



Issue 1246 12-18 October 2023 formerly Militant

# STOP THE ISRAEL-GAZA WAR

# For mass united workers' struggle against national conflict and oppression

ISRAEL-GAZA WAR >>> p8-9

- •Stop the Israel-Gaza war! For the immediate withdrawal of the Israeli military from the occupied territories
- For democratically organised defence committees in local communities
- •For a mass struggle of the Palestinians, under their own democratic control, to fight for liberation
- •For the building of independent workers' parties in Palestine and Israel and links between them
- •For an independent, socialist Palestinian state, alongside a socialist Israel, with two capitals in Jerusalem and guaranteed democratic rights for all minorities, as part of the struggle for a socialist Middle East

**NEWS** socialistparty.org.uk the **Socialist** 12-18 October 2023

#### the **Socialist**

Issue 1246 12-18 October 2023

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

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#### **OUR NEWSPAPER TEAM**

**Editor of the Socialist** Josh Asker socialistparty.org.uk Mark Best **Circulation manager** Chris Newby

**Editorial** staff Scott Jones Ian Pattison Paula Mitchell Mark Best

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

# **Tory school reforms farce**

#### **Union action for the funding needed**

#### **SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER AND TEACHER**

At the Tory Party conference, Rishi Sunak announced a brand new Baccalaureate-style 'Advanced British Standard' qualification, combining A-Levels and T-Levels. The Department for Education (DfE) admits: "This is a long-term reform: it will take a decade to deliver in full." But it is a reform that will never see the light of day, Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, described the announcement as "headline chasing".

It is a smokescreen for the very real crisis that is facing education. Like the National Health Service, schools and colleges are facing a staffing shortage because of the lack of proper funding. As a result, class sizes increase. In my own college, it is not unusual to have classes of 30-35 students; in some cases, it is as high as 40.

Successive governments have created a market economy in colleges. Each student comes with an amount of government money. So, to stay 'financially viable,' colleges have to recruit more and more students to plug funding gaps, without taking on additional staff. Workload increases and staff get burnt out.

#### **Tory 'error' means more cuts**

And to add insult to injury, the DfE has announced an 'accounting error': £370 million will be cut from the education budget for 2024-25. This amounts to around £55 per student. It doesn't seem a lot but it leaves schools and colleges with the stark reality of having to make cuts. And this always has a greater effect in schools and colleges with large cohorts of working-class students inevitably it means cuts in teaching assistants for students with special educational needs.

The National Education Union (NEU) strike action, for a fully funded pay claim, over the first six months of this year showed the willingness of educators to take action to defend education. When the government's below-inflation offer of 6.5% was accepted by the NEU leadership, the Socialist Party said that the problems facing schools and colleges would not disappear. Less than three months later, the need for strike action is facing education workers

 A bold leadership is needed in NEU - see page 7



# Hottest-ever September means we either have:

# Socialist change or climate change

NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Many on the right have complained that models for climate change are inaccurate and it turns out they might be right! This September was hotter than any of the models predicted, 0.5°C hotter than the previous record. 2023 is now on track to be the hottest year on record.

In the same month, Sunak announced the watering down of the UK's already inadequate climate pledges, pushing back the date at which no more new petrol or diesel cars can be bought, and scrapping the requirement for landlords to make homes more energy-efficient. These policy changes and more have made achieving the 2050 netzero target go from unlikely to near impossible.

Yet, according to climate scientists, the 2050 target was already insufficient to prevent climate catastrophe. Meanwhile, the Labour Party is also beginning to waver on its climate pledges. Even the Green Party's programme falls short of what is required.

In fact, it's impossible for any pro-capitalist party to solve climate change on the basis of capitalism. Competition between capitalists, and between capitalist states is an



inherent part of the profit-based system. The level of investment and collaboration needed is ruled out.

We need a complete change in our economic system to prevent the unfolding climate crisis. Only under socialism can we shift the goal to people over profit. Just think about what is possible. A massive expansion of high-quality public transport made convenient, reliable, and freely available for all. The rapid construction of new properly insulated, energy-efficient social housing. Huge investment into renewable energy production including solar, wind, and hydro.

Imagine all of this under the democratic control of ordinary people and the workers running these industries and paid for with the money hoarded away by the super-rich.

Many argue that this is unachievable since it will scare away investment. That the rich will run away, clutching their bags of money. They may well try. That's why it's essential that we nationalise the commanding heights of the economy including the banks, the energy industry, and manufacturing, with compensation only based on proven need not to the fat cats. Only then can we put these industries to use serving the people rather than making the

12-18 October 2023 the Socialist socialistparty.org.uk EDITORIAL

# Tory and Labour conferences drive home need for new workers' party



utside this year's Tory conference in Manchester, 3,000 members of various health unions, mainly consultants and junior doctors, gathered. They set out their determination to keep up strike action throughout the autumn and winter if the Tories continue to refuse to negotiate with health workers.

It was an awkward reminder for Tory delegates of the rising tide of class struggle which their government has faced in the last 16 months, including from sections of society whose support the Tories once took for granted, but which the special crisis of British capitalism has steadily eroded.

The collective anger of the workers' movement wasn't the only nasty jolt of reality felt by the Tories in Manchester. While they were meeting, growing storms in the British and world economy, particularly in the bond market, underscored the reality of a Tory party increasingly hostage to the economic crisis of British capitalism.

#### Tax

Debates over when to introduce preelection tax-cut giveaways for their rich mates had cold water poured over them when it was reported that the yield on 30-year government bonds reached a 25-year high in the light of persistently high inflation and interest rates, further pushing up the cost of newly issued government

This year's Tory conference was not only a battle to determine the policies on which the Tories would fight the next general election, but also an opportunity for various Tory factions to measure up their support within the party in preparation for the future beyond their pending defeat.

Home secretary Suella Braverman's keynote speech viciously attacking refugees and trans people, perceived by many at the conference to be a pitch to the Tory membership for a future leadership bid, reportedly received the biggest applause and ovation of the entire conference.

Hanging around the fringes of the conference were the likes of Liz Truss who, at her 'Great British Growth' rally, called for cuts to corporation tax, and was accused by one Conservative source of 'Corbynite Toryism'; and Nigel Farage, who Jacob Rees-Mogg suggested the Tory party should "roll out the red carpet" for if he ever wanted to rejoin!



Health secretary Steve Barclay's attacks on trans people in the NHS were echoed by Sunak in his keynote speech. Having nothing to offer whatsoever for workers or young people, the Tory leadership is attempting to use the poison of divide and rule - the 'culture wars' as they like to call it - to whip up the Tory party base and squeeze out as many possible votes for their crumbling party at the next election.

#### **Threat**

Right-populist tub thumping doesn't come without its cost in the Tory party however. Andrew Boff, Tory member and Chair of the London Assembly, had to be forcibly removed from the conference hall during Braverman's speech for heckling. Braverman's threats to withdraw Britain from the European Convention of Human Rights is a 'red line', in the words of Damian Green, chair of the One Nation Tory faction of around 80 MPs.

The fact that Sunak's headline policy and offering to workers and young people was the scrapping of the HS2 project, the future of which was already in question, says a lot!

At the time of its scrapping, the cost of HS2 stood at over nine times more than the average cost internationally of high-speed rail lines, with hundreds of private companies sticking

their hands in the honey pot. It was reported at the end of 2022 that, since September 2020, HS2's four main private contractors had made 3,000 separate requests for either more money or time for the completion of projects from the government.

It is desperately hoped that the decision to scrap HS2 will salvage some support for the Tory party at the next election amongst communities, particularly in the north of England, who have seen virtually zero investment in local infrastructure in previous decades.

#### Scrapped

Sunak and his allies have made sure to make the best possible use of the opportunity HS2's scrapping presents by talking up a supposed £36 billion which will be made available for investment in other local transport infrastructure in the North and around the country, including rail and road investment. Sunak cynically spoke about ending the focus on linking up major cities "at the exclusion of everywhere else".

The only small problem facing the Tories is that no one believes a word they say! After 13 years of brutal austerity and collapsing living standards, it is pure delusion to hope that the scrapping of HS2 will be enough to turn the Tories' electoral misfortunes. The latest Opinium poll shows the Conservatives unchanged on 29%, while Labour stands on 42%.

#### **Scorched earth**

But like with every proposed policy 'solution' rolled out to try and tackle the impending electoral defeat facing the Tories at the next election, there is a price to be paid. This goes for Sunak's announcement of the scrapping of HS2 as well. Tory West Midlands mayor Andy Street reflected the anger of a layer of Tory leaders when he threatened to resign, while Sunak's 'scorched-earth' policy of selling off land acquired for the development of HS2 has generated even more anger.

HS2's abandonment is yet another addition to the long list of humiliations to the prestige of British capitalism in recent years. In France, Germany and Italy, there exists 1,740, 1,030, and 834 miles of high-speed rail line respectively. Britain by contrast has only 71 miles. It is this further damage to Britain's reputation internationally that a more farsighted section of the Tory leadership is angry about.

So hated are the Tories that Sunak in his conference speech was forced to present himself as a 'change' candidate, creating as much distance as possible between himself and the hated record of the Tory party in government over the last 13 years.

Sunak spent much of his conference speech attacking Keir Starmer for 'doing and saying as little as possible and hoping no one notices.' Ironically, both leaders of the main parties are fighting to present themselves as 'not the Tories'!

The conference again demonstrated that the Tory Party no longer reliably represents the interests of British capitalism. However, despite the continued influence exerted by the populist right of the party on the Tory leadership, the capitalist class will not give up their historical vehicle of political representation – once the most successful pro-capitalist party in the world – without a serious struggle, indicating the battles that are likely to develop in the party beyond the general election.

But for anyone looking for an alternative to the pro-capitalist policies of the Tories, the Labour Party conference has only been further confirmation of the dyed-in-the-wool pro-big business character of the potentially next Labour-led government. Shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves' speech, which promised big business she will be an "iron chancellor" with "iron discipline" when it comes to public spending, earned her the official endorsement of former Bank of England governor Mark Carney.

#### **Big business government**

Meanwhile, there were more business leaders at this year's conference than trade union leaders. Starmer, on Monday morning, told business leaders directly that "if we do come into government, you will be coming into government with us." At the same time, conference has passed, with 67% in favour, further attacks on CLP members' rights to influence policy at Labour's National Policy Forum, and to clamp down on the right of Labour Party members to support bureaucratically expelled former Labour MPs like Jeremy Corbyn.

Unite the Union leader Sharon Graham moved a motion calling for "UK energy [to] be brought back into public ownership, starting with the National Grid's electricity and gas networks", to a standing ovation, and won a big majority of votes. But asked whether Labour's election manifesto would abide by this vote, shadow business secretary Jonathan Reynolds replied with a flat "no".

Both conferences drove home obvious conclusions about what will be needed to represent workers' interests under a Starmer-led government. Including the need to take steps now towards the formation of a new workers' party based on socialist policies to fight for what working-class and young people need against all the different shades of pro-capitalist political representatives.

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# End sexual assaults on campusresources and democracyneeded to stamp it out

**AMY SAGE** 

BRISTOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

exual violence and harassment are endemic at UK Universities. In a national survey conducted by The Student Room and Revolt Sexual Assault between 2017 and 2018, 62% of students and recent graduates reported that they had experienced some form of sexual violence. While sexual violence is not an issue that exclusively affects women, female students reported much higher rates of harassment and assault than male students.

In a more recent survey, it was revealed that 370 allegations of sexual assault on university premises and 320 reports of rape had been made to the police since 2019 – averaging over three a week! Given what we know about how underreported incidents of this type are, this is likely to be just the tip of the iceberg.

Despite these staggeringly high numbers, however, many students feel they cannot report their experiences. In the Revolt report, only 6% of those who had experienced sexual assault or harassment reported the incident to either the police or the university. When asked why, students stated that they either didn't know how to report it or expressed fears that they would not be taken seriously.

Such fears are not surprising when you consider the case of one female student at the University of Bristol who reported rape by a fellow student, reported in the Independent. She reported the assault to the university and, rather than taking action against her alleged attacker, they simply told her not to go near or contact him. This inaction on the part of Bristol University meant that the female student kept running into her attacker and was even forced to take an examination in the same exam hall as him.

It is not just students who are experiencing sexual violence on the

campuses, however. One survey found that one in ten college and university staff have experienced workplace sexual violence in the last five years, the majority responding that they did not report it to their employer. Where reports were made to the employer, some described being pressured to resolve complaints informally to avoid reputational damage.

This response highlights a pattern of behaviour by some university bosses where, rather than acknowledging the scale of the problem, they try to minimise or conceal the extent of sexual misconduct on campus. One third of universities have been found to use Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) which silence student complaints about sexual misconduct, harassment and bullying, allowing Higher Education institutions to prioritise their reputation over student and staff safety.

#### **Union and student-led inquiry**

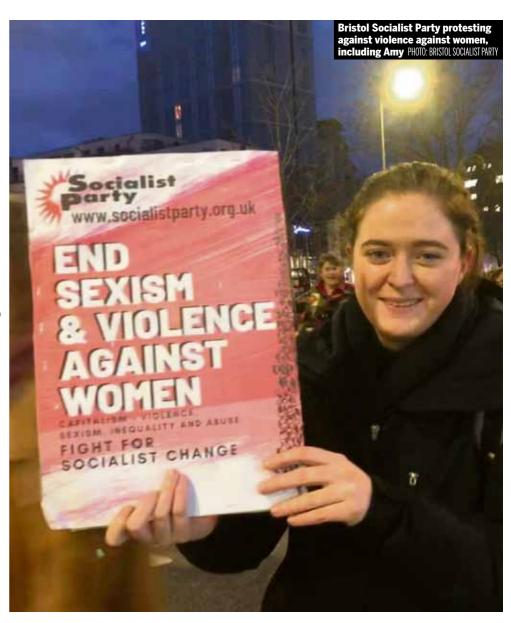
We urgently need a trade union and student-led inquiry into the true extent of sexual misconduct on the campuses. Trade unions should be demanding that universities end their use of NDAs in cases involving allegations of sexual misconduct, which are used only to conceal the extent of the problem and avoid taking responsibility for the issue.

We also need democratically organised and controlled committees, involving staff, students and specialist support services that can properly investigate allegations of sexual violence involving students and university staff, both on and off campuses.

There are also practical measures that can be implemented to improve student safety, including accessible and trusted campus wardens; chaperoned night transport; zero-tolerance policies in university facilities; adopting a community bystander training programme, giving anyone witnessing abusive or discriminatory behaviours the confidence to

62%
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violence



intervene or offer help. Specialist services offering support to those who have experienced sexual misconduct, which have been decimated by capitalist austerity, need considerable investment so that they are able to offer vital services to those who need them.

However, it is also important to understand where gender oppression and violence against women come from. Research conducted in 2020, 'Unsafe Spaces', highlighted the role of a 'lad culture', prevalent particularly in student sports clubs, in the rise in incidents of male sexual violence against women. They argued that it created a 'toxic atmosphere' which leads to sexual assault and harassment.

While the impact of this cannot be denied, we have to look more

broadly at the causes of violence against women. Ultimately, individual attitudes are shaped by the social and economic context in which we live. Capitalist class society is the root cause of today's sexism and sexist ideas as its structures and ideology perpetuate the idea that women are inferior and their bodies are commodities or objects (see 'How can women's oppression be ended?' at socialistparty.org.uk).

Ultimately, to tackle the root causes of violence against women, both on and off the campus, a complete overturn of the existing social and economic structure of society is necessary, to replace the rotten capitalist system with socialism. A system based on democratic workers' control of what we need, not divisive competitive capitalism.

#### The Socialist Party demands:

- A student and trade union-led inquiry into the full extent of sexual violence and harassment on campus
- An end to the use of Non-Disclosure Agreements in cases involving allegations of sexual misconduct
- Democratically organised and controlled committees, involving staff, students and specialist support services to investigate allegations of sexual violence involving students, both on and off university campuses
- Fully funded services on campus to ensure staff and student safety, including support services, campus lighting, safe transport and non-exploitative, affordable housing
- End the capitalist system that maintains and promotes sexist ideas. Fight for a socialist alternative

# Hampshire council ends 'discretionary services' due to cuts

#### SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER AND TEACHER LIVING IN ALDERSHOT

Tory-run Hampshire County Council is the latest local authority to declare a financial crisis, with council leaders warning that they intend to cut services to the 'bare minimum' to avoid issuing a Section 114 notice, declaring effective bankruptcy. Despite council leader Rob Humby insisting the local authority is in a "good" financial position, he is considering cutting or ending so-called 'discretionary' services such as community transport, libraries, household waste recycling centres,

school crossing patrols, museums, and charity grants. Even with these cuts, the council expects to exhaust its reserves by 2026 unless additional funding is made available from the government.

Hampshire is a Tory stronghold and one of the largest Conservative-held councils in the country. This isn't the first time the council has raised the issue of funding, writing a joint letter with Kent County Council warning of impending financial crisis earlier in the year. They implored their Tory party colleagues in Westminster to step in with additional funds. Yet the austerity politics of the

national Tory party extend even to their own electoral heartlands. There are similar stories in county and borough councils across the South East (see 'Woking council announce cuts - unions must fight back' at socialistparty.org.uk).

#### **'Bare minimum' services**

Residents in Hampshire will probably be surprised that they aren't currently experiencing the 'bare minimum', with services having suffered immensely since 2010. An absolute majority has given the Tories free rein to practice austerity, still not enough to prevent potential

bankruptcy. Tory councillors in power have meant rapidly shrinking services and rising council tax bills.

Hampshire illustrates the impossibility of local councils playing by the austerity handbook, no matter how much is cut, the Tories in Westminster are determined to starve local authorities so their big business mates can pick the profitable parts from the bones of what were once public local services controlled by elected councillors. 'Playing by the rules' inevitably leads to bankruptcy. Local communities should look to the example of the Militantled Labour council of Liverpool in

the 1980s that successfully secured additional funds from Thatcher's government by mobilising working-class communities and trade unions to fight back (see 'Council 'bank-ruptcy' crisis: Take the Liverpool road, make no cuts' at socialistparty. org.uk).

On the back of such a mass movement, councils should use the powers they have to borrow, invest in their communities and demand that an incoming Labour government makes available the funds needed not only to arrest the decline, but to reverse the austerity of the last decade.

# **Chris Kaba murder charge: Fight back against** police racism

SOUTH WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

vear after the awful police killing of unarmed father-tobe Chris Kaba, an armed police officer has been charged with his murder.

Despite the start of an ongoing court case, Tory home secretary Suella Braverman responded to the charges with a statement expressing concern about officers "ending up in the dock for carrying out their duties". Braverman's suggestion that killing an unarmed man is part of police 'duties' is an attempt to sway public opinion, to delegitimise the family's justice campaign and turn the case into another frontier for the Tories' reactionary 'culture war'.

The majority of people see police 'duties' very differently. For most of us, the police are the only option to turn to when we are victims of crime. Increasingly, due to cuts, police are unable to actually help. Home Office statistics found that the proportion of crimes (excluding fraud and computer misuse) resulting in a charge and/or summons this year was 5.7%, compared to 16% in 2015.

In contrast, resources have often been found to attack peaceful protestors. We have seen violence by police during Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests, the 2010 student protests, the 1984-85 miners' strike and many more. In reality, the police play a dual role in society. They are part of a state apparatus which is not neutral, but ultimately exists to defend the existing capitalist order, which is based on the exploitation of the working-class majority by a tiny highly privileged elite.

#### **Metropolitan Police**

However, in order to be able to play its role as part of the capitalist state

effectively, public confidence in the institution of the police is needed. The above statistics alongside multiple scandals, including the murder of Sarah Everard by a serving officer and examples of racist policing, have weakened people's faith in the policing system. One survey has found that 51% of Londoners don't trust the Met. The Metropolitan Police has been found to be institutionally racist, misogynistic and homophobic by official reports.

The murder charge, therefore, comes with the police, the Met in particular, under popular pressure, including from Chris Kapa's family's hard-fought campaign. An inquest heard that "officers did not activate their lights or sirens" and that Kaba was not a suspect. Given these reports and bodycam footage, if the officer was "carrying out their duties" then it's further condemnation of the policing system.

However, following the murder charge, Braverman called for a review into policing to ensure firearms officers have the "confidence to do their jobs", and Met leader Mark Rowley also called for "sufficient legal protections" for the police. This points to an attempt to add further barriers to prevent justice in this case and others.

Attempts to increase barriers to justice must be fought against. Justice campaigns must be linked up, and join with fighting trade unions to demand change. In the case of Child Q (see 'Child Q strip search outrage: Racism, sexism, police and profit out of schools' at socialistparty.org.uk) the Socialist Party points out the important role the National Education Union could play in ensuring the safety of children from the police. Following a racist attack in a school in Surrey,



a Socialist Party member pushed for trade union intervention against racism (see 'Surrey community condemns brutal racist attack on pupil' at socialistparty.org.uk).

Ultimately, reviews and inquiries run by the establishment won't get the change we need; we must demand independent workers' and community-led inquiries into police violence. Such an inquiry should include the experiences of young Black people, regularly harassed by the police using racist stop-and-search

#### **Police violence**

And to prevent further police killings, racism and brutality we need to establish a new policing system. The Met should be abolished. We need complete demilitarisation of the police and abolishment of the paramilitary units, such as the Territorial Support Group.

We must demand proper, democratic control of the police by working-class communities and local trade unions through elected bodies of elected representatives from trade unions and community groups. These bodies would be able to direct police operations and priorities, including having responsibility for all appointments, disciplinary measures and dismissals, as is demanded in our Black workers' charter (see 'Black workers charter 2023: a programme for fighting racism' at socialistparty.org.uk).

The fight to end racism and police violence also means fighting to end profit-driven capitalism that depends on racism and division, and for a socialist alternative based on democratic workers' control of



editors@socialistparty.org.uk

or, if you're not online, write to the



### Fight to end the housing crisis We demand:

**ROBBIE DAVIDSON** 

TOWER HAMLETS SOCIALIST PARTY

Throughout my search for a home as a young person in London, I have faced a series of issues highlighting the dire state of the housing crisis. Licensing requirements for houses of multiple occupancy gave landlords excuses to bump up their rents, making a shared arrangement more difficult than ever.

And then, the amount we were expected to earn to lease a property was way over the 'London living wage. Rent was likely to take up 70-80% of my income each month, before utilities, travel expenses or food, over double the proportion advised as being 'affordable'.

A council house wasn't even worth

considering due to the ridiculous size of the waiting list. This forced my group and I under the thumb of greedy individuals and agencies, who themselves are indebted to private banks. In the end, we were rejected by most liveable places, and the only options left were cramped attics far away from any real work opportunities.

The only conclusion I could come to about London's housing crisis is that rents are being driven up by not only greed, but by the insecurity and fear of monopolisation in a highly strung market.

Council housing would provide a safe and affordable option for people like myself, starting off in the world of work, if only we could have access

- Slash the rents introduce rent controls now!
- Compulsory licensing of all landlords to ensure decent housing standards
- A mass programme of council home building. Councils should fight the cuts, by setting no-cuts, needs-based budgets as part of building a mass campaign for the funding they need
- Nationalise the large building companies, land and banks, under democratic workers' control and public ownership to ensure enough good-quality council housing and cheap mortgages
- For socialist planning to end the housing crisis and ensure a decent future for all

London Socialist Party meeting at 7pm, 18 October, at The Abbey Conference and Community Centre, 34 **Great Smith** Street, SW1P 3BU

March against the housing crisis at 12noon 28 October, starting at the Department for Levelling Up and marching to Trafalgar Square

#### UCU AND WEST YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Simone Buitendijk has resigned as vice-chancellor of the University of Leeds, following motions of 'no confidence' from all three unions on campus, Unison, Unite, and University and College Union (UCU).

Since taking the role in 2020, she has overseen the largest concerted strike action at the university in memory. As part of the national strike wave, all three unions have fought for more humane pay and work conditions to compensate for 30-40% wage cuts over the past 13 years and the effect of the cost-of-living crisis that racks the country.

Simone was unpopular amongst all parts of the university, with students, support staff, researchers, lecturers, management, and senior management expressing significant frustration with her unwillingness to compromise on her draconian approach to managing the university.

Having been unwilling even to meet with union representatives, she was finally engaged by students during an occupation of her office in 2022. In an interview which was recorded and placed online, she openly stated her lack of any understanding : a right, not a privilege.

: as to why the strikes or occupation were happening.

During the UCU's marking and assessment boycott, Buitendijk implemented a punitive 100% pay deduction for any lecturer taking part; a strategy denounced by unions, students, and the general public alike. UCU members went on all-out strike action against this deduction. Even some of her own deputies and senior management appointees expressed their frustration about her unwillingness to move from this position.

All this was while she was being paid £350,000 a year, with her house and travel all paid for by the

As the higher education sector becomes increasingly marketised, figures such as Simone are increasingly in positions of power. While we should celebrate her dethroning under pressure from the collective actions of our unions and student body, we must recognise that this is not all about one individual: she is a symptom of the rot at the heart of our education system.

We must eliminate student fees, kick profiteering out of our schools. colleges, and universities, and fight for free, fully funded education being

workers have been

brought in to undermine the strike.

One driver, unfamiliar with the route.

The £850 million private finance

(PFI) waste disposal contract was

given to Veolia in 2006 by the Labour

county council. Courts ruled that the

contract's profit margin should not

be disclosed, so local residents and

the workers can't find out how much

they are contributing towards Veo-

lia's highly paid executives and big

got stuck under a low railway bridge

this week!

**Notts bin workers still fighting** 



#### JON DALF

MANSFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

Veolia waste disposal workers are into a third week of all-out strike, 50 North Nottinghamshire GMB members are demanding a cost-of-living

On the Mansfield picking belt they are exposed to dirty and hazardous rubbish for the minimum wage. Drivers only got a 3% rise this year - not even the extra £500 one-off payment given to managers and office staff.

Veolia put up a security fence to make it harder for pickets to speak to drivers. The fence blocks a zebra crossing but the company seems willing to take a fine for obstruction. Howthe police if pickets hold up a lorry. : and working conditions

Local Labour district councils should stop using Veolia sites while the strike continues. PFI should be abolished and the sites taken over by ever, management are quick to phone : the county council, with good wages

**Get all the latest union news...** 



SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL AND

"Tory Health Minister Barclay has come out saying that health workers are fighting for extreme pay claims. Extreme?! Our members in health have lost up to a fifth of their wages in the last 12 years." This was how Len Hockey, Unite

branch secretary for Barts NHS Trust, opened the rally after hundreds of striking health workers had marched from the Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel, East London, on the third day of their latest round of action. Millicent Manso, Unite rep at Roy-

al London, demanded that the lump sum that has been paid to NHS staff be paid to all those who have been transferred back in-house from privateer Serco. This insourcing was won by the action taken by these same Unite members in early 2022.

They were joined on the demon stration by BMA junior doctors and consultants, themselves on a 72hour stoppage in their continuing pay campaign, and striking Barnet Unison mental health social workers Reps from these disputes spoke at the rally, alongside Aslef general secretary Mick Whelan, as his train driver union members took to the picket lines for their 14th day of action since the summer of 2022.

The RMT's London Transport Presdent Noreen Hayes told the rally that the union's London Underground



(LU) station staff members were due to take action in their dispute but had forced significant concessions from LU management, meaning that the latest strikes had been suspended. But she reinforced RMT's support for the health strikes.

**East London: Hundreds of health strikers march together** 

Len saluted the other striking workers: "The RMT, Aslef and the transport workers are fighting for the same issues as us." Jeremy Corbyn and local Labour MP Apsana Begum also addressed the strike rally, along-

union London and South East regional secretary, ahead of strike action by the union's members in ISS next week.

In his speech, Len explained why broad action across the NHS was needed on pay: "You can't deliver care to patients without the nurse. without the porter, without the cleaner, without the admin worker. We will not be divided." Barts workers have now taken 12 days of strikes and are determined to maintain and

### Aslef rail strike: 'Where's Harper?'



#### **NEWCASTLE SOCIALIST PARTY**

Striking train drivers in Aslef picketed Newcastle Central station wearing masks of transport secretary Mark Harper, mocked up to look like Where's Wally'. As one of the strikers explained: "We're asking where's Harper - we haven't seen him since Ianuary.

Strikers were pleased to report to us that reps of other unions, including the BFAWU bakers' union and National Education Union, had been along to their picket lines to offer solidarity. Alongside unwavering public support, this has boosted the confidence of strikers.

There is clearly a mood for struggle. One of the strikers highlighted that support for action is resolute telling us: "The percentage of the ballots coming back in favour of strike action are getting higher." The same striker talked of the need to coordinate strike action across unions.

#### **Go North East buses strike**

FI AINF BRUNSKII I

NEWCASTLE SOCIALIST PARTY

Bus drivers, engineers and admin staff working for Go North East are taking an initial two separate weeks of strike action, with picket lines in bus depots across the region. At the Washington picket line, strikers took a slow walk down the approach road to the depot, which had buses driven by bosses moving at a snail's pace. Of course, this was all in the interest of

The union Unite points out that workers have been forced into strike action following the failure of Go North East to come back to the negotiating table with an improved pay offer, even though bus drivers in the north east are amongst the lowest paid in the Go-Ahead Group. Unite also highlights the latest accounts from the Go-Ahead Group, which show profits of nearly £85 million – it could easily afford to pay its workers

Across the region, the Go North East picket lines have been very well : One striker commented, "We've got attended, with hundreds of strik- : the union behind us, which is a huge ers showing they are determined to : boost to members"

fight for a better deal. Strikers at the Washington depot told us that pub lic support has been phenomenal. Alongside passing vehicles tooting, they've had people come up to make donations to their strike fund. This included "an elderly gentleman who gave us a tenner to buy us a cuppa". Someone else from a local business brought fish and chips for

Strikers also spoke about the support they've had from Unite under the leadership of Sharon Graham.

# Nominate a fighting candidate for NEU vice-president

# No to cuts – get ready to fight again!

On Friday 6 October, the Tories announced an "accounting error" that cuts education funding by £370 million. This announcement was made just as members of the National Education Union (NEU) are getting ready to nominate candidates for two vice-presidents of the union. Nominations open on 1 November. This is an opportunity for members to elect a serious, fighting leader, who is up to the challenge of leading a fight to defend education and jobs. Socialist Party member Sheila Caffrey, National Executive (NEC) member and activist in Bristol NEU, has written to NEU districts requesting nomination.



12-18 October 2023

#### Sheila says:

'Teacher members of the NEU have taken massive national strike action and forced the Tory government to retreat on pay. 70,000 members joined the union and thousands stepped forward to be reps.

socialistparty.org.uk

"A reballot of members in May and June indicated enormous support to continue strike action, with a 95% 'yes' vote, giving the union a mandate for action into the autumn.

"Unfortunately, the leadership of the NEU recommended a premature ending of the dispute once the Tories offered 6.5%. Socialist Party executive members and I warned that the offer was not enough, and was not fully funded even without this 'error'.

"We need to prepare our members to fight again. "While Labour's shadow education secretary described this 'error' as 'More Tory chaos, more uncertainty for schools and families, all we hear from Starmer's Labour is 'fiscal responsibility'. With a general election looming, the NEU must demand that they commit to fully funding

"We need a presidential team that is prepared to lead a national fight when needed, no matter who forms the

Sheila, along with other Socialist Party members on the NEC, has campaigned all along for the national action that was necessary, and has also campaigned for support staff members of the union to be part of that

#### SHEILA SAYS IN HER LETTER REQUESTING NOMINATION:

"I have been proud to be part of nearly half a million members who stood up to demand the government respect education. As a current member of the national executive, re-elected this year on a fighting programme, I have regularly written motions and spoken at the executive over the last two years arguing for a national, fighting strategy for an inflation-proof pay rise for all staff.

"This must be built from below, ensuring, as a lay-led union, we have strong union groups in schools, colleges and nurseries.

"However, that on its own leaves many of our members to fight alone in unorganised workplaces; in supply agencies; in tiny rural schools etc. We need a strong leadership that leads from the front showing the power of a national union, sharing a strategy that supports all members.

"Striking works! We forced the government through three 'final' pay deals. Last year, 40,000 teachers left the profession - the highest number since they started collecting figures; and teachers took three million sick: cation system that is fully funded:



days - 60% higher than before the

"Support staff are frequently workng two or three jobs and still not making ends meet, and are being forced out of education due to finances or pressure.

"But could we have won more? Certainly, there's no chance that an extra £100 a month in pay packets is going to turn around these figures to resolve the recruitment and retention issues we face.

"So, we must show our colleagues and pupils that it is worth fighting! That there will be an education system for the next generation. An edu-

that has a curriculum created by educators and that reflects the needs of all children and young people."

#### SHEILA'S LETTER ALSO ARGUES FOR:

 A new national contract, with a limit on hours worked Continuing to fight for support

staff members, including acting on the decision of national conference to campaign for recognition for NEU support staff

 Supporting and listening to equalities groups

 Campaigning for proper pay, pensions and conditions for supply

#### **PCS general secretary and AGS** nominations – make sure the paperwork is in!

#### Deadline to submit nominations: 5pm Monday 16 October

WORKPLACE

Socialist Party member Marion Lloyd: is seeking nomination to stand as a candidate for general secretary of the Public and Commercial Services Un-

Marion is the candidate of the socialist rank-and-file organisation PCS Broad Left Network, standing for a fighting and democratic union. She has won support from all areas of the union, from members who want : Monday 16 October.

She is standing on a joint ticket with John Moloney, the current assistant general secretary, who is standing for re-election. John is part of the Independent Left group.

If you have had enough of a leadership that talks but doesn't lead in action, make sure your branch supports Marion and John, and gets the paperwork into PCS HQ by 5pm



### **Pension victory for UCU members**



#### DAN FFI MI FF

LICH MEMBER PERSONAL CAPACITY

The University and College Union (UCU) has made a joint statement with Universities UK (UUK), the employers' representative, to restore the 35% cut previously made to the university employee pension scheme, and to make good what has been lost, by April 2024.

This victory has been hard-earned by workers striking 69 days since 2018. UCU General Secretary Jo Grady states: "Today is a historic victory for UCU members. It should also be motivation for every single worker in the UK who has seen their pension slashed. Our members car

be rightly proud." Achieving restoration of the pensions is indeed a huge accomplishment that would not have occurred without the struggle and persistence of UCU members. The total value of the win is over £15 billion.

It doesn't alter the fundamental problems of a privatised pension

While the universities scheme (USS) projects to maintain pension contribution rates to 2029, there are no guarantees. UCU members have limited oversight of the scheme, and the valuation methodology is flawed. It is possible the scheme could face attacks in the future. The lesson is that striking works,

to this problem in the first place

along with having a vibrant workers' union, and hopefully this will encourage other union members to

This should reinvigorate UCU's 'four fights' demands: fair pay, equality, eliminating casualisation, and action on workloads.

Our union leadership needs to learn this lesson too, and mount a serious campaign on pay and the other demands, instead of the delays and retreats that have marked the fight on pay this summer and autumn. (see Universities: UCU strikes and reballot: A serious fighting lead needed' at

socialistparty.org.uk) Vote 'yes' in the reballot, that runs **ISRAEL-PALESTINE** 

A wave of 'national unity' due to

the war could temporarily boost Net-

anyahu's own position. His weak coa-

lition government, which includes

far-right parties, has faced great pres-

# STOP THE ISRAEL-GAZA WAR! For workers' unity and struggle against national conflict and oppression

INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT, COMMITTEE FOR A

images from Israel and the Gaza Strip are horrific. Many hundreds of civilians are dead on both sides. The unprecedented attacks by Hamas inside Israel followed the escalation policy of the Israeli government against the Palestinians in recent months and years. The Netanyahuled government, with the support of the western powers, has in turn reacted with methods of mass military terror - a massive brutal bombardment of Gaza. Whole areas are being obliterated with indiscriminate attacks, and the siege has been tightened, allowing in no power, food or fuel. A new war has begun which could last some time, with its victims coming from the working class on both sides of the conflict, and which will not bring the people of the region one step closer to

peace and self-determination. The Israeli military blockade of the Gaza strip was always going to be a major contributor to another round of bloody conflict. Over two million Palestinians are trapped in that povertystricken, densely populated strip of land, most of them refugees. They regularly suffer brutal raids and killings by Israeli forces, as do Palestinians in the West Bank, where repression has been stepped up this year - including over 150 being killed - under the direction of Israel's most right-wing government ever.

Early on Saturday 7 October a huge, well-prepared offensive was carried out by the military arm of the Hamasled authority in Gaza: a staggering barrage of thousands of rockets fired into Israel together with blowing up and smashing down parts of the Gaza fence - a fast-executed and coordinated deployment which enabled hundreds of Hamas fighters to storm into

rarily take control of them. Sending a massive shockwave across Israeli society, over 800 people in those areas were killed and around 130 taken

This is the fifth war between the Israeli regime and Hamas-led Gaza authority, but this time with the developments having already reached an unprecedented level. Never before have the scenes involved in the Hamas offensive taken place on that scale in Israel's 75-year history. For Palestinians in Gaza, painfully familiar with death and destruction, the death toll will rise far above that of Israelis, as Netanyahu declared that parts of the strip would be turned into rubble, and even threatened that it would become a "deserted island".

#### **Ground invasion**

A ground invasion is being prepared a major military undertaking which would take this war onto an even more devastating level if pursued How far it will go can't be predicted at this early stage, but attempts to rescue hostages, and possibly even to remove Hamas from power and directly occupy, or install a stooge authority, can't be ruled out. Also, a spread of the war involving other countries or forces in the region is possible, given the unpredictability, volatility and potentially explosive nature of the events unfolding. The US administration sending warships to back up Israel - a 'strike group' led by the Ford aircraft carrier - indicates the level of concern among capitalist powers globally over the developments.

This is in a world already divided and destabilised by the Ukraine war and facing major economic shocks. Capitalist politicians internationally have no solutions to offer - their system is rotten to the core and is the underlying cause of the wars that break

For an in-depth look at the history of the Israel-Palestine conflict read 'Israel-Palestine: 30 years since the Oslo accord – will there ever be a Palestinian state?' written by Judy Beishon on socialist party.org.uk or at:

**Committee for a Workers' International** FIGHTING FOR A SOCIALIST WORLD socialistworld.net



peoples' needs and aspirations anywhere in the world. Instead, they ooze hypocrisy, such as that of the western powers arming Ukraine against Russian occupation while at the same time supporting the Israeli regime's pounding of Palestinians who are also under occupation.

And just weeks ago, the western powers barely voiced criticism of Azerbaijan, with whom oil and gas trade deals are at stake, for militarily overrunning and inflicting ethnic cleansing on Nagorno-Karabakh, causing over 200 fatalities.

Once again, in this new round of Israel-Palestine conflict, many civilians have already been killed and injured. The leaders of both sides have no hesitation in terrorising civilians whether it be the history of the Israeli state in Lebanon and Gaza or the Hamas leaders in their 7 October offensive. The killing of around 260 young people on Saturday at a 'rave' will not bring progress in the fight for liberation but was an attempt to terrorise the Israeli population, which can play into the hands of the ultra-right Israeli government.

But the condemnations by the Israeli government are completely hypocritical given the record of some of its ministers. For years the

minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir, glorified Baruch Goldstein, the Israeli terrorist who massacred 29 Palestinians in a mosque in 1994. In March this year, finance minister Bezalel Smotrich called for Huwara, a Palestinian town, to be "wiped out" after two Israeli settlers were killed there.

#### **Crisis in Israel**

The Israeli state is confronted with its biggest security crisis since its foundation in 1948. Just two weeks ago, Netanyahu overconfidently addressed the UN General Assembly waving a map in his hands of the Middle East with the Palestinian territories non-existent. Now he represents a ruling elite that has been dealt an almighty blow to its prestige by the Hamas Gaza government that it had wrongly assumed was effectively

In addition, Israel's capitalists have basked in a status worldwide of being considered leaders in developing and using surveillance and military technology and equipment. This image has been severely dented and has been shown to have contributed to a false sense of security inside Israel itself - a feeling of being invincible

sure from a nine-month-long mass movement against its programme of judicial reform, including a general strike which paralysed the country on The Hamas offensive, as it inflicted high level of civilian casualties -

including the systematic slaughter of entire families - has clearly had a colossal impact on Israeli Jewish people, ratcheting up feelings of insecurity. So this onset of war will no doubt cut across that particular movement. But even at this early stage there is great anger being voiced in Israel against the government. Survivors of the attacks and relatives of those killed and missing are heard saying on Israeli TV: "Where was the government?", and "Where was the army?", expressing feelings of abandonment by a state they believed was built to protect its Jewish citizens.

On Sunday 8 October, a presenter on Israel's Channel 12 news opened with: "The feeling every man for himself, as the state has abandoned us. is the feeling of every Israeli in the last two days". The editorial of Israeli newspaper Haaretz on Monday was headlined: "Netanyahu bears responsibility for this Israel-Gaza war". So the mood is polarised, and anger is likely to develop and widen further as the shock across society subsides and the war and its death toll goes on.

The opposition parties in Israel's parliament might then temporarily benefit, but they are reducing their ability to do so by expressing willingness to form an emergency 'national unity' government with Netanyahu. Also, as with all the pro-capitalist parties, they have low appeal after their failures in government; and they have no alternative proposals to prevent future worsening rounds of bloody conflict, just a similar agenda of military repression, punctuated with occasional and minimal

concessions

of the Israeli establishment no doubt fear the instability the war could bring into the heart of Israel. In 2021 communal violence broke out in a number of the mixed Iewish-Arab cities in Israel, which was egged on at the time by mobs of rampaging racist, ultranationalist Israeli Jews. The new outbreak of war with Gaza could lead to more clashes of that nature, increasing instability inside Israel.

Faced with such dangers, Israeli workers and trade unionists need to organise against them, striving to build working class-based solidarity across communities from different backgrounds. This, together with other workers' actions and struggles, can help prepare the way for the building of a new political party in Israel based on working-class interests - and with a socialist programme that can pose a real alternative to the cycles of terrible bloodshed.

#### The Palestinians' struggle

Hamas, a party based on right-wing political Islam, has positioned itself as leading the resistance to the blockade and occupation, in contrast to the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority in the West Bank which collaborates with Israeli military repression. Polls indicate that Hamas usually has only minority support in Gaza, but its 7 October offensive is likely to boost that level, at least for a while.

The offensive was also no doub aimed at increasing the support and funding Hamas receives from what it describes as 'Islamic resistance' organisations elsewhere in the Middle East. Hamas cites all the pressing grievances of the Palestinians as its reasons for the action: the Gaza blockade, Israeli army raids into West Bank towns, violence from right-wing Jewish settlers, the growth of the settlements, repression of Palestinians at Jerusalem's Al-Agsa mosque, and the 5,200 Palestinians held in Israeli

The timing of the offensive was also likely linked to the US-sponsored rapprochement talks between Israel and Saudi Arabia, with Hamas aiming to make those talks no longer tenable

probably backed by pressure from

the regime in Iran. Hezbollah

based on the interests of workers and the poor, independent of those of the Also, the present Israel-Gaza war shows why socialists in the CWI have always warned against the targeting of Israeli civilians in the national conflict, and oppose such attacks. Attacks

Arabia when it called the Hamas op-

eration a "decisive response to Israel's

continued occupation and a message

to those seeking normalisation with

Israel". Hezbollah showed support

siles at an Israeli military base, a front

in the war that could become more

Socialists, however, can give no

support to Hamas and Hezbollah,

parties which are based on right-

wing political Islam. They are against

workers' rights, LGBTQ+ rights and

equality for women; and their mili-

tary strategies won't bring about lib-

eration for the Palestinians, decent

living standards for them, or an end to

the conflict - none of which are pos-

sible under capitalism. Rather, the

mass struggle - a socialist intifada

being 'driven into the sea', push Israeli

Iewish workers away from feeling

any solidarity with the Palestinians'

for Hamas' action by firing some mis-

cause, and towards supporting bru tal retaliation by the Israeli state, instead of trying to draw them away from identifying with the interests of the Israeli capitalist class. The civilian captives being held in Gaza should be released, as of course should all the

Palestinian political prisoners being

held in Israeli jails. As well as engaging in mass struggle, Palestinian workers need to build their own mass party, independent of capitalist interests. The Palestinian elite and pro-capitalist political parties in the occupied territories will never be able to deliver an end to the conflict. Only the overthrow of the capitalist system, replacing private ownership of the main corporations with public ownership and democratway forward for the Palestinians will ic control by the working class and be through democratically organising poor masses can lay the basis for an end to oppression and war.

The building of mass workers' or ganisations armed with socialist programmes on both sides of the national divide is the only path towards that goal, along with decent living standards and guaranteed rights for all. An appeal to the masses of all countries to join a struggle for demoon civilians in Israel reinforce fears of : cratic national rights and to end the exploitation of the masses by all the capitalist ruling elites and regimes is the way forward.

• Stop the Israel-Gaza war! For the immediate withdrawal of the Israeli military from the occupied territories

• For democratically organised defence committees in local communities

• For a mass struggle of the Palestinians, under their own democratic control, to fight for liberation

• For the building of independent workers' parties in

Palestine and Israel and links between them For an independent, socialist Palestinian state, alongside a socialist Israel, with two capitals in Jerusalem and guaranteed democratic rights for all minorities, as part of the struggle for a socialist Middle East





**CAMPAIGNS CAMPAIGNS** socialistparty.org.uk 12-18 October 2023 the **Socialist** socialistparty.org.uk

# Socialist Darty **WHAT WE STAND FOR**

exploitation of the majority of the world's population by a small, superrich 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 workingclass 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 and is democratically run by workingthe 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 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 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
- 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

#### services for all who need them. Expand services for all women suffering violence For local councillors who are committed to opposing austerity and

 For a socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs, including dental and eve 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

all cuts to local services, jobs, pay and

including rail, mail, water, telecoms and power - under democratic workers control and management.

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

 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.

companies, land banks and estates

- 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

**Help fund the fightback!** 

existing housing stock. Agribusiness to be taken into democratic public ownership. For a food processing and retail industry under are set by consumers, small farmers, and

all workers involved in the production,

- 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
- 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 loca 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
- Expand democracy. For the abolition 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. right to vote at 16.
- For the right of nations to selfdetermination. For an independent socialist Scotland and for a socialist Wales, both part of a voluntary socialis 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.
- No to imperialist wars and occupations!
- Take the wealth off the super-rich For a socialist government to take companies and the banking systen that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management Compensation to be paid only on the
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in
- No the EU bosses' club. Organise a campaign with European socialists and workers' organisations to use the talks on post-Brexit relations to tear up

#### Do you agree? Join the fightback! JOIN THE SOCIALISTS Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join or call **020 8988 8777** or text your name and postcode to **07761 818 206**

processing, distribution and retail of food **DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS** 

For united working-class struggle to

and all others that trample over civi

- resources. No to racist immigration laws
- For proportional representation and the

- basis of proven need, not to the fat cats
- a way that safeguards the environment.

# **Palestine protest in Coventry**

# "Only the socialists stand up for us"



A protest, 100-strong, stood with Palestinians in Coventry city centre on 9 October. Speakers said how horrific the events unfolding are.

Many protesters spoke about the relentless pressure on the conditions the Palestinians face. The ruling class in Britain and the government in Israel have no intention to ease bloodshed for civilians.

Coventry Socialist Party members spoke with people from the Palestinian community. They told us that "the

only ones that are gonna stand up for us are socialists". And many were angry with the position taken by Keir

Capitalism does not have a solu tion to the national question in Israel-Palestine. The Socialist Party calls for the immediate withdrawal of the Israeli military from the occupied territories and an end to Israeli state

 Read the Socialist Party's full statement 'Stop the Israel-Gaza war! For workers' unity and struggle against national conflict and

# **Coventry council by-election:** standing for workers as **budget crisis looms**

COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY AND TUSC CANDIDATE

On 7 October, Socialist Party members and supporters kicked off our council by-election campaign in Coventry's Earlsdon ward, where we are standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

Coventry needs a socialist voice in the council. The alarming news about Birmingham council going bankrupt has been followed by Coventry's council warning it is heading down the same path. The Labourcontrolled council is £12 million in debt this year, and faces debts of £30 million next vear.

Socialists repeatedly warned the council that the situation was getting

campaign to win back funds stolen by central government. Labour ignored those warnings. It carried out Tory cuts, scrapping 2,000 council jobs and gutting services. Earlsdon's the vigilant protests by residents.

Instead of building a united campaign with unions, Labour went to war with them, spending nearly £10 million last year on a vicious strikebreaking campaign against its own The developing financial catastro-

phe threatens to devastate Coventry's services further, unless we build the fight to restore funding from this weak Tory government.

Get in touch with the Socialist 1072 no heating or hot water since 14 October, flat 1005 since July, and flat Party if you can help in Coventry's



# Northampton protest air pollution deaths

#### CHARLEY LINCOLN

People protested outside a full meeting of Northampton council on 28 September. Northampton is the worst for air pollution in the UK, according to the website House Fresh.

The council was first informed in 2006, and legally committed to come up with a 'comprehensive plan' within 18 months. 17 years later, and the council's harmful negligence and inaction means we now have the top

#### **Everyone is impacted**

Everyone in Northampton is being impacted by toxic levels of air pollution, according to the World Health Organisation. Umbrella Fair says, on average, there are 102 Northampton deaths a year - two a week - related to

Marly Lyman, one of the organisers of the event, spoke to the Socialist Party: "Our media, government and corporations want to keep us from mobilising, from making change, and instead want us to keep being distracted with the day to day. The sooner we look at the issue, the sooner we can collectively organise and make the change. They don't want us doing that, because it's not profitable for them and their Ella Adoo-Kisswi-Debrah died in

London, at nine years old, from a fa tal asthma attack triggered by illegal levels of toxins caused by road traffic The first person in the UK to have air pollution as her cause of death in the official report. Developing asthma in childhood

has sadly become a common complaint. The UK has 5.4 million asthmatic people, 1.1 million children.

Failure to reduce air pollution i resulting in lost lives. The British Heart Foundation has stated that in the next decade there could be 1,700 deaths down to air pollution just in Northamptonshire alone. National and local governments

should stop promoting private comand safety of people. We can't wait any longer. We need huge investment in environmentally friendly policies funded by the wealth hoarded by the super-rich - such as renewable energy production and extended free

Socialist Party members joined 150

Bristol buses are privately run by First and Stagecoach. The disastrousgripe for anyone in the city who uses The march finished at the West of England Combined Authorities

people on a 'march for fairer buses' headquarters. This is the office of the in Bristol on 9 September 'metro mayor' covering Bristol and the surrounding local authorities South Gloucestershire as well as Bath ly bad service they deliver is a major: and North East Somerset

are a major gripe in Bristol

Overpriced, disastrous buses by XR Youth Bristol, a local Extinction Rebellion group. XR Youth Bristol are campaigning for free, fair and franchised buses that they say is a step towards publicly owned buses. It is calling on the council to implement this model. A franchised model is where the

The march was organised and led

authority specifies the bus services to be provided, determining the routes, imetables and fares. But services are still operated by a private company making profit. This model is being put into place by Labour's Greater Manchester mayor Andy Burnham.

#### Publicly owned, direct control

The Socialist Party was campaigning for buses to be publicly owned, and brought directly back into the control of local authorities. Socialist Party member Sheila Caffrey - a member of the National Education Union (NEU) executive - made the case for this in one of a number of rousing speeches at the start of the march.

Members of the public on the sides initially did not understanding why we were marching. However, once the call for free and fairly priced buses was put across to onlookers, they became supportive.

The Socialist Party received a wholly positive to our leaflet - 'Public transport not private profit. We me another person on the march who wants to join the Socialist Party.

# Cardiff Trans Pride: Sick of being scapegoated, ready to fight for systemic change

I had the privilege of attending the Cardiff Trans Pride parade on 16 September. Socialist Party members from Cardiff East and West, as well as Swansea, were present to express solidarity. Compared to the non-committal façade of support in Cardiff's annual Pride festival "Pride Cymru", this group was much livelier and more devoted to enacting actual systemic change. Around 200 people, most of whom were there with friends, were dressed in vibrant colours and gleefully waved homemade

In a time of heightened moral panic against our community, recklessly encouraged by the Tories to distract from their capitalist system's abject failure, it was a breath of fresh air to hear demands for meaningful

Most of it related to trans issues, such as commissioning a gender identity service for trans children and ado lescents, but some demands had a wider scope; some included the Senedd (Welsh parliament) to provide shelter for all homeless people like they did in the pandemic, and opposing the encroachment of 'pink

capitalism' in Pride Cymru. Of this the organisers opposed a welcoming of police presence that "launders the image of South Wales Police", and thus sterilises their sordid record of abuse against racial, sexual and gen der minorities.

There was huge anger expressed about being scapegoated for capitalist failings, with more and more people making demands for wide societal reform. Increasing number consciousness. It came as no surprise that the members of the march, both trans people and others, were recep tive to the Socialist Party's LGBTOcharter, with most of our copies sold

# East London residents left without heating over successive winters

Last Christmas, on 23 December 2022, the Barking Reach Residents Association on the Barking Riverside estate in East London gathered the following information from residents in Argent House:

"Flats 1072, 1005, 2001 and 1008\* are all without heating in Argent House. Flat 1072 has care of a oneyear-old and eight-year-old at weekends, flat 1005 has a two-vear-old

residents of your property "Flat 2001 has been waiting for the issue to be fixed since the spring, flat

contractors would turn up failed, and these issues were not resolved. Christmases were ruined. After Christmas, one resident

Promises by housing association

London and Quadrant (L&Q), that

Dear I &O Team. I am emailing from a place of

disappointment and anger at the shabby way we are treated as

We have endured two biting winters without heating as L&O have sent at least eight people to check our heating and none has been able to fix

me wondering if incompetent people are sent or if L&Q has just decided that their tenants can freeze to death and ignored the recommendations given to fix it.

My family spent the entire Christmas and New Year sick because we were stuck in a freezing house unable to recover. This has happened two years in a row, same problem...

Now, the government's own housing ombudsman says L&O is even ignoring their official warnings! A Guardian report on 19 Sep-: it since December 2021. This leaves : tember carried a picture of our : ble the resources put into our estate

estate. The ombudsman's report demonstrates that L&Q is far worse than other housing associations, which are bad enough as anyone can tell you

This is not a case of good or bad local property managers at the front line. I've urged them to join the Unite the Union housing branch. This is a case of them being inadequately resourced.

The article in the Guardian came out the day before our Barking Reach Residents Association monthly meeting, and we agreed to demand that L&Q should dou-

to resolve residents' issues, with-

I've had three responses so far, none of which address my request An L&O executive member wants to speak to me in person to "fully understand" the issues. We wrote 2,000 words and he can't understand the issues?

Makes my blood boil PETE MASON

# **Students: Organising against** cost-of-living and housing crises

#### **Northampton: Anger at prison-like** accommodation

Ever since St John's Halls have come under private ownership, the same complaints have been repeated year after year: most notably, ever-rising rent prices, unsafe living conditions, and prison-like security.

For an accommodation regularly likened to a prison, rent prices at £153-a-week for a single ensuite (the option for 90.8% of students) are appalling. Strict, outsourced security enforce a rule restricting guests to one a night and once a week with a pre-approved request, and require students to enter and exit through a full-height metal turnstile. Many students feel as if they're living in a

From speaking with students currently living in St John's, it's clear that the standard of living in the halls is low. Common grievances include flats having no running water, hobs and ovens that don't work (which halls owners fail to fix) and wide gaps underneath doors. Others complain of showers, heating, and plug sockets not working. With so many issues left unsolved for so many students, you have to question what the extortionate rent we're paying actually goes

JESSE PICKWELL

#### **Oxford: Support for** socialists standing in elections

The freshers stalls at the two universities in Oxford were invigorating. We had many strong conversations, with political consciousness seeming higher than your average campaign stall. Students asked directly what separated us from other groups and how we plan to turn rhetoric into

There was a strong distrust for Labour among the students, with support for the idea of trade unionists and socialists running in the next election. Other elements of the programme resonated well, especially on the cost of living and housing, which seemed the most immediate issues for the students. The call for free education seemed more distant, and students seem to view it as less attainable since Keir Starmer ditched it as Labour policy.

Overall the stalls have gone well, with 22 copies of the Socialist and 15 Socialist Student magazines sold, as well as 100 sign-ups across both universities.



#### Cardiff: Solidarity with | Warwick: Students striking workers

Around 15 Socialist Party members helped campaign at the Cardiff Uni freshers this year - in between work and studies! Though security moved us on from our preferred spot on the first day, it didn't stop us engaging with hundreds of students as they started their first day of freshers.

There was clear anger from firstyear students in regard to tuition fees, but also the fact that annual student rent is now on average higher than the maximum available student loan. The stalls also proudly had some University and College Union (UCU) leaflets from striking workers in support of their recent and possible future action, something that Cardiff Socialist Students has supported unequivocally. Cardiff Socialist Students got over

a hundred sign-ups and eight people expressed an interest in joining the Socialist Party, showing the eagerness towards our ideas. The student meeting we organised in freshers week had 20 freshers at it, many of whom were ex-Labour members who were enthused by Corbyn's programme on education, but have become essentially politically homeless since Starmer's pro-capitalist takeover. The meeting also had students from University of South Wales in Trefforest at it, where Caerphilly Socialist Party is in touch with many Nigerian students who want to

A main theme that came from the meeting was that Socialist Students isn't just a talking shop, where we don't just shout out random slogans and do nothing else. Several Socialist Student members made the point that as well as supporting UCU strikers, they also want to support the Cardiff council bin workers' strike, and possibly stand in future elections - as George Phillips from Socialist Students and others did for TUSC in

the council elections. The society also agreed that it is going to plan campaign stalls to engage with even more students over the year, to ensure Cardiff Socialist Students carries on having a strong presence on campus, to engage in

# the struggles to come.



# ioin the fight for

Warwick Socialist Students met with seven new students in attendance. Over 150 names were collected in the campaign stalls building up to the meeting aiming to answer students and young workers' questions on what their role is in fighting for socialism.

Sky-high rents, with the crippling weight of debt, the repayment threshold of which being lowered to £25,000 annually, have meant that the consciousness of even apolitical students has been raised because of their conditions in all universities. Admin staff also expressed interest in unionising their workplace, which shows the consistent exploitation of staff and students alike.

One student is already attending Coventry Socialist Party meetings, with other attendees expressing interest in visiting upcoming pickets. Having students on campus raising issues explicitly facing students is vital to build and keep links in the

Many students are forced into work while studying. The point was made at the meeting that private schools set their own exam curriculums, allowing teachers to selectively teach what is expected to be on exams. So when working-class students who are employed get higher grades, they are really putting in twice the work of students who don't!

Plans have been made for our next Warwick meeting, including activity on campus to build for it. With Warwick University's malicious reputation, our activity on campus is vital

#### **SOCIALIST STUDENT**

The magazine of



#### **University of Arts London: Caught in the** middle of the cost-ofliving crisis

Many UAL students have been caught in the middle of the cost-of-living crisis, with rising tuition fees and poor job opportunities which pay as little as £9.15 an hour. Students need to come together to hold an open discussion on their concerns and the lack of help universities give to their students - even profiting from allowing private art shops to operate on campus as if they are the university's which allows them to charge up to 46% higher on supplies.

University students bear the cost of the 'independent bodies' which profit off of them. Those who are inernational students are paying up to £24,000 to £28,000 per year for their education, but across the board our : Tories out but can't bring himself to requirements are being ignored. This issue is branded as something that naturally occurs within this economy. There is nothing natural or reasonable about it, nor university lecturers not being able to make ends meet and who are expected to work extra hours without proper pay for doing so.

#### **Salford and Manchester: Feeling abandoned by Labour**

Fighting against the Manchester rain, we have managed to keep campaign stall activity consistent at the University of Salford, Manchester Metropolitan University and University of Manchester (UoM). The UCU has been striking at UoM so we coordinated our stalls to intervene with the

Students were clear about not supporting the Tory government, but many of them also expressed no faith in Starmer's Labour, feeling abandoned after his U-turn over scrapping tuition fees.

One student said to me that he doesn't know who to vote for in the next general election. He wants the support Starmer's Labour.

We are creating a solid programme of meetings which will be held in Manchester and Salford to cater to as many students as possible. Our next meetings will be on how students and the working class can fight back against the cost-of-living crisis.



# Mansfield: 'Tories out! We're fighting for everyone'



# Swindon: "Keep up the fight"

After supporting the picket line in : shake each of our hands, and tell us Swindon - part of the national rail strike - we held a Socialist Party campaign stall in the town centre. We focused on our upcoming Socialist Students work that we're planning at the local college.

We met a former Labour councillor, who was dismayed at the state of that party. We discussed the history of Swindon's workers' movement with a lifelong trade unionist: and one man who simply stopped to

to keep up the fight!

New Socialist Party members young college students - got to join us on campaign activity for the first

Like all Socialist Party campaign activity, they got to meet all manner of workers and youth on the stall and picket line. There's no better place to learn about the class struggle than in the Socialist Party!



### **Coventry: Scrap** hospital parking charges



We got over 100 signatures on our petition to scrap hospital parking charges. One nurse, who signed the petition, told us she can barely afford When NHS workers are struggling

like never before, it is absurd that hospital car park charges nearly £700 a year for staff to park there. And over £1,500 a year if they don't have a pass. It's all just so a private company can keep making profit.

Alongside anger at the charges, more workers are looking for an alternative to crisis-ridden capitalism We also had a striking worker ask about joining the Socialist Party.

And more people are doing that longside getting a regular copy of the Socialist delivered, and coming o our regular meetings.

#### the "Tories out". And, both he, and one of his mates, donated to the So cialist Party fighting fund as well.

They had remembered us from last time. So they took our leaflets, a Socialist paper, and some updated Socialist Party LGBTO+ charters, say ing: "We should be fighting for equal ity for all."

PÄUL TOOLEY-OKONKWO

### **Dewsbury:** Fighting Kirklees council cuts

Socialist Party members have been campaigning against Kirklees council cuts in Dewsbury town centre.

Over the weeks of campaigns the scale of the cuts has seemed to get worse, with arms-length leisure ser vice providers 'Kirklees Active Leisure' now guaranteeing to keep only Huddersfield and Spen Valley leisure centres open. This time last year i ran 13 centres across Kirklees! On our first stall we found tha

many people were still shocked about the proposals, but a week later there was far more awareness of the cuts and a bigger mood to discuss what we could do about them.

We promoted the upcoming lobby of the council on 18 October, but also explained the need for the council to fight for the funding needed to keep services open. Many people agreed that an incoming Labour government could pledge to restore council funding, making these cuts by a Laoour council totally unnecessary.

Dewsbury is among a number o owns to have been granted £20 million from the 'levelling-up fund', but this money hasn't been granted for keeping public services running; instead it's for 'sprucing up' town centres. As one person signing our petition commented: "What's the point in putting planters in our town centre to make it look nice if we don't have a leisure centre or anything else people want to come here

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# Why I joined

# We have plenty to fight for

SWANSEA AND WEST WALES SOCIALIST PARTY

oined the Socialist Party back in 2019, after meeting with members on a campaign stall in York and bought a copy of the Socialist. For me, joining the party was an obvious choice. 2019 was an interesting time for politics, you could feel people's rising discontent.

The Brexit referendum served as a catalyst to many things, to the vorking class it bought politics to the forefront of discussions. While I couldn't vote, I still watched the referendum closely as it was the only thing anyone was discussing. So I went in search of a party that was best for me. Labour under Corbyn took more

of a left turn than had been seen for decades. However, I lost trust after the failure of Welsh Labour to stand against the Tory austerity measures. or even to offer assistance in the

So I looked to other parties like the

Greens and Plaid Cymru, but they lack the political ideas I was looking

13

Despite what I thought about Welsh Labour I can recognise that Corbyn was offering something different, a more radical plan like nationalisation, better welfare pro grammes and higher wages.

Reading the Socialist - about the saving the NHS from the Tories - and seeing the same argument that I had been making, was so comforting to see. The paper made me realise that

When I first joined, I had read a few political theories but as I began to attend more meetings and to talk with members, my knowledge expanded and only reaffirmed my



### Only our class can fund a party of the working class - donate now!

We heard from Tory politicians ranting at their conference, offering policies and blaming us for their mistakes. Now it's New Labour poli

They, like the Tories, will not put forward policies in our interests. Labour under Sir Keir Starmer has proved to big business and the capitalist class that, under its control. Britain will be a safe place for them to invest and make profit. Few disagree that it would be almost impossible to be worse than the Tories. But not being as bad as the Tories is not good enough.

It's not good enough for the 4.2 million people living in poverty, 7.68 million people on NHS waiting lists, or all the workers who have been made worse off by wage stagnation, low pay and the cost-of-living crisis.

One of the biggest crises facing the working class and young people is one of lack of political representation. We need a party that fights for our class. We need politicians who will vote against cuts to jobs and services. One that will fight for rent control and carry out a mass, affordable, council house building programme. The Socialist Party has been cam-

paigning for a new mass workers' party. We are part of the Trade Unionisi and Socialist Coalition and have been boldly standing under this banner and taking part in elections to offer a genuine alternative as a step in that fight. A Socialist Party Scotland member stood in the Rutherglen and Ham ilton West by-election in Scotland and a Socialist Party member is standing in the Earlsdon Ward by-election in Coventry (see page 10) and in Higham Hill ward in Waltham Forest, East London.

Under capitalism, it's not easy to fight for a party of the working class. No capitalists or companies are going to sponsor it. Only our class can fund such a party. If you agree with us and want to support us fighting for an alternative, please make a donation today on socialistparty.org.uk/donate

Every quarter, we have a target to raise £25,000 to ensure we have the funds to carry out our day-to-day tasks and produce the materials and stand up for our rights. One that will: leaflets taking our ideas as far and wide as possible

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or make cheques payable to Socialist Party



**ANTI-RACISM** socialistparty.org.uk the **Socialist** 12-18 October 2023

# **BLACK HISTORY MONTH: WINDRUSH** AND THE HOSTILE ENVIRONMEN

#### **HUGO PIERRE**

SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

his year marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Empire Windrush ship docking at Tilbury, Essex, in 1948. That marked what is considered to be the beginning of modern immigration into the UK from the former colonies, particularly of Black workers from the West Indies.

The Tory party is deeply divided on many issues, including immigration, with the cabinet currently a hostage to their extreme right wing on this issue. The Home Secretary, Suella Braverman, is pushing her policy of using boats in the opposite way the Empire Windrush was used in 1948 - in this instance, to moor them off ports and house refugees.

She is also still pursuing the policy of flying any migrants that use 'illegal' routes of entry to Rwanda. Her own backstory reveals that her father fled from the land of his birth, Kenya, and was allowed to migrate to London because he held a British passport. This allowed entry under the longsince abandoned Nationalities Act 1962, even though this was amended in 1968, just before he arrived.

#### **Post-World War Two**

After World War Two there was a substantial rebuilding job in the UK, in the cities and in industry. But this coincided with a great shortage of labour. 100,000 Polish workers and their families, recruited through a European Voluntary Workers scheme of displaced eastern Europeans, and free transit for Irish workers, were used to fill the gap.
At the same time, the landslide La-

bour election victory of 1945 posed the fear of revolution for the ruling class. They were prepared to make substantial concessions to save their system. The nationalisation of key industries and infrastructure, and the establishment of the welfare state, were a major encroachment on the bosses' source of profits and power.

In the immediate post-war years, no call was made to the colonies for workers, particularly from the West Indies and Africa, although Labour introduced the Nationalities Act in 1948 that gave to anyone born in the colonies the right to live and work in the UK.

Many of those that set sail on the Windrush from the Caribbean quickly found work. Immigration from the West Indies that followed was a trickle until the mid-1950s, when the US imposed stricter immigration controls.

Even then, the Conservative governments of the 1950s were actively looking at ways to reduce immigration from the West Indies. They followed on from an initial Labour cabinet inquiry to try to find ways to limit 'coloured' migration into Britain. In the end they limited their restrictions to bureaucratic methods rather than legislation. Legislation at that stage would have inflamed

the rise of national liberation movements, especially in Africa but also the Caribbean.

Immigration from the West Indies hit a peak in 1956-57. Housing shortages leading to discrimination by landlords was a common situation faced by many. A 'colour bar' also operated in many industries. Those with skills and professional qualifications often could not take up those professions and were forced to work in lower-skilled occupations.

The immediate post-war economic upswing was coming to an end by the late 1950s. In the late summer of 1958, Blacks were attacked in Nottingham and more infamously in the Notting Hill area of London. The Notting Hill riots were almost certainly inspired by supporters of Oswald Mosley, leader of Britain's fascist Union Movement, even though the police reported to the Home Secretary that racism was not the motivation for the riot.

#### **Black resistance**

However, Blacks were no longer willing to tolerate this level of violence and organised to resist. Some attempted to mobilise the local trade unions. Unfortunately, the response of the trade unions was weak.

A delegation of Black workers approached the Trades Union Congress (TUC) to organise, in effect, an antiracist rally in the local area to support the Black community, oppose further racist attacks, and to bring together trade unionists in their support. Black workers were also urged to speak to individual trade union branches, to put their case against exploitation both 'in the colonies' and against the rent-racketeering endemic in London at the time. This call to action, if followed by the TUC, could have created a force in local working-class communities.

The ruling class reacted to these events with restrictive racist immigration controls, with the Commonwealth Immigration Act 1962 introduced by the Tories.

Black workers were fighting for jobs and recognition by the trade unions. In the 1960s 'colour bars' operated in many jobs. Workers would often face restrictions on promotion, or were tasked with the most menial jobs. Many fought back using protest, boycotts and other methods, often without official trade union backing.

Labour government was forced into action, introducing its first Race Relations Act in 1965. But racism was whipped up further by their Commonwealth Immigration Act 1968, specifically designed to limit the potential influx of Kenyan Asians. Right-wing Tory politician Enoch Powell made his infamous 'rivers of blood' speech, calling for a halt to further immigration and the repatriation of 'non-whites' to their country of origin.

There have been many new controls since the Immigration Act 1981, which completely revoked the right of a member of the former British:

'colonies' to live in the UK. Both New Labour and the Tories have also cynically used immigration controls and asylum seekers as a proxy for continued use of 'divide and rule'. In the Tories case, to promote cuts and austerity, and while Labour sought a diversion from fighting cuts and austerity.

The most recent legislation, introduced by the Tories, along with the destruction of boarding cards for those that travelled to and settled in the UK before 1971, led to the Windrush scandal, where Black workers with the right to live and work in the UK were denied jobs, medical care, and some even lost their homes.

#### The struggle against racism

The situation today is very different from that facing the Windrush generation, or even those who became active in the 1990s and 2000s. Trade unions have been forced into action on the cost-of-living crisis. A new generation of trade unionists and reps are being recruited in many workplaces, in many cases with Black workers to the fore.

The trade unions, whilst not perfect, nearly all have policies opposing

racism and racist immigration controls. The TUC also passed a motion, campaigned for by Socialist Party members, in 2018 calling for racism to be fought not just as an ideology but by winning workers away from these ideas with a campaign to link this with the demands to meet the needs for jobs, homes and proper services.

Jeremy Corbyn's general election manifesto of 2017, with all its limitations, raised the consciousness of many that there was an alternative to capitalism and its racism and division: socialism. This had a dramatic impact on Black workers, with a greater percentage turning out to vote Labour than in previous elections.

The response to the George Floyd murder in the US during the Covid pandemic lockdown in 2020, when demonstrations were effectively illegal, also shows that a new layer want to fight for their future. Black vouth who had never taken part in any demo turned out with their own home-made slogans for 'Black Lives Matter' protests.

The battle for ideas to end racism will be a struggle for the new layers that will be drawn into it. But a core will be won to the idea quickly that the struggle for a socialist society is the only way to end racism once and for all.

 This article is based on the Socialism Today article 'From Windrush to hostile environment' which can be read at socialismtoday.org





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# Rutherglen and Hamilton West: The reality behind Labour's by-election euphoria



PHILIP STOTT AND MATT DOBSON

SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND

The Rutherglen and Hamilton West parliamentary by-election was a massive vote of no confidence in the main pro-capitalist parties. Despite intense attention from the media and the political establishment, and major resources expended by Labour and the Scottish National Party (SNP) in particular, there was evident and palpable anger in this predominantly working-class constituency. Anger over the cost-of-living crisis but, above all, towards the politicians responsible for the economic disaster, especially the Tories and the SNP.

This mood was reflected in a collapse in the turnout, from 66% in the 2019 general election to just 37%.

Scottish Labour's neo-Blairite Michael Shanks won with a 20% swing from the SNP to Labour. Yet Labour's number of votes were lower when compared to both the 2019 and 2017 general elections when Jeremy Corbyn was Labour leader. Shanks resigned his party membership in protest at Corbyn's leadership and only rejoined when Starmer took over.

The result was a brutal electoral defeat for the SNP, which saw its share of the vote fall from 44.2% to 27.6%.

It's a product of the widespread disappointment in working-class communities who put their faith in the SNP after the 2014 indyref in particular, but who have delivered little other than cuts to public services and holding down of workers' pay.

Keir Starmer described the result as "seismic", putting Labour on course for a sizeable majority or even a "landslide" at the forthcoming UK general election. But there was little enthusiasm for Labour by workers for Labour's pro-big business policies other than a vehicle to hit back at the SNP and a desire to get the Tories

out. Some SNP voters backed Labour, but thousands of pro-independence supporters simply refused to vote.

No party other than the SNP and Labour held their deposit. Both the Tories and the Lib-Dems saw their previous voter base vanish to Labour.

#### **TUSC's campaign**

The anger towards the main parties was palpable. The Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), which includes Socialist Party Scotland members, heard this 'a plague on all their houses' mood repeatedly. There is a colossal political vacuum in working-class areas that only a mass working-class party based on the organised power of the trade unions could attempt to fill.

In a polarised election amid a collapsing turnout, Chris Sermanni - a Glasgow Unison convenor from one of the most combative and left-wing branches of the union in Scotland - standing for Scottish TUSC for the first time in the seat, polled 178 votes (0.6%). This vote, while modest, does not fully reflect the very positive support we received on stalls and on the doors and for our leaflets, which highlighted the idea of a local trade union fighter standing for socialist policies to fight the cost-of-living crisis.

Many voters said they fully agreed with our calls for nationalisation of the energy companies, for a £15-anhour minimum wage without exemptions, no-cuts budgets and for an MP who would live on a skilled worker's wage.

Despite our limited resources and lack of media attention, there was also significant active support for Chris from shop stewards and trade union activists out campaigning in the seat, including from the CWU, Unison, EIS, Unite and the GMB.

Read the full article at socialistparty.org.uk

# US: Speaker crisis reveals political division against backdrop of growing worker militantcy

LENNY SHAIL

SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

t seems that few weeks go by without a new stage of widening social polarisation and fracturing divisions developing within US society and US capitalism.

On 3 October, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Republican Kevin McCarthy, was removed after a motion was moved by a member of his own party! The first time this has happened in US history.

Days before, McCarthy had outraged the extreme right and Trump-supporting wings of the Republicans after he had secured a temporary, last-minute deal with the Democrats and President Joe Biden for a funding bill to stop a government shutdown. Many of their red-line issues, such as spending cuts, were dropped and uncertainty over further funding for Ukraine continues.

Negotiations over the deals had been pushed to the final few hours in the same fashion as McCarthy's election as Speaker of the House in the first place. In January 2023, the first ballot did not elect a speaker for the first time in 100 years. This was despite a Republican majority. In June 2023 the government also came within days of a default after hitting its debt ceiling.

And the can has only been kicked down the road yet again, with a government shutdown posed when the new deadline ends on the 17 November, such is the division that exists.

For working-class people across the US, the spectacle reflects the farce of two sides of US capitalism arguing over how much suffering and pain to pass onto ordinary people, using an outdated, chaotic, undemocratic system that in no way reflects or represents the needs of the masses.

Its why socialists fight for socialist change and the reorganisation of society, alongside the nationalisation of key industries and sections of the economy under democratic workers' control and management, so the needs of ordinary working-class people are met.

For US capitalism, the impasse is just another fracture that is fuelling potential economic and social crisis. A recent Financial Times editorial summarised the situation: "The stakes for the US and the world are very high. The continued operation of the federal government - and Ukraine's ability to sustain its fight against Russia's invasion - may depend on getting Congress to agree to a budget that lasts more than a few weeks. If that is to happen, the House of Representatives needs a speaker.

"The chaos in Congress is part of a broader disintegration of the American political system. Donald Trump remains the favourite for the Republican Party nomination, despite facing four separate criminal cases and the possible loss of large parts of his business empire in a civil fraud case. With Trump as one of the two main candidates, the US presidential election will be chaotic. A leaderless Congress that cannot pass a budget would deepen the dark hole into which the US political system is descending."

Extreme social polarisation continues to spread like fire across the

country. On the economic front, the volatility of the situation and the threat of a shutdown still to come, has added further fuel to the US debt crisis that has pushed the cost of US government debt to levels not seen since 2007, that has had knock-on effects across the world. This further diminishes the strength and confidence of the US to dominate economically and militarily internationally.

But the biggest fear for the US ruling class is the reaction of the US working class against a government shutdown. The last time that the government shut down, during the Trump presidency, the question of a general strike was brought to national attention and became a factor in the situation, mainly from the call by flight attendant union leader Sara Nelson.

This time it takes place against the backdrop of an historic car workers' strike by the left-led UAW union that has inspired millions across the country, a health workers' strike currently taking place involving 75,000 workers at health consortium Kaiser Permanente, and rising workers' militancy taking place across construction sites in the new 'battery belt' areas of the south. The contagion of struggle has begun to show the first signs of spreading. The potential for coordinated action and even the call for a general strike could easily become part of the equation once

 See 'US: fissures prepare eruption of political crisis and working-class struggle' at socialistparty.org.uk for more





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