapse of UK public services and rebuild our crumbling infrastructure is building a strong workers' movement willing and able to take action to defend jobs, pay and conditions, and fight for full funding and to end privatisation. And a mass workers' party to fight for these demands, armed with a socialist programme, so we can have the public services we so desperately need.

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

# Come to Socialism 2023

## Buy your tickets now

There's just a few days left to get your Socialism 2023 tickets at early-bird prices!

There is nowhere better place to be on the 25 and 26 November. Join hundreds of other working-class fighters and socialist activists in London, coming together to draw on shared experiences and hammer out how best to organise and fight for every possible gain for the working class, and struggle for socialist change worldwide.

Mass protests and strikes, and revolutionary opportunities, are the new normal. As is the increasing polarisation and fracturing of the capitalist world riddled with debt, stagflation and crises. The ruling class see no way out except on the backs of the working class.

That's why we have to be the best prepared and armed with ideas, programme and tactics, to stop them in their tracks.

110 years ago, the Bolshevik Party was formed, it went on to lead the working class to take power in Russia in 1917. 100 years ago, Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky launched the

fight against Stalinist degeneration of the new workers' state by forming the Left Opposition. 40 years ago, Britain's miners began their epic strike against Thatcher's attacks, and Liverpool's socialist city council took shape. Socialism 2023 will draw on the lessons from all these events, using the tools of Marxism - Marxist economics and dialectics - to prepare how to defeat the Tory anti-union laws, help save the NHS, fight climate change with socialist change, and make sure working-class people get a voice in the next general election.

As well as the annual rally for socialism on the Saturday night, this year will have two Sunday closing rallies to send everyone off back the fight; one on the struggles of students and young people taking place today, and the other on the fight for a workers' list at the next general election.

- Don't miss it!
- Buy your tickets now, visit [socialistparty.org.uk/product/socialism-tickets/](http://socialistparty.org.uk/product/socialism-tickets/)
- 2022 prices valid until midnight 10 September

# Tories 'doing a fucking good job' destroying our services

Tory education secretary Gillian Keegan asks ITV cameras, thinking recording has stopped: "Does anyone ever say: do you know what, you've done a fucking good job?"

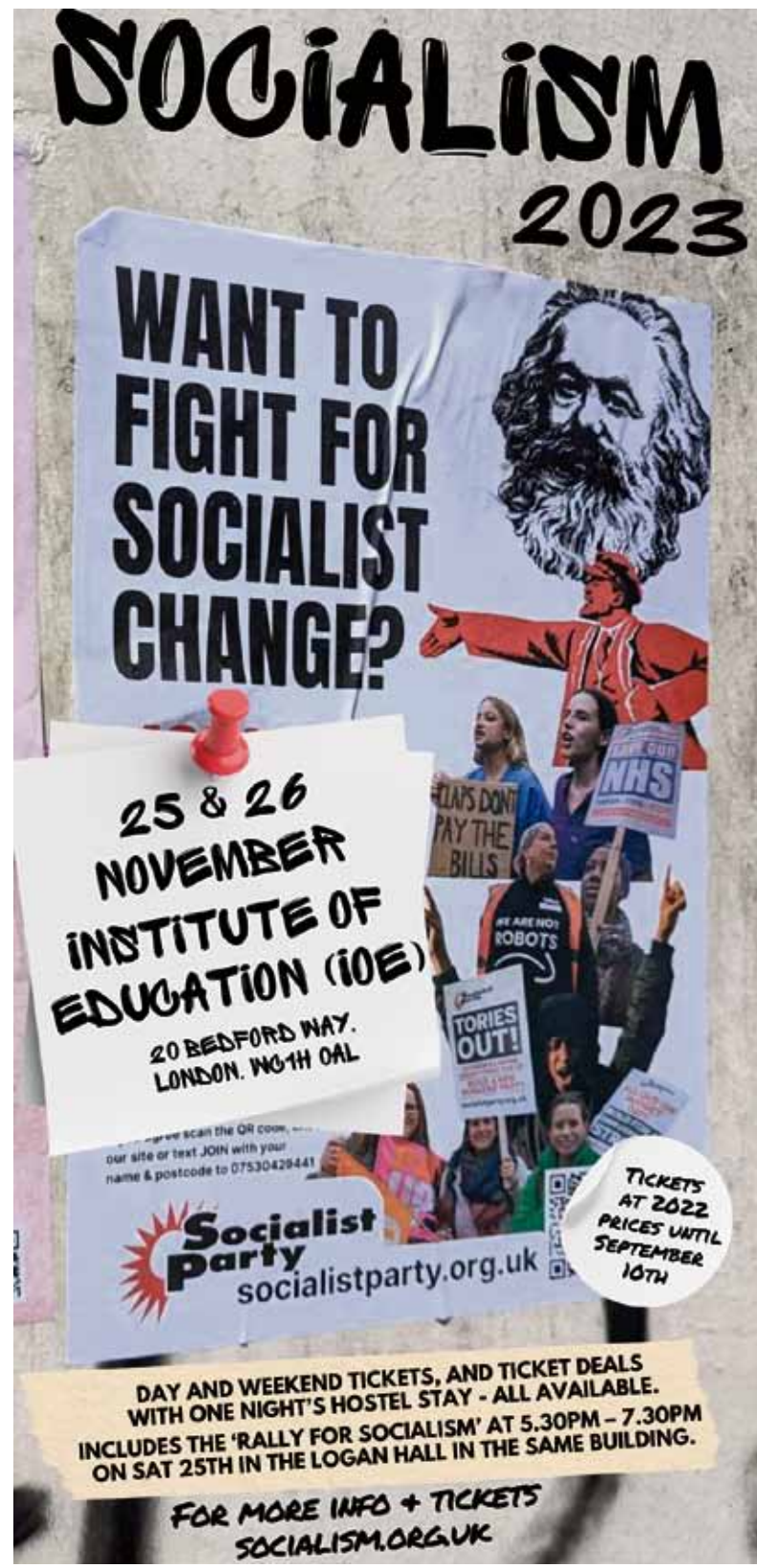
No. But when Socialist Party members campaign in working-class communities, there are plenty of other ruder expletives reserved for the Tories. And plenty of ordinary people telling us about what a good job teachers, NHS staff and others do, and how they deserve a decent pay rise.

Keegan ends her rant: "Because everyone else has sat on their arse and done nothing - no signs of that no?"

For a start, school staff working all weekend to deal with the RAAC crisis, and parents scrambling to find last-minute childcare, have been busy enough! But it is highly likely that job is aimed at her Tory Party colleagues. Like our public services and buildings, the Conservative Party is falling apart too.



Gillian Keegan and Rishi Sunak sat on their arses PHOTO: UK GOVERNMENT/CC



# Electricity companies manipulate the grid to charge us more

An innocuous sounding 'balancing mechanism' tool used by the privately owned National Grid and passed on by electricity companies is actually a 'manipulative tactic' designed to drive up profits and charge us more for our bills.

Under the balancing mechanism, the National Grid gets paid varying rates for turning output up or down, on a minute-by-minute basis. The cost of this system is ultimately borne by bill payers via 'network costs' included on bills.

Daily balancing costs hit a record of £60 million on a single day in November 2021, while the total annual balancing cost paid for by consumers reached £3.1 billion during that financial year.

Ofgem is now threatening fines

of up to 10% of revenues if the practice is continued - this doesn't mean we're going to see an end to it though, and 10% of mega-profits is hardly punishment.

We need to own and control the energy sector - both energy operators and providers - by nationalising all these private companies under democratic workers' control and ownership, to stop the rip-off in accessing this basic need.



# TUC: PREPARE MASS ACTION AGAINST ANTI-UNION ATTACKS

- For a weekend union-organised demo
- Strike together to defend unions and workers sanctioned



## WHAT WE THINK

This year's Trades Union Congress (TUC) in Liverpool, beginning 10 September, will take place at a critical stage. The Tories have, before the parliamentary summer recess, passed into law their latest tranche of anti-union legislation, the brutal Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) (MSL) Act. It has the power to open unions up to heavy financial damages if they don't comply with the law, as well as exposing striking workers to the clear risk of dismissal.

Union reps and members, including the hundreds of thousands who have been taking action in the growing strike wave, will be looking to Congress for a fighting strategy to defeat this new Tory attack on the right to strike and inflict a decisive defeat on Sunak's government. Many times over the last decade or so, particularly in the fight against Tory austerity, union activists have demanded that the TUC becomes a 'council of war', but that is exactly what must happen now.

### Divided Tories

The MSL Act comes in a now very long line of Tory attacks on the right to strike - going back four decades to Thatcher's anti-union laws, and then followed by those of Major, Cameron and Johnson. But it would be a serious miscalculation of Sunak to imagine that he is acting from a position of power. In fact, the various attempts by the House of Lords to effectively neuter the bill, including by Tory peers, reflects the deep nervousness of more farsighted representatives of the capitalist establishment.

They are wary of provoking mass resistance, glimpsed in the tide of struggle that has developed over the last two years. The crises in the Tories, leading to three prime ministers in 2022, has been underpinned by the unrelenting cost-of-living squeeze that has been the main driver for the biggest, broadest and most persistent strike wave for a generation. In August 2020, in the depths of the Covid lockdown, the more-realistic RPI inflation was 0.5%, just over two



years later, it was over 14%. It is still almost double figures now with food inflation higher.

Shamefully, Cameron's vicious 2016 Trade Union Act passed into law virtually unchallenged by the trade union leaderships. Not one national Saturday demonstration was called, let alone any industrial action. Yet this was only five years after the TUC's 750,000-strong 26 March 2011 anti-austerity demonstration that led directly to the 30 November pensions strike of 29 unions, effectively a public sector general strike, against the same Cameron's attack on public sector workers' retirement rights and benefits. The strategy for that mass joint strike was discussed and set out at that year's Congress, which was lobbied by over 500 union reps and members.

The 2016 Trade Union Act stipulated that industrial action ballots would only be legal if the turnout was at least 50%. The Tories believed that the new law would make it virtually impossible for unions to win national

industrial action ballots, especially in the public sector, where hundreds of thousands of workers are grouped together in national agreements on pay, terms and conditions.

### Undemocratic thresholds smashed

The strike wave has dealt a fatal blow to that idea, with a whole range of strike ballots smashing through the threshold. Some unions have moved to disaggregate ballots in order to ensure that at least a significant amount of members can beat the 50% threshold and take action, although some unions have managed to get the necessary turnout in nationally aggregated votes. On Budget Day this March, an estimated 600,000 workers took strike action together.

But Cameron went on the offensive in a period when workers' struggle was at a historically low level. The stalling and eventual ending of the public sector pensions battle primarily by the right-wing union leaders of the TUC, Unison and the GMB,

which had the potential to inflict a huge defeat on Cameron, only emboldened the Tory-led coalition with the Lib Dems (after the 2010 hung parliament) to unleash the biggest austerity attack for nearly a century.

In 2015, when the Trade Union Bill was launched after that year's general election which gave Cameron a slim majority of ten seats, the number of working days lost due to industrial action was 170,000. It was the second-lowest annual total since records began in 1891.

However, this isn't the industrial calm that faces Sunak's divided, crisis-ridden administration. The latest figures from the Office for National Statistics show that in the six months between June and December 2022, nearly 2.5 million days were lost, with 843,000 being lost in December alone. This level of action has continued this year.

### TUC motions

There are motions on the TUC agenda from FBU, RMT, Unite, UCU and

NASUWT that, if passed, would set out much of the fighting strategy that is needed. The FBU and RMT call for a special Congress, a mass national demonstration and mass non-compliance. The FBU calls for this to include industrial action and "100% solidarity with any trade unions attacked under these MSL laws". The RMT motion demands that the TUC "organise a special Congress, size to be determined, to explore options for non-compliance and resistance."

Although not included in its TUC Congress motion, Unite passed a resolution at its July policy conference, moved by a Socialist Party member, calling for action on the scale of a 24-hour general strike against the MSL Act.

### Prepare mass action

The National Shop Stewards Network will be lobbying Congress to pass these motions. But the main points would then need to be put into action. Before the end of Congress, a date should be set for a national demonstration with a real campaign to build for it, linking the need to defend the right to strike to the persisting cost-of-living squeeze. There should be a process set out if any union or worker is threatened with action. This could include a solidarity demonstration outside the High Court, if a union is brought before it, or at a workplace if workers are threatened with the sack. This would be the platform for solidarity strike action. If the TUC refuses to undertake these steps, the fighting unions must take the lead that militant members of all unions would support.

But the fight against this pernicious law must also go onto the political plane. Correctly, all the motions call for an incoming Labour government to repeal this and other Tory anti-union legislation. But the RMT and FBU call for employers, devolved governments and local authorities to refuse to issue work notices. In particular, the FBU motion "calls on Labour-led local authorities, mayors, fire authorities and other public bodies to refuse to implement the MSL laws."

### Starmer's Labour

But given Starmer's constant policy retreats, shifting his New Labour further to the right, Labour can't be trusted to stand up for workers' rights, just as he wouldn't stand on our picket lines. The unions must build a political alternative with a clear programme of socialist public ownership instead of the profiteers, to fight for the pay rises we need and throw off the statute book the Tory anti-union laws. If such a party existed right now, it would raise the sights of workers, strengthen the strike wave and also act as a powerful lever on the Starmerites. It would also be a growing pole of attraction during the travails of a Starmer government.

This Congress could very well be the last before such a government is elected. It is certainly the one that must give a lead against this vicious legislation. The strike wave has won important victories and there have also been setbacks. But over this period, workers have shown that they are prepared to fight. They have learned the priceless lesson that whatever is won, more is gained through struggle. Now is the moment to organise that struggle and push back the Tory attack.



## Local government funding black hole real consequences

KATIE SIMPSON  
NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Working in a council-funded team, you cannot help but be acutely aware that such funding can be stripped away at a whim. Northampton will soon be losing Pause, a service dedicated to supporting women who have had children taken from them by social services. The initiative lost its bid for council funding despite overwhelmingly positive outcomes and a clear need in the local community.

This tightening of funds comes amid a £5.2 billion budget 'black hole' in local councils' finances, even after £2.5 billion of cuts this year. Once again, adult social care services are being hit hardest due to rising costs both from the cost-of-living crisis and the increase in demand for these services.

Labour chair of the Public Accounts Committee, Meg Hillier MP, has expressed alarm, but has presented no call for action against these cruel austerity measures that will leave more people without essential services. This will ultimately cost the government in the long-term with increased hospital visits and

## £5 billion deficit in local councils' budgets this year

999 call-outs, more criminal damage and fewer people able to access the workplace.

It is vulnerable people and their loved ones paying the price of a crisis caused, once again, by the wealthiest in society. Yet none of the main parties are able to represent ordinary people. Labour are always keen to point out the failings of the Tory Party but never willing to fight. Nowhere have Labour councils refused to implement cuts and campaign for the resources their constituents need.

The Socialist Party is part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition which campaigns against the cuts and has consistently put up candidates in council elections. Working-class socialists, trade unionists and activists, fighting for jobs, homes and services. Because if we don't who will?

## Unions must lead the struggle to transform care provision



Care workers striking in South Gloucestershire PHOTO: ROGER THOMAS

DAVE GORTON  
COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER NATIONAL SHOP  
STEWARDS NETWORK

Like June's Fabian Society report 'Support Guaranteed: The Roadmap to a National Care Service', commissioned by the Labour Party and trade union Unison (see 'Labour says social care will stay privatised' on www.socialistparty.org.uk), the Trades Unions Congress (TUC) report 'A strategy for the care workforce' identifies the horrendous state of social care in England. That it also covers childcare services will be welcomed by many children's workers who often feel left out of the discussion.

The report highlights:

- Over half a million hours of domiciliary care undelivered in spring 2023 due to lack of staff
- 40% of councils in England saw a spike in nursery closures in 2022, with 88% expecting more in 2023, citing workforce shortages as a key factor

- 28% of children with a social care worker parent are growing up in poverty
- In childcare, private providers account for 65% of all group-based providers and nearly a quarter of all provision

- Private providers deliver the majority of social care services, including 87% of care home beds for older people
- The significant increase in the role of private equity in care has led to "profit extraction" and reductions in staff pay and conditions

Care must be a public service, and not organised for private profit. These figures demonstrate how far removed we currently are from that - once a bedrock of the labour and trade union movement.

### TUC prescription

But having diagnosed the patient is suffering from the equivalent of a broken spine, the TUC recommends a sticking plaster to treat it!

The report calls on the government

to "Support local authorities to move towards public provision of social care and childcare wherever possible" (my emphases). The TUC calls for 'National Partnership Forums' in social care and childcare.

But how will these be enforced? In a 22-page report, there are 42 uses of the word 'should'. What we need is a programme and strategy - not just hope - for change!

An incoming Labour government has no intention of doing anything more than seek a "partnership" of national and local government with more than 10,000 mainly private providers, with little mechanism to force those private providers to comply.

Social care must be nationalised. The trade union movement needs to embrace and campaign on this demand. No partnership solution will suffice because the market listens to profit, not health and wellbeing. And the best place to start the campaign is amongst social care and childcare workers themselves in a huge push to unionise the sectors.

## Gifts and tax U-turns – Starmer's Labour looking to big business

RYAN LYDDALL  
SURREY SOCIALIST PARTY

Its not just the Tories, famously the party of tax cuts for the rich and big businesses, who are at it. The Labour Party has backtracked on its plans to increase digital service tax from 2% to 10% after receiving nearly £10,000 worth of gifts from Google and YouTube, reported by OpenDemocracy. The Labour Party had previously promised that they would use this tax increase to slash tax rates for small businesses - the value of the ditched policy was estimated to be worth as much as £3 billion.

Once again this policy proved to be nothing more than lip service as the

Labour Party has chosen to align itself with the interests of large corporations instead of the working class.

Current leader, Sir Keir Starmer, has received more freebies than the combined total of every other Labour leader since 1997. Starmer has received days at the races, tickets to eleven football matches (normally in exclusive executive suites), tickets to an Adele gig and Coldplay concerts - the combined value of Starmer's gifts totalling nearly £30,000. Starmer's predecessor Jeremy Corbyn accepted only one free ticket while Labour leader, and that was to attend Glas-tonbury, where he famously spoke on the main stage.

Starmer's willingness to accept all

these gifts has made it clear that the Labour Party is susceptible to corporate influence. It might look like Labour's policy can be sold to the highest bidder. Is this why it doesn't back the immediate nationalisation of Royal Mail and the railways, or scrapping all the anti-union laws? These are the policies of their trade union financial backers.

Well it is evident now more than ever that if workers and young people want a party that will represent our interests then we will have to build it ourselves. That's why the Socialist Party is making the case for unions to back workers' candidates to fight for socialist policies at a general election.

# Crumbling education system no longer a metaphor

EMILY  
TEACHER

Suddenly on 1 September, over 100 school closures were announced due to the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC), used to construct buildings between the 1950s-90s in Britain. RAAC is a cheaper alternative to concrete, filled with bubbles, and is at risk of crumbling. Where it has been used in schools and colleges, it jeopardises the safety of children, school staff and others. At the schools forced to close, education staff spent their Friday scrambling to empty classrooms in fear of collapse before the term began.

Once again, government failings have meant workers forced to rectify errors out of their control. Many teachers across the UK will have experienced working in classrooms with asbestos, no heating, broken windows, structural damage, and a concerning lack of resources and equipment.

In a press release, the National Education Union (NEU) blames the government's lack of investment in school buildings. Education

facilities across the country are in a "dire state of disrepair". The Tory government has failed to treat this issue with the urgency needed to ensure schools are safe for the beginning of the year and, as we go to press, still not having published the full list of schools with RAAC demanded by the NEU. Sunak says "extra money will be available" but this should come from the pockets of the super-rich, not paid for by cuts to our services!

So far 156 schools have been found to contain RAAC in England, meaning accommodations will have to be made for anyone planning to return to school. Many schools has delayed start dates, causing immense pressure for working and single-parent families. So far there has been no announcement on how to access free school meals while schools remain closed. For these families, the only meal on offer from the Tories is aerated concrete rubble!

The lack of concern from the government, putting cost-cutting and profit before safety, has caused the tragic loss of lives. Health and education staff have died from asbestos-caused mesothelioma, and combustible cladding led to the

More than a third of school buildings past their estimated design lifespan



Appleton school in Benfleet, one of the schools forced to close due to RAAC PHOTO: TREVOR HARRIS/CC

deaths of 72 people in the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

Who else is working in buildings at risk of collapse? Which hospitals, universities, and others have RAAC in them? All workers deserve to go to work not worrying if they are working in unsafe buildings, we need united action by unions to demand inspections are carried out and when they are, the results are

known and the repairs needed are paid for.

We need safety regulations drawn up by workers and unions themselves and remedial works should be under democratic oversight by school unions and parents. Nationalise the big construction and building firms under democratic workers' control to ensure the safety of building materials is put before the cheapest option.

1 in 10 pupils in buildings in need of repair or refurbish

## Schools at risk of collapse – union action to reverse decades of cuts

SEAN MCCAULEY  
FORMER NEU EXECUTIVE MEMBER

### NEU demanded publication of RAAC list for months

In May and June 2023, the National Education Union (NEU) called for the list of schools most at risk of collapse to be published. The government was forced, just a few days before the start of term, to announce that some or all of 104 schools' buildings are unsafe and cannot be used. They seemingly had to act after a beam collapse in a school building previously declared safe.

Initially, the government said it would not be covering the costs of emergency temporary accommodation or additional transport, but it U-turned less than 24 hours later in the face of outrage from unions, heads, staff and parents.

### A risk to life known for more than a year

In June, the government raised the risk alert level over school buildings collapsing, from "critical - likely" to

"critical - very likely". The risk to the lives of pupils and staff has not just suddenly come to light!

In a government document, leaked in May 2022, they knew then that the state of disrepair in some schools is 'a risk to life'. Since 2010, capital spending has declined by 37% in cash terms and 50% in real terms. And the fund for school repairs was cut by prime minister Rishi Sunak himself while he was chancellor - funding only 50 of the 3-400 required school rebuilds a year.

### Asbestos compounds the problem

The last Department for Education (DfE) annual report found the risk of building collapse is most acute in 'system-built' buildings between 1945 and 1970. Almost 14,000 of these have been identified as containing asbestos - around 85% of schools still have it, one of these collapsing could cause major health problems. Since 1980, more than 400 school teaching professionals have died of mesothelioma in Britain, 300 having died since 2001.



Save our schools NEU banner from 1 February strike PHOTO: GLENN

### £13.8 billion needed

The National Audit Office highlighted in its 2017 report 'Capital Funding for Schools' that £6.7 billion was needed to restore all school buildings to satisfactory condition, and a further £7.1 billion to bring parts of school buildings from satisfactory to good. The NEU believes these figures are likely to be an underestimate, based on the DfE's 2014 Property Data Survey, not taking into account three years further deterioration.

### Labour has no answer

The NEU has pointed out that if the Tory-Lib Dem coalition government had not cut Labour's school rebuilding programme in 2010, £27 billion more would now have been spent on school and college buildings. However, what is not pointed out is that in order to pay for previous rebuilds in the 2000s, Labour accelerated the use of now-discredited Private Finance Initiatives (PFI).

PFI meant a consortium of private companies raised money on commercial markets to carry out rebuilds, rather than allowing councils to do it through the far lower cost Public Works Loan Board. All the risk under PFI was shouldered by public bodies, with repayments to the private sector guaranteed. This has resulted in cuts to services and redundancies in schools, hospitals and other parts of the public sector where PFIs were used. Councils repay the cost of a PFI scheme over a 30-year period, with considerable mark-up. This has often ended up ten times the original cost of the rebuild, going straight to the profits of big businesses.

We demand:

- Publication of the safety status of all education buildings, including links to asbestos
- Immediate safety works and rebuilding carried out by councils under the democratic oversight of school trade unions and parents, and fully funded by the government
- Workers' control of workplace safety
- NEU and school unions must be prepared to back up demands on safety with industrial action
- Scrap all PFI contracts. Stop acadatisation
- Stop cuts. Full funding for schools and all public services
- Tories out. For a new mass workers' party armed with a socialist programme

### A socialist solution is needed

We can have no confidence that Keir Starmer will come up with a solution to school buildings in disrepair. While criticising the Tory party, Labour front-bench politicians haven't

## Stop press

As the Socialist goes to press, Birmingham council, facing a £1 billion hole in its budget, has issued a Section 114 notice, meaning they will only fund the statutory minimum services and appeal for money from the central government. See 'Fight back against budget "black holes"' on www.socialistparty.org.uk for an article that appeared in the Socialist about Birmingham council's financial situation and the fightback needed to solve it.

Socialist Party members campaigning against council cuts in Croydon, after the council raised council tax 15%



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



# PCS members vote to 'continue campaign' on pay - but leadership want to end it

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

### PCS MEMBER

Concluding on 31 August, in a month-long all-members ballot, civil service members of the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union voted on the question: "Do you support the PCS strategy to continue the campaign?" 90% voted 'yes' on a 47% turnout.

Despite enormous confusion over what voting 'yes' actually meant - confusion actively fostered by the current national leadership of PCS - what is clear is that the vast majority of members think the campaign should continue.

The truth was hidden in the fine print. Voting 'yes' actually meant cancelling the union's strikes, cancelling rebalots in the largest government departments (DWP and HMRC), and cancelling the £3-£5 strike levy that union members had been paying since February - actions the leadership had already implemented.

This is not what thousands of members believed that they were voting for.

PCS president Fran Heathcote and deputy president Martin Cavanagh have argued that this vote is an overwhelming endorsement of their strategy.

Socialist Party members in PCS vehemently disagree. At mass meetings of hundreds of members in our various branches, the mood was decisively in favour of continuing the union's national campaign.

The vote is an overwhelming rejection of the pay increases currently on offer. The £1,500 lump-sum payment for 2022-23, and 4.5-5% for 2023-24, is simply not good enough.

Anger at the government for treating civil servants worse than teachers, senior civil servants, civil servant trade-streamers and other public sector workers is undergirded by a sense of grievance against the union's current leadership.

The PCS national leadership, drawn predominantly from a faction known as Left Unity, sought to confuse this burgeoning discontent by arguing vigorously that they wanted to continue the campaign, and therefore members should vote 'yes' in the ballot. Heathcote, Cavanagh and Co have dishonestly soothed and reassured in answer to questions.

Socialist Party members, and the PCS Broad Left Network (BLN), argued for a 'no' vote, but from early on it was clear that the instinctive response of the overwhelming majority of members was to vote 'yes' assuming that meant continuing the campaign.

When many members realised the truth, it was too late - once a vote was submitted digitally, there was no way to invalidate it by requesting a replacement ballot, as many tried.

### What next?

Having abandoned the hard-won strike mandate that took effect in May 2023, following the government promising a one-time, non-consolidated, pro-rated payment of £1,500, the union leadership ordered that departmental pay negotiations must begin.

But having failed to shift the March

2023 Treasury Pay Remit that capped average pay rises at 4.5% (or 5% for the low paid), and with no way to show teeth during pay talks, this was a recipe for below-inflation pay awards, i.e. pay cuts, for most staff.

This is exactly what we said would happen and it has happened. It was not inevitable and could still be challenged.

Socialist Party members in PCS have repeatedly called for escalation of the campaign through determined national strike action, and for continued targeted action where this is proven to have a significant impact on the government.

### Rebuild the campaign

A mandate still exists covering some 50,000 civil servants. We should use this mandate to immediately relaunch the campaign, while simultaneously seeking to renew lapsed mandates for strike action in DWP and HMRC. It can be done. That is what Broad Left Network national executive (NEC) members will argue for.

But it is unlikely that a leadership that waited six weeks to call any action following our strike ballot in November 2022, then waited three months before calling national, all-member strike action, will do it without coming under pressure.

As Cavanagh has indicated clearly in his comments to reps, "the result of the ballot overwhelmingly endorses the strategy of the NEC, which includes pausing action".

Cavanagh has also suggested that a ballot of all members can be considered to cancel "a decision taken by reps at conference" over the rebalot in DWP.

Increasingly, the leadership of the union adapts itself to old right-wing tropes that attempt to divide members from reps, in order to suggest one is disconnected from the other.

### Marion Lloyd for general secretary

This continuing abdication of genuine leadership means that we need to seize with both hands the chance we get this year to change the direction of the union, by electing a new general secretary, Marion Lloyd, and by re-electing John Moloney as assistant general secretary.

Marion, a Socialist Party member and national chair of the BLN, is also PCS President in the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Group. She has a proven track record as a campaigner and leader of strikes - and from the 2018 discussion on disaggregated strike ballots onwards, she has consistently argued against the current leadership for a coherent national fightback.

We call on all PCS branches to continue to exert pressure on the NEC to reignite our national campaign, and not to wait until next year.

We ask all branches to call an Emergency General Meeting before 16 October in order to nominate both Marion Lloyd for general secretary and John Moloney for AGS.

# Unite members in London NHS strikes

NHS workers in Unite the Union at four London NHS Trusts are taking strike action over safe staffing and pay. Over 2,800 workers will be on strike, including cleaners, caterers, porters, nurses and pathologists. The workers are employed at Barts Health Trust; Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Trust; East London Foundation Trust; and Guys and St Thomas'.

The Barts strike will coordinate with junior doctors and consultants.

- Barts workers will be on strike 13-14 September and 16-22 September
- Barking, Havering and Redbridge workers will strike 13-14 September
- Guys and St Thomas' workers on 13-14 September
- East London Foundation Trust workers will strike on 13 September

## Barts workers: A proud record and a massive victory - but we have to keep on fighting!

LEN HOCKEY  
UNITE BARTS HEALTH BRANCH SECRETARY

In 2022, workers at Barts Health Trust won a massive historic victory through bold strike action, being brought back in-house on NHS pay and conditions after a succession of private sector employers, including Serco.

Now the same workers have voted by 95% for strike action against the government's imposed real-terms pay cut for health workers. Our

hospitals, are also demanding the £1,655 lump-sum payment awarded to other NHS staff for 2022-23 but which was withheld from some of the former Serco workers when they were brought back into the NHS.

We issue a warning to Trust management: our members have a long and proud record of fighting on pay and defending services. We will continue fighting for what we deserve!

We resoundingly demonstrated last year that when workers are

provided leadership, are conscious of their strength and mobilised in action, then they are an unstoppable force for changing their pay and conditions.

The victory in 2022 was not pre-ordained, but was rooted in the combined factors of the raw experiences of exploitation under the capitalist policy of outsourcing on the one hand, and on the other, the implacable will and confidence of the local collective trade union leadership to campaign.



Striking in 2022 to be brought back in-house PAUL MATTISON

## How the victory was won

Excerpt from 'Massive victory for Barts hospital workers: Strike wins pay rise and an end to outsourcing', first published on 9 March 2022 at socialistparty.org.uk

ROB WILLIAMS  
SOCIALIST PARTY INDUSTRIAL ORGANISER

Unite members in Barts NHS Trust in east London, the largest in the country, are celebrating a fantastic victory after two weeks of strikes. We send our congratulations to Unite and its members and reps, including the union's branch secretary Len Hockey, a longstanding member of the Socialist Party.

The low-paid workers, porters, cleaners, catering staff and security, are employed across five east London hospitals, including Whipps Cross, Royal London and St Bartholomew's, by notorious outsourcing giant Serco, with an estimated turnover of nearly £4 billion.

The Barts workers rejected the miserly 1% pay offer from Serco last year, but always placed the issue of ditching the parasitic privateer and being brought in-house on NHS contracts central to the dispute. Just by winning their strike ballot, the bosses were forced to up their pay offer to 3%, mirroring that offered to workers directly employed by the NHS. But because they are outsourced, the real gap is far wider, at up to 15%.

Unite rejected this offer when real inflation was rising and moved to an industrial action ballot, which was won with a 97.7% yes vote.

Workers took to the picket lines at the three hospitals in the first two weeks of February. There were huge

mobilisations, with well over 100 at the hospitals, often singing and dancing. They organised strike demonstrations outside each hospital of hundreds of striking workers and their supporters across the labour and trade union movement. Management was in no doubt that the action would continue and escalate unless an acceptable agreement was reached.

That improved offer includes the 3% pay rise backdated to last April, plus a one-off payment of £400. But crucially, it also confirms that the workers will be brought back in-house on 1 May 2023. The workers have insisted that this is done on NHS pay, terms and conditions.

As well as securing a wage rise, they have pushed back against the privatisation agenda that has been used to attack the livelihoods of workers in the NHS and elsewhere in the public sector for decades. Barts strikers have shown that action wins.

# Junior and senior doctors to strike together in historic first

Junior doctors in the BMA have overwhelmingly renewed their strike mandate in the rebalot required by Tory anti-union laws. 98% voted to strike on a turnout of 71%.

The BMA has now announced four days of joint strike action by junior doctors and consultants in England, for the first time ever in the history of the NHS.

The Tories have imposed a "final offer" of 6% for consultants and 6% plus a lump sum for junior doctors. But given that doctors have lost a third of their pay in real terms, the BMA says this is not "credible".

- Junior doctors will strike on 20, 21 and 22 September, and 2, 3 and 4 October.
- Consultants plan to strike on 19 and 20 September, and 2, 3 and 4 October.
- A joint rally will take place in Manchester on 3 October when the Tory conference takes place.

## Consultants say the NHS is malfunctioning

JOHN TIVAL  
LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

Thursday 25 August was the latest day of strike action by BMA consultants as a result of continuous real-terms pay cuts. The BMA cited a more than 33% reduction of pay over the past 14 years.

Members of the Socialist Party joined the picket line at Leeds General Infirmary (LGI) in solidarity. Among the pickets was a retired consultant, who voiced their resentment at the lack of negotiations. The solidarity displayed by this retired doctor was encouraging to others on the picket line.

The retired doctor said that NHS workers are doing their best. Their

discontent is towards the administration responsible for the functioning, or malfunctioning, of the NHS.

Others on the picket line all shared these sentiments. They agreed with the BMA that "No consultant wants to be striking and we head out to picket lines today with heavy hearts... we would rather be inside the hospital seeing our patients".

According to the BMA, it has been almost five months since a meeting was conducted with the Tory health secretary. Based on the scene at the LGI, the resilience of doctors is clear and they are determined to receive the fair pay being demanded. Socialist Party members will certainly continue to stand in solidarity.

## Clinical support workers in Wirral hospitals strike

STEVE ION  
LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT SOCIALIST PARTY

Over 400 clinical support workers (CSW) staff, members of Unison, voted 99% for action and walked out on strike for two days on 31 August and 1 September. This is the first time CSWs have taken action. Socialist Party members spoke to the strikers on the picket line.

These staff, employed in Wirral hospitals Arrowe Park and Clatterbridge, have remained on the Band 2 pay scale, despite carrying out work like bloods, urinalysis, ECGs and cannulas; dealing with families, and computer work. With reduced funding and a lack of staff, these out-of-grade duties have been passed on to the CSWs.

The Band 2 level of work they are paid for is feeding, washing and general care. According to NHS guidance, they should only undertake these personal care duties. But for years they have been expected to

do more higher-grade work with no compensation.

Unison states that members have lost around £2,000 a year by being in the wrong band.

Seven trusts in the north west have rebanded and backdated their CSWs' pay to 2018. But Wirral chief executive Janelle Holmes has made an offer of backdating to December 2022 only. The deputy chief executive, who has spoken out against the strikes, is paid £210,000 a year - ten times that of the striking workers.

The mood on the picket line was vibrant. Workers were determined to win this dispute, and while they have been patient up to now, it is about time the trust honoured their claim. Workers feel used by the trust.

Further strikes are planned. As we go to press, negotiations are taking place.

• Messages of support to Norman Robinson, branch secretary Wirral Unison Health Branch norman.robinson@nhs.net

# Rail strikes: 'This service is run on goodwill'



Leicester STEVE SCORE

In the ongoing national campaigns on pay, jobs and conditions, rail unions Aslef and RMT struck on 1 and 2 September respectively.

Elaine Brunskill reports that Aslef pickets in Newcastle were discussing how to take the strike forward on the picket line. One of the strikers commented on the intransigence of the Tories and the need for more than just one-day strikes.

Scott Hunter reports that Socialist Party members in Swindon found RMT pickets in a determined mood. They were fully aware that their battle is to save the rail service as we know it, and that ticket office closures, if management is allowed to get away with it, will be the thin end of the wedge for attacks on the safety of workers and passengers alike.

Pickets told us that they think the

RMT needs to step up the strike action in order to move the train operating companies and their backers in this incredibly weak Tory government. "We should be out every Saturday, at least," said one worker. There was also discussion on the need for action short of strike. One picket said: "30% of the service is run on goodwill," meaning on voluntary overtime.

Retired Aslef member Pete McNally says: "I have been on quite a few picket lines, but the RMT picket at Worcester Shrub Hill was one of the best. The ten or so there were determined to maintain the fight and discuss what needs to be done, but also to enjoy the experience. The constant dialogue was like one long funny story. There were jokes and laughter about rail workers themselves, various managers, politicians and customers, it was all very inclusive!"



# CHILE COUP 50 YEARS ON



## Lessons from revolution and counter-revolution

**11** September marks 50 years since the bloody coup which overthrew the socialist Salvador Allende government in Chile. In the weeks and months that followed, tens of thousands of workers' leaders were coldly executed or disappeared at the hands of the military dictatorship led by General Pinochet. But the tragedy was not inevitable. Chilean workers and youth had elected a socialist government in 1970 and were demonstrating their willingness to struggle to bring an end to capitalist rule. The September issue of our sister publication, *Socialism Today*, has republished an article written on the 30th anniversary: 'Chile 1973: Heroism was not enough'. It concludes: "...The experience will not have been in vain if revolutionaries learn from the mistakes of the workers' leaders between 1970 and 1973. The same tasks will again be posed for the Chilean workers, and workers internationally. Lessons must be learnt." The *Socialist* will publish a series of articles, seeking to draw some of the lessons of Chile.

## Film review: The Battle of Chile Part one

OISIN DUNCAN  
SOCIALIST PARTY NORTH WEST  
ORGANISER



The events leading up to and including the Chilean coup on 9 September 1973 were documented on film by Patricio Guzman and other journalists, including Leonardo Henricksen who was actually killed by the army in a premature assault on government buildings in June 1973.

Due to the intensity of the class struggle and tempo of events, part one of the four-part series, fittingly titled 'the struggle of an unarmed people', covers only the period between the parliamentary election in March '73 and that abortive coup attempt by the No. 2 regiment of the Chilean Army. As Guzman himself claims as narrator, once seeing that Allende's Unidad Popular (UP) ticket had increased their votes in March, the so-called 'defenders of freedom' gradually turned to anti-democratic and increasingly violent means.

For example, immediately after UP's electoral victory was confirmed, right-wing supporters came out and rioted, having been whipped up to believe this was a fraudulent result. This would not be the last time the ruling class used violence to try and undermine Allende's legitimacy; the spectre of the September coup, aided and abetted by the CIA and US imperialism more broadly, looms over the entirety of this part of Guzman's documentary. For revolutionaries in the present day, the eventual outcome of Allende's government should only encourage us to study these events keenly, rather than dismiss the heroics of the Chilean workers and even the actions of Allende himself, as 'reformist', 'a betrayal' or other epithets.

In fact, the possibility of eventual defeat was not lost on Allende's supporters at the time. Guzman conducts many brief interviews with supporters

of both UP and the right-wing opposition parties, and one young worker at a UP rally tells him: "We are fighting hard to win a big majority, but we know that this election is not everything. Of course we are trying to win, but when we do that will not solve or avoid the problem of the civil war in Chile. The civil war is inevitable, it is fundamental".

The foresight demonstrated by that young UP supporter summarises the tragic trend of Allende's time in power. Time and again, his supporters and the broader working class could see the coming attacks of the capitalist class more clearly than Allende could. After the election, the economic sabotage of the Chilean bosses (assisted by US imperialism) tried to "make the economy scream", in US President Richard Nixon's words. To hammer home this lining up of forces within and without Chile against the UP government, one supporter of the right-wing opposition interviewed before the March election launches into a tirade against the "destruction of Chile" by "disgusting Marxist" forces.

### The working class

The working class clearly did not let up after sweeping Allende and the UP to a stronger position in parliament. In response to manufactured shortages, UP set up Committees on Provisions and Prices (JAPs), local grassroots networks in working-class areas which were intended to root out speculation, hoarding and other economic crimes. They went beyond this brief and some began to organise food distribution wholesale, issuing ration cards and repossessing hoarded goods.

This process, of the working class stepping ahead of the political limits of their leaders, would continue through 1973 and is a key feature of revolutionary situations. In fact, this is the real shortcoming of the reformist approach taken by Allende and other leaders of

the UP coalition; to match the constantly advancing aims of the working class in struggle, it is necessary to link their immediate demands to the general struggle to transform society in a socialist direction.

For an example drawn from outside this part of the documentary, other working-class organisations, the cordones industriales (or 'industrial belts') formed to knit together trade union activists, the unemployed and urban poor. During an attempt by the transport bosses' association to starve the cities by preventing food deliveries, the cordones took on the responsibility for organising alternative transport, defended truck drivers accused of strike-breaking and ultimately broke this attack from the Chilean bourgeoisie.

The actions of the working class often came from their own initiative, encouraged after the fact by Allende, but rarely initiated by him or the parties involved with UP. Allende, his background on the right wing of the Socialist Party of Chile, was attempting to win reforms through parliamentary means. Against a background of intimidation from right-wing opposition parties, including the murder of worker-activist Jose Ahumada, Allende and his supporters were wary of provoking a coup d'état. Unfortunately for Allende, the coup was going to take place regardless of timing.

The cordones were increasingly beginning to play a role organising aspects of society and, together with the JAPs, forming elements of dual power – where the working class is moving towards taking over the running of society, but capitalist rule and its state machine have not yet been broken. Neither class has full control in running society. Such a situation however cannot continue indefinitely. One class or the other must ultimately take control.

During the 1917 Russian Revolution, soviets played that role – elected bodies of workers and soldiers developing an independent political programme in the interests of the working class and masses. Ultimately the working class took power in Russia through the all-Russia Congress of Soviets and under the political leadership of the Bolshevik party.

Revolutions don't all follow a soviets 'blueprint'. Organisations develop organically, and contending political forces determine their programme and action. In Chile, the role of the cordones and the JAPs was not developed on a firm basis, with bodies brought together at a regional and national level. They could have provided an invaluable counterweight to the UP government's increasingly timid policies.

The final climax of part one of

## Memories of Allende's government

During this summer's Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) event in Berlin, we spoke to **Hugo Rodriguez** about the struggle against the Pinochet dictatorship which followed the coup, and his activities as a member of the CWI through that period. During those discussions, which will feature in a future article, Hugo explained his memories of the coup and of Allende's government.

I was nine years old when Allende was first elected. And when the coup happened I was 12. During those three years, one thing that stood out to me overwhelmingly, something that appears very trivial but in the economic situation in Chile was very important, was the promise of a half litre of milk for every child in the country.

When I talk with people who say: "But no, under Allende the lines were so long" and criticise, I say: "Look, I was a child, I didn't know. All I knew was that every day during the Allende government, we had milk. After the coup, milk disappeared from our house." Because we were very poor. We were five siblings and my mom. My father had died. So we were in a very precarious situation. This is what I say about Allende. For many people, this was very important.

The other thing I remember was that at the elementary school I

attended, there was a dentist. Today dental care in Chile is super-expensive - one of the worst problems for the working class in Chile. During the Allende government, there was free dental care for children in the public schools.

I remember we had to stand in enormous lines to buy bread, to buy sugar, but even as a kid, I knew this wasn't a problem caused by the Allende government, but a problem caused by the rich hoarding all of the food.



**They placed a curfew so we couldn't leave, including even just opening the curtains to see what was going on, because the military was passing by**

In this period, there were detachments of youth, of workers, of women, who were in charge of finding businesses who had their stores and warehouses full of food, but refusing to sell it. The workers would find it, take the bosses out of power, then re-open the

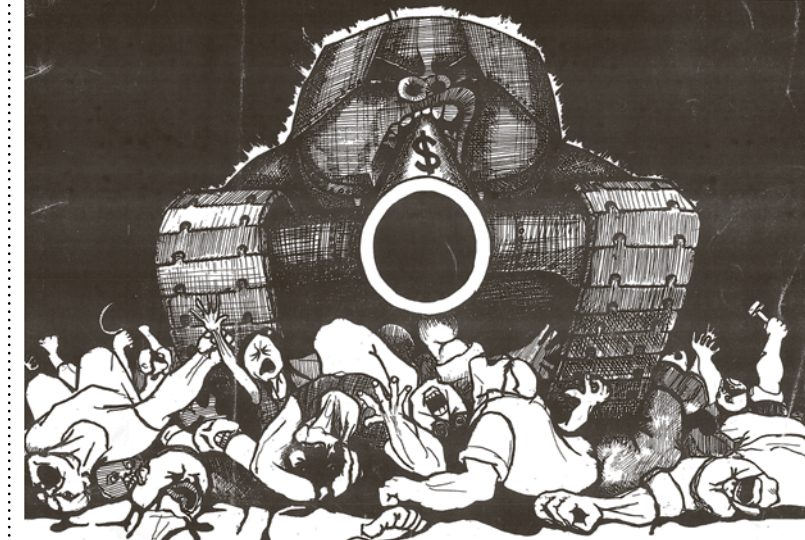
business and make sure the food was sold to the people. At prices set by the Supply and Prices Board.

And I remember the day of the coup too. In truth, it was strange. I was in school and it was time for us to start class but there were no teachers or staff there. We were 10 or 12 classmates in the courtyard talking and happy because 8am passed, 9am, and there were no teachers, nobody in the school and therefore no class. The older brother of one of our classmates came looking for him and said, "No, there are no classes, let's go". And we said "Why not? Why is there no class?" Because there has been a government coup.

I was only 12, I didn't know what that meant. We took a bus home and I remember that on the side we passed around six tanks, which I had never seen before in my life. It was like in a movie, but right there. I think I arrived home around noon that day. My siblings were home, my mom was home, and after a while, maybe 4pm they placed a curfew so we couldn't leave, including even just opening the curtains to see what was going on, because the military was passing by.

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## CHILE - 'DEMOCRACY' RESTORED



An Alan Hardman cartoon in *Militant* (predecessor of the *Socialist*) 14 September 1973

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- Socialism is possible but heroism is not enough - the tragedy of Chile 1973

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Guzman's documentary hints that this was the direction in which the working class in Chile was heading.

Mass demonstrations in support of Allende's government took place, and the masses were demanding weapons to protect their chosen leaders. In Allende's admirable desire for a peaceful path to socialism, he denied this demand, and in fact tried to appear more left wing at that point, suggesting that more powers would be given to the JAPs and the cordones.

And yet, as the film ends with the image of a Chilean army officer murdering Leonardo Henricksen, the terrible bloodletting during and after the CIA-sponsored coup in September of 1973 occurred despite Allende's best intentions. He himself would meet a violent end on 11 September as the Air Force he was theoretically in charge of bombed the presidential palace.

Tens of thousands of militant worker-activists were then sealed into their factories and workplaces, before being moved to huge detention centres, like the one in the national football stadium in Santiago, to be tortured, killed, or intimidated so that General Augusto Pinochet's regime could be consolidated.

That is the price of failing to understand the necessary course for a revolution; in such a heightened form of class struggle, the working class is faced with a stark choice. This is to either throw off the shackles of capitalism, beat back the reaction of the capitalist state and begin to build a new form of society, or to allow the exploiters to reassert control with every violent means of repression at their disposal. That is the reason that we as Marxists have to study events like these in as much detail as possible, to avoid taking the latter option in future class battles. In this sense, *The Battle of Chile* provides an invaluable resource in observing the real-time dynamics, perspectives and outcomes of the struggle for socialism.

- *Battle of Chile* is distributed by Icarus films





## WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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



**WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS**  
 • A £15-an-hour minimum wage for all without exemptions. For the minimum wage to automatically increase linked to average earnings or inflation, whichever is higher.

• Share out the work. A maximum 32-hour working week with no loss of pay or worsening of conditions. The right to flexible working, under the control of workers not employers. An end to insecure working, for the right to full-time work for all who want it; ban zero-hour contracts.

• All workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness, parental and holiday rights from day one of employment. End bosses using bogus ‘self-employment’ as a means to avoid giving workers rights.

• No to austerity through inflation. For all wage rates to be automatically increased at least in line with price rises.

• Open the books of all companies cutting jobs or claiming they can’t afford to pay a real living wage. State subsidies, where genuinely needed, for socially-useful small businesses.

• For trade unions independent of the capitalist state, with members having democratic control over their own policies, constitutions and democratic procedures. For all trade union officials to be regularly elected, subject to recall by their members and paid a worker’s wage.

• Reduce the state retirement and pension age to 55. For decent living pensions.

• Replace universal credit and the punitive benefit system with living benefits for all who need them.

**PUBLIC SERVICES**

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

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

• For local councillors who are committed to opposing austerity and all cuts to local services, jobs, pay and conditions.

• For a socialist NHS to provide for everyone’s health needs, including dental and eye care – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out the private companies! Nationalise the pharmaceutical industry under democratic workers’ control and management.

• Renationalise privatised utilities – including rail, mail, water, telecoms and power – under democratic workers’ control and management.

• Free, publicly funded and democratically run, good-quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees and write off student debt, end marketisation, and introduce a living grant. No to academisation. For all schools to be under the genuine democratic control of local education authorities, school staff, parents and student organisations.

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

**ENVIRONMENT**

• Prioritising major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels and nuclear power with renewable energy, and ending the problems of early obsolescence – where products are designed to ‘wear out’ and be replaced – and unrecycled waste.

• Nationalisation of the energy companies, under democratic workers’ control and management, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need, in order to carry out a major switch to clean, green energy, without any loss of jobs, pay or conditions.

• A democratically planned, massively expanded, free to use, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

• For a major, publicly funded, insulation and energy transition plan for existing housing stock.

• Agribusiness to be taken into democratic public ownership. For a food processing and retail industry under workers’ control to ensure that standards are set by consumers, small farmers, and

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

**DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS**

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

• Repeal the anti-trade union laws and all others that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest and to strike! End police harassment. For the police to be accountable to local committees, made up of democratically elected representatives of trade unions, local community organisations and local authorities.

• For the right to choose when and whether to have children – for the right to access abortion, contraception and fertility treatment for all who need it.

• For the right to asylum – with democratic community control and oversight of emergency funding resources. No to racist immigration laws.

• Expand democracy. For the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. For all MPs to be subject to the right of recall by their constituents at any time, and to only receive a worker’s wage.

• Free, proportional representation and the right to vote at 16.

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

• Oppose the dictatorship of the billionaire owners of the media. For the nationalisation of newspaper printing facilities, radio, TV and social media platforms. Access to these facilities should be under democratic control, with political parties’ coverage being allocated in proportion to the popular vote at elections.

• For a new mass workers’ party, based on the trade unions, and drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplaces, and community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, socialist political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

**SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM**

• No to imperialist wars and occupations!

• Take the wealth off the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need, not to the fat cats.

• A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.

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

# Book review: An Indigenous Peoples History of the United States



Native American protest march PHOTO: JOHN HARRINGTON

PETE MCNALLY  
 HEREFORD AND WORCESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

If Donald Trump goes to prison he may have time to read ‘An Indigenous Peoples History of the United States’ by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. This is not a big read but there is a lot of information in its 236 pages.

Donald will find that the original human inhabitants of modern America numbered some 15 million and that 3 million of the current inhabitants can trace their ancestry to those people. There were hundreds of tribes. This was no wilderness. There were villages, towns, roads, cultivation of crops and established relations between tribes. The idea that the land was unoccupied and it was the “manifest destiny” of white settlers to populate the country is a lie.

The invaders brought with the thirst for land, disregard for the original inhabitants, modern weapons, and alcohol to weaken the will of the tribes to fight, and imported disease which did the same job.

The newcomers engaged in what today is called total war - defeat the enemy in battle, eliminate their chance to recover by destroying their

fields and water sources, and killing the children.

The native tribes lived generally in one place with villages, crops, necessary animals, homes and hunting grounds, and with these destroyed became nomads.

The superior technology of the newcomers meant they were able to defeat the tribes they faced and then try to eliminate them totally.

The author gives a timeline of the growth and development of modern America but also shows the contradictions which exist. The richest country in history is home to millions of poor, and millions more people just keeping their heads above water, their health and wellbeing neglected in favour of more weapons of war and the profits they generate for the ruling capitalist class.

I think this is an important book for socialists to read – a call to arm the millions of American workers with an understanding of their history and of the urgent need to develop a force to bring about a new, peaceful and abundant, socialist future for America.

• **An Indigenous Peoples History of the United States, published by Beacon Press**

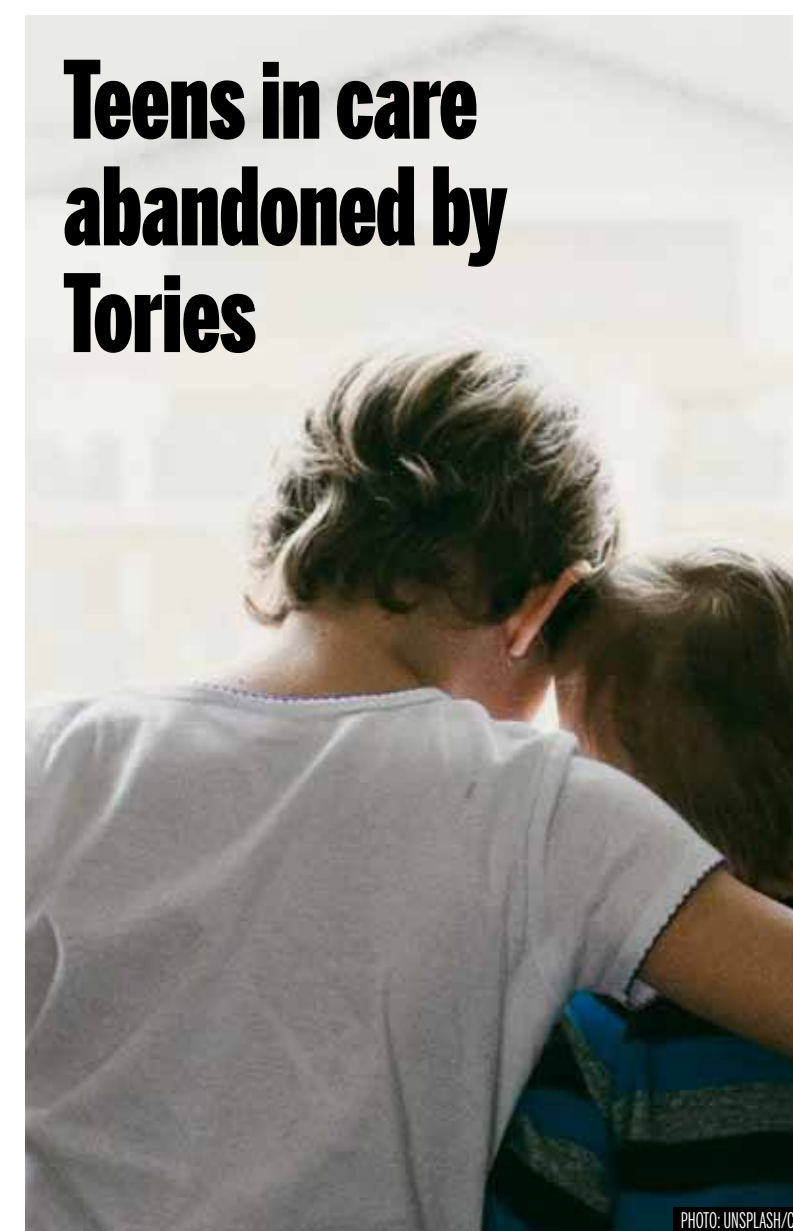


PHOTO: UNISPLASH/CC

CHARLEY LINCOLN  
 NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

In 2019, the Tories tasked Josh Maclister to oversee an independent review of the children’s social care system, predicting that in England, within the next ten years, the number of children in care would increase from 80,000 to 100,000. The cost to taxpayers will be £23 billion per year. The review asks for £2.6 billion over four years to reset the system.

The former Minister for Children, Claire Coutinho, (appointed in 2022, the 11th since that review), said the government was putting just £200 million into the reforms as a ‘kick start’ before investing more. TV personality Joe Swash has covered this in his recent BBC documentary ‘Teens in Care’. After talking with Coutinho, Joe said: “They know the issues and what they need to do, but it’s like an iceberg, and they only play on the top, and so much more on the bottom, kids that need help - I can’t help feel we’re resetting them up for failure.”

Joe expressed that his interest in making the documentary is due to his mum’s choice to foster once her children left home. She saw the state fail to support the transition between being looked after to leaving care.

Foster Care Allowance and Young Persons Allowance stop the day a dependant turns 18. Young people must hope their local authority has allocated a Personal Advisor (PA) who can make referrals for support. These individuals, often preparing for their A-level exams, now discover they must apply for Universal Credit (UC) and housing applications on their birthday, as they are now essentially homeless.

Local authorities are required to find ‘aged-out care leavers’ a home, but due to the housing crisis, those who are most vulnerable are being put in unstable accommodation, such as sofa surfing. Those lucky enough to be provided a home are left to wait while being allocated a PA to access a grant for white goods and furniture. Despite a legal responsibility to provide a PA, most local authorities are underfunded, and many young people are moved into empty flats with no income, with no control over how their adulthood begins.

Care leavers making it into higher education find they don’t qualify for UC while in full-time education. Care leavers in college rely on bursaries in term-time and any employment they can find, all while running their own household for the first time. Shockingly, only 13% of care leavers make it to university compared to 37.5% of 18-year-olds.

Legally, local authorities have a duty of care until the care leaver is 25 if they’re in education or have additional needs. Meaning they must provide accommodation outside of term-time.

Individuals in care are ‘children of the state’ - the state is their ‘corporate parent’. You can tell a lot from the treatment they get from the government - proof of the contempt that the Tories have for young people.

We need local authorities to be willing to set no-cuts budgets, using cash reserves and borrowing to fund essential services, and building a campaign with the support of trade unions and young people to demand the money from rich-list Rishi’s government.

## Obituary: Brian Blake 14.02.1954-24.08.2023



Brian (right) campaigning against the poll tax

It is with great sadness we report the death of Brian Blake.

Brian joined Militant in the early 1980s. As a young working-class shop steward he had worked in numerous jobs around West London, for a while as an engineer at Otis lifts, taking part in numerous local struggles, including the spontaneous walk-out in support of the Grunwick strikers in 1976.

Brian joined Militant within days of joining the Labour Party and within months was a very active comrade, going on to become a full-time organiser responsible for West London, and later working in the national centre. He would oversee the rapid growth of Militant in West London from a few branches to three districts by the end of the 1980s.

Brian worked tirelessly for the organisation, pulling together a team of full timers and encouraging especially young workers to be as fully active

as possible. Brian drove recruitment but was always mindful that new comrades married activity with political education, developing many young workers who are still active within the Socialist Party 40 years later.

Brian had to step back from full-time work for Militant in the 1990s. He passed seamlessly back into work at Ealing Council where he was quickly elected as a local Union shop steward and quite rapidly becoming a senior shop steward on the council. He was then elected to the Regional Council. Brian threw himself into local work, taking up numerous positions within his local Socialist Party branch.

Brian’s activism continued into the 2000s but failing health meant he retired from the council at the age of 58. In his final years, he moved to Leytonstone and always tried to do what

he could, given his failing health.

Our friendship with Brian was forged in the activity of the 1980s and has remained throughout the subsequent decades.

Brian’s levels of sacrifice were inspirational, never demanding of others what he was not prepared many times over to do himself.

Our thoughts are with the many comrades who knew Brian and his wider family and six children: Nicholas, Samantha, Christopher, Alex, Elizabeth and Jackie.

Brian remained an indefatigable revolutionary socialist and stalwart of Militant and the Socialist Party to the very end.

CHRIS MCNULTY, JULIA LEONARD, KEITH DICKINSON  
 WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

• **Full obituary online at socialistparty.org.uk**

## Solihull bin strike: ‘The work is like two marathons a week!’



Picket line 4 September PHOTO: NICK HART

NICK HART  
 BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Over 60 grounds and bin workers in Solihull, members of the GMB union, are taking a week’s strike action against council contractors idverde and Veolia. They pay poverty wages, while lengthening the working day with increased rounds and ending ‘task and finish’.

With some workers at the Moat Lane depot paid as little as £10.60 an hour, Veolia ranks as one of the lowest-paying refuse providers in

the country. Workers on the picket told us: “I used to enjoy this job, but now I’m finishing at half four where it used to be half one.”

“I jog the equivalent of two marathons a week, pulling full bins behind me!”

“In the last three years, Veolia’s profit margins have been 18% - but they say they can only offer us 30p more an hour.”

The workers are prepared to serve notice for more action if a better pay offer isn’t tabled.

## Greencore strike: A free cup of tea isn’t enough!

‘REBEL WITH A CAUSE’ ROTHERHAM

Following many years of under-inflation pay rises, effectively pay cuts, and worsening terms and conditions, Unite members at Greencore Manton Woods site in Worksop have had enough. The latest pay offer is again lower than inflation.

Greencore is a major supplier of sandwiches and ready meals to big supermarkets. Many of the 500 workers earn as little as £10.53 an hour.

Year after year the workforce suffers pay cuts as the company profits soar. Management believes giving the workforce a free cup of coffee or tea suffices to make up for continued pay cuts!

Unite members have sent a clear message to Greencore management as they plan to take strike action from 11 September to 9 October, starting at 5.30am. This will be the first strike action taken by union members at Manton Woods in its history. Please support it!



# Socialist Party members fight for LGBTQ+ rights at Pride events

## Leicester

Thousands attended Leicester Pride on 2 September assisted by one of the few sunny days this summer. Leicester Socialist Party applied to have a stall in Abbey Park, the venue for the festival. Clothing Company Bizzle Bizzle replied stating that pitch prices started at £300. We responded with the following email:

"Thank you. We are only a small organisation and £300 is beyond our means. It's disappointing that the Socialist Party is unable to have an official presence, given our role in the past.

"The Socialist Party and its predecessor, Militant, have a proud history of struggle against all forms of oppression. In fact, the first Pride march in Leicester would not have taken place without the intervention of the Socialist Party. The organisers of the Pride march were threatened by the National Front and were considering calling off the march. Socialist Party members suggested a march against prejudice to strengthen the march and increase numbers. We called on our members from other parts of the country to help with safe stewarding of the march as the National Front was threatening to attack it. Two members of the Socialist Party (myself and Steve Score) had threatening visits from the National Front to our homes prior to the march. The National Front turned up on the day but, due to our effective stewarding, they were not able to intimidate the march."

Unsurprisingly, we have had no response. Although Leicester Pride is registered as a charity, big business has extended its grip on the festival with corporate sponsorships from the likes of Next and Synchron. There was some trade union presence from the Leicester and District Trades Council, the NEU and Unite.

We set up our stall outside the gate to the festival, only to be asked to move further away. Undaunted, we set up further down the street. Our Pride leaflet was received eagerly by many.

HEATHER RAWLING  
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

## Southampton

"Trans rights are human rights!" This is what Southampton Socialist Party chanted when we joined forces with



Southampton SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

the others at 'Southampton Pride is a protest' on 26 August.

This year organisers chose to put activists at the front of the march, including the Socialist Party behind a banner saying 'Pride is a protest' with many placards in support of trans rights. Southampton Pride never fails to draw in a massive crowd, and this year was no different in that respect. Trundling around town on my scooter, I came across such a wide range of people, all colourful, excited to attend, and most importantly politically motivated. There is something enormously powerful about a protest, especially when it involves basic rights like living without fear of discrimination and persecution.

Those who attended are hungry for a mass workers' party that stands for the rights of all. And if 'Southampton Pride is a protest' proved anything to anyone, it's that when people come together, they can move mountains to make way for rainbows.

DEE STRUTT  
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

## Manchester

Thousands gathered in the centre of Manchester on 26 August for the Pride parade, with over 200 floats showing support at this 'Queerly Beloved' themed event, celebrating ten years of gay marriage.

The parade included floats from companies such as Tesla, whose CEO happily spouts homophobia on Twitter. It seemed clear to me that large parts of the parade was nothing but 'rainbow capitalism', something that we had a lot of conversations about on the day.

On 15 August there was an horrific

homophobic attack outside 'Two Brewers' in Clapham (see 'Clapham homophobic attack consequence of Tory divide and rule' at socialistparty.org.uk), and there was another homophobic attack in Brixton shortly after. This comes just after prime minister Rishi Sunak announced a crackdown on gender-neutral toilets, with new non-residential buildings required to have separate bathrooms for men and women. Labour leader Keir Starmer also stated: "A woman is an adult female," after his party announced it would no longer introduce self-identification for trans people.

Even in the wake of these attacks, Manchester Pride reminds me how lucky I am that people fought so that I could have the freedom to love who I want to love, and that we need to continue to fight for our rights.

Manchester and Salford Socialist Party members attended, with help from members in Liverpool. Many people bought copies of the Socialist and donated to the Socialist Party's fighting fund, and we held a public meeting on LGBTQ+ rights and socialism on 4 September.

SAM HEY  
MANCHESTER AND SALFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

## 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](https://socialistparty.org.uk)
• Or text 07761.818206 with your name and postcode.

Party as long as you might expect. He joined when he was 89!

He was also a member of the National Pensioners' Convention. And never hesitated about showing his new political allegiance to the Socialist Party. He never shied away from speaking out or selling the Socialist paper.

He wasn't stuck in his ways either. He had been a Communist Party member in the 1940s, but readily admitted he got "Stalinism all wrong".

And he never gets uppity with young Socialist Party members, who, in turn, love him.



Socialist Party campaigning in Plymouth

## Fund socialist message that needs hearing

ALEX SAMPSON  
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

As we move into the final month of the Socialist Party's July-September fighting fund quarter, Plymouth branch is delighted that we have already reached our target.

We did this in a number of ways. By fundraising to support the work of the Socialist Party on campaign stalls, picket lines, and other events, such as Plymouth Pride; as well as raising funds in other ways too - for example, selling trinkets at a local fair.

### Fightback

Plymouth Socialist Party isn't resting on our laurels, however. September will see vital opportunities - freshers' fairs for students, and a large environmental protest where we will raise socialist ideas that can combat climate change.

Socialist Party members in Plymouth are also now planning for our October-December fighting fund target - we are collecting for a car boot sale, a Christmas raffle, and at least one Socialist Party public meeting will run alongside our usual weekly campaign stalls in the city centre and Devonport. Excitingly, new plans are also under way for more regular stalls in the university area (see 'Plymouth - working-class communities neglected' at socialistparty.org.uk)

Every pound raised goes to the vital work of the Socialist Party - running our national headquarters,

producing socialist leaflets and other material we use on campaign stalls, picket lines, and everywhere else we meet people who need to hear of our programme for a socialist future.

Despite what the Tories and capitalist media say, the cost-of-living crisis will continue into the winter, and into next year. 2024 could be a general election year.

### Tory cuts

Our socialist message needs to be heard by working people, who are being crushed by Tory cuts and ignored by the Labour Party 'government in-waiting'. So every Socialist Party branch here in south west England is focusing on exceeding our fighting fund target to the best of our ability.

After much discussion, Socialist Party members recognise that the uncertainty workers feel about their future has the potential to effect fighting fund donations to the Socialist Party. But to preempt that possibility, Socialist Party fighting fund organisers in the south west are working together, pooling our knowledge and experience, and coordinating our efforts to ensure we can continue to support the vital work of the Socialist Party.

Help fund the fightback  
DONATE  
[socialistparty.org.uk/donate](https://socialistparty.org.uk/donate)

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q3: JULY-SEPTEMBER 2023	DEADLINE: 30 SEPTEMBER 2023
South West	2,121	2,100		101%
Southern & SE	2,299	2,400		96%
Eastern	1,043	1,300		80%
Wales	1,616	2,400		67%
North West	616	1,200		51%
London	2,464	5,000		49%
East Midlands	857	2,050		42%
Northern	291	800		36%
Yorkshire	908	2,650		34%
West Midlands	514	2,700		19%
Other	826	2,400		34%
TOTAL	13,555	25,000		54%

# Out with student debt and down with cuts - Southampton youth fight back



Eoin campaigning in Southampton NICK CHAFFEY

EIOIN WILLIAMS  
SOUTHAMPTON WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

For students, the elation of results day has started to wear off, as applications for student loans are put in, and deposits for halls of residence and rented flats are paid out. To many young people, this is their first taste of facing a capitalist world alone.

I am starting university later this month. Many of my friends are already feeling the pinch before even starting.

The maximum amount given out from a maintenance loan is only £8,171 per year. That's around half a minimum wage salary. So you can understand why the average UK student now owes £45,000 at graduation. Students aren't the only young people who are struggling in Southampton. The local council is cutting

the city budget by £35 million. Young

people will be among the hardest hit by these cuts.

As part of the Labour council's 'streamlining' process, education and healthcare plans will be cut back. These are grants to young vulnerable people, and provide them with access to support, until the age of 25.

It's the same old story. The government cuts back, and workers are left to pick up the pieces. Alone.

### Doesn't have to be this way

But it doesn't have to be that way. The Socialist Party supports the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) call for a new working-class alternative to the Labour Party, in the light of Keir Starmer abandoning Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity policies, including no longer supporting free university education.

In Southampton, the Socialist Party has a two-pronged plan to

fight back - with campaigns for free university education, and an end to council cuts. We have been campaigning on our stalls, with leaflets for a free education at all ages, and an end to austerity cuts. And you can bet that we'll be at every council scrutiny meeting to oppose all council cuts.

We call for living grants to replace student loans, and for the writing off of all student debt to enable working-class students to have truly equal opportunities. We fight for an end to all cuts and outsourcing of public services to private companies for profit, and for a socialist alternative that truly represents the working class.

Do you agree?  
JOIN THE SOCIALISTS  
[socialistparty.org.uk/join](https://socialistparty.org.uk/join)

# Lincoln manufacturing workers strike for pay rise that bosses Lincat can afford

STEVE SCORE  
EAST MIDLANDS SOCIALIST PARTY SECRETARY

Workers at Lincat Lincoln, commercial kitchen manufacturers, began a week's strike action on Monday 4 September. Socialist Party members and Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) supporters have joined the picket lines.

Unite the Union regional officer Lee Purnell told us: "The company is refusing to give them a reasonable pay offer. The offers they made have been derisory, and not anywhere

near what these highly skilled workers receive.

"Their pay is getting closer and closer to the minimum wage because the minimum wage has increased by 9.7% this year. Yet, we have people who, for example, deal with the electrical work, welding and sheet metal working.

### Frozen pay? Absolutely not!

"The original offer the company made included a freeze on some of our members' pay! We were not interested in that.

"After several months they came back with more. And the last offer was 5.5% for the first half of the year, and 8% for the second half - which works out to 6.75%.

"It's nowhere near the 9.7% that these guys are looking for to keep them in line with the minimum wage, let alone inflation, which was 14% earlier in the year.

"Middleby [Lincat's owners] made \$1 billion in the second quarter of 2023. Lincat itself made £8.9 million for the year. So they have a bob or two to settle the dispute!"

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

## Poole, Dorset - Tory record, not Starmer's policies, will defeat government

From our Socialist Party campaign stall, the topics very much on people's minds were the strikes by rail workers and doctors, and the deterioration of the NHS.

People also have a clear understanding of who Keir Starmer and his Labour Party represent. The one person we spoke to, who is a Labour Party member, identified Starmer as just another Tory.

There was also an understanding that no party represents ordinary working people, and agreement that a new party is required to fight for the working class.

Starmer will no doubt defeat the rotten Tories at the polls. But, from today's conversations, more and more people are aware that it will be lost due to the abysmal Tories' record, rather than won because of Starmer's policies.

MARK RICHARDS

## Swansea - angry at Tories in Westminster and Labour in Wales

It is a couple of months since I took on the role as organiser for the Socialist paper in Swansea. So far, our weekly sales of the Socialist have increased week on week. Including, most recently, with 60 people in

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# Socialist Party's oldest member turns 100

SUE POWELL  
GLOUCESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

There will be a Zoom meeting on 8 September to say happy birthday to 100-year-old Socialist Party member, Claude Mickleson.

Claude hasn't been in the Socialist

Party as long as you might expect. He joined when he was 89!

He was also a member of the National Pensioners' Convention. And never hesitated about showing his new political allegiance to the Socialist Party. He never shied away from speaking out or selling the Socialist paper.

He wasn't stuck in his ways either. He had been a Communist Party member in the 1940s, but readily admitted he got "Stalinism all wrong".

And he never gets uppity with young Socialist Party members, who, in turn, love him.

His discipline is formidable. And his sheer bloody-minded determination to keep going is remarkable.

He attended Socialist Party campaign activity with broken ribs in icy weather. He did at least one Socialist paper sale every week. And attended Socialist Party meetings on Zoom with Covid.

He might need a wakeup call. But, otherwise, he never misses a Socialist Party branch meeting.

And many know of his generosity. I'm telling you all this so you can see why he is so important to Socialist Party members in south west England.

National Pensioners' Convention will also be taking part on 8 September, as Claude requested. The book about Claude, by Bristol Radical History Group, will also be on sale. And we are appealing for donations to the Socialist Party and National Pensioners' Convention.



STEVE SCORE



# Stop Labour council cutting Cardiff public services

## Don't cut our buses!

JOE FATHALLAH  
CARDIFF WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Party members have kicked off a campaign against cuts to Cardiff Bus services, proposed by the Labour council. This would mean losing vital routes used for commuting and access to community facilities.

Fares have been creeping up and up over the last few years. And Cardiff hasn't had a central bus station since it closed in 2015.

Cardiff Bus is owned by the council, but is a separate entity, with its own management structure, and no mechanism in place to hold its board of directors accountable to any elected body. There has been a complete lack of community consultation and democratic input.

Whilst the council talks up the need to protect the environment, cuts to public transport are taking

place right under our noses. The only effective way to reduce the number of vehicles on the road is to create a reliable and affordable public transport network – with full community consultation and involvement – to ensure a service which meets the needs of all the city's residents.

The council claims that these cuts are a result of the withdrawal of post-pandemic support for public transport. However, we need councillors who are prepared to fight for the funding required for the services we need!

A large chunk of the UK government's transport investment is being eaten up by the HS2 high-speed rail project. Current costs are over £40 billion, and some estimates project that this could more than double! We need representatives in the Senedd (Welsh parliament) willing to demand an adequate chunk of these funds.

At a local level, Cardiff Council is sitting on £134 million in reserves, or nearly £109 million, even if the 'ringfenced' housing fund is excluded! This could be used to buy time, whilst building a campaign for proper funding of public transport.

### Socialist Party Wales calls for:

- An immediate halt to bus service cuts – and restore services already cut
- Bring all bus and rail services and infrastructure back into public ownership, into one integrated single-ticket bus and rail service
- Cheaper subsidised bus fares to attract passengers and lower car usage, as a step towards free bus travel
- A national agreement on wages and conditions for all bus workers in Wales



Cardiff Socialist Party members campaigning to save buses

## Save Pentwyn Leisure Centre

JONATHAN GOLDING  
CARDIFF EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

Pentwyn Leisure Centre never reopened after the pandemic. It is now threatened with downgrading to a smaller pool, with 70% of the site rented to Cardiff Rugby.

The Labour council and GLL/Better – the private company that manages the site – insist that this is the only financially viable option. That is disputed by local people.

Local people will still have to fork out £4 million, through the council, for this downgrading. So, instead, we are campaigning to get the centre fully restored.

Rhian Vernall is a local resident and leader of the Save Pentwyn Leisure Centre campaign. She obtained 'freedom of information' figures from Cardiff Council.

Those figures show that before Better assumed management of the centre in 2016, it was one of the most used in Cardiff, with very popular swimming classes. More recent figures are not available, because

Better, as a private company, is not subject to freedom of information requests.

There is anger in the communities of Pentwyn, Llanedeyrn and Pontprennau – the main users of the centre. 180 people turned up to a meeting on 30 August, organised in response to the council's plan.

Labour councillor Jennifer Burke and council officer Steve Morris were present, and got a 'roasting'. The feelings of people were confirmed by a show of hands – opposition to the current plan and a determination to fight on.

Campaigner Rhian was quoted by Wales Online: "We're almost being made [to] feel grateful for the fact that they are opening it at all. But what they are opening it with is not what people want or need. The community needs a local facility that is cost effective that will bring people together, that will allow children to engage in sport and health and wellbeing".

Socialist Party member Katrine Williams, president of Cardiff Trades

Union Council, spoke from the floor of the meeting: "Limited resources are cited by the council. So the politicians should stand with trade unionists in fighting for the funding needed for our services. They should stop wielding the axe for the Tories". She also suggested lobbying the council's Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee.

There were many other speakers from the floor. A young girl, still in primary school, received loud cheers after she explained how her and her friends' swimming classes had been disrupted by the closure and delayed opening of the leisure centre.

Our services should be based on need, not on their ability to turn a profit. Cardiff Council has over £100 million in reserves.

Some of this could be used to fund a full refurbishment of the centre. That should be linked to a mass campaign by trade unions and working-class communities to get the money that we need from both the Welsh Labour and UK Conservative governments.

## St David's Hall – Labour agree anti-union deal with privatisers



VASTITHOMAS/CC

JOHN WILLIAMS  
CARDIFF EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

A community campaign fought the privatisation of St David's Hall earlier in the year, and opposed plans to close a Cardiff library and further library cuts. Unfortunately, the Labour council went ahead with privatisation.

It's now been revealed that the council agreed a secret anti-union deal with the new owners, when it privatised St David's Hall.

Whilst this recent revelation is shocking, it's not surprising. And is further evidence that the Labour council is doing the Tories' dirty work.

Cardiff Council has scrapped more than 2,500 jobs and passed more

than £200 million of cuts since 2010. And things are set to get worse as Mark Drakeford, Labour's First Minister of Wales, is demanding that the Welsh Government find cuts worth £900 million!

The local secretary of the Unison trade union said: "Trade unions attended a meeting with the new operators of St David's Hall – Academy Music Group – where they informed us they won't be recognising trade unions."

"Apparently, they've been open about this with Cardiff Council from the start... All three trade unions – GMB, Unison, Unite – have asked for an urgent meeting".

Read what we've said before: 'Cardiff - Don't sell off St David's Hall' at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)

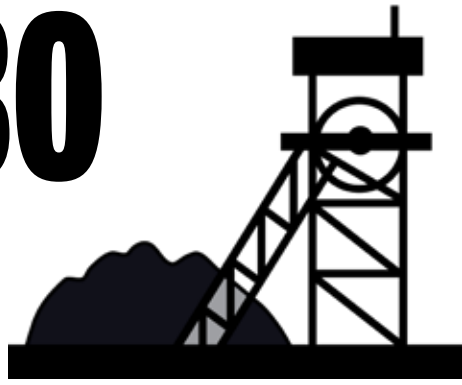
## Bin strikes



Bin workers, members of Unite, at three Welsh councils are striking over pay, including in Cardiff. The other councils are Wrexham and Gwynedd. Cardiff and Wrexham workers are striking from 4 September; Gwynedd from 11 September. PHOTO: CARDIFF SOCIALIST PARTY



# THE 1893 MINERS' STRIKE - 130 YEARS ON



130 years ago, in the second half of 1893, 300,000 miners across Britain's major coalfields were locked out for four months, with employers demanding a 25% wage cut. Workers resisted, different methods of trade union organisation were put to the test, and the forces of the capitalist state showed their repressive role. **Iain Dalton**, Socialist Party Yorkshire regional secretary, revisits the events.

The employers had been forced to concede a series of wage increases amounting to 40% since 1888, as a wave of industrial militancy swept Britain during a period known as 'New Unionism'. But into the 1890s, as the economy and coal prices declined, the bosses wanted to take back what had been given.

As the coal trade recovered following the long depression of the 1870s and 80s, the then county-based miners' unions were split over the best methods to defend wages. Some of the larger mining areas, such as Durham, Northumberland and the majority in South Wales, favoured what would today be called 'partnership' with the employers and agreed a sliding scale of wages that would decrease when coal prices dropped, and increase when prices went up.

In contrast, the unions that formed the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB, later the National Union of Mineworkers), led by Ben Pickard the general secretary of the Yorkshire miners, instead demanded a 'living wage' and an eight-hour working day.

The MFGB was the third attempt at forming a national miners union, with others going back to the Chartist

revolts in the 1840s.

It was the fight to win the 'living wage' demand in particular, that led to the industrial militancy of the MFGB and its leaders. With illusions in the Liberal government of the time, the MFGB pursued their eight-hour day demand through parliament, as Pickard later explained: "Strikes and lockouts and tumults do not hold with me, and never have until they were forced upon me..."

When the economy moved into recession, and the selling price of coal dropped, the wages of miners in the non-federation areas began to be reduced. Failing to get a coordinated response with the non-federation miners' organisations, the MFGB leaders instead initially put into practice a strategy known as 'playing the pits'.

## 'Overproduction'

This strategy was based on the idea that overproduction of coal was a key factor in the selling price of coal dropping, so if miners took a week's holiday from work at the same time, then that would reduce the output of coal and exert upwards pressure on wages. Of course, this theory misses the fact that employers can increase the rate of exploitation by holding

down wages to increase their profits.

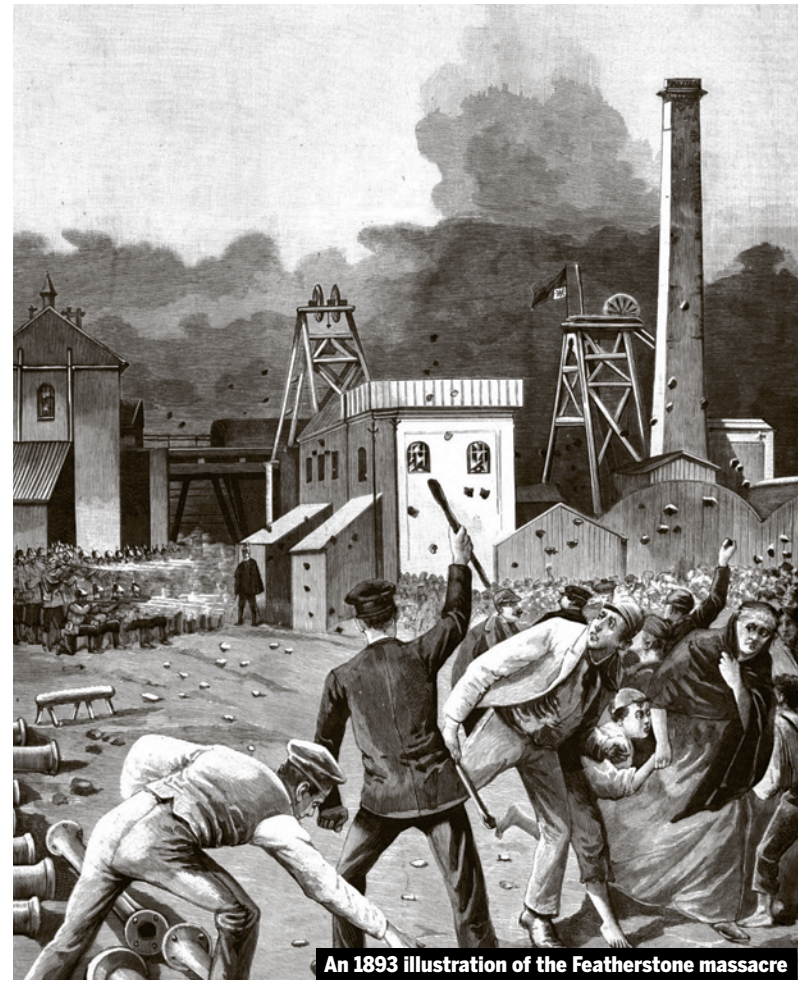
Despite the strategy's limitations, the fact that the MFGB was able to carry out a week's stoppage across the federated area it covered, even with a significant number of miners not being 'financial members' of the unions (ie not paying union subs), highlighted their potential power. As Pickard explained in a letter to a MFGB special conference: "It is quite clear that if the men will stop for one week, they will stop for two, three or more weeks, as they may require."

This display of strength held the owners in the federated area back for over a year before they again raised the potential for wage cuts. In contrast, miners in Durham who refused to accept further wage cuts were locked out for twelve weeks, ultimately succumbing to the cut.

As 1893 began, smaller coal owners attempted to implement cuts. Employers issued an ultimatum for a 25% cut and the lockout began at the end of July. Half of the 300,000 affected miners were MFGB members.

Several weeks into the dispute, any rumours of coal being loaded or men working underground, was met with anger and mass pickets outside the respective pits.

On some occasions, these



An 1893 illustration of the Featherstone massacre

situations were easily resolved, such as at Rylands Main near Barnsley, where the colliery manager invited a workers' deputation to inspect the site. At Waterloo colliery near Leeds, a crowd of 5,000 gathered which effectively stopped deputies from going underground.

However, a number of colliery owners were determined to try to break the strike. At Rockingham colliery, again near Barnsley, a crowd of up to 3,000 miners was unable to get guarantees from the owner and took action themselves to stop the coal, including stoning men loading wagons, setting the coal heap on fire, and slipping the brakes of one of the wagons.

Some of the more well-connected owners called in the police or the military to help defend their profit interests. During the first weeks of September, 400 Metropolitan Police and even more infantry and cavalry from the armed forces arrived in the West Riding of Yorkshire. Miners who went to Barrow colliery near Barnsley found themselves confronted with police armed with cutlasses.

On 7 September, events reached their highest pitch, when the Riot Act was read out after crowds had surrounded two pits: Ackton Hall colliery near Featherstone and New Watnell colliery near Nottingham. The events outside Ackton Hall colliery have become known as the Featherstone Massacre, after two men were shot dead (one of them simply walking nearby), with dozens others injured.

The establishment rallied to defend the shootings. Even the Liberal press - such as the Guardian - denounced the strikers, with their article on Featherstone stating: "For the sake of the miners and of trade unionism itself, we hope that every repetition of these blundering crimes will be repressed with more common sense than when soldiers were helplessly looking on for want of a magistrate to read the Riot Act."

The inquest held in Featherstone

for James Gibbs, one of the men killed, found the authorities responsible for his death, in contrast to the inquest into the death held in Wakefield. Eventually the campaign won compensation for the two men's families, with Asquith, the Liberal home secretary who had dispatched the troops to the area, becoming known to miners as 'Bloody Asquith'. The newly formed Independent Labour Party made the 'massacre' a cause célèbre in the labour movement.

This wasn't the only confrontation that took place, with others as late as the end of October at Ripley in Derbyshire.

The striking miners received overwhelming public support, raising funds to support the miners and their families. Radical newspaper editors opened lists for subscribers, and local co-operative societies donated cash and food.

A decision at the end of September to allow miners to go back to work at the old rates, with them paying a shilling a day levy to support miners still locked out, further alleviated the financial distress.

This strengthened the miners' position, and ultimately forced the government to step in to resolve the dispute. The miners returned to work on 17 November without having to concede any loss in pay, with a conciliation board due to meet in February 1894 to discuss any changes to wages.

In the end, a 10% reduction in wages was agreed from July 1894 as the only reduction miners in the federated areas were subjected to before wages began to increase towards the end of the century.

This was a significant victory against the backdrop of defeats and disintegration being suffered by many of the new unions at this time, where the state machinery had similarly been lined up to crush the workers and their trade unions. It consolidated the MFGB as one of the most powerful trade unions in the country.



Striking miners in 1893 in Darnall, Sheffield



£1/£2 solidarity price

socialistparty.org.uk



# the Socialist

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# TUC must prepare to STRIKE TOGETHER AGAINST TORY ANTI-UNION ATTACKS



PHOTO: TOMMY LIVERPOOL

## Join the NSSN lobby of TUC

### 1pm, Sunday 10 September

Premier Meetings, Albert Dock, Liverpool, L3 4AD

**N**ew anti-union 'minimum service levels' legislation is on the statute books. Workers at NHS trusts in London, university and college teachers, rail workers, junior doctors and consultants - all set to take action this autumn - could face attacks.

Failure to deliver a 'minimum level of service' demanded by the government and employers could see unions faced with huge fines, and workers losing legal protection from facing the sack.

It is not known if and when the laws will be used for

the first time. But the trade union and workers' movement must prepare now for a coordinated response.

The Trades Union Congress meets from 10-13 September - representing 7 million workers. Congress must be used to lay out a strategy to defend those sanctioned and defeat the legislation, including organising a weekend demonstration this autumn, and planning what is Unite the Union's 2023 conference policy - a 24-hour general strike in response if the laws are used.

• What we think - see page 3