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the Socialist

Issue 1248

26 October - 1 November 2023

formerly **Militant**

STOP THE WAR ON GAZA

- No trust in capitalist leaders
- For mass socialist struggle against war and capitalism



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the Socialist formerly Militant

Issue 1248 26 October - 1 November 2023

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

By-elections indicate Starmer heading for No. 10

Organise now for anti-war, anti-austerity workers' candidates



PHOTOS: RIVENDLAND AND MICHAEL D. BECKWITH BOTH CC

SARAH SACHS ELDRIDGE SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Anger at Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer has blazed on the mass demonstrations and protests against the slaughter in Gaza. On the BBC's Question Time, Shadow Attorney General Emily Thornberry was typical of Labour spokespeople who repeatedly refuse to condemn the cutting off of water, food, power supplies and medicines to Gaza.

Many marchers have made the comparison with Jeremy Corbyn. The Labour Party's anti-austerity manifesto at the 2019 general election, under the leadership of Corbyn, included committing an incoming government to strive for peace in the Middle East, including recognition of the state of Palestine.

Socialists go further, supporting mass workers' struggle in the Middle East to transform the situation in a socialist direction. But however limited Corbyn's 2019 policies, the comparison with Starmer is stark. Of course, the Israeli regime's attacks on the Palestinians are supported by the Tories. But Starmer, as on so many issues, just says 'me too'.

Starmer's approach means many cannot back Labour in the future. The call to build an anti-war, working-class alternative is welcomed by protesters because the difference such a voice could make is understood.

However, many marchers will be members of trade unions whose leaders, with authority from leading the strike wave, have also told them that a vote for Labour is necessary to get the Tories out. This claim, however, is coming under increasing

pressure - by Starmer's war stance but also by the results of the recent by-elections.

"Our vote is on strike," was the conclusion drawn by one Tory MP following the Tamworth and Mid Bedfordshire by-elections on 19 October. With collapses in Tory votes of 20,000 and 26,000 respectively in the two seats, they weren't wrong.

The reasons to not vote Tory are legion. From the housing crisis, to low pay, inflation, the cost-of-living crisis, and climate change, to the support for the onslaught on Gaza. They have no answers to any of the problems facing the majority of people. They defend a capitalist system underlying the situation.

A poll published recently by the Observer suggested Labour would win 420 seats - equating to a landslide 190-seat majority. Election commentator John Curtice went so far as to raise the possibility of a landslide bigger than Tony Blair's 1997 win. So the idea that building a workers' election challenge risks a Tory government doesn't hold.

The by-elections also show how little enthusiasm there is for Starmer's Labour. In Tamworth, Labour's 11,719 votes represent an increase of less than a thousand since 2019 when Starmer and the Blairites sabotaged Corbyn. In Mid-Beds, the Labour vote was down on Corbyn's 2019 result. There the Labour vote almost doubled in 2017 to 17,953 when Corbyn offered an anti-austerity alternative, attracting over 4,000 more votes than Starmer's candidate has this year.

The perspective, nonetheless, is for a Starmer-led government to be in power in the next year. What that

means for working-class people is clear. Starmer, shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves, and co are at pains to show that any alternative to the capitalist status quo is not on offer from them.

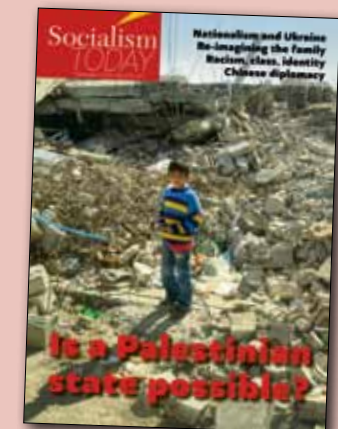
Foreign policy is only domestic policy abroad. This is also the party that is pledged to maintain the two-child benefit cap, supports the attacks on the right to protest and is proud to be seen in the tradition of warmonger Tony Blair.

Of a piece with this is the ban on Labour MPs and council leaders attending the demonstrations against the war on Gaza. In response, a number of councillors have resigned and Starmer has been forced to back-pedal a touch.

This is a tiny indication of the pressure even a small bloc of anti-war, anti-austerity workers' MPs could have, which could include Corbyn, who will not be standing as a Labour candidate.

And it would be entirely possible to achieve that at the next general election, if steps were taken now by even a couple of the left-led trade unions to establish a new party, or at least organise an election coalition list. That is what the Socialist Party is fighting for.

SOCIALISM TODAY



Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

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MASS PROTESTS SPREAD AGAINST WAR ON GAZA

Build independent workers' organisations to fight for socialist change

Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

Capitalism and its political representatives are totally incapable of meeting any of the needs of working-class and poor people anywhere on the globe. All that is on offer is a never-ending diet of war, poverty, oppression and repression.

This message has been amplified by the bloody events in the Middle East over the past few weeks. Now the Israeli regime is on the verge of launching a brutal land offensive in Gaza, raising the possibility of war spilling over into a wider confrontation that could inflame the whole region, and adding to the multiple crises the capitalist system is already creating internationally.

The Israeli regime's indiscriminate bombing and starving of 2.3 million people in Gaza, including 1 million children, of food, water, medicines and fuel - "a death sentence" according to the United Nations - has provoked mass protests around the world.

Alarmed at the possibility of a regional escalation, US President Joe Biden on his recent visit to Israel, while pledging unconditional support to the Israeli regime, pleaded with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "to not go too far". The most he could achieve was the dispatch of a few aid trucks through the Rafah border with Egypt, described by the World Health Organisation as a "drop in the ocean". Before the war, 450 trucks were arriving every day.

With the same breathtaking hypocrisy Rishi Sunak, tail-ending Biden, declared he was "proud to stand" with Israel and pledged the UK's "continuous" support. This after 1 million Palestinians had been forced from their homes, more than 5,000 civilians killed in Gaza, and thousands more lives potentially placed at risk from an imminent ground offensive.

On the more than 100,000-strong demonstration in London against the war on Gaza on 14 October and the even bigger one a week later, protesters readily made the link between Tory support for the repressive Israeli regime and their attacks on workers' living standards and democratic rights here in Britain, and the need to kick them out.

But it's also clear that a Starmer-led



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

Labour government will be no alternative. Starmer has echoed Sunak and Biden's unconditional support for the Israeli regime, saying that Israel "has the right" to deny Gaza water and power. The Starmer that banned Labour MPs from visiting the picket lines of workers fighting for a decent wage rise has now prohibited Labour MPs and councillors from attending protests showing solidarity with the ordinary people under siege in Gaza.

Several Labour councillors have torn up their party cards in disgust, joining the tens of thousands of members that have already left since Starmer - in his mission to turn Labour into a 100% capitalist party - began his coup against Jeremy Corbyn and any hint of socialist ideas or opposition. That tickets from Labour's recently organised business conference sold out within four hours, is yet more evidence that his mission has been accomplished, and that the building of a new mass party based on the working class is urgently needed.

The anti-war movement in defence of Palestinian rights, and the recent strike wave to defend workers' living standards against the cost-of-living crisis could provide the first steps

towards such a party by standing a list of trade union and working-class community candidates in the forthcoming local and general elections in opposition to the main capitalist parties.

Internationally, trust and confidence in capitalist rulers, institutions and politicians is in freefall. In Israel, many ordinary Israelis - who before the war had been protesting in their tens of thousands against the attacks of the right-wing coalition led by Netanyahu on the judiciary, viewed as an attack on democracy - are now furious at that same government's inability to keep them safe following Hamas's brutal slaughter and kidnapping of Israeli civilians. For now, war has cut across that movement but an unprecedented 56% want Netanyahu to resign when the war is over.

Protests of rage have erupted throughout the Arab and Muslim world in the face of the Israeli state's bombardment and inhumanity towards the Palestinians in Gaza. It is these mass mobilisations, and not the firing of rockets and targeting of Israeli civilians by Hamas and Islamic Jihad, that point to how occupation, national oppression and mass suffering can be ended and a

- Stop the war on Gaza! 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
No trust in the capitalist politicians, internationally or in Britain. Fight to build a workers' party in Britain that stands for socialism and internationalism

Palestinian state achieved, while also guaranteeing the right of Israelis to national self-determination.

Corrupt and authoritarian Arab leaders throughout the region are terrified that the mass rage against Israel and the oppression of the Palestinians could fuse with the enormous anger at poverty and repression at home. When King Abdullah of Jordan and Egyptian President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi warned of a conflict that "threatens to plunge the entire region into catastrophe", it's the wealth and power that these capitalist elites derive from their autocratic rule that they were most concerned about.

In Ramallah and other towns in the Israeli-occupied West Bank - where around 200 Palestinians have been killed so far this year by the Israeli state and far-right Jewish settlers - protesters didn't just call for an end to Israeli war and occupation but also demanded the overthrow of Mahmoud Abbas, the corrupt and undemocratic president of the Palestinian Authority, who has colluded with the Israeli state repression and presided over mass poverty and suffering.

The conditions are being prepared for mass uprisings with the potential to overthrow dictators and capitalist elites throughout the Middle East and beyond. But the lesson of the 'Arab spring' of 2011, when uprisings were followed by new authoritarian rulers, civil war and failed states, is that spontaneous mass movements are not enough. The working class and poor need their own independent political organisations with a programme that points to how the capitalist system itself can be ended and a government formed that represents their interests - a socialist intifada.

In Israel, building workers' organisations that can unite Jewish, Palestinian and other workers in the fight for socialist change will not be easy given the current extremely polarised situation. But it has been through the workplaces, trade unions and strike action that solidarity and unity between workers have been forged in the past and it will be again in the future.

Protests condemning bombing and siege of Gaza grow

Socialist Party campaign stall was swamped in Birmingham NICK HART



London – biggest yet

Collective grief and anger brought one of the biggest Palestine solidarity marches in UK history. Fears that the demonstration would see fewer numbers than that of the previous Saturday were quelled by more attendees than a week prior.

As demonstrators arrived, they assembled at Socialist Party campaign stalls to sign our petition, buy record numbers of Socialist papers and donate record amounts to our fighting fund. Socialist Party placards and posters reading 'End Israeli State Terror' and 'Stop the War on Gaza! For a Socialist Intifada' could be seen amidst a wave of Palestinian flags.

Our flyers offering an alternative were taken with enthusiasm.

Socialist Party members were constantly speaking to protesters about a socialist programme for a free Palestine, which got an overwhelmingly positive response.

Whilst the capitalist devastation prevails and dominates the news, people are organising in their masses around the world to call for an end to war and occupation. The demonstrations continue.

EMILY LYNDON

Newham – Labour splits

Several hundred people attended a protest initiated by Mehmood Merza, an independent councillor. Mehmood is part of Newham Socialist Labour, a group of mainly former Labour members.

The East Ham Labour Party

secretary spoke and angrily ripped up his Labour Party membership card in protest at Keir Starmer's support for the Israeli state's collective punishment of Gaza.

Mehmood also asked East London Socialist Party member Lois Austin to address the crowd. Lois welcomed Mehmood's initiative, and compared it to the rest of the council, and other "weak cowards inside the Labour Party, who would rather hold on to their Labour Party cards than stand up for the rights of Palestinians, who've been slaughtered by the Israeli state in their thousands, backed up by Western powers".

Lois pointed out that there are young Israelis protesting against Israeli government policy, "calling for an end to the attacks and for a ceasefire". To applause from the largely Muslim and Asian crowd, Lois said: "We should support these brave

young people in Israel who want peace and justice".

Newham Labour mayor, Rokhsana Fiaz, spoke about Gaza to an outside gathering of mainly local Labour councillors. An event that was not widely publicised, and did not feature any slogans.

A local Labour councillor has resigned over Keir Starmer's position on what's happening. Local socialists and activists against the war are discussing the best alternative candidate to put forward in the by-election.

The Socialist Party will aim to reach agreement with other activists on a manifesto that stands against the Israeli war on Gaza, and for Palestinian rights, alongside the need for a fighting anti-cuts programme in the town hall.

NIAL MULHOLLAND

Swindon – don't trust capitalist politicians

People are horrified at the scale of violence, and desperately hope for peace. Swindon Socialist Party was out for the second weekend in a row with material on the ongoing war in Gaza, leafleting for our upcoming public meeting.

Most common was a feeling of powerlessness. 'Yes, the war should stop, but what can we do?' This led to conversations about the need to fight for socialism at home, and a mass workers' party with a socialist and internationalist programme.

There was widespread revulsion at the hypocrisy from both the Tories and Keir Starmer's Labour, especially Starmer ruthlessly purging voices in the Labour Party that aren't uncritically supportive of Israeli state terror. No one we spoke to had any trust in capitalist politicians to bring peace to the region, or anywhere in the world.

Most were happy to see a political party campaigning against the war with a class-based perspective, after the near blood-frenzy amongst the capitalist politicians.

So people also donated generously. We raised more than double what we normally would.

Another vigil has been called for 4 November. Our Socialist Party branch will be there in strength.

SCOTT HUNTER

I only recently joined the Socialist Party, this was the first demonstration I attended alongside other members. Seeing local residents turn out in support in such great numbers was heartening.

MARY QUATE

Manchester – rage

The protest took place at Media City, where some of the BBC is based. Throughout, the protest was condemnation of biased media coverage of the conflict.

The mood was angry at the actions of the Israeli state.

Every person we spoke to agreed that the indiscriminate killing of Israeli Jewish workers was wrong, and would not help the Palestinian cause, because it pushes the Israeli Jewish working class towards supporting the Israeli state's brutal retaliation.

When posed in this way, many understood the need for working-class unity to bring about liberation for Palestinians and social change. Many people agreed with us that capitalism cannot provide a solution.

There was also regular booing for Rishi Sunak and Keir Starmer for supporting the Israeli state's vicious response. 100 people confirmed their interest in attending the Socialist Party's meeting to discuss the issues.

WARREN CORRIGAN

Leeds – zero love for Starmer

Many supported our message calling for new mass workers' parties that will actually stand up for the oppressed. Contrary to media lies about how these rallies contain a large 'pro-Hamas/antisemitic/homophobic' element, not once did I hear any slogans that were pro-Hamas or anti-Jewish.

There were, in fact, Jewish groups supporting the march, and Jewish speakers. They were warmly received by everyone there. Likewise with LG-BTQ+ groups.

None of the speakers condoned Hamas's actions, and were quite clear that even one civilian death is too many on either side. The speech by Socialist Party member Iain Dalton was posted online by the organisers.

London LENNY SHAAL



Hatred for the Tories was a given. Yet, there was zero love for Keir Starmer and his sycophantic approach saying Israel can do whatever it likes.

There were also chants against East Leeds Labour MP Richard Burgon. Burgon is considered to be on the left, and, in the past, has been a supporter of Palestine. However, he hasn't been sighted at these rallies – sadly a common trend among the remaining 'Socialist Campaign Group' Labour MPs.

TOM GIBSON

Birmingham – leaflets snatched up

The first Birmingham protest was called by a group of teenagers, armed with an Instagram page and a WhatsApp group. Socialist Party leaflets were snatched out of our hands.

LLUIS BERTOLIN

Birmingham – sick of injustice

A last-minute protest was organised on 18 October following the bombing of a hospital in Gaza. In a teary voice, one speaker announced: "You do not have to be Muslim to show support".

Socialist Party members spoke to

the crowd about how capitalist governments are responsible, with the UK selling weapons to Israel. "Exactly, we're the one's funding it!"

On 21 October, there was an even larger turnout. One person told the Socialist Party: "I'm really glad you guys are bringing class politics into this".

People are sick of the injustice. They want a place to direct their discontent.

TOM PORTER BROWN

Carlisle – right to protest

Carlisle Socialist Party has held several campaign stalls against the war in Gaza.

At a vigil, lots of people came to our stall, signed our petition, took our material, and expressed their support and gratitude. Young Muslims and asylum seekers took handfuls of our leaflets to hand out at the mosque, hostel and uni.

BRENT KENNEDY

Sheffield – Labour called out

The fourth demonstration in 10 days was the largest. Sheffield council had been criticised for flying the Israeli flag on the town hall.

The local Labour Party was criticised relentlessly, called out, and invited to speak out against their party's position in front of the crowd. But only one councillor – Nabeela Mowlana – addressed the crowd.

With this hostility towards Labour, our socialist material was well received. 20 Socialist Party members supported the demonstration, and put forward our socialist, class-based position.

ALEX BROWN

Lancashire – youth lead march

On behalf of the Socialist Party, I spoke out against the divide-and-rule policies of all of the capitalist politicians, and for mass united struggle and building workers' parties. Afterwards, demonstrators thanked me for what I had said.

And most of the 250 there took our Socialist Party material. An impromptu march was led by local Palestinian youth chanting.

MARTIN POWELL-DAVIES

Coventry – Labour failure

The crowd picked up more people as they marched. Many who approached our Socialist Party

campaign stall questioned the hypocritical position of Labour, not only on this issue, but its failure to support the working class today.

MILA HUGHES

Wolves – it's not two weeks, its 75 years

"I'm sick of seeing dead children and separated families on my TV." "It's not just the last two weeks, this has been going on for 75 years."

"Money and greed is what motivates politicians in the Middle East and the UK. Since they got rid of Corbyn, you can't tell the difference between Tories and Labour anymore."

JOSH ALLERTON

Newcastle – loads of support

Hundreds joined the rally outside the BBC's Pink Palace in protest at its biased reporting. The protest got loads of support from passing traffic. Our Socialist paper and leaflets were well received.

ELAINE BRUNSKILL

Worcester – not in our name

Worcester Trades Union Council organised the event. Many shoppers stopped and listened to the speakers. A few young Muslim children

chanted in the microphone. And many speakers encouraged us to show the government that this war is not in our name, and stop supplying the Israeli state with arms to use against Palestine.

CALVIN FOWLER

Cardiff – looking for solutions

At least 1,500 people marched. The mood was determined and looking for solutions.

Socialist Party members got an excellent response with our leaflet, calling for workers' unity and struggle against the conflict and national oppression. And almost 100 protesters bought a copy of the Socialist.

JOE FATHALLAH

Northampton – silence becomes loud

What was originally advertised as a silent vigil became a passionate rally of 150.

JOSH CURTIS

Stop the war on Gaza – trade union model motion

Find it at socialistparty.org.uk

Reinstate SOAS students suspended for Palestine protest

LONDON SOCIALIST STUDENTS STATEMENT

The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London has outrageously suspended a number of students who organised and attended a pro-Palestine solidarity rally outside the university building on 9 October.

This follows Tory education secretary Gillian Keegan calling on universities to clamp down on students who are accused of supporting Hamas (see 'Tory hypocrites clamp down on students' right to discuss Palestinian liberation' at socialiststudents.org.uk).

Socialist Students defends the right of students to discuss and debate the

way forward for Palestinians, including the right to organise protests without the fear of being suspended or prosecuted by the police. The suspended students must be reinstated immediately, with no sanctions.

Tories and university managements are attempting to bring in draconian measures to restrict freedom of speech on university campuses.

Such tactics are part and parcel of trying to intimidate students and stop them from expressing support for Palestinians under attack by Israeli forces. Israel's indiscriminate bombing of Gaza, forced displacement of Palestinians and cutting of essential supplies has led to the

deaths of thousands of civilians so far.

We are in favour of the Palestinians building a mass movement and fighting for socialist change to end the brutal occupation and secure national and democratic rights for all, as well as a mass movement of the Israeli working class fighting for socialism.

The politics and tactics of Hamas, a pro-capitalist right-wing Islamist organisation, do not offer a way forward for the Palestinian struggle. Also, its targeting and killing of Israeli civilians plays into the hands of the Israeli leaders' agenda of brutal repression.

On the basis of capitalism, the ruling class in Israel, backed by US and European imperialism, will make sure there is no viable Palestinian state. Only workers' unity and mass struggle for socialist change within Palestine, Israel and across the Middle East can end national oppression and conflict, and lay the basis for genuine cooperation.

Socialist Students will continue holding meetings and protests around London, as well as in other parts of the country, to discuss and debate the way forward for Palestinians. Get in touch with us for more information about our activities.

The police under capitalism – can it ever be not racist?

ISAI MARJERLA
SOCIALIST PARTY BLACK AND ASIAN GROUP
CONVENOR

Asked 'What do you think the police should be doing,' the majority of people would say something like 'protecting and safeguarding people from being victims of crime, particularly violent crimes.'

But do they think that this is what the police are actually doing? The same people will have experienced the police being slow to respond to calls about robbery and fears about safety. At the same time, police are deployed in huge numbers when there is a protest, demonstration or workers' action. More and more people are asking, 'what are the police for?'

According to the government website, levels of trust and confidence in the police in England and Wales have declined in recent years. One YouGov survey earlier this year found that only 6% trust the Metropolitan Police 'a lot', over half of Londoners don't trust the Met.

There is a whole array of reports on corruption, and of sexism and racism in the policing institutions. Let's be clear, we are not taking about one or two police officers, but the institutions as a whole. Even those that join the police force motivated by wanting to serve and protect their community are quickly pulled into the role of protecting the status quo, following the orders of governments and the capitalist state looking after the interests of the bosses and not working-class people.

The preference for the ruling bosses' class is for 'policing by consent'. To do this, policing institutions have to appear to be functioning for ordinary people; they need public confidence. But in the face of capitalist crisis, after over a decade of austerity and rising inequality, that trust and confidence

in the system and its institutions, like the police, is being undermined.

There are too many examples of racist targeting and discrimination by the police to list them all. And the vast majority go unrecorded. Still, hate crimes recorded in England and Wales have reached a record high. Most recently, a 13-year-old Black boy, Child X, got surrounded by armed police for carrying a water pistol! He was 'rammed' off his bike, handcuffed and confronted by marksmen in Hackney. One of the water pistols being played with was blue and white and one was pink and white, and unmistakably toys. This took place not too far from the Child Q traumatic strip-search in a school.

Black Lives Matter

It was the racist murder of George Floyd in the US that reignited the Black Lives Matter movement globally in 2020. Those mass demonstrations featured placards reading: 'UK is not innocent'. Two and a half years later, Chris Kaba was killed by the police in south London. It took more than a year for the armed police officer to be charged with his murder.

There have been revealing reports of racism within the Met. The Casey Review found that it is broken and rotten, suffering collapsing public trust, and being guilty of institutional racism, misogyny and homophobia. Yet this is not the first time an inquest came to similar conclusions. The 1999 Macpherson report on the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence also found the Met to be institutionally racist.

Socialists fight for immediate steps to improve conditions and stop racist discrimination. The Socialist Party demands an immediate end to stop and search, demilitarisation of the police, and for the abolition of the Territorial Support Group, Special Branch, and other similar paramilitary units. We also demand the end of police spying, which has mainly been carried out on



Black Lives Matter protest in London 2020 PHOTO: JUDY BEISHON

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left-wing, anti-racist and Black justice campaigns and activists, as exposed in the 'Spycops' scandal. We demand independent workers' and community inquiries into police violence and for the outcome of these inquiries to be implemented immediately.

We need a justice system with democratic workers' control all the way through. The police must be accountable to locally elected committees composed of representatives from trade unions and community groups.

Profit-driven capitalism is a system that brings misery to working-class and young people; it brings war, poverty and exploitation. Ultimately, the primary role of the police is to protect that system, and to help maintain it.

Socialists agree with Malcolm X that you can't have capitalism without racism. Racist ideas, established and maintained to try to 'justify' slavery and super-exploitation, have been baked into the system from its creation.

Similarly, you can't have an institution whose role it is to defend capitalism and it not be ridden with the reactionary ideas of the rotten system itself - for it to be racist, sexist, LGBTQ+phobic and anti-working class. Ultimately, to get rid of racist policing we need to overthrow capitalism and its state, to establish a socialist society based on democratic public ownership of big business and the banks, and without exploitation and oppression.

Rich Rishi's sleazy scheme



PHOTO: ANDREW PARSONS / NO 10/CC

SAM BENNETT
OXFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

The Conservative Party is embroiled in another sleaze scandal, they barely seem to register now. It has been reported that Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, when chancellor, did not declare a conflict of interest between his wife's investments and his own government scheme, Future Fund.

Sunak's wife, Akshata Murty, was a shareholder in several companies that received £2 million of taxpayers' money from a fund designed to support start-up businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Sunak did not report this in the ministerial interest register, which makes any financial benefits from government policy publicly known.

The commissioner for standards has been asked to investigate the matter but any investigation into Sunak's conduct by a parliamentary commissioner will not, however, uncover the true rottenness of British capitalism and its representatives in Westminster.

The Future Fund scheme was one of many attempts by the government

to prop up British capitalism during the lockdowns, including the 'Eat out, to help out' scheme. The latter helped to spread the virus, according to the government's chief scientific advisor, Prof Dame Angela McLean. She later branded Sunak 'Dr Death', as the scheme may have killed thousands of people.

130 businesses that received support from the Future Fund have since gone bankrupt, three of them being part of Murty's investments.

Keir Starmer's successful attempts to erase almost all of Jeremy Corbyn's 2019 manifesto pledges from Labour's programme show that there is no party in parliament serving the interests of working-class people.

The Socialist Party calls for MPs to receive only an average worker's wage, and to be subject to recall from constituents. We fight for candidates who stand up for the working class and for a socialist society, with democratic workers' control of production and a redistribution of wealth from the bosses to the masses. The Socialist Party is fighting to build a party made up of fighters like that today.

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Tory candidate oblivious to reality of life on benefits

Fight for the living wages and benefits that we need!

JOHN WILLIAMS
CARDIFF EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

Andrew Cooper, defeated Conservative candidate for the Tamworth by-election, defended sharing a Facebook post telling jobless parents who cannot feed their children to "fuck off" if they still pay a £30 phone bill. Shockingly, but not surprisingly, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak refused to condemn him, ignoring struggling families and child poverty, instead patting himself on the back for the 'achievements' of thirteen years of Tory rule.

What this Tory candidate seemingly doesn't realise, probably because him and his party are so out of touch with the struggles of ordinary people, is that children aren't going hungry because their parents are paying £30 a month for their phone contract. When looking for a job and receiving Universal Credit, a phone with mobile data is necessary. Claimants are required to be contacted at short notice for interviews, to receive security codes to log in to Universal Credit accounts, and spend a minimum amount of time online looking for jobs.

There are around 2.3 million working people who receive Universal Credit payments of some sort, about 40% of claimants have jobs, according to Universal Credit's statistics. This shows how low wages are and that the government knows, for a lot of people, wages on their own aren't enough. One decade of Tory rule saw the biggest decrease in wages in real terms since the Napoleonic era!

But would a Starmer-led Labour government have a different attitude to those struggling to make ends meet? Keir Starmer has said Labour will keep the hated two-child cap on working tax credits. Abolishing the cap would cost £1.3 billion a year, (a drop in the ocean considering the amount of wealth that exists in society) and could help lift 250,000 children out of poverty.

We need a new mass workers' party fundamentally different from the pro-capitalist parties of the establishment. One that will fight for the minimum wage to be £15 an hour for all, for wage rises at least in line with inflation, and for out-of-work benefits and pensions to also rise with the cost of living.



PHOTO: J J ELLISON/CC

Come to a Socialist Party meeting near you

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

Branches across the country have been holding meetings on a socialist programme to stop the war on Gaza, how we can build a working-class alternative here and many other topics. If you would like to participate:

- Go to socialistparty.org.uk/join
- To see meetings in your area socialistparty.org.uk/events
- Text 07761 818206 with your name and postcode.
- Or scan the QR code:



Crumbling concrete in hospitals

Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) was reported in 18 more hospitals on 19 October, bringing the number up to 42. This building material caused the government to shut schools at the last minute at the start of September due to concerns of building collapses (see 'Crumbling education system no longer a metaphor' at socialistparty.org.uk). A worker reports on the impact of RAAC in a hospital they work in.

It's not an unusual sight to walk onto a hospital ward and see staff running about. It is however unusual to see them dodging scaffolding while they do it. This, however, is the reality of a hospital I work at that, when built, was largely constructed out of RAAC. It is one of the oldest hospitals constructed with RAAC and is littered with design issues that only worsen the risks RAAC now poses; one of the largest flat roofs in the NHS, at the top of the tables in the number of RAAC floors, defects throughout elements of its building (to the extent that design features at this hospital were dropped completely) and over 200 roof leaks a year.

Even before RAAC became national news it was a major issue at this hospital for a number of years, leading to chaos and confusion for staff and patients. Wards move around the hospital with almost no warning as RAAC issues develop the need for urgent attention, or else the ceiling may come down on convalescing patients.

Beds have been lost for days to make sure the ceiling is propped up. Some departments vanish completely for periods of time to the extent there have been occasions patients requiring scans and other treatment have to go on a two-hour round trip to a hospital in another city rather

than the two-minute walk down a corridor.

This hospital has been an accident waiting to happen since at least 2021, with RAAC issues being so widespread that odd repairs are not enough. But according to MPs, more substantive work would be 'difficult'. However, faced with growing public scrutiny of the issue of RAAC, the money has been found for a newly rebuilt hospital. In a little under ten years if we're lucky.

We know if the Tories get their way the money for this new hospital will come from the working class paying, in cuts and other much needed funding for hospitals getting stripped away. Rather than money being ripped out of the NHS, by austerity or things like Private Finance Initiatives, the money to fix these problems should come from the pockets of the super-rich.

Until then chaos and disruption, at a time when you need a little as possible of either, will be the order of the day at my hospital.

Welsh Water pollution scandal

MARIAM KAMISH
CAERPHILLY SOCIALIST PARTY

Welsh Water, a BBC exposé reveals, has been dumping raw sewage into our rivers and into the sea to wash up on our beaches.

Last year, in 83,000 separate spills, the company dumped untreated sewage for nearly 600,000 hours.

Six major Welsh rivers make the top ten list of the most polluted in the UK. But this is not just a Welsh problem.

Throughout most of the UK, rainwater and wastewater are carried in the same pipes. When it rains a lot, overloaded plants are allowed to dump untreated sewage. The BBC found that Welsh plants do this even when it's not raining, as have water companies in England (see 'Cut the crap renationalise water' at socialistparty.org.uk).

600,000

hours untreated sewage dumped into Welsh waterways

One plant in Cardigan almost never treats the level of wastewater it's meant to - and discharges untreated sewage into a rare dolphin habitat.

Welsh Water has admitted that 40-50 of its wastewater treatment plants are regularly breaking the rules - which are far from stringent.

But the regulator, Natural Resources Wales says it's looking at data from 101 Welsh Water treatment plants that spill waste before they reach permit capacity.

In the eight years it's been monitoring, it's issued only enforcement notices, no fines. In many places there's



Beaches such as this one on Cardigan Bay have been polluted by untreated sewage GRAHAM WELLS/CC

not even regular monitoring of water quality.

Unsurprisingly, Welsh Water says it can't afford the £9-14 billion cost to update its Victorian infrastructure. And even a 'new' plant - installed in 2004 - has proved substandard.

Despite his shocking level of failures, the CEO of Welsh Water took home £232,000 in bonuses alone in 2021! And Welsh Water continues to raise its prices to the public.

We say clearly not-for-profit companies like Welsh Water are not the answer. Renationalise all the water companies and put them under the democratic control and management of the working class! Only democratic public ownership of water, big businesses and the banks can ensure our services get the investment they need and are run safely in the interests of all.

This issue of the Socialist is 12 pages because of staff absence. It will be back to the full 16 pages for the next issue.

We have printed more copies however, as we did last week, to account for the appetite for our ideas on Palestine protests around the country.

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RMT national rail members renew strike mandate

Step up and coordinate action

A MIDLANDS RMT MEMBER

RMT members at 14 Train Operating Companies (TOCs) have returned a fourth consecutive 'yes' vote to continue the battle in defence of our jobs, pay and conditions.

Despite the dispute rumbling on for nearly eighteen months, including 25 days of strike action, the resolve of most members to fight on remains.

Back in June 2022, along with the posties, we were the first out of the starting blocks on a national scale as employers up and down the country began to try and claw back long-held terms and conditions while offering below-inflation pay rises.

But while some national disputes have been settled, rail workers in the RMT along with those in ASLEF are continuing the fight.

It is clear to us all that the TOC bosses are backed up to the hilt by the Tory government. So far they have conceded a little by increasing the pay offer and removing the immediate threat of 'driver-only operation'.

The question now is what to do with our newly refreshed strike mandate. At the beginning of the dispute

we took action comprising several days across a week. That has unfortunately diminished over time to only one or two days in any week, sometimes weeks or months apart.

Renewed campaign

To push the dispute back up the agenda, a renewed campaign must be launched with pressure to coordinate action with our sister unions both on and off the railway. The leadership also needs to launch a campaign inside the union to raise the sights of the members and reps, to ensure the membership is on board and ready to take the necessary action.

We cannot simply wait for Starmer's Labour to rescue us, particularly while the Labour leadership refuses to commit to taking the Tories' £2 billion railway cuts off the table. As RMT members agreed at this year's AGM, in a motion supporting Jeremy Corbyn standing in the general election, even if that means independently of Labour: "Workers need political representation that supports their action against the cost-of-living squeeze, and stands for policies such as re-nationalisation, opposition to cuts, and for the repeal of the Tory anti-union laws".



80 branch nominations for Marion Lloyd

Elect a socialist for PCS general secretary



Nominations have closed in the elections for Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) general secretary and AGS elections. In a stunning outcome, Socialist Party member Marion Lloyd, standing for general secretary with the support of the PCS Broad Left Network, has received a tremendous 80 branch nominations.

That is an indication of how badly let down activists and members of the union feel by the current leadership, and the appeal of a fighting programme.

Marion is running on a joint ticket with John Moloney of the Independent Left. John is the current assistant general secretary but is not part of the leading group in the union, Left Unity. He has received 87 nominations.

Marion and John's opponents are from Left Unity. Fran Heathcote, the current president, is standing for general secretary and Paul O'Connor for AGS. Heathcote is the candidate supported by retiring general secretary Mark Serwotka; she received 90 nominations and O'Connor 84.

There is now the very real chance that PCS members can elect a fighting, democratic socialist as general secretary.

If Marion were to be elected, it would be a big gain for PCS members. Marion opposed the premature and dishonest closing down of the

national campaign on pay and pensions by the current national leaders (see 'Socialist candidates are on the ballot paper in PCS elections' at socialistparty.org.uk). If Marion were general secretary, there would be a serious and escalating plan of action put forward, utilising all the options for action available, with democratic and inclusive discussion throughout the union to seriously rebuild the campaign and momentum squandered by the current leaders.

Broad Left Network

But Marion would need members to get active and involved to ensure a fighting programme was implemented at all levels of the union. Marion is supported by the Broad Left Network, which brings together socialists and activists from across different groups, regions and nations, who are committed to building the strength of the union.

Marion is prepared to work with anyone who shares those aims. It is important that a strong left is built. The union will hold National Executive elections in the new year so, whatever the outcome of the general secretary election, it is important that members who want a fighting union get organised.

If Marion were to be elected it would send shockwaves throughout the trade union movement and the Labour Party. A bold fighting lead

could give confidence to workers everywhere - look at the impact Mick Lynch had in the summer of last year! Marion would be able to appeal to other trade union leaders for serious coordination of action against the anti-trade union laws, for pay and against cuts.

And a general election is looming. A trade union leadership that will put demands in the interests of members on whoever forms the government, and that is prepared to lead a fight no matter who is in power, would pile pressure on a Starmer-led government. A leadership that was willing to back candidates who actually support the policies of the union would also put big pressure on Starmer's Labour, and could help the process towards workers building their own political representation.

● The ballot runs 9 November to 14 December. If you want to help in the campaign, get in touch: bln.org.uk



Teachers exercising their right to strike earlier in 2023 PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

Tories attack education workers' right to strike

NEU must help lead fight against new anti-union laws

SHEILA CAFFREY
NEU EXECUTIVE MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

If it wasn't bad enough already, when education workers were told at the beginning of October that funding would be slashed further next year, we've now also been threatened with 'minimum service levels' - an attempt to prevent effective strike action in education and other 'key' services.

This is an outrage! The crisis in education has been getting worse for years - less funding, less pay, higher workloads and higher stress levels. Education workers have been voting with their feet. Last year, 40,000 teachers left the profession - the highest number since they started collecting figures; and teachers took 3 million sick days - 60% higher than before the pandemic. Support staff are frequently working two or three jobs, and still not making ends meet - forced out of education due to finances or pressure. A clear indication of stress and lack of value educators feel, but does the government wish to address this? No. They just try to back us into a corner and try to stop us taking action.

Unions must take a stand! We must refuse to accept the minimum

service levels and fight to defend our education system regardless. Interestingly, the government didn't worry about the safety, care or education of our youngest children when they increased the ratios for two-year-olds earlier this year from one adult to every four children, to 1:5.

Likewise, as there are over 1,800 Reception and Key Stage 1 classes above the statutory limit of 30 pupils per class, there has been no concern about minimum service levels with the way this affects education for children or workload for staff.

Spying

The shock news that the Department for Education (DfE) has also been spying on education workers' social media accounts when they have been critical of changes to education has coincidentally been released at the same time: a threat to put up and shut up if I've ever heard one!

Spying and blacklisting has happened for years in other sectors, which unions have fought against. The DfE received a barrage of freedom of information requests from concerned workers, but we can't just see this as isolated attacks on individuals; instead it is part of a concentrated attack on education workers after the successful ballots and strike action taken earlier this year.

We won millions of extra pounds of funding, as well as doubled the pay deal offered for teachers. Although Socialist Party members in the National Education Union (NEU) argued that we should have kept the pressure on to win more, the government will have been plotting how to ensure that this type of winning campaign doesn't become the norm.

This puts it to union leaders and the Trades Union Congress (TUC): what will be needed to ensure this legislation never sees the light of day?

The TUC in September agreed to:

- Build an appropriate industrial response to defend workers' right to strike
- Call on employers, devolved governments, mayors, fire authorities, local authorities and other public bodies to refuse to implement the MSL legislation and issue work notices, and work with the trade union movement to render MSLs inoperable
- Support demonstrations and hold a national march opposing the legislation and calling for repeal of the anti-union laws
- Mobilise support for any affiliate seeking assistance, whose union and members are sanctioned for non-compliance
- Organise a Special Congress, size to be determined, to explore options for non-compliance and resistance

So let's have all preparations ready, the NEU should take a lead in fighting for the TUC to name the date for an open-democratic special congress that can organise across all unions to use industrial action to smash the minimum service levels, and for a national demo. The NEU should support initiatives from other trade unions preparing to fight against MSLs.

If we are to stop the systematic dismantling of education, we need to stand up and fight. We showed the might of hundreds of thousands of education workers earlier this year and we can do it again if the government persists with these attacks.

GET YOUR NEU DISTRICT TO NOMINATE SHEILA FOR NEU VICE-PRESIDENT

HOW CAN THE ANTI-UNION MINIMUM SERVICE LEVEL LAWS BE BEATEN

Come and discuss at **SOCIALISM 2023**
London, 25-26 November
tickets and info at socialism.org.uk

WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

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

across the world. Our demands include:

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

where genuinely needed, for socially-useful small businesses.

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

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

insulation and energy transition plan for existing housing stock.

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

- For united working-class struggle to end discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice and oppression.
- Repeal the anti-trade union laws and all others that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest and to strike! End police harassment. For the police to be accountable to local committees, made up of democratically elected representatives of trade unions, local community organisations and local authorities.
- For the right to choose when and whether to have children - for the right to access abortion, contraception and fertility treatment for all who need it.

- For the right to asylum - with democratic community control and oversight of emergency funding resources. No to racist immigration laws.
- Expand democracy. For the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. For all MPs to be subject to the right of recall by their constituents at any time, and to only receive a worker's wage. For proportional representation and the right to vote at 16.
- For the right of nations to self-determination. For an independent socialist Scotland and for a socialist Wales, both part of a voluntary socialist confederation of Wales, England, Scotland and Ireland.
- Oppose the dictatorship of the billionaire owners of the media. For the nationalisation of newspaper printing facilities, radio, TV and social media platforms. Access to these facilities should be under democratic control, with political parties' coverage being allocated in proportion to the popular vote at elections.
- For a new mass workers' party, based on the trade unions, and drawing together workers, young people

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

- Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join
- or call **020 8988 8777**
- or text your name and postcode to **07761 818 206** to find out more today!



London Socialist Party discusses the fight to end the housing crisis

ABIGAIL HARRINGTON
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

On 18 November, 60 people attended a London Socialist Party public meeting to address the housing crisis. This coincided with a last-minute vigil for those affected by the air strike on a hospital in Gaza, which we attended before the meeting. This prompted discussions linking the housing crisis to the Israeli-Gaza conflict, a matter of significant concern.

The government has failed to provide shelter for the homeless, inadequate protection for renters against mould and substandard living conditions, and an insufficient amount of social housing, especially council housing. Additionally, it was highlighted that corporate housing companies are constructing homes that pose safety risks. There was also emphasis on the many opulent residences in London, owned by billionaires, which remain unoccupied.

The Socialist Party calls for rent control and a mass council house building programme to fight to end the housing crisis.

The planned protest by the Socialist Party in London against the housing crisis set to take place on Saturday 28 October has been postponed due to a Gaza solidarity protest taking place at the same time. See socialistparty.org.uk for the new date

Young college students join Swindon socialists

Why I joined the Socialist Party

ERIS
SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY

I and many others are pissed off with Tory bullshit and capitalist rule. Rishi Sunak has declared the recalling of trans rights, our generation has been born into economic crisis, living an entire life through recession after recession, and quarantine.

Young people's anger often manifests in a hesitance to talk about politics, or apathy, as the system seems too big to fight. However, after Covid, I found myself becoming more politically inclined, going to protests if one came about.

I first saw a Socialist Party campaign stall in the town centre in late 2022. There I bought a Socialist paper. Reading it made me hopeful that there was actually a group in

Swindon that wanted to address systemic issues. When I next saw a stall in May, I filled out a 'join the Socialist Party' card, and joined a week later.

If I don't fight, me and everyone else I know will face an awful future. I cannot do this alone. So joining an organisation based around socio-economic policies I support will do much more than I can do by myself.

In the last few years, we have faced pandemics, brutal police suppression against peaceful protests and vigils, nearly 150,000 officially recorded hate crimes just last year in the UK, and war crimes committed against innocent people.

Younger generations will be considerably more radical. I and others my age were born with economic crisis emerging, and even younger generations are born several recessions

deep!
Over the next few years, we will see disillusionment in the capitalist system grow, and more young people fighting with us for socialism.
Each and every person fighting for the hope of a future where we can actually receive healthcare, where we can afford to survive, where people don't go out in public fearing violence or death for the 'crime' of being systemically marginalised.
We fight for the hope of a better world. Progress has no time to lose.

Swindon Socialist Party is growing

Swindon Socialist Party member Scott Hunter says: "Several young members under the age of 18 have joined Swindon Socialist Party over the last six months. And they are all already an important part of the Socialist Party in Swindon, including at the local college.

"We recently held a Socialist Party branch meeting about socialism and youth. Each of our three young new members spoke about why they joined the Socialist Party."

Ezra and Saige from Swindon will appear in a future issue.

Fund the socialist message on mass Palestine protests

So far there have been two massive demonstrations in Central London calling for 'an end to the violence' and for 'stopping the massacre in Gaza'. London Socialist Party members have prioritised attending these demos with our socialist ideas of working-class unity and mass struggle - and we have had great responses.

For the 21 October demo, Socialist Party members invested hours, and hundreds of pounds making 800 placards and printing 10,000 double-sided A4 leaflets. We have since bought 1,000 more 'protest sticks', and will be printing the posters on card to make even more placards for the next protest.

On 28 October, all London Socialist Party branches will again prioritise supporting the Palestine demonstration and will be spreading our socialist ideas amongst the demonstrators, many of whom are angry, politically-minded young people. The fighting fund that we have raised so far is vital to help us produce the resources we will use on this Saturday's demo, and is vital too to help fund the fight for socialism more broadly in Britain and worldwide. Can you help fund the socialist fightback? Donate now!

Our many stalls and gazebos have been met with enthusiasm, with people queuing up to discuss with us, buy our newspaper, take our leaflets, sign up to get more information about joining the Socialist Party, hold our placards (with demands that point the way forward) and to donate to our fighting fund.

Hundreds of people, when asked, have donated generously in return for placards and posters.

On 14 October we sold over 1,000 copies of The Socialist and raised over £2,500 in fighting fund donations. We had a similarly excellent response on 21 October. These sales and donations are gratefully received in order to further assist our work building support for socialist ideas.

Help fund the fightback
DONATE
socialistparty.org.uk/donate

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q4: OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2023	DEADLINE: 31 DECEMBER 2023
London	2,620	5,000	52%	
Northern	332	800	41%	
South West	763	2,100	36%	
North West	394	1,200	33%	
West Midlands	446	2,700	17%	
Southern and SE	265	2,400	11%	
East Midlands	187	2,050	9%	
Yorkshire	225	2,650	8%	
Wales	175	2,400	7%	
Eastern	44	1,300	3%	
Other	1,797	2,400	75%	
TOTAL	7,248	25,000	29%	



Swindon Socialist Party members including Eris (right) PHOTO: SCOTT HUNTER

Kirklees – Protests win money from cutting Labour councils

ANGIE WALLER
KIRKLEES LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNISON
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)

250 people from several campaign groups chanted: "Kirklees Council, shame on you, shame on you for turning blue". We questioned each councillor, asking them not to vote for cuts, and instead save 750 jobs.

Many people made deputations to speak to the full council meeting, including two from Unison trade union. But the council refused many of these.

This didn't stop each campaign speaking on the megaphone outside, giving moving reports from their areas. One in particular was from the wife of a resident, speaking about the Save Claremont House campaign.

She graphically outlined the needs of her husband, who has dementia. Closure would devastate the family if

he is moved, and destabilise her husband's condition as he battles with unfamiliar surroundings.

Councillors felt compelled to applaud the same speech when it was given in the council meeting. The councillor responsible for social care said she sympathised with the situation, but expected that the council would make 'tough decisions' after a consultation.

In other words, the council will make cuts of £47 million. This includes two dementia care homes, three leisure centres, Cleckheaton Town Hall, and Batley Library.

The Labour council's crude response stated that they "fully appreciate council finances are absolutely not a priority for you or your families at this time, but, unfortunately, they have to be for us."

Campaigners from Kirklees Active Leisure spoke about recent knife

crime in the area, and that young people see the centre as a lifeline. They pleaded for councillors to bring the service back 'in-house' after the council reduced its subsidy to them.

Batley Baths has closed, and Deighton Centre has begun limited weekend opening. Campaigners against the closures of Colne Valley Leisure Centre in Slaithwaite and Deighton Sports Arena managed to speak to the council.

Pressure has now forced West Yorkshire Combined Authority to return £9 million to Kirklees Council to plug the funding gap. This should be used to keep services open and save jobs.

Kirklees Unison's agreed strategy is to call on the Labour council to set a "no-cuts needs budget to defend all jobs and services, and campaign for adequate central government to protect jobs and services".

President Sisi weakened as Gaza war stirs Egyptian masses



DAVID JOHNSON

Just five days after Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi had launched his election campaign for a third term of office, war erupted across the border. With 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza, this dramatically escalates the pressures he already faces - an economy in dire straits and developing opposition, within both capitalist and working classes.

Egyptian and Israeli governments have co-operated since 1979 in harsh control of the Gaza border. For many years, the movement of goods and people through Egypt's Rafah crossing have been partially or completely blocked.

Sisi seized power in 2013, ousting Muslim Brotherhood President Mohammed Morsi, killing hundreds of Muslim Brotherhood members and imprisoning thousands as 'terrorists'. Hamas had emerged from the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1980s, so Sisi has always feared it could become a source of opposition to his regime. According to US Middle East analyst Steven Cook, Egypt urged Israel to destroy Hamas in 2014. "They were telling the Israelis to kick down every door in Gaza - to finish them off," he said.

Now Sisi is determined to stop Palestinians moving to Sinai to escape the bombs and siege, where they could further destabilise an area where there have previously been clashes between an Isis faction and the army. He also fears a financial drain on the weakened economy. A senior Egyptian official was reported telling a European counterpart: "You want us to take one million people? Well, I am going to send them to Europe. You care about human rights so much - well you take them."

\$1.3 billion of US military aid a year helps sustain Egypt's armed forces. Lack of democracy has never concerned the US ruling class, for

whom the Egyptian government is a key stabilising factor in the region. Sisi needs senior military officers' backing and they want to continue receiving this huge subsidy.

Weak economy hits workers and poor

The discovery of natural gas in the Eastern Mediterranean increased co-operation between the Egyptian and Israeli governments. Israel exports gas to Egypt where Liquefied Natural Gas is produced, earning dollars the debt-ridden economy desperately needs.

This year's intense summer heatwave raised domestic demand for gas (used to generate electricity for cooling) leaving none for export. Even so, there were frequent power cuts.

The first natural gas cargo for three months departed on 5 October. Three more ships were due to sail this month, but two days later Chevron shut down the Tamar gas platform, under 50 kilometres from Gaza, on Israeli government instructions. This is costing the Egyptian economy hundreds of millions of dollars, with companies already struggling to pay for imports due to a dollar shortage.

Life has got much harder for almost all Egyptians this year. The Egyptian pound has lost half its value after three devaluations since early 2022. Food prices were up 72% annually in August, with overall inflation a record 39.7%. Interest rates have more than doubled since early 2022 to 19.75%, but inflation means real rates are negative, so the government cannot borrow enough to pay its debts.

Two thirds of the population rely on subsidised bread, costing \$2.9 billion last year, 2.6% of government spending. Egypt only grows half its grain, with yields falling due to climate change and water shortage. The Russia-Ukraine war had already increased global prices.

Sisi is under pressure from the

Egypt-Israel border PHOTO: IDDBI/CC

International Monetary Fund (IMF) to reduce public spending, including subsidies on basic foods. 56% of public spending is on loan repayments and interest charges, so the banks get their money while education, health and other basic services are squeezed.

Despite poor and working-class families missing meals, Sisi arrogantly told them: "Don't you Egyptians dare say you would rather eat than build and progress. If the price of the nation's progress and prosperity is hunger and thirst, then let us not eat or drink." He also told young people they could earn "a respectable income" by donating blood every week.

The IMF is withholding the next instalment of the \$3 billion bailout agreed last December, demanding the currency floats, meaning a further devaluation adding to the cost of imports. They also want faster privatisation. Companies worth \$1.9 billion were privatised in the first six months of this year, with another \$5 billion due to be sold off by June 2024. But armed forces-owned companies have not been sold. Egyptian and foreign capitalists want to stop their tax and business advantages, but they provide high incomes to many retired senior officers.

Early election

The presidential election, due in early 2024, has been brought forward to 10-12 December. Sisi hopes this will prevent credible alternative candidates emerging before another devaluation and further public spending cuts. He got the constitution changed so he could theoretically remain president until 2030.

Sisi announced his candidature on 2 October. Large support rallies were held in many cities, reported to include government workers instructed to attend, as well as others



The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the international socialist organisation which the Socialist Party is affiliated to. The CWI is organised in countries across the planet. We work to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against capitalism, and to fight for a socialist world.
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attracted by free entertainment. But in Marsa Matrouh, a Mediterranean city of 230,000, the rally turned into a rare protest as hundreds tore down pro-Sisi banners and placards, "the people want the fall of the regime" was chanted, as during the 2011 uprising which brought down President Hosni Mubarak.

When Sisi last stood for election in 2018 he won 97% of the sham vote by ensuring there was only one other candidate - who supported him anyway! But this year Ahmed Al-Tantawy from al-Karama (Dignity), a party from a left-wing Nasserist tradition, has quickly gained support. One supporter in Alexandria said: "We are dreaming on a grand scale, hoping for transformative change and the cessation of oppression that has systematically impoverished the Egyptian people for the benefit of a select few."

With two million followers on Facebook, Tantawy should have been well placed to get the 25,000 signatures needed to become a candidate. But, with widespread reports of intimidation, arrests and obstruction of those trying to sign the official documents, he failed to make the candidates' list.

Sisi must have thought his road to re-election was clear but now the war on Gaza has thrown everything into great instability. His past friendly meetings with Netanyahu and US presidents, and antagonism to Hamas is going to increase pressure on him in coming days and weeks. There is massive public sympathy for Palestinians.

There were strikes and large protests by Egyptian workers and students during the second Intifada in 2000 and 2002 in solidarity with the Palestinians, that quickly became anti-Mubarak. Troops were used to crush the protests but the movement towards the 2011 uprising had begun. A new upsurge of mass protests and demonstrations, initiated by the Israeli state attacks on Gaza, cannot be ruled out, despite the Egyptian state repression.

Sisi will win the election in December, but the likelihood of him surviving as president to 2030 looks slim. He will be one of many leaders in the region to fall as a result of unending economic crisis and renewed horror of war.

Only Egypt's working class can clear a way forward by building its own independent organisations and arming them with a socialist programme to use its wealth and resources for the benefit of all. Nationalisation under democratic workers' control of all big companies, planning their resources to meet the needs of all, and full democratic rights would inspire a movement for a socialist federation of the Middle East and North Africa.

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formerly **Militant**

End the housing crisis!

Fight for council homes and rent control

PHOTO: MILES GLENDENNING

WEST LONDON PRIVATE TENANT

At least 271,000 unhoused people currently live in the UK. The number of people on waiting lists for council housing is in the thousands for every London borough that supplies this data, with some families waiting up to 28 years for a house. Given that private rent prices average approximately £2,500 per month in London, and are still

increasing, this is not a problem just for young people and students; this is a countrywide crisis that affects every property-renting person.

The Renters (Reform) Bill, introduced by levelling-up secretary Michael Gove, is woefully inadequate to tackle the actual issues faced by people in the housing market. Gove himself admitted that the bill "will support the vast majority of responsible landlords who provide quality homes to their tenants." So, who is

this bill really for: renters, or exploitative big landlords?

The new bill will allow landlords to evict tenants in rent arrears - a policy rigged against the vast majority of renters who are faced with ever-increasing rent prices and incomes that barely stretch to cover them. It also targets people who cause damage to the property, even unintentionally - and what constitutes 'damage' is a subjective decision usually made by the landlord.

Currently, the lack of outside influence on whether a landlord returns tenants' security deposits also leaves renters worrying if they will be paid back the thousands of pounds they paid at the beginning of their tenancy. In the last few days, the government also axed the no-fault eviction ban - the only useful part of the bill - allowing landlords to continue evicting their tenants at short notice should they want to repossess the property for themselves.

The Socialist Party demands policies that target the real issues faced by renters: rent control that caps rent, the mass building of affordable council housing, an end to affordability barriers such as unfairly high security deposits; and secure tenancies.

Fair rent price decisions should be made by and for tenants, backed by housing associations and trade union representatives, with tenants' best interests at heart.

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on page 8

