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the Socialist

Issue 1249

2-8 November 2023

formerly **Militant**

STOP THE WAR END THE SIEGE

For democratic mass struggle by Palestinians to fight for liberation

Build a mass workers' alternative to Sunak and Starmer



The horrors of war fill our screens and airwaves.

Israeli forces advance deeper into the Gaza rubble and continue to drop further devastation from the skies. Two million people, half of them children, under constant fear of death and facing starvation and disease under siege. Over 8,000 have already perished. In the West

Bank, hundreds of Palestinians have been driven from their homes and dozens killed.

Millions worldwide have taken to the streets, including in defiance of bans on pro-Palestinian protests in France. In Britain too, the Tories have threatened to repress protests – not that it has worked; the 28 October London protest was the biggest yet. Across the Middle East, millions have marched on pro-Palestinian protests, some expressing

opposition to their own governments. Protesters in Egypt faced police violence when chants calling for an end to the repressive rule of President Sisi developed.

Potential power

The potential power of the millions-strong protests is huge. It would be strengthened by building mass political forces making the case for a united workers' struggle and for socialist change. In Britain, thousands

chanted “Keir Starmer shame on you” in Trafalgar Square on 28 October; the Labour leader has suspended MP Andy McDonald for saying at a rally: “We won’t rest until all people, Israelis and Palestinians, between the river and the sea, can live in peaceful liberty”. Dozens of Labour councillors have resigned from the party.

Fighting to build a working-class political alternative to the Tories and New Labour in Britain, standing

for socialism and internationalism, is crucial to build solidarity with the Palestinians’ struggle. Join the Socialist Party to help us fight for it.

Read what we think:

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DO YOU HAVE NEWS FOR US? The Socialist is written, read, sold and bought by ordinary workers, trade unionists, young people and Socialist Party members. We want you to write for the Socialist.

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

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

DEADLINES Friday before publication, or Monday morning for urgent news, unless otherwise agreed with the editors. The Socialist goes to press on a Tuesday night. We publish online on Wednesday and in print on Thursday.

SUBSCRIBE to the Socialist for weekly working-class news, analysis and fighting strategy socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe Paper subscription £4.50 a month, or £6.50 including Socialism Today E-subscription £2.50 a month, or £4 including Socialism Today

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SOCIALIST PARTY The Socialist is the weekly newspaper of the Socialist Party, the England and Wales section of the Committee for a Workers' International socialistparty.org.uk socialistworld.net

BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS Socialist Books: our publishing house socialistbooks.co.uk Left Books: Marxist classics bookshop leftbooks.co.uk

OUR NEWSPAPER TEAM Editor of the Socialist: Josh Asker socialisparty.org.uk Mark Best Circulation manager: Paula Mitchell Chris Newby Editorial staff: Scott Jones Ian Pattison Paula Mitchell Mark Best

ISSN 1366-9621 Published by Socialist Publications, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office Printed by trade union labour at Reach Printing Services

Militant issue 1: October 1964 The Socialist issue 1: 7 February 1997

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

Labour resignations: Prepare an anti-war, anti-cuts stand for May local elections and beyond

The following is an open letter from Oxford Socialist Party members to the nine Oxford councillors who have resigned from the Labour Party

We are writing to you to request an in-person meeting in light of the resignation of nine councillors from the Oxford City Council Labour group over the stance of the Labour Party leadership towards the war on Gaza and its support of the Israeli state.

We send solidarity and support to anyone who is willing to take a principled stand against war and oppression. Clearly the horrific events in Gaza over the last weeks have shocked a huge number of people in Britain and internationally, the callous stance of Keir Starmer's Labour Party therefore - of supporting the siege of Gaza and the persecution of its population by the Israeli state - has rightly alienated a huge number of workers and youth from the party.

Labour U-turns Unfortunately, this is only one in a long line of betrayals and U-turns by the current Labour Party, with all of the key manifesto pledges from the time of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership being scrapped and Corbyn himself now blocked from standing as a Labour candidate at the next general election.

The Socialist Party and supporters of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), of which the Socialist Party is a member, have a proud history of campaigning against all forms of oppression and have been active participants and leaders in the anti-war movement, stretching all the way back to the campaigns against the Vietnam War, Blair's illegal war in Iraq, the war in Ukraine, and now this latest episode of the conflict in Gaza.

We believe a mass movement will be necessary to bring about a decisive change in the situation, not just in Israel and Palestine, but here in Britain as well. We therefore appeal to any sincere anti-war campaigners, trade unionists, and socialists to join with us in helping to build such a movement, starting with planning a campaign in Oxford to offer a

socialist, internationalist alternative to the pro-capitalist politics of the establishment parties.

The issues with the Labour Party are not limited to its stance on the conflict in Gaza however. Like many others around the country, the Labour-controlled Oxford City Council has overseen years of austerity and cuts to public services with little-to-no fightback against the budget cuts imposed by the central government.

Councils must fight We believe that all councils should use their existing financial reserves and borrowing powers to fund the services that people need and then launch a mass campaign against the Conservative government for more funding, linking up with local trade unionists and community activists and with other councils around the country that take the same stand.

TUSC has campaigned for this since its foundation in 2010, but a proposal for a no-cuts, needs-based budget presented at a council meeting by local TUSC supporters was rejected by Oxford City Council in 2022. Unfortunately, Labour councils have proven again and again that they are unwilling to take the steps necessary to lead the fight against austerity.

May 2024 will be the next date for elections to Oxford City Council and Socialist Party members along with other local campaigners will be standing as part of TUSC as widely as possible in the city in order to offer a genuine socialist, anti-austerity, anti-war choice at the ballot box to the people of Oxford. We encourage all who agree with the core TUSC programme (see: www.tusc.org.uk/policies/) to consider standing under this banner as well, but we are open to working alongside any left-wing candidates who are in agreement with our key policies.

If you agree, or want to discuss further on concrete steps that we can take in Oxford then please contact us as soon as possible.



Protesters in London chanted "Keir Starmer Shame on you" ISAI MARJERLA

Stop the war on Palestine! Crisis confirms need for an alternative to Sunak and Starmer

Read the TUSC statement at tusc.org.uk

Behind the headlines, how can the Israel-Palestine conflict be solved?

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. This podcast, recorded on 23 October, goes behind the headlines to examine the processes that have brought us to this point - and to offer socialist ideas to build the anti-war movement to end the conflict and deliver peace, security and a decent future for the masses of the region.

Listen and subscribe on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Soundcloud and all major podcast platforms socialistparty.org.uk/main/Podcasts pod.link/1438845215/



Israeli state offensive on Gaza escalates

Only socialist struggle can pave the way for peace



The horrific bombing of the Gaza Strip has continued relentlessly, inflicting terrible and unprecedented suffering on the trapped, blockaded population. The death toll has increased daily - over 8,300 at the time of writing - with more than 20,000 injured. Nowhere in the Strip is safe, so Gazans are in deep trauma, not knowing where the next missiles will land, and lacking electricity, fuel, water, food and medical supplies.

Israel's spokespeople dismiss the death toll as exaggerated by the Hamas-led Gaza authority, but the pictures of housing turned into rubble and the reports from foreign journalists and aid workers in Gaza - who are also being killed - indicate its massive scale.

Referring to the recently started ground invasion, Amir Avivi, a former Israeli military deputy division commander, confirmed the lack of differentiation between military and civilian targets when he said: "When our soldiers are manoeuvring we are doing this with massive artillery, with 50 aeroplanes overhead destroying anything that moves." The intensive bombing has also shown that the fates of the Israeli hostages held in Gaza are only of secondary importance in the Israeli war cabinet's strategy.

Its declared aim is to wipe out Hamas, but that will be not be possible, and the devastating bloodshed will not prevent more bloodshed in the future. The ground invasion appears to have been calibrated as piecemeal stages in a drawn-out war rather than as a full-scale invasion with stronger impact. This is probably with the aim of minimising casualties of Israeli troops but also to try to avoid a sudden shock effect across the Middle East and internationally which would increase the chance of the war spreading.

Masses' pressure

But outrage across the masses of the Middle East and beyond is so great that regional forces such as Hezbollah in Lebanon have come under pressure to open up other fronts, and might do so as this war develops further.

In this volatile situation Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu inflamed the situation further by describing the war on Gaza as Israel's "second war of independence". The first was the war before and after the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 when up to a million Palestinians were forced from their homes, becoming refugees. So Netanyahu's words caused immense fear among



Gaza, October 2023 PHOTO: WAFA/CC

Palestinians in the occupied territories and inside Israel on where the war is heading. He posed the war as existential for Israel, clearly hoping to come across as a leading saviour for Israeli Jews and turn the tide on his sinking popularity.

Already in this war over a million Palestinians have been displaced inside Gaza and hundreds in the West Bank, due to the orders and incitement of Israel's ministers, some of whom make no secret of wanting more 'facts on the ground' regarding enlarging Israeli territory. US imperialism and other Western powers, while staunchly supporting Israel, are at the same time trying to exert some pressure on Israel's leaders to limit their war objectives. This is not out of concern for the Palestinians, but rather due to worry over the potential for massive disruption to the world economy and other instability if the war spreads - including fear that mass fury can turn on the capitalist

ruling classes, especially in the Middle East.

The Palestinians can place no trust in the world's capitalist powers. In the occupied territories they will need to turn back to the mass struggle they engaged in during the first intifada, only this time organised under the democratic control of elected popular committees of struggle. This would mean challenging the Palestinian pro-capitalist parties - whether Fatah, Hamas or others - that have no way of ending their national oppression or of providing decent living standards for all. The Palestinian masses need to build their own political party armed with a socialist programme for taking into public ownership the main companies and resources in society, and running them democratically in the interests of all.

Turmoil in Israel

In Israel, following the callous killing of 1,400 Israelis and immigrant

administration, the Arab elites and others for the idea of a Palestinian state. This isn't out of support for the right of the Palestinians to self-determination. Rather, having no solutions to the Israel-Palestine conflict, they can only try to end rounds of bloodshed by sponsoring façades of talks that won't achieve an independent, genuine Palestinian state, because there is no prospect of one under capitalism. Israel's capitalist ruling class regards the idea of such a state as a threat to its interests and won't allow it. Also, that ruling class benefits from a 'divide-and-rule' approach, including fostering a heavy smokescreen of racism and security concerns in Israel to draw Israeli Jews behind capitalist interests.

But the interests of Israel's working class and middle class are another matter. They have an enormous amount to gain from an end to the conflict, as well as from ending Israeli capitalism with all its exploitation both within and beyond the country's borders. Israel's myriad of pro-capitalist parties have shown again and again a complete inability to offer any way out of the cycles of war, or to end the poverty and massive inequality in Israeli society. So the building of a new mass workers' party with a socialist programme is needed in Israel.

Socialist forces

Only the development of socialist forces on both sides of the divide can start to counter the distrust and division and indicate the way forward towards an alternative system, free of war and oppression.

On a socialist basis, it will be fully realisable for both sides to have their own state if they so wish, while fully respecting the rights of minorities within those states, and linking them together in a voluntary socialist confederation. Capitalism is so rotten across the Middle East - as well as the whole world - that the taking up of socialist ideas on a mass basis in any country would very quickly become enormously attractive in neighbouring countries, laying the basis for a socialist confederation of the entire region, in which cooperation would replace conflict.

SOCIALISM TODAY Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party November issue includes... Is a Palestinian state possible? Chinese diplomacy - beyond the Belt and Road War in Ukraine - nationalism and conflict socialisttoday.org/subscribe 020 8988 8777 Paper sub £3 a month, e-sub £2.50

TORY TUITION FEE CHANGES – MAKING AN AWFUL SYSTEM WORSE

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY AND GRADUATE

The Tories have snuck through a massive change in student finance. 'Plan 5' loans apply to new students from August this year and, crucially, they lower the salary threshold at which graduates start paying back their loans from £27,295 to £25,000.

That means far more low-wage graduate workers will have to start paying back, squeezing poorer graduates' incomes from the start. If you were earning £30,000 a year, your student loan repayments go up from £243 a year to £450.

The debt is also written off after 40 years instead of the previous 30, leaving these 21-year-old graduates in debt almost until retirement, unless they're one of the few graduates lucky (or well-connected) enough to land a big salary.

Also, if a student's family income is just £25,000 or more, they cannot get the full maintenance loan for living costs. The maximum loan available to students is just £9,978 for those living away from home – far from enough to live on.

Reality of studying with fees

My parents saved up over years so that I could go to uni under Blair's tuition fees. When the Con-Dem government tripled tuition fees, even with those savings and a student loan, I still had to get a part-time job after my first year. I typically worked 20 hours a week – time I should have been able to spend studying!

Students from wealthier families don't have to worry about that. Those that can afford to pay the tuition fees from the start and can fund three years of living aren't burdened

50%

increase in total student loan payments for an average graduate after recent changes

10

more years paying off student loan debt for new students

with work or debt. From the start, the entire student loans system has been grossly unfair on working-class students. Poorer students pay more than the rich, then study less than the rich, and so get worse grades and less out of university than the rich.

It is a clearly flawed and unfair system, and students and working graduates must fight to write off the debt and for free education.

Socialist Students fights to:

- Stop the Tory stealth fees attack. Cancel all student debt, scrap tuition fees and take the wealth off the 1% to fund it
- End the student cost-of-living crisis. Replace maintenance loans with grants students can actually live on, rising with costs
- Students and campus workers unite to fight for the funding our universities need
- End the student housing crisis, for third-party halls to be brought back in-house, with democratic control to make sure student housing is good quality and not a rip-off

Students can't afford to go to university

DEAN YOUNG
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Being a student is meant to be one of the best periods of your life. Sure, there is the stress of whether you can finish your essays in time, but that is supposed to be the side dish to three or more years of growing up, enjoying not having the responsibilities of a full-time job and thus avoiding being eaten up by the exploitative capitalist system.

But in reality, students are seen as commodities by universities desperate for our fees, and with maintenance grants replaced by loans that don't cover the cost of living. What does this look like for students? It means having to work to survive; over 50% of students now work, unable to fully focus on their studies.

It means having an average debt upon graduating in 2023 of £44,730, if you study in England. I'm a third-year student and would like to do a Masters degree. That's another £12,000 or

£44,730

average student debt graduating in 2023

more of debt to be paid off separately to my undergraduate loan.

Students hardly ever pay this debt off, with the interest rates at ludicrous levels. Instead we are burdened by a stealth tax, costing graduates thousands upon thousands of pounds across their working lives. Paying off the debt from a Masters degree is an additional 6% of your income above a much lower threshold of £21,000. So if you enjoy education, good luck to your bank account!

Join the student fightback: join...



- Visit socialiststudents.org.uk/join
- or text your name and school, college or uni to 07747 174 833



Socialist Students campaigning against fees
PHOTO: JOSH ASKER

When students were paid to go to university

ROGER BANNISTER
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

I was brought up in one of 36 terraced houses in a working-class cul-de-sac in Manchester. In 1970, when I went to Bristol University, I was the first person from there to go to university. My parents were both low paid, at that time my dad was earning around £600 a year, and my mum even less as a part-time typist. To get things into perspective, a newly qualified teacher then would be paid around £940 a year. If things were as they are now, with inadequate maintenance loans and massive tuition fees to pay afterwards, there is no way that I could have gone to university.

But back then, as a result of legislation from the mid-1960s, local authorities were obliged by law to pay all university fees (including student union membership) and pay all but the children of rich parents a maintenance grant. In 1970 the full grant was £340 a year, but it was means-tested according to parental income and certain outgoings. I remember that in my first year my grant was £309, my parents having to make up the difference, which they still struggled to do.

The grant was never lavish, but we could survive within a culture of frugality. Rather than buy a small

loaf, two of us would buy a large one, and we would have half each, which worked out cheaper! A couple of weeks' work on the Christmas post and a summer holiday job in a local brewery made a big difference. During the Easter holiday, when temporary jobs were rare, I used to sign on as unemployed, which students were allowed to do then, and get paid unemployment benefit.

This all meant that life at university was free from worries about money. I did not know any students that worked during term time, so we could concentrate on our studies, buying our textbooks out of our grants, and even managing to have a bit of recreational spending at weekends.

One other difference between then and now was that the National Union of Students (NUS) was more militant. National student strikes were called to defend grants or to push the case to have them increased. I was surprised that when grants were ended, and tuition fees introduced by the New Labour Blair government, there seemed very little action from the NUS. Socialist Party members, as part of the campaign 'Save Free Education', pushed for the NUS to act to prevent the fees-based model, expanded upon by Tory-led governments decades later.

Storm Babet floods result of Tory rule

JON DALE
MANSFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

Storm Babet's widespread floods devastated homes, local shops and businesses. An 83-year old Chesterfield woman tragically drowned in her living room, unable to climb upstairs.

Thérèse Coffey, Tory Environment Secretary, claimed rain coming from the east was the problem! When it comes to predicting rain from the west, she said, "We've got that pretty much down to a fine art."

Local residents were scornful when she visited Retford in North Nottinghamshire last week. They experienced floods in 2007, 2019 and now again.

Four years ago, the district council put £200,000 aside to widen a culvert that can't cope with heavy rain. But austerity cuts have slashed the Environment Agency's funds by almost two thirds since 2010, so council funds weren't matched and the work hasn't been done.

Retford's Tory MP, Brendan Clarke-Smith, said in Parliament, "Can we also please ask councils to stop building on floodplains?" But his own government has encouraged this!

About 10% of new houses were built in areas at the highest risk of flooding in England in 2021. Half the planned houses in neighbouring North Lincolnshire were on a flood plain, where it's more profitable for building companies and developers.

Despite this, Keir Starmer has attacked the "restrictive planning system" as the blockage to new



Swollen River Till after Storm Babet
PHOTO: JAMES T M TOWILL/CC

building. What's needed is democratic control of planning by local communities, ensuring drainage, soakaways, green space and other essential measures are installed. Big building companies should be nationalised to prioritise flood prevention over profit. So should the water companies responsible for sewage. Residents and small businesses affected should be compensated from their vast profits.

Bolsover Tory MP Mark Fletcher said, "We need to make sure that Derbyshire County Council, unlike

over 4,000

English flood defences 'poor or very poor'

in 2019 [when there was fatal flooding], is given the proper funding it needs to get things back to normal... quickly." More hypocrisy after voting for every Tory cuts budget!

Derbyshire County Council has announced it's short of £46 million, despite making £300 million 'savings' over the past 13 years, and £63 million more planned over the next five.

Ground is now water-saturated before winter starts, so there's a strong possibility of more floods in coming months. What junior Tory minister, Rebecca Pow, complacently called "rare, extreme levels of rainfall" are becoming increasingly common as a result of climate change.

We need socialist planning to urgently stop environmental destruction and to make sure working-class people don't pay the price for its effects.

Bankers get Halloween bonus treat

LINDSEY MORGAN
BRISTOL SOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

It's a really happy Halloween for bankers this year after the cap on bonuses was lifted by the ghouls in government. Announced in Liz Truss and Kwasi Kwarteng's disastrous 2022 'mini-budget', Rishi Sunak has kept this little treat for his banker friends.

After the 2008 financial crash, the cap was introduced in part due to mass anger with the banking system and supposedly to prevent risky gambling with our money. The cap claimed to help stamp out prioritising short-term profits. But capitalism as a system will always prioritise short-term greed over the long-term needs of the working-class majority.

The cap meant financial dire straits for the bankers, with bonuses restricted to just double their annual salary! And even then, for well-paid bankers, there was room for negotiation.

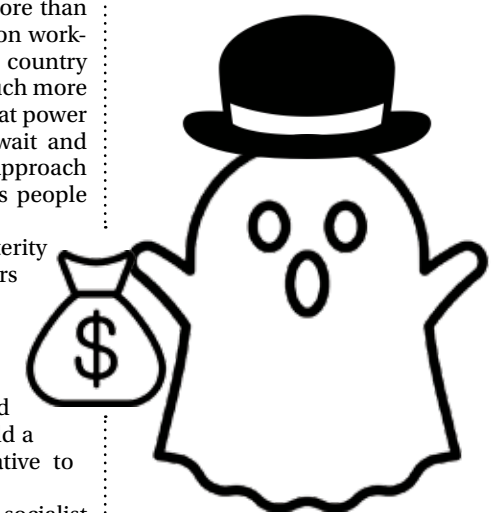
What about us?

While not all bankers are obscenely rich (just most of them), removing the cap is a massive kick in the teeth for the majority of us. We've been told that we shouldn't fight

programme, would nationalise the top 150 companies including the banking sector and make sure that a decent quality of life isn't just a bonus for some but a way of life for all of us.

We've had enough of having tricks from them and them having their treats taken from us!

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



SOCIALISM 2023

An unmissable weekend for those who want to fight back



Prasad, one of the speakers at the Socialism 2022 rally a participant in the mass uprising against the Sri Lankan government that year
PHOTO: SEMAN

ALI COOK
DORSET SOCIALIST PARTY

Every year our Socialism event is something to look forward to. It is an opportunity to learn about many different aspects of our struggle - over 30 different workshops in fact! This year includes: 'Gaza under siege', 'Building Marxism in trade unions and workplaces', Marxist economics and many more. (See socialism.org.uk for the full programme.)

Speaking as someone who lives in quite a remote area of the country, can at times feel a bit isolated far from the 'big city' struggles. So, socialism is an opportunity to see all

the Socialist Party does and hear the experiences of people from up and down the country.

Perhaps you are looking for a way to fight back, but haven't yet decided if the Socialist Party is for you. Socialism is a weekend of discussion and debate so come along and let's see if you want to join.

Increasing numbers of young people are looking towards socialist ideas, so it's great that tickets are staying at the same price as last year and students pay as little as £10 per day. To get a top-tier political education to prepare for the struggles to come, it's a bargain!

So come along to Socialism 2023, you won't regret it!

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**KICK OUT THE TORIES!
FIGHT FOR A
SOCIALIST WORLD!**

Three-day Amazon strike: GMB must build the fight

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

Amazon workers in Coventry will be back on strike from 7-9 November. This is the workers' response to another round of insulting pay rises. Warehouse workers previously on £11 an hour now get £11.80 an hour, rising to £12.30 in April. This is far off the £15 an hour GMB members at Coventry's BHX4 site have demanded. Amazon has called its wages 'competitive'. The only competitive part of it is the competition between workers' gas bills and food bills - heating or eating!

This poverty pay is in real contrast to what Amazon workers have earned for their bosses. New figures show Amazon's profits have tripled from \$2.9 billion last year to \$9 billion this year!

The strike is also about Amazon's appalling work conditions. Bathrooms that take half a lunch break to walk to, overheating trailers, managers trained to intimidate; no wonder the workers say robots are treated better.

Anger at this nightmare brought BHX4's workers together to fight for better. Over 1,000 workers at the site have now joined the GMB union. Hundreds make up every picket line in impressive displays of strength. A lot of working-class organisation has been built.

A few weeks ago, dozens of BHX4 workers suddenly booked an afternoon of annual leave to stage a walk-out. This shows impatience at GMB's inaction for some weeks. There have been no strikes since 5 August, giving Amazon three months to prepare to organise against GMB.



Amazon Coventry workers striking in 2022. PHOTO: COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

Amazon has a well-earned reputation as a vicious union-busting company. It spies on workers and lays out warehouses so meeting places are minimised and monitored. Breaking through that in BHX4 has been a success, but Amazon won't let it last if it can break the union. GMB must throw everything at this fight.

The three upcoming strike days should be used to organise the active layer among the hundreds of members. GMB should call a mass democratic meeting on the picket line to decide the course of the strike and encourage members to get active. Also, GMB has made good attempts to leaflet more Amazon workplaces; this is an opportunity to try again and bring new activists along. The cost-of-living crisis has made Amazon workers' lives more difficult, which makes it more likely workers will be convinced to join a union and to strike. Reaching out once again to other sites could help prevent BHX4 being isolated, and rebuild the campaign to defeat the Amazon monolith.

Six weeks in, striking Black Country metal workers standing firm

NICK HART
WEST MIDLANDS SOCIALIST PARTY

After six weeks of strike action, Unite members at the ArcelorMittal steel coil plant in Willenhall in the Black Country are showing no signs of backing down!

We heard on the picket line about how management would sooner spend several thousand pounds sending out work to subcontractors and the company's two other plants than settle a pay claim equal to just 5% of their profits in 2021.

This is despite the shop floor workforce there earning an average of only £11.24 an hour - at least £2 less than what many other similar metalworking jobs in the area pay. As one worker put it: "They can find £90,000 to do up the offices, they can pay the top brass who work in there a six-figure salary, but when we ask for our pay to be brought up to where it should be for the work we do, we get threatened with the factory closing and us losing our jobs".

The campaign for a living pay increase continues, with further strike days planned into December if management carry on refusing to negotiate with the union.

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shopstewards.net

Unison social work strikes spread



South Gloucestershire care workers striking earlier this year. PHOTO: ROGER THOMAS

DAN SMART
ADULT SOCIAL WORKER AND BRANCH SECRETARY,
UNISON SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)

With soaring workloads, massive understaffing and the ever-increasing demand for care, social workers are beginning to take a stand.

A grassroots movement in Unison is now well under way, with multiple strikes set to take place. Social workers in Brighton and Barnet branches have recently won emphatic mandates to strike, and have set out a programme including co-ordinated action on 7 November.

Swindon Council social workers in GMB have also been on strike recently over cuts to unsociable hours payments, and social workers in Leeds have reportedly just won their ballot and are setting strike dates. South Gloucestershire Council social workers and occupational therapists are still in dispute, after striking for six days over the summer, and may reballoon if there is no satisfactory

outcome from ongoing negotiations.

From around 60 council staff in South Gloucestershire, being the first group of social workers and occupational therapists to take action during the recent strike wave, this has now spread to at least five local authorities! Led by Socialist Party members in Unison, this shows the massive potential workers have.

The majority of the current disputes have been sparked by inequality between various social care departments when being paid retention payments. Retention payments are increasingly being used by councils across the country as a sticking plaster for the staffing crisis. However, they have mainly been implemented in children's services, creating a two-tier workforce with adult social workers. This is despite adult staff having exactly the same qualifications and similarly dealing with some of the most challenging situations in society. We are one profession!

The divisive use of the payments

has further angered workers who are struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. Many are being forced to leave for better-paid roles, for example in agency work where the pay can be three or four times that of local councils, for less stress. This then creates the knock-on problem of a lack of experienced council staff being able to pick up complex work and train newer staff.

The crisis in social care has gone on for far too long. The multitude of issues, including endless austerity and understaffing, have all had a devastating effect on the care and support people receive in their communities. Social workers go into the profession because we care about people, not the money, but when we're prevented from being effective at doing this, the job just becomes demoralising.

A statement from Brighton and Hove Unison states: "A recent survey found that over half [of social workers] are considering quitting - unless we improve pay and conditions it is

unlikely we are going to avert a disaster that is literally waiting to happen."

Nevertheless, we can take optimism in the workers deciding to fight back. The burgeoning strike wave in social work is a tremendous step forward in tackling the issues of low pay and inequality in the sector. At a Unison social work seminar I attended last month, the enthusiasm for strike action was palpable, with many seeing the action going on in other branches and being eager to go back to their own workplaces and organise. Sections of striking social workers are already sharing experiences and speaking at each other's events, recognising the importance of solidarity and seeking to build wider change.

This now has the potential for a movement to emerge which can not only win on pay demands but also go further. To fight for a properly funded, fully public-owned social care service. A service that can ensure everyone gets the support and dignity they deserve.

PCS members gear up for leadership elections

Vote Marion Lloyd for general secretary and John Moloney for AGS

PCS MEMBER

As reported in last week's Socialist, Socialist Party member and PCS Broad Left Network (BLN) chair Marion Lloyd has secured a phenomenal 80 nominations to stand in the elections for PCS general secretary. Marion's running mate, John Moloney, who is standing to be re-elected as Assistant General Secretary, won 87 nominations.

This is not a flash in the pan. As workers have come under pressure from high inflation, from threats to jobs and offices, and from Tory rhetoric about lazy civil servants working from home, they have turned to their union to fight back. But PCS members have found that the union's leaders have let them down.

The BLN, which is supported by Socialist Party members in PCS, has been at the forefront of attempts to rebuild a member-oriented union, that can exert control in workplaces, that puts resources under the control of members' elected representatives, and which bargains effectively with employers.

Basics like this have all but collapsed in areas of the union where

activists from Left Unity (LU), the grouping which most of the current leadership are members of, are dominant - not least of which is the union's largest employer group, the Department for Work and Pensions, where branch officers hardly ever get a response when they raise concerns with the LU-dominated union executive.

The recent events in the pay battle have tipped the balance for many members. The leadership decided to cancel the union's planned strike action, reballoon and the strike levy following an inadequate government pay offer, and dressed this up in a dishonest membership consultation as 'continuing the campaign'. This happened under Fran Heathcote's presidency. She is now standing for general secretary.

Marion is standing on a platform of rebuilding the union's national campaign, including a serious plan of national strike action, supported by targeted, selective action. She is also standing on a platform of re-democratising PCS, returning the union to the control of members and reps.

● Voting begins on 9 November and runs through to 14 December

London Underground: Build the resistance to attacks on our pensions, pay, terms and conditions

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN RMT

The RMT is an all-grades trade union that seeks strength through unity and action of all grades to defend and improve our conditions.

We are not limited by narrow 'craft interests'. That is why the 'final offer' of a 5% pay rise from London Underground is not acceptable. If accepted, it will further increase the gap between the higher-paid members and the lower-paid. Even for higher-paid members, 5% represents a significant real-terms pay deduction. Currently, RPI inflation is at just under 9%.

For over a decade on London Underground we have won inflation-proofed pay increases.

Through industrial action we have delayed attacks on our pensions. But these savage cuts backed by the government and the London Mayor,

Labour's Sadiq Khan, remain on the table. That is why a big 'yes' vote for further action is imperative.

We have also through action (the Socialist Party opposed calling off the coordinated action) and the threat of strikes achieved a partial victory in restoring 200 station jobs and forcing other partial retreats by management.

The latest 'final pay offer' should be rejected. And we must build a campaign throughout our membership to resist this threat to reduce our real wages at a time of high inflation. This offer should also be rejected because it contains a freezing of pay bands for some of the grades we cover. This, if implemented, will lead to a pay cut and reduced pensions for these members.

To win would require unified and sustained action that would close down London. We are always told that a day's strike costs the London economy £50 million plus a day. This shows how important our members

are to the London economy. The vast wealth of the London economy is robbed from the workers who create the wealth by big business and the parasitic bankers. The money is there to pay our members and other public service workers that kept London running during Covid and continue to keep it running.

We are dismayed that the Aslef leadership are recommending acceptance of 5%. We urge Aslef members to reject the offer and fight alongside RMT to defend pay, pensions, and terms and conditions.

STOP PRESS - TICKET OFFICE VICTORY

As we go to press, the government and train operators have announced a U-turn on closing ticket offices in England following pressure from rail unions and the public. A full article will be published in next week's issue of the Socialist.



Elect Marion and John!
PCS election online launch meeting
Thursday 9th November 7pm Zoom ID: 832 6171 5048

MARION LLOYD
FOR PCS GENERAL SECRETARY

JOHN MOLONEY
FOR PCS ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

#ACTION NOTWORDS

FOR A FIGHTING, DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP OF PCS

Go North East bus workers 'Go all-out'

Drivers from Go North East have rejected the company's latest pay offer by a resounding 81% on a turnout of 93%. More than 1,300 Unite members are now on all-out strike action.

Strikers on the picket line outside the Gateshead depot told us how bosses had attempted to needle them by putting up notices in the depot, saying: "The lion doesn't concern itself with the sheep". One striker commented, "That poster probably substantially added to the vote for strike action!" Another added, "I don't see any sheep running away from lions."

The company's business director, Ben Maxfield, has been dubbed "Baffled Ben" by strikers, as he is quoted in local press as being baffled as to why drivers have turned the pay deal down. Go North East

bosses are clearly tone deaf to the anger felt by their workforce, who are being paid up to 20% less than their counterparts from Go North West in Manchester. As drivers pointed out, they are doing exactly the same job and working for the same parent company.

These strikers are determined to fight for fair pay and conditions.

ELAINE BRUNSKILL

Cardiff bin workers fight on

Cardiff Council refuse workers continue their strike for a pay rise. The current phase of strike action began on 16 October and is set to continue until 26 November.

Unite is now calling for an investigation into the council's potential use of agency workers to undermine the strike - a criminal offence. Workers lobbied agency firm Acorn on 27 October.

Bin workers in Wrexham, also Unite members, have voted to settle a seven-week-long strike.

HOW CAN THE ANTI-UNION MINIMUM SERVICES LEGISLATION BE DEFEATED?

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HOW CAN WE BUILD A MOVEMENT TO STOP THE WAR ON GAZA?

HANNAH SELL
SOCIALIST PARTY GENERAL SECRETARY

The world is looking on in horror at the siege of Gaza. The Israeli state has been carrying out unprecedented levels of airstrikes on the densely populated Gaza Strip ever since the terrible Hamas attacks on Israeli civilians. The bombing campaign is not only the most intense ever inflicted on Gaza, it is worse than any carried out during the invasion of Iraq. Swathes of Gaza are reduced to rubble. Clean water is in extremely short supply and starvation is stalking the Strip. More than 8,000 Gazans have died to date, with the death toll mounting hourly. Slaughter from the air is now being followed up with troops on the ground. Meanwhile, Palestinians have also been killed by Israeli forces in the West Bank, and within Israel itself all those opposing the onslaught against Gaza – especially Palestinians – are facing growing repression. No wonder that millions of people in Britain, as in countries across the world, are wondering what they can do to stop the war on Gaza and to aid the Palestinian struggle for national self-determination.

What power stands on the side of the Palestinians?

Inevitably people are looking for an institution with the authority and will to stop the slaughter. Some have hopes in the United Nations (UN) to do so. After all, the UN Secretary General has called for a humanitarian ceasefire and accused Israel of “clear violations of international humanitarian law”. However, the UN is not an independent power. It is composed of the governments of the world, and is dominated by the major powers, the ‘permanent members’ of the security council, above all US imperialism. So while a symbolic motion calling for a ‘humanitarian truce’ was passed by the General Assembly, even the motion for a ‘humanitarian pause’ put to the decision-making UN security council was vetoed by the US, with Britain abstaining.

Clearly, it is no good looking to Western governments for the Palestinians’ salvation. All have joined in behind the world’s strongest power – the US – in backing the assault on Gaza. The EU summit only agreed for a ‘humanitarian pause’ rather than a ceasefire, never mind actually calling for withdrawal from the occupied territories. US imperialism is in decline but it remains the pre-eminent military power on the planet. It has sent two of its eleven aircraft carriers to the Arabian Gulf, for example, whereas no other country has more than two. For US imperialism, Israel has always been a base of support in the Middle East which it backs to the hilt.

However, nor are the regimes of the Arab world interested in defending the Palestinian people. Rather, they

are driven by maintaining their own rule and defending the wealth and power of their elites.

That does not mean there is nothing we can do, however. There is a potential ‘superpower’ that stands against the onslaught on Gaza. The massive demonstrations that have taken place across the Arab world – including Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait and Tunisia, as well as on the West Bank – have given a glimpse of that superpower. They are a central factor in US imperialism and other Western powers changing their tone at least, and attempting to prevent the Israeli government going ‘too far’. The imperialist powers, and the Arab regimes, are undoubtedly anxious to try and avoid the real danger of a regional war. Above all, however, they are anxious to avoid a new ‘Arab Spring’. Just over a decade ago, mass movements of the working class and poor swept the region overthrowing dictatorships. Ultimately, those movements were defeated because the working class of the different countries lacked their own parties with a programme for the socialist transformation of society. Nonetheless, the working class is potentially the most powerful force in society, capable of overthrowing the existing order. The elites fear they might not be so lucky next time around.

How do we build that potential superpower here in Britain? What lessons can we learn from the movement against the Iraq war?

Here too, hundreds of thousands of people have already taken to the streets of towns and cities across Britain in solidarity with the Palestinians. And those demonstrations are already piling the pressure on Westminster. How do we make the movement more powerful?

Twenty years ago, in the campaign against the Iraq war, the Socialist Party helped to build for the gigantic demonstrations that took place. In London on 15 February 2003, up to two million people took to the streets, with millions more protesting across the country. Those demonstrations shook the New Labour government to its core, with Blair fearing he would have to resign. Nonetheless, his government clung on and continued on its path to war. Many trade unionists participated in the demonstrations, and trade union leaders spoke at them. There were also some cases of collective trade union anti-war action, particularly the Motherwell freight train drivers who refused to transport munitions bound for Iraq.

However, there was no lead given from the top of the trade union movement for that kind of action on a broader scale. On ‘Day X’, when the invasion began, school students and

students across the country walked out on strike action, largely initiated by young Socialist Party members, with some groups of workers joining them. Had the trade union leaders called for strike action against the war on a national basis it could have brought the country to a halt, and forced the government to retreat from participating in the invasion. That wouldn’t have stopped US imperialism going ahead, but it would have enormously strengthened the confidence of the anti-war movement in the US. Today as well, collective trade union action, for example blocking the production and transport of military equipment bound for Israel, could have a significant effect. The trade unions in Britain have over six million members and enormous potential power. And over the last 18 months they have begun to feel that power, with the highest level of strikes in thirty years.

Are there also political lessons from that anti-war movement?

Yes. Another weakness of the anti-war movement twenty years ago was that it had no mass political voice. Although it was largely led by socialists, the leadership of the Stop the War Coalition, including the Socialist Workers’ Party, mistakenly did not give socialist organisations speakers to raise the need for a socialist alternative at the mass demos, instead handing the stage to the likes of the Liberal Democrats, who posed as the ‘anti-war’ and ‘left’ alternative, before they backed the war once it had begun and later joining a coalition government with the Tories.

Today no one is surprised that the Tory government has wholeheartedly backed the onslaught on Gaza. However, Starmer’s New Labour has been no different. The general secretary of the Labour Party wrote to Labour MPs and councillors saying “they must not, under any circumstances” join Palestinian solidarity protests. It is welcome that some have rebelled against this diktat, but it an indication of the right-wing character of the Parliamentary Labour Party that only a quarter have even called for a ceasefire!

Starmer is on course to be the next prime minister but – on foreign and domestic policy – he is making it clear he is not going to follow a fundamentally different path to the Tories. He will act in the interests of the capitalist elite, rather than the working-class majority. Starmer’s New Labour Mark II is no different to New Labour Mark I which, under Blair, took part in the invasion of Iraq. That’s why a crucial way to strengthen the Palestinian solidarity movement will be the building of a new party that represents the interests of the working-class majority, rather than the capitalist elite, and stands in defence of the Palestinians as part of a socialist and internationalist programme.



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSOON

What attitude should the movement take to Hamas?

Sunak, Starmer, Biden and the rest of them express condemnation of the Hamas killings of Israeli civilians, while standing over the right of the Israeli state to defend itself by killing thousands of civilians trapped in the open-air prison camp of Gaza. Rightly that hypocrisy has enraged all of those participating in the anti-war movement, who understand that these events follow decades of brutal repression for the Palestinians. That does not mean, however, that we should support Hamas’s ideology, strategy or methods. Even before the horrific killings on 7 October, the Socialist Party and the Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI) had warned against the targeting of Israeli civilians in the national conflict and opposed such attacks. We are not pacifists.

The Palestinians are struggling against a brutal occupier. Nonetheless, by targeting Israeli civilians inside Israel, Hamas and the other forces involved in the 7 October attack have made it far easier for the Israeli government to mobilise Israeli society behind its current savage onslaught on Gaza. Contrast how the attacks of 7 October strengthened the support for a ground invasion into Gaza with the way the mass movements across the Middle East have made it more difficult for the Israeli state to escalate. We point to the first Intifada mass uprising in the occupied territories which began in 1987. The way forward for the Palestinians will be through democratically organising mass struggle – a socialist intifada – based on the interests of workers and the poor, independent of the rich elites.

But doesn’t supporting the Palestinian struggle require supporting their existing leaders?

Well Tory home secretary Suella Braverman tries to argue that carrying a Palestinian flag means supporting Hamas, but clearly that is not the case! Unfortunately, there are also some on the left, including the Socialist Workers’ Party, who argue that socialist revolutionaries should give unconditional support to Hamas on the grounds that “revolutionaries should always support the resistance of the oppressed against their oppressors”. We agree that it is essential to support struggles for national liberation, but giving “unconditional” support to the leaders of organisations who have no strategy to win national liberation does nothing whatsoever to help those struggles. Hamas has ruled Gaza since gaining the biggest vote in the last elections held, 17 years ago. Opinion polls from within Gaza are not reliable, but the most recent from before the current war showed big majorities with little

or no trust in Hamas and angry at the scale of corruption in the institutions of the Strip. It is a pro-capitalist, right-wing Islamist organisation which opposes independent working-class organisation – which is the key to winning Palestinian liberation.

But surely no matter how the Palestinians organise, and how big a movement is built in their defence worldwide, it will still be impossible to defeat the Israeli state, which is armed to the teeth and backed up by US imperialism?

The military strength of the Israeli state is one side of the question. Since the foundation of Israel in 1948, the Palestinians have suffered a succession of crimes against them. Over a million have been driven from their land and into refugee camps in surrounding countries. In 1993 the Oslo Accords raised the hope of a capitalist ‘two-state’ solution but, as we warned at the time, it has turned out to be a cruel illusion. However, no amount of military strength can ever destroy the desire of the Palestinian masses for self-determination. Nor will the current war, no matter how barbarous, be able to do so. On the contrary, it will be strengthened.

At the same time Israel is not one homogenous block. It too is a class society and is, in reality, deeply divided. In 2017 Israel’s GDP per capita was \$35,700 a year, compared to just \$1,700 in the Gaza Strip, but of course that doesn’t mean all Israelis are wealthy, anymore than Britain’s GDP per capita of \$45,100 does. One third of children within Israel are bought up in poverty. Prior to the current war there was an unprecedented political crisis in Israel, with a nine-month-long mass movement against the government, including a general strike and widespread refusal of reservists to serve in the army. In the current situation that movement has been cut across, but the government remains extremely unpopular, and it points towards the inevitability of future big class conflicts in crisis-ridden Israeli society.

But surely the Israeli ruling elite will never grant a genuine right to self-determination to the Palestinians?

No they won’t. The Israeli capitalist class are driven by defending their

own profits and resources. They will always combine brutal repression of the Palestinians with exploitation of the Israeli working class, whilst using nationalism to maintain their rule. They will need to be overthrown. A workers’ government in Israel which broke with capitalism and began to develop a democratic and socialist planned economy would, however, be an entirely different prospect.

Leon Trotsky, one of the leaders of the Russian revolution, predicted that if an attempt was made to create a Jewish homeland in the Middle East it would be a “bloody trap”. Clearly he has been proved correct. However, Israel has existed for three quarters of a century and there is an Israeli national consciousness which socialists cannot ignore. Today around 70% of Israelis were born there and certainly feel it is their home. Like working-class people everywhere, they too want to be able to live free from poverty, but also from war and insecurity – which will never be achieved via continued repression of the Palestinians.

But a workers’ government in Israel would have a road to achieve that, via negotiations with elected and accountable Palestinian workers’ organisations – which also need to be built – to reach agreement on all relevant issues, including on land borders, on how water and other resources would be distributed, and how Jerusalem could be shared.

So we need socialism?

Yes! Winning a genuine right to self-determination for the Palestinian people is inextricably linked to the overthrow of the capitalist system. For the capitalist classes of the major powers, the right of oppressed nationalities has always been so much loose change. Lip service is paid when it suits their interests, only to be discarded when it does not. Even lip service has rarely been paid to the national rights of the Palestinians. And today, capitalism globally is a system in crisis, increasingly unable to meet the needs of the majority or to overcome environmental crisis. War and conflict is on the rise. But the global mass movement in support of the Palestinians does point towards the potential ‘superpower’ that could end this rotten system and start to build a new socialist society able to meet the aspirations of every nationality in the Middle East and worldwide. Revolutionaries have a vital role to play, not just in supporting and building the mass movements, but in arguing for the socialist programme that is needed for victory.

GAZA UNDER SIEGE: HOW WILL A PALESTINIAN STATE BE REALISED?
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Obituary: Graham Lewis (1954-2023) "One of the steadfast poll tax warriors"



Graham (centre) marching against the far-right in 2009

Graham Lewis, who has passed away aged 68, will be remembered by Socialist Party members in the East Midlands and London for his drive and unwavering commitment to socialist change over decades. Born and educated in Derby before graduating in Manchester, he taught English in Borneo, returning just after Margaret Thatcher became prime minister in 1979.

Militant-supporting Lambeth Labour councillor, remembers Graham priming her to ask detailed questions, to which the officers had to respond and have their answers recorded in council minutes. Graham then used these in court to get the cases thrown out. "Most of the 70,000 didn't know what had happened or why, just that they stopped getting poll tax bills.

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Review: The Old Oak Ken Loach's final film 'a masterpiece of working-class solidarity'

LYNDA MCEWAN SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND



PHOTO: STUDIOCANAL UK

Ken Loach's new film, and by his own admission probably his last, The Old Oak is a masterpiece of working-class solidarity. Set in northern England in a once-thriving mining town, it depicts the life of pub landlord, TJ, his struggle with mental health after a marriage breakdown, his desperate attempts to keep The Old Oak running, and of navigating the arrival of a group of Syrian refugees to the community.

communities. That they're not innate, but fostered by the ruling class and its control of the media. Being drip-fed sensational 'them and us' headlines coupled with the devastation of more than a decade of cuts creates the conditions for xenophobia to spread.

confidence to fight for more money for the town. The film finishes with hundreds of people coming to pay their condolences to Yara and her family after the news that her father has been killed in Syria, a tradition of old mining towns when one of their own dies.

Review: Killers of the Flower Moon A film about the exploitation of the Osage people in 1920s USA

PETE MCNALLY HEREFORD AND WORCESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Killers of the Flower Moon is based on the book 'The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI' by David Grann. The Osage Native American tribe had been moved several times but by World War One had been on a reservation settled in Oklahoma. The film shows how the US government made payments to the tribe members for oil discovered on their land, only some of whom were able to access this money, deemed 'competent'.

work out a way to get his hands on these funds and anything else that will ease his life. He is adept at getting pieces of paper signed. His nephew Ernest turning up injured physically and probably mentally from the war is a bonus for him to exploit. The Osage are now rich, they can follow in the footsteps of white people buying new homes, new clothes and new cars.

back and just buy another one. We see occasions where the Osage tribal council meets to discuss the problems they face. Appeals for help to various bodies are made without results. The tribal structure gives way on all important matters to the pressures of the modern world.



PHOTO: PARAMOUNT PICTURES

Germany: 'Goodbye socialism' - Sahra Wagenknecht leaves Die Linke and announces foundation of new party

SASCHA STANIC SOL (GERMAN SECTION OF THE CWI)



Sahra Wagenknecht PHOTO: MARTIN RULSCH/CC

23 October was the day on which Sahra Wagenknecht and nine other members of the Bundestag (German parliament) resigned from Die Linke (the Left party). At a press conference, they presented the 'Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance' (BSW), which aims to found a new party to contest next year's European elections and three state elections in eastern Germany.

podium of the press conference. In addition to a wealth tax, Suikat spoke in favour of "fair competition" and a defence of middle-sized entrepreneurs, against large corporations. One looked in vain for a high-profile trade unionist among the BSW executive members. It was noticeable that there was no mention of the strikes which have taken place this year and no call for class struggle, for trade union self-organisation, for protest - not even for joining the Alliance. On the contrary, Leye made it clear that the association and party would develop "slowly and in a controlled manner", in order to prevent "soldiers of fortune, careerists and people who hold other political views" from flooding into the party.

Gang shootings and bomb attacks in the suburbs of Sweden

ROBIN NILSEN CWI NORWAY

In supposedly peaceful Scandinavia, we have recently witnessed mafia-like shootings, gang killings and even bombs exploding in the suburbs of Sweden. Many right-wing commentators are blaming refugees fleeing from war-torn countries. Socialists must put the blame for all these atrocities at the door of capitalism.

and Liberals, which are all firmly anti-immigration and 'anti-multiculturalism'. The far-right Sweden Democrats prop up the coalition government. These right-wing parties have drastically cut funds to the regional and local councils, leaving local communities with little or no funding for many of the necessities of life.

Many refugees have grown up in extreme poverty and in war-torn states (like Somalia), where education was minimal, with young people often finishing school at 14-15 years old. In Sweden and elsewhere in Scandinavia, they have little to expect other than heading into a life of unemployment and poverty, often never finding a decent job. Many are prey to the clutches of mafia-like gangs. There needs to be properly funded help to provide meaningful employment, and to stop cuts to social projects to help refugees. Workers' unity across all national and ethnic divisions is needed, and a political programme that fights against the bosses' system and for a socialist society.



Sweden's prime minister, Ulf Kristersson, leader of a coalition between his own party, the Moderates, Christian Democrats and Liberals, and dependent on the support of the far-right Sweden Democrats PHOTO: FINNISHGOVERNMENT/CC

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the Socialist

Issue 1249

2-8 November 2023

formerly **Militant**

ONE MILLION CHILDREN

HUNGRY

COLD OR

HOMELESS

Fight for a socialist alternative to the Tories and Starmer's Labour

JOE WATERS
GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

In 2022, 1.8 million UK households experienced destitution, a recent study by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has found. This means 3.8 million people, including over one million kids, were unable to meet basic physical needs like food, warmth and shelter. Rates of destitution have more than doubled over the last five years with three quarters of these households reporting living on less than £85 a week after housing costs.

It is not difficult to understand

why so many people are being forced to live without basic necessities. Inflation has put enormous financial pressure on households, many of whom were already struggling due to low pay or underemployment (if they could even find work, or were able to work). While the bosses have made massive profits, wages have not kept up, making a slip into serious poverty for millions inevitable.

Benefits provide no real safety net for households struggling to get by. The basic rate of Universal Credit for a single adult (£85 per week) falls, by definition, below the threshold for destitution in the UK.

With so many people failed by capitalism and its pursuit of profits, and punished by the Conservative government, whose benefit policies have guaranteed hardship for millions, it is natural that many would look to the opposition Labour Party in hope of change.

However under Keir Starmer, Labour has made it clear that it is unwilling to commit the resources needed to improve the situation. He has refused to commit to remove the two-child benefit cap, a policy which has been identified by groups as a major factor in pushing so many families into poverty.

In many cases, where wages have risen for ordinary households, even if not in real terms, this has come as a result of industrial action. Through taking strike action across a number of sectors over the last year, working people have delivered some relief for themselves. However, whilst the government attempts to tighten laws to restrict the activities of trade unions, Labour has failed to show real opposition and stand with striking workers.

Labour has claimed it will scrap some of the Tories' anti-union laws. But in the context of Starmer's almost constant abandoned pledges,

and the hostility the party leadership has shown to strikes (including banning MPs from speaking out on picket lines), this commitment seems paper thin.

Working-class households desperately need a new mass party, grounded in the working class, which can fight for the resources people need. Such a party, armed with a socialist programme to take the wealth and resources out of the hands of the bosses and putting society in the hands of the working class, on a democratic basis, could put an end to poverty once and for all.

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on p12

