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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

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

Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

Outside 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 pre-election 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 debt.

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!



Royal London Hospital workers striking for a pay rise PAUL MATTSSON

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.

End sexual assaults on campus - resources and democracy needed to stamp it out

AMY SAGE
BRISTOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Sexual 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; chapered 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%
of students and recent graduates between 2017 and 2018 reported that they had experienced some form of sexual 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



Bristol Socialist Party protesting against violence against women, including Amy PHOTO: BRISTOL SOCIALIST PARTY

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 Militant-led 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 'bankruptcy' 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

DEJI OLAYINKA

SOUTH WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

A year after the awful police killing of unarmed father-to-be 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 protesters. 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 Kaba'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,



Black Lives Matter protest in London 2020 PHOTO: JUDY BEISHON

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 powers.

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 society.

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

• editors@socialistparty.org.uk

or, if you're not online, write to the Socialist Inbox, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT



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 to it.

• **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

BLACK HISTORY MONTH: WINDRUSH AND THE HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT



HUGO PIERRE
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

This year marks the 75th 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 long-since 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 Labour 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 anti-racist 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.

The 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.

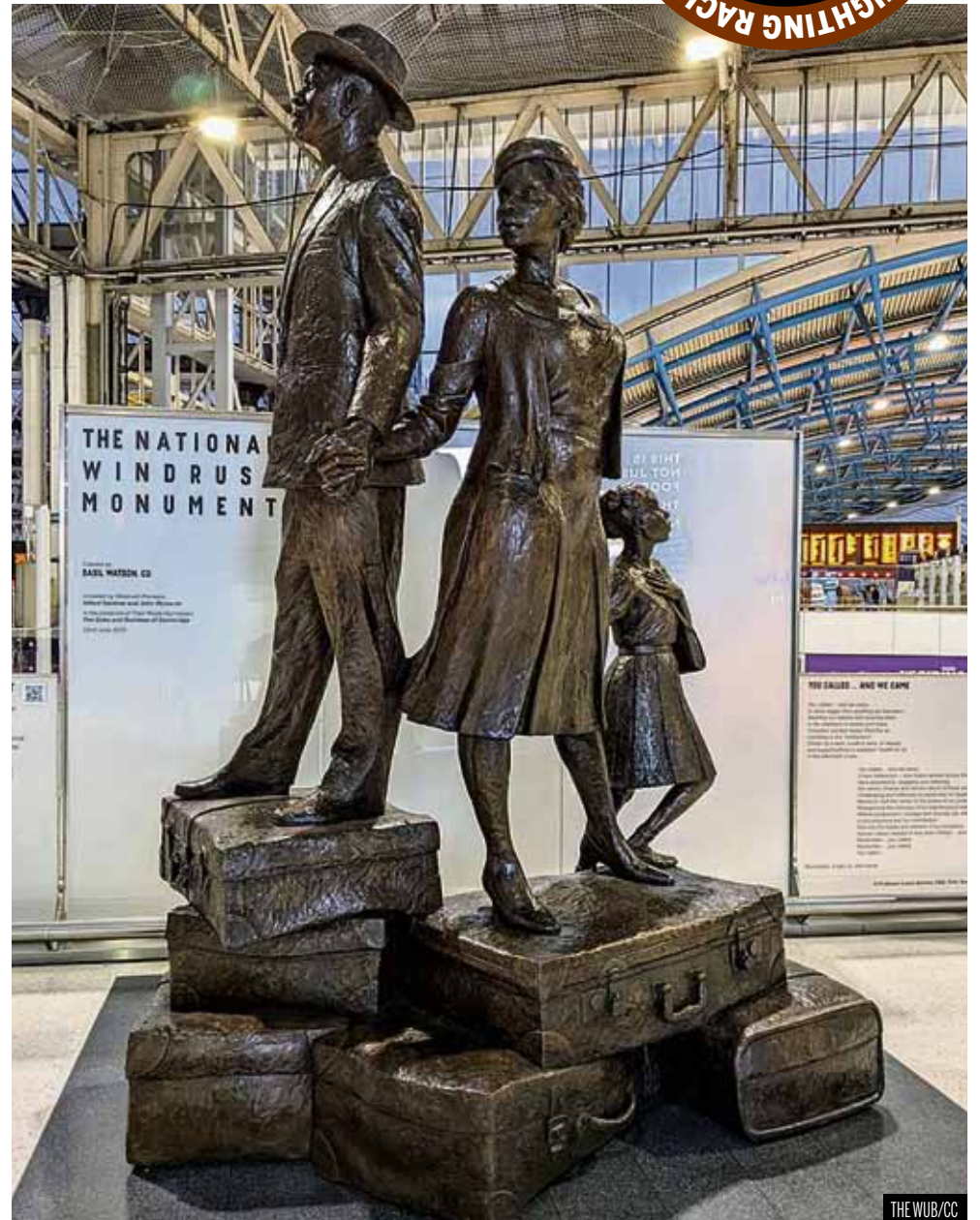
Jeremy Corbyn's general election manifesto of 2017, with all its limitations, raised the consciousness of many that there was an alternative to capitalism and its racism and division: socialism. This had a dramatic impact on Black workers, with a greater percentage turning out to vote Labour than in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

LENNY SHAIL
SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

It 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 again.

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



Kevin McCarthy PHOTO: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE/CC

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