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formerly **Militant**

END MURDEROUS SIEGE ON GAZA

For democratic mass Palestinian struggle for national self-determination and socialism

Build a mass workers' movement and political alternative to Sunak and Starmer



#WeWillMarch – defend the right to protest

INSIDE:

- WHAT WE THINK: CAPITALISM MEANS WAR >>> p3
- A SOCIALIST WORLD IS POSSIBLE - SOCIALISM 2023 >>> p2
- BUILD THE WORKERS' MOVEMENT AGAINST WAR >>> p4
- A WORKING-CLASS SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE TO TORIES & LABOUR >>> p5

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2023

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Socialist Party general secretary

MARION LLOYD

left candidate for PCS general secretary

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Committee for a Workers' International secretary

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Youth Against War

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**BUILDING A WORKERS' VOICE
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A Socialist world is possible - come to Socialism 2023 Fund the fight for socialist change worldwide!

A world without war, poverty, and oppression; a world where the elite 1% doesn't own and control the world's vast resources; where the talent and skills of individuals is used for the benefit of all; where policies are in the interest of the working-class majority.

Such a world is possible. But for it to become a reality, we need to get rid of the existing profit system and replace it with socialism.

The Socialist Party has the ideas and programme to make that happen. We say that the working class, young people, and the masses have the power to get rid of capitalism and build a new system, to have a planned economy, publicly owned under the democratic control and management of the working class.

If you want to change the world, join us at Socialism 2023, on the 25-26 November, at the Institute of Education in London.

Socialism 2023 is the annual event organised by the Socialist Party. It is a weekend full of discussion on socialist ideas - learning the lessons of mass struggle and organising the fightback for socialist change worldwide.

Historic mass movements have toppled repressive governments, brought social change, and challenged backward ideas. Inspiring movements have shown us the masses have nothing to lose and everything to gain by getting organised and fighting back. Capitalism is a global system in multiple crises; getting rid of it requires international working-class struggle.

An international socialist organisation is needed to share the lessons of those movements, current and historic, and to assist in the building of fighting, socialist forces all over the world. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for Workers' International (CWI) - a starting point towards developing that mass, revolutionary party internationally.

A big part of the Saturday rally at every Socialism event is the financial appeal. The Socialist Party does not have any rich backers. To make sure we are able to get our socialist message out as widely as possible by producing leaflets, posters and the Socialist newspaper, we rely on donations from our members and the working class as a whole.

We urge all our readers to think about what they can donate and make sure we have the most successful appeal possible. Everything that is raised goes to fund the fight for socialism. This year, a third of all donations received will go to the building of our international, the CWI.

How much can you pledge to help build the force that can lead the fight for socialist change worldwide?

CAPITALISM MEANS WAR - BUILD MASS UNITED WORKERS' STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALIST CHANGE



WHAT WE THINK

A month into this devastating war on Gaza and the world's capitalist leaders are demonstrating again that our lives are not safe in their hands and their system. Capitalism means war, just as it means a cost-of-living crisis, poverty, environmental catastrophe, and inequality.

The average Gazan is living on two pieces of bread a day. The death toll has topped 10,000. Horrific, unprecedented levels of shelling by the Israeli army combine with the escalating land invasion and encirclement in the month since the terrible Hamas attacks on Israeli civilians.

Over 150 health workers have been killed in Gaza so far. Hospitals are crammed with not only injured humans but also, in the absence of essential medicines and supplies, insects and the threat of disease. A surgeon at the Al Shifa hospital reported that they only had enough energy to power the neonatal unit - and only for the rest of that day.

At the hands of the Israeli regime and far-right settler thugs they enable, many Palestinians in the West Bank have been forced from their villages, have lost their jobs, have been arrested, including more than 700 being held without charges, and are beaten and even killed.

Demands for an end to the war and a just solution for the Palestinians grow louder. Last weekend saw large marches including in London, Paris, Berlin, Milan, Dhaka, at the US embassy in Turkey, and across the Arab world. In cities across the US, the protests against the onslaught on Gaza are the biggest since the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Youth predominates, a young generation who only knows capitalism in terms of crisis and war - and has had enough.

Many demonstrations have gone ahead in the face of undemocratic government bans. Here the Tories are threatening similar measures, but the police have so far stopped short. In this situation a ban, as in other countries, would only teach a new generation the inability of repressive laws to prevent a mass movement.

The war highlights the main divide in society - 'them' and 'us'. On one side, is the solidarity and opposition to war of the working class and poor peoples of the world, and the middle classes too; and, on the other, the representatives of capitalism, seeking to serve the interests of big business in terms of power, prestige and profit.



PHOTO: LUCLACEY_CONTACT

The protests are an expression of how millions of people not only reject war and its devastation, but the belief that they must act themselves because capitalist establishment leaders and their parties of the rich cannot be trusted to rule.

There is, undoubtedly, growing fear among these capitalist leaders that a spill-over into a regional war is possible. But it is increasingly clear that it isn't in their gift to prevent it - events can take a logic of their own. Last week the leaders of Hezbollah delivered speeches threatening to escalate attacks on Israel, under pressure to be seen to act. The capitalists' primary concern is the major implications for the system they defend, including for the economy.

In an interview with the Sunday Times, Larry Fink, the chief executive of mega corporation BlackRock, said: "Rising fear creates a withdrawal from consumption or spending more. So fear creates recessions in the long run, and if we continue to have rising fear, the probability of a European recession grows and the probability of a US recession grows."

Recognising the dangers to their system is not the same as the capitalists having a solution. The US government is expending significant military efforts now - on top of its enormous regular military 'aid' to Israel - attempting to both be seen as on Israel's

side while also trying to prevent escalation into a regional war.

The US government is also investing diplomatic efforts, in part in response to the pressure of the anti-war mood and protests. But another US visit to Israel and the Arab leaders by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has delivered no steps towards an agreed plans let alone a viable one.

'Greater Israel'

Meanwhile the Israeli government continues to pursue ramping up its 'Greater Israel' expansionism. Its spokespeople make it clear it sees no situation where Palestinians have meaningful self-determination. Netanyahu is desperate to be seen as acting decisively following the 7 October attacks. But, despite majority support for action, his government faces unprecedented wartime unpopularity including due to its lack of a plan for the return of the hostages taken by Hamas, with demonstrations growing on this issue.

Netanyahu is not the only capitalist politician who will be found wanting by this war. In the next year US president Biden, Egyptian president Al-Sisi and many other world leaders, like the Tories in Britain, face elections. They have reason to fear that the war will bring consequences for their electoral prospects. This

threat does not yet come from an organised political expression of the anti-war movement or broader workers' struggles. Instead, from opposition to the capitalist politicians' war stance and their lack of solutions, tipping the balance in a situation where their support base is already extremely limited.

A new poll shows Biden losing in 2024, not because of votes switching to Trump but because of voters rejecting Biden's record which has delivered falling living standards for ordinary Americans and no end to the worldwide crises. The building of a mass working-class party that opposes all attacks on the working class - from war to wage cuts - is needed to fill this vacuum.

Arab Spring

This is also the case in the Middle East. There, the 2011 Arab Spring mass uprisings that removed dictators are in the living memories of both the masses and the capitalist elites. Socialist intifadas mean mass struggles of the working class and poor, including building their own independent political organisations. Necessary will be a programme of how to unite the working class to end capitalism and replace it with a socialist alternative based on democratic planning of the economy in the interests of all, not just a tiny elite.

In Israel, where divisions appear to be ever more entrenched, building workers' organisations that can unite Jewish, Palestinian and workers of other backgrounds can be seen as off the agenda. But the Israeli capitalists will expect the working class to pay for the economic woes facing the Israeli economy down the line. The fight to defend living standards will demand a response in the workplaces and trade unions, where strike action has brought solidarity and unity between workers in the past - and can again.

The context is a capitalist system in deep crisis. 'They' have failed. But 'we' are not yet organised enough to take the initiative and not only throw them out but replace them. That is the task of the organised working class and the anti-war movement, including building new anti-war workers' parties with socialist, internationalist programmes.

- **Stop the war on Gaza! For the immediate withdrawal of the Israeli military from the occupied territories**
- **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**

BUILD THE WORKERS' MOVEMENT AGAINST WAR

TRADE UNIONS MUST ORGANISE AND LEAD

ROB WILLIAMS

SOCIALIST PARTY TRADE UNION AND WORKPLACE ORGANISER

The horrific images of the Israeli state's brutal assault on Gaza have sparked an intense debate across the trade union movement and in individual unions about the attitude the workers' movement must take to the conflict, both industrially and politically.

Most, if not all, unions have issued statements, many of which have condemned the Israeli government's vicious offensive, while at the same time criticising the 7 October attack by Hamas and others, particularly the targeting of civilians. Most have also opposed any rise of racist division, including both Islamophobia and anti-Semitism.

The trade union movement should use its authority and power, as well as its ability to reach across all working-class communities, to put itself centre stage in the anti-war movement. There have been union blocs on some of the demonstrations and protests, although relatively small at this stage. This can grow if the unions have a bold approach and go far further in setting out the programme that is necessary to give a lead to millions of workers here, and can point a way forward to having an impact on the war itself.

Authority

The union movement has begun to re-build its authority through the strike wave that has grown over the last two years, especially in the last 18 months, with hundreds of thousands of workers on picket lines. With Keir Starmer moving Labour to the right, clearly setting itself up as a trusted representative of the capitalist establishment, the unions have come to the fore as the leadership of not just their own members but wider layers of the working class, and even the middle class, desperate for a fighting lead during the cost-of-living squeeze.

Even at that level, to avoid a new inflation spike and recession that a continuation of the conflict could accelerate, the trade union movement must intervene against the war. While sometimes even the best industrial militants want to avoid 'politics', politics and its consequences cannot be sidestepped.

The massive economic power that workers have, especially when they have taken action together, has been shown over the strike wave. Earlier this year, we saw at least two days, one on the Tory budget day in March, when over half a million workers took strike action together. If that had been developed further, it could have defeated Sunak's weak and divided government, but it has shown the strength that workers' collective action has.

The trade union movement, both here and internationally, has a proud record of solidarity against war and



PHOTO: MARK BEST



The trade union movement should use its authority and power to put itself centre stage in the anti-war movement

repression. London dockers in 1920 boycotted the loading of arms on to the Jolly George for use against the Russian revolution, and Scottish Rolls Royce workers in the 1970s refused to work on parts for the Chilean Air Force which had been a key force in the 1973 coup against the socialist Allende government - just two examples.

Example of Spain

But there is a more recent example of mass action. In 2003, the right-wing Peoples Party Spanish government of José Aznar, despite declaring support for Bush and Blair's war on Iraq just days before at the Azores summit in March 2003, was prevented from joining the invasion by a general strike. Socialist Party members

on the national steering committee of the Stop the War Coalition, which was formed in opposition to the 2001 war on Afghanistan, argued that such a lead should have been given by the unions in this country at that time.

The unions have even more authority today, and such mass action now would undoubtedly put huge pressure on Sunak and other Western governments to withdraw their cover for the Israeli government, with the knock-on effects this would have, for example, on the Israeli currency and its economy more widely. The question of a protest general strike might not be posed yet, but it is essential that the idea that workers can act industrially, on both a local and national scale, is raised in the workers' movement now.



A bloc of left MPs and councillors supported by militant unions would have more impact than those imprisoned in Labour

Workers in industries that impact Israel state

A vital step in this direction is how best to relate to those workers who work in industries, logistics, docks or services that directly impact the Israeli state and particularly its war effort. It is no surprise that anti-war campaigners have protested outside workplaces in this sector. But more impactful results could be achieved by approaching the workers and their unions directly for discussion.

The unions in these sectors should take the lead in this, bringing together reps nationally to discuss what they can do, making it clear that the unions will defend any worker who withdraws their labour from being victimised by their employer. This discussion should then be replicated in each workplace, through mass meetings.

The very fact of such a process unfolding, led by unions who have been leading action on pay and jobs, would itself raise workers' sights, bringing home the class character of the war and heap huge pressure on the Tory government.

Shameless Starmer

Therefore, it's essential that the unions clearly pose the class interests at play at home and abroad. The same bosses' Tory government that is slashing our incomes and bringing in more repressive anti-union laws is lining up with the far-right Israeli government.

But they must also oppose Labour leader Keir Starmer's shameful tail-ending of the Tories. It is no accident that he disciplines Labour MPs for standing on picket lines and supporting striking workers as well as those speaking out against the Israeli assault on Gaza.

Taking on Starmer on this issue is not an 'add-on' option for the unions but vital in preserving their independent authority. The establishment media narrative, however false it may be, is that Labour politically represents 'the unions'. In that context, what would equivocation about Starmer's acquiescence to the slaughter in Gaza say about 'the unions' to the millions of Muslim workers in Britain, and millions of others, young people especially, who are rising up in horror?

But this would then pose the political steps that need to be taken by the unions - establishing an independent pro-worker political strategy that fights for workers' interests, both here and internationally. A bloc of left MPs and councillors supported by militant unions - that supports striking workers, demands the renationalisation of rail, mail, steel and the energy and utility companies, but also opposes Netanyahu's murderous war - would have far more impact than those imprisoned within New Labour and would be a massive step forward towards a real workers' political vehicle that is so needed right now.

We need an anti-war, working-class, socialist alternative to Tories and Labour

ISAI MARIJERLA
SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

“I know that you are taking every precaution to avoid harming civilians”, prime minister Rishi Sunak told his Israeli counterpart during his visit to Israel on in mid-October. Thousands of Palestinian civilians have died since.

Home Secretary Suella Braverman has gone as far as calling the hundred thousands-strong protests “hate marches”. Sunak has called the planned demo on the 11 November as “provocative and disrespectful” because it coincides with Armistice Day, commemorating the end of the First World War.

No surprise

Even as more and more is coming out about the horrors unfolding in Gaza, including the fact that more children have been killed in Gaza than in any global conflict during the whole of 2022, the Tories are refusing to call for a ceasefire at the very least, let alone to stop the war or to fight for the rights of the Palestinians. The Tories’ lack of action and inhumane nature comes as no surprise to anyone.

But the protesters’ anger is also directed at Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer. Having said at the start of the conflict that Israel has the right to cut off power and water to Gaza, as long as it acts “within the law”, he refuses to back calls for a ceasefire.

The growing mass anti-war movement is piling pressure on Labour politicians. Four in ten Labour councillors are ‘dissatisfied’ with Starmer’s Israel-Palestine stance, according to one poll. 65 MPs, including 15 frontbenchers, have defied Starmer and called for a ceasefire. 330 Labour councillors have signed a letter to Starmer to back one. Dozens of councillors have resigned from the party and the Labour leader of Burnley has called for Starmer himself to go.

But Starmer’s reaction is consistent with his policies and attitude to protesters. He has refused to back workers on strike, condemned MPs for attending picket lines and didn’t support nurses fighting for a pay rise. He has been determined to prove to the capitalists that he is a safe pair of hands for them and their profits. It



is clear that Labour in power under Starmer will be another version of Tony Blair’s ‘New Labour’.

Another nail in the coffin for the lack of credibility for Starmer is that Blair, well known as a ‘war criminal’, has given him his blessing.

Jeremy Corbyn

He has also been targeting the left within the Labour Party. In April this year, Starmer moved a motion, which passed at Labour’s National Executive Committee to prevent Jeremy Corbyn from being a Labour candidate at the general election, with no right of appeal. He suspended Diane Abbott and blocked several left-wing candidates from standing for the party.

Starmer has ruthlessly attempted to root out anyone who could be susceptible to mass pressure in preparation for being in government.

Further mass protests against the war are needed, and the trade unions representing 7 million workers should give a lead in them. The anti-war movement also needs to develop an organised political expression.

The Socialist Party is campaigning

for a workers’ list of anti-war, anti-cuts candidates for the next general election, backed by the trade unions. It could include Corbyn, others barred from standing for Labour, and those who have resigned in protest; trade unionists from the strike wave and anti-war campaigners too.

Even just the first steps towards developing such a stand will turn up the pressure gauge now, more if even just a few trade union leaders throw their weight behind it too.

Mass protests

Mass popular opinion, expressed by the mass anti-war protests, acts as a weight on British capitalism and its institutions – including on its foreign policy. The workers’ movement taking steps to build a mass political alternative to war and capitalist crisis would multiply that weight, and most importantly would be starting to build a force that can challenge and remove capitalism.

A crucial task for socialists in the anti-war movement is to fight for those steps to be taken, towards the development of a new mass workers’ party with a socialist programme.

TUSC calls for convention to organise general election challenge

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), the electoral coalition in which the Socialist Party stands as part of in elections, has sent an invite to over twenty campaigning organisations inviting them to co-host a ‘convention to organise

a working class challenge at the general election.’

“The aim is not for another debate on whether an election challenge is a good idea or not, but to get down to practical organisation. The time for decisions is coming.”

The invitation from the TUSC all-Britain steering committee includes proposals for an agenda. The letter can be found on the TUSC website: tusc.org.uk or directly: tinyurl.com/p29sys49

• tusc.org.uk

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 about joining us today!



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

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- socialistparty.org.uk/Podcasts
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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
- socialismtoday.org/subscribe / **020 8988 8777**
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End the war and siege – the movement is growing

● London – people want alternative to horror

Once again, huge numbers demonstrated. This time, many arrived after taking part in local protests.

The hypocrisy of the Tories and Keir Starmer's Labour is fuelling the anger already existing. People chanting: "Rishi Sunak and Keir Starmer shame on you". The recent protests have seen more people looking for ideas to stop the war.

Socialist Party members have been boldly taking part in these demonstrations. We are the only organisation raising the need to build a mass political voice for the working class here in Britain, and raising workers' unity and socialist intifada to end national conflict and oppression.

Our gazebos were once again swamped with people looking for a socialist alternative. Several young people, who we met on a previous demo, helped us give out leaflets, sell our placards, and raise socialist ideas. One young woman approached our stall, said she was a socialist and offered to help there and then, asking how she could join too.

Even though the demo on Saturday 4 November wasn't as big as previous ones, as people attended local protests, loads of new people have shown interest in joining. Another 100 people filled in 'join the Socialist Party' cards.

As the war drags on, there will be more searching for a socialist alternative to this horror. We'll be out again on Saturday 11 November to raise such an alternative.

BERKAY KARTAV

● Keighley – crowd chants over speech by Labour politician

Ahead of the demonstration of 1,000 people, local Tory MP Robbie Moore had attacked the organisers for holding the rally, much like the Tory government has done with demonstrations nationally.

There was huge anger at both the Tory government and the Labour Party leadership under Keir Starmer. Sections of the crowd chanted over the speech of the former Keighley Labour MP John Grogan. A number of people told us that they couldn't vote for Labour anymore, given Starmer's position.

I spoke at the rally on behalf of the Socialist Party. I pointed out how talk of 'humanitarian pauses' and 'aid for Gaza' from the likes of Sunak and Starmer only took place because of the hundreds of thousands who have protested across the UK.

I pointed out that war and crisis are synonymous with capitalism, and spoke of the desperate need for a political alternative that stands with the interests of working-class people in relation to ending the siege of Gaza, as well as supporting the fight for decent pay, housing and jobs.

At various stages our Socialist Party campaign stall was surrounded by those signing our petitions, taking leaflets and buying copies of the Socialist. When one person asked: "So what do we need to do to solve this crisis?" Another person chipped in: "Get rid of capitalism, that's what".

IAIN DALTON

● Bristol – school student strike

On Friday 3 November, in central Bristol, there was a protest billed as a school student strike against the war on Gaza. 200 students and parents gathered outside city hall to protest.

Students made speeches, students of many ages got up to voice anger and horror, and chant. Then an impromptu protest march wound its way up the incline to the doors of city hall to deliver a petition to local politicians.

On Saturday 4 November, over 7,000 people once again marched. Bristol Trades Union Council led the union bloc, with banners from the National Education Union (NEU), public sector union Unison, and civil service union PCS.

ROGER THOMAS

● London – Liverpool Street station occupied

Hundreds of mainly young people had a sit-down protest at London's busy Liverpool Street station on 31 October. Among the protesters were groups of Jews who opposed the Israeli state's brutal offensive.

It had been called and mobilised for through social media. Home-bound commuters stopped to listen, and some showed support.

I was able to sell our Socialist paper, due to its front page – 'Stop the war on Gaza: No trust in capitalist leaders'. I always carry copies of the Socialist paper with me, because spontaneous events like this could happen at any time. Sit-down protests at stations have taken place across London and beyond.

KEVIN PARSLOW

● Swindon – enormous energy brought home

The crowd was larger than the last time. Many attendees had been to the huge demonstration in London the previous Saturday, and planned to march in London again on 11 November. They had carried that enormous energy home with them to Swindon.

I got the chance to speak at the Swindon protest. I talked about how capitalism has completely failed to provide a solution to the conflict, or a decent life for the Palestinian or Israeli working classes.



One of the London protests ISAI MARJERLA

I raised the need to fight for a workers' party in Britain, with a socialist and internationalist programme. And I called on the demonstrators to consider whether they might be workers' candidates themselves at the next general and local elections, with the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

Our message got a good response. We completely sold out of the latest issue of the Socialist.

When we ran out of papers, people were still willing to buy the few unsold copies we had from previous weeks. Demonstrators also gave extremely generously to the Socialist Party's fighting fund. At times, people were putting money into our collecting tins faster than we could keep track, raising £160.

SCOTT HUNTER

● Birmingham – even more protest meeting ban

Birmingham City Council disgracefully cancelled a room in the Council House booked by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign to discuss the situation in Gaza. Although no official reason was given, it is obviously due to the Labour council's slavish support for the murderous actions of Israeli forces.

The meeting was changed to a protest outside. The protest was likely bigger than the original meeting would have been.

I spoke at the protest and made the case for a workers' list of candidates at the next general election, because neither the Palestinians nor workers here in Britain have anyone to stand up for them in parliament.

CLIVE WALDER

● Leicester – spontaneous

The anger over Gaza, especially among the Muslim population in Leicester, has been reflected in numerous protests. Often they are called with no apparent organiser, and a semi-spontaneous character.

The two called via social media posts on 28 October had different starting points, and began chaotically. But eventually one group marched to the other into a mass of 1,000 people.

The chanting kept up constantly. And the Socialist Party campaign stall was mobbed for leaflets, placards and Socialist papers.

It was very common for us to get into discussions about the failure of Labour leader Keir Starmer to support the people of Gaza, and that a new workers' party is needed. In Loughborough, we were greeted with the question: "Do you intend to stand in the next elections?"

Police arrested a young lad for setting off a flare at the bonfire night 5 November protest. Five police cars and one van arrived.

The crowd was supportive of the lad, but not aggressive. So the police had to let him go.

STEVE SCORE AND HEATHER RAWLING

● Waltham Forest, east London – right to protest

400 in Walthamstow Town Square. Socialist Party member Linda Taaffe managed to get in to speak.

She called for united working-class struggle, and a socialist intifada. She got cheers and applause for calling

for a new mass workers' party in Britain.

She was also interviewed briefly on Sky News talking about the moves against the right to protest by Tory home secretary Suella Braverman.

JAMES IVENS

● Trade unions – Another branch passes Gaza solidarity motion

KIM HENDRY

GMB@PCS SHOP REP, WRITING IN PERSONAL CAPACITY

GMB branch council (reps committee) passed a motion based on a model motion from the Socialist Party (see 'Mass united workers' struggle to stop the war on Gaza' at socialistparty.org.uk).

The motion called on GMB union's central executive committee to mobilise for future mass protests in the UK opposing the war on Gaza. The trade unions have an essential role to play in building solidarity with Gaza.

● Read about how other union branches have passed the motion – 'Winning opposition to Gaza siege in workers' movement' at socialistparty.org.uk

HOW WILL A PALESTINIAN STATE BE REALISED?

Come and discuss at

SOCIALISM 2023

London, 25-26 November
tickets and info at socialism.org.uk



Tories threaten anti-strike attacks

The Trades Union Congress (TUC) has called a special Congress for 9 December to respond to the undemocratic, anti-union, Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act. Supposedly to prevent Christmas disruption, the Tory government has announced further details of planned attacks, which would mean employers can issue a 'work notice' instructing trade unions and their members to organise and carry out strike-breaking work.

Rob Williams, NSSN Chair, said: "We believe that the TUC must now enact its motion agreed at its Congress in September, that stated 'Congress pledges 100% solidarity with any trade unions attacked under these MSL laws' and included to 'support demonstrations and hold a national march opposing the legislation and calling for repeal of the anti-union laws'. The Special Congress must explore options for non-compliance and resistance. This must be implemented now."

- Read more 'TUC agrees to call a national demo and special congress against anti-trade union laws' at socialistparty.org.uk

Ticket offices victory: It's rail workers 1, rail bosses nil!

WEST MIDLANDS RMT MEMBER

The government's decision to ditch its plans to close nearly a thousand railway ticket offices was a fantastic victory for the rail unions RMT and Aslef, and all those who campaigned to keep these vital public facilities open.

The government didn't want the consultation to happen and tried to hurry it along over an initial period of just three weeks. After an outcry, the consultation was extended and eventually 750,000 responses were received by the transport watchdogs. 99% of respondents opposed the closures.

It is regrettable that our sister union TSSA accepted the initial proposals to change ticket office provision when they settled with the Train Operating Company (TOC) bosses back in February, which obviously emboldened the government to press ahead with its plans.

Fight to win

This U-turn is a significant victory and should give rail union members confidence that the Tories can be defeated. We cannot take our eye off our main objectives, which are to win a pay rise which counterbalances the sharp cost-of-living increase we have been subjected to, and to protect hard-won pay and conditions. RMT members at every



RMT members on strike at Birmingham New Street station
PHOTO: BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

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



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

TOC have recently returned another solid 'yes' vote to continue the fight, and this new mandate must now be used to launch a renewed campaign in every region and workplace.

The looming general election means we must boldly put our demands for renationalisation.

Get all the latest union news
nationalshop
stewardsnetwork
NSSN bulletin: shopstewards.net

Tata steel: Nationalisation not devastation

ALEC THRAVES
SWANSEA SOCIALIST PARTY AND TRADES COUNCIL VICE-PRESIDENT.

Tata Steel in Port Talbot continues to act like a sadistic animal, playing with its prey before striking a killer blow!

After meeting with steel unions to lay out their future plans for the Port Talbot plant on Wednesday 1 November, Tata cancelled its planned press conference and said it would not be releasing a statement on its plans after all.

Steel workers and residents remain on the edge of an economic and social precipice yet again!

Undoubtedly, this delay was a response to the furious reaction of union leaders. Tata representatives had previously announced the closure of the two blast furnaces, ending 'primary steel making' with up to 3,000 job losses in the 'heavy end.' Its replacement with an electric arc furnace, becoming essentially a big scrap metal operation, would employ a few hundred workers, if there's enough scrap metal in the UK to melt down!

Tata executives have unbelievably already acknowledged that steel would need to be imported when their plans are implemented, to continue to supply their customers.

Unions believe Tata wants the closure of the furnaces by March 2024!

There should be no illusions now that Tata Steel, or any other private corporation, would be willing to finance the billions of pounds of investment necessary to retain the blast furnaces, decarbonised with new technology to save the environment, and to save all the jobs



Port Talbot steelworks
PHOTO: CHRIS SHAW/CC

in the steelworks and surrounding communities.

Sharon Graham, the fighting General Secretary of Unite, is correct when she says: "Tata's sole purpose is serving its shareholders, not UK steel communities".

She adds that "Only by the government taking a stake in the company will the right choices be made for the UK's economy".

But why take just a 'stake' in Tata steel?

If steel production is of such national and strategic importance to the UK economy, along with the thousands of jobs reliant on it, then the steel unions should be demanding that a future Labour government guarantees the full nationalisation of steel, under democratic workers' control and management, with compensation paid only on the basis of need!

That essential demand had the support of many steelworkers on the Unite day of action in Port Talbot, fully supported by Swansea Trades Council and local Socialist Party members.

Alan Davies, a senior official of the Community Union, reflected the mood of the steel workers and the wider community when he warned Tata that if heavy job cuts are demanded: "We will just go to war with them!"

Middlesborough supports our steel

DANIEL FORREST
TEESSIDE SOCIALIST PARTY

A cold and wet Thursday morning didn't stop Unite the Union coming out in Middlesborough town centre to campaign to save what's left of the steel industry in this country. Middlesborough and Teesside in general were built on iron and steel works as well as other heavy industries, which gives the campaign a special significance in the area. Scores of local people signed the petition and hundreds took leaflets, all within the space of an hour.

This campaign is ongoing with Unite across Teesside, also hitting Redcar and Stockton. Unite's call for public investment and no job losses in our steel industry is a good start, but as socialists we must expand upon this and convince people of the need for a fully publicly owned steel industry under workers' control, as part of a democratic national plan to rebuild our industries and provide full employment.

As the Socialist goes to press, the importance of this campaign has been driven home. British Steel, owned by the Chinese Jingye Group company, has announced plans to close down its blast furnaces in Scunthorpe, putting up to 2,000 jobs at risk.

the Socialist

formerly **Militant**

Issue 1250
9-15 November 2023

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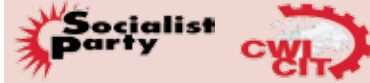
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."
Karl Marx

Barts health workers’ strike escalates: ‘We’ll keep on until they pay’

Domestics, catering staff, porters and other ‘soft services’ workers, members of Unite, have begun 12 days of strike action in Barts NHS Trust, across five east London hospitals. This follows over a week of action in September and three days in October.

Over 1,000 workers are fighting over the national NHS pay award, but also over specific issues. These workers won a historic victory in 2022 when they were brought back in to the NHS from private company Serco, as a result of bold strike action. However, due to the staggered way in which Barts Trust decided to bring the workers over, some of them received a £1,655 lump sum paid to NHS staff, and others didn’t. So, among other demands, the strike is to call for the lump sum to be paid to all.

The Tory government has just been forced through legal action to pay the one-off lump sum to health workers who missed out because they worked for non-NHS organisations. Workers such as community nurses and physiotherapists will now get the bonus.

This still doesn’t apply to Barts workers, as until they were brought back in-house their wages were not pegged to NHS rates. But this legal victory should nonetheless be a boost to Barts workers, as it shows the Tories can be pushed back.



Rallying at the Royal London hospital in Whitechapel. JAMES IVENS



UNITE REP AT WHIPPS CROSS HOSPITAL IN LEYTONSTONE, MARIA TALAIÁ, SPOKE TO THE SOCIALIST ON THE PICKET LINE

We decided to take 12 days of strike action, because when we came out in September, they promised us they would talk but they didn’t come to us till now. We are striking for the lump sum, we are striking for dignity and respect.

When we transferred over, they put catering and domestics through in May. They put porters through first. So they paid porters the lump sum, but they didn’t pay us. And that’s totally unfair. They’ve also capped overtime to no more than ten hours.

But we are standing together. We are the ones who do the job. We are the ones on the front line. But the bosses don’t appreciate us. That’s why we decided to strike again.

More people are involved in the strike, more people have joined Unite. And if they don’t pay we’ll come again, and we’ll come again, until they pay.

Vote Marion Lloyd for PCS general secretary and John Moloney for AGS

PCS members are campaigning for change

A PCS MEMBER

Ballot papers in the election for general secretary and assistant general secretary (AGS) in the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) went out on 9 November. Socialist Party member and chair of the PCS Broad Left Network (BLN) Marion Lloyd is standing for general secretary and has the backing of 80 branch nominations. Her running mate is John Moloney of the Independent Left group in PCS and the incumbent AGS, who has 87 branch nominations.

Union activists and socialists have been campaigning among PCS’s 190,000 members, promoting a fighting programme and encouraging a vote for Marion and John. Leafleting has taken place at workplaces across the country, with BLN supporters either desk-dropping election material or otherwise leafleting from outside workplaces. The reports received so far have been of friendly and positive responses from union members.

Their opponents, Fran Heathcote, who is the current national president, and Paul O’Connor, who is currently

an unelected full-time officer, are part of the Left Unity group in PCS. In a sign of their uneasiness, both candidates have refused to take part in some hustings organised by branch es, regional committees or town/city committees. Instead, they have been using the union machine to promote themselves. Personal attacks on Marion and John have also started in a coordinated fashion on social media.

However, union members will care little for this style of campaigning, and will be demanding to know what each candidate will do for their falling rates of pay, threats to their jobs and redundancy rights, and poor working conditions.

A key theme in these elections is the state of the union’s national campaign on pay, jobs and pensions. Marion is standing on a platform of rebuilding the union’s national campaign and to develop an industrial plan to win, including national strike action, supported by targeted, selective action, and action short of strike.

Maximising turnout in the elections will be crucial and anyone who wants to support Marion and John’s campaign should visit bln.org.uk.



PCS members in the union’s BEIS group, working for private company ISS, are on a 36-day strike. Marion is President of PCS BEIS group. ROB WILLIAMS

MARION IS SPEAKING AT THE SATURDAY RALLY OF

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Unison: the left-led NEC must stand up to the general secretary

Public sector union Unison’s October National Executive Council (NEC) meeting took place as the Israeli state’s bombardment of Gaza was escalating. The NEC has a small left majority, including the ‘Time for Real Change’ group, which is the biggest grouping on the NEC. But the Unison general secretary, Christina McAnea, comes from the previous right-wing dominated leadership.

Unison was urged to strongly condemn the Israeli state’s bombing of Gaza by Israel and fully support a ceasefire, and to make it clear that Unison’s position was in direct contrast to the Tories’ and Keir Starmer’s position of supporting Israel’s attacks. Starmer was sharply criticised for banning Labour MPs and councillors from attending Gaza demonstrations, much like he banned Labour cabinet members from attending picket lines.

Left NEC members argued that Unison must encourage members to attend the Gaza protests with visible branch banners. The discussion reflected the pressure of the members on the general secretary, who is a supporter of Keir Starmer’s Labour leadership, and means that Unison has now adopted the position of calling for a ceasefire.

The pay strike wave continues, with ongoing strikes in schools and early years in Scotland. Higher Education and the Environment Agency. In Scotland, there had been an improved offer on pay, but in a consultation, this was met with a 97% rejection on a 57% turnout because of the very vague offer.

There has been a myriad of strike action in schools and other workplaces.

A message of support was agreed for Ashfield Academy, a special educational needs school in Leicester. The Camden parking wardens strike was highlighted for successfully achieving a significant pay rise following all-out strike action. They achieved £15.90 per hour, leading to some members receiving up to £5,000 with back pay.

There was some discussion of this year’s national pay campaign in local government, but as at that stage the GMB ballot result was still to be announced, the NEC will review the 2023 pay campaign and begin preparing for 2024 at its December NEC. The 2023 pay campaign has now ended, after GMB had “not secured enough mandates to pursue effective industrial action”.

Unison agreed to launch a campaign on equal pay following the crisis in Birmingham, with the Labour council issuing a Section 114 notice and Tory commissioners coming in to run the council.

The national Unison leadership was criticised by NEC members for not leading the equal pay campaign and consequently losing school members to GMB, which was seen to fight on the issue. It was reported that members in Birmingham were fearful of mass job cuts and privatisation, and are discussing an industrial action strategy. Under the general secretary’s report, Socialist Party member April Ashley proposed a message of support, but that was declined by the general secretary, on the basis that there were many other branches also fighting back against cuts and redundancies!

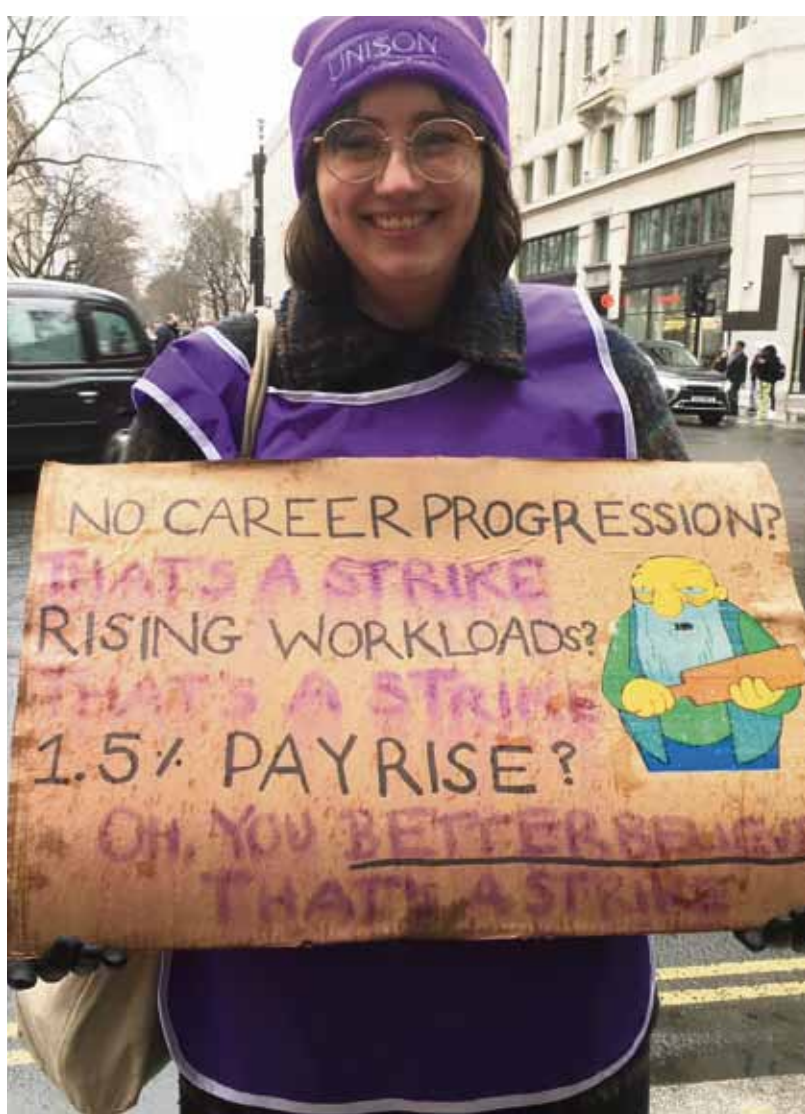
Socialist Party members argue that

Birmingham council should have set a no-cuts needs budget and mounted a campaign to win the funding necessary from the government, instead of caving in to Tory demands for cuts. This is the position agreed by the National Education Union branch in Birmingham, but unfortunately is not demanded by Birmingham Unison.

Funding cuts to local government amount to £3.5 billion and the union has rightly called on the Tories to fully fund local government. But, in reply to a question by April, the general secretary said that Unison will not write to Labour to demand it funds local government, on the basis that Labour is not detailing its funding commitments now to avoid attack by the Tory press. She did say, however, that Unison will “hold Labour to its commitments,” including on workers’ rights.

But in his insistence on ‘fiscal responsibility’, Keir Starmer has made it quite clear that he will not deliver on workers’ demands for full funding, inflation-proof pay rises, an end to privatisation in the NHS etc. That is something the right-wing general secretary wants to cover over, in order to not rock the boat. The left NEC should stand up to that approach. It is essential we have a leadership of Unison that is prepared to put demands on Starmer in the interests of its members and that is prepared to fight no matter who is in power.

The NEC called for the minimum service level legislation to be a high priority campaign for Unison. Unison should call on the Trades Union Congress (TUC) to act urgently on the decisions made at Congress in September (see page 7).



Unison members in universities on strike in 2022. IAN PATTISON

Sheila Caffrey for NEU president

SEAN MCCAULEY
WORCESTERSHIRE NEU DISTRICT SECRETARY,
PERSONAL CAPACITY

Nominations for the two National Education Union (NEU) vice-president positions opened on 1 November, with voting to begin in January.

These vice-presidents will go on to become the national NEU presidents in 2025 and 2026 and are part of the national leadership of the union for three-four years in all. Their role is crucial in influencing the outlook of the leadership. A vice-president is seen as one of the principal spokespersons of the union.

Therefore we need a proven fighter, with a track record of taking a bold stance on issues such as pay, funding and workload, elected into the role. Socialist Party member Sheila Caffrey, Bristol NEU and sitting National Executive (NEC) member, is seeking nominations from local districts.

Even with the nomination window having been open only a few days, as we go to press, Sheila already has the nomination of Vale of Glamorgan and Leicester districts.

From the very start of her time on the NEC in 2021, Sheila has taken a consistent position on the need for national action on pay and workload. At that stage, the prevailing mood within the leadership of the union, including the ‘NEU Left’ grouping, was that it was not possible to win a ballot for national action, but to instead fight school by school. The magnificent national action taken this year has shown what’s possible.

A fight in individual workplaces where, for example, workload is excessive is a vital part of the union’s

campaigning, and some gains will be made, but it risks only touching the surface. Sheila champions the need for the union to lead a national fight for a new National Contract that sets an overall limit on the hours teachers work. That must include fair pay for support staff, and ensure employers don’t force support staff to exceed their hours and responsibilities. It should include supply staff, reintroducing local authority supply pools that pay the going rate and contribute to pension schemes. And it would need to be a real National Contract that all employers, including academies and multi-academy trusts (MATs), must abide by. All of this can only be won through a national fight, which will mean national action at some point.

Fight cuts

On funding, Sheila was to the forefront of exposing that the Tories’ “technical error”, which has resulted in a cut of £370 million to school budgets in April 2024, will mean cuts will be made. Even without this cut, 3.5% of the 6.5% teacher pay award was already unfunded. That’s why Socialist Party members recommended rejection of the 6.5% offer in June and July this year, urging that we could have secured a higher figure and better funding.

At the September NEC, Sheila and other Socialist Party members argued that the union should use our live ballot mandate, re-won in July, in order to fight the cuts, and if there was a legal challenge to that from the Department for Education, to reballoon on funding. Sadly, the executive and general secretary, Daniel Kebede,

said no, and kicked the can down the road to the December NEC.

Sheila is the kind of fighter we will need at the top of the union under a Starmer-led government. Remember that Labour shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves went on record in June saying that she would not accede to the ‘independent’ review body’s 6.5% recommendation. Starmer has made it clear he will be a safe pair of hands for big business, which means he will keep a tight hold on the government purse strings.

Unlike Tony Blair in 1997, he will not inherit a growing economy but one in crisis. Let’s not forget too that it was Blair who ratcheted up private finance in schools, which has burdened many with unsustainable debts; it was Blair’s New Labour that pushed widespread academisation.

Starmer

Already there have been indications that some at the top of the union are unlikely to support national action this academic year, even if the Tories submit an insulting offer for next year’s pay. What’s more, there have also been some indications that in the build up to the general election and for some time after a likely Starmer victory, the main leadership bloc in the union will not want to ‘rock the boat’. That could leave us without any attempts being made in 2024 and even 2025 to secure a deal which seeks to redress the 16% shortfall in teacher pay since 2010, or a bold national lead on workload. Our view, and the view of the majority of union activists and members, is that we will need to continue to fight under a Starmer government on pay, workload and funding.



Sheila (right) on the picket line as part of the NEU national pay and funding strike. BRISTOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Education funding cuts should be resisted. What’s more, all cuts to councils can be resisted, if only the political will were there from our elected representatives. Setting budgets that make no cuts but meet needs instead, using reserves and borrowing – and using council powers to license school deficits - can offset cuts in the short term and allow time for campaigns to be built. We should demand that a Starmer-led government restore funding levels across the board.

Arguing for this as a union is crucial, but how different would it be if there were actually candidates and elected representatives in Parliament and local councils that back trade

SHEILA IS SPEAKING AT SOCIALISM 2023

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Go North East bus drivers continue pay dispute

ELAINE BRUNSKILL
NORTHERN SOCIALIST PARTY

Bus drivers for Go North East are continuing their all-out strike for decent pay and conditions.

Disingenuous bosses are arguing that the pay deal that has been offered would make Go North East the highest-paid drivers in the region. One of the strikers responded to this, saying: "Aye, by a couple of pence!" Strikers also explained that the drivers being referred to were themselves about to enter pay negotiations - so would be getting a pay rise soon.

Bosses are also stating that the pay offer is an inflation-busting offer, but

strikers said this is not the case, and "the offer is below inflation".

These drivers are determined to fight for a fair pay deal, and there is huge anger that they are paid up to 20% less than their fellow workers (from the same parent company) in Manchester. They do the same job, so want the same pay.

Strikers were also angered as a bus leaving the depot was going too fast, and being driven aggressively towards them - strikers said the driver was "trying to push them along with the bus."

The strikers will not be intimidated by the antics being deployed by Go North East, and are determined to fight for a decent pay increase.

Cardiff bin workers' strike enters ninth week



PHOTO: CARDIFF SOCIALIST PARTY

JOHN WILLIAMS
CARDIFF EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

Cardiff Council workers are in their ninth week on strike, after council bosses still refuse to offer an adequate pay rise that responds to the sharp rise in the cost of living. Many workers in Welsh local authorities get a wage that is barely above the national minimum. It's appalling that, on average, Cardiff Council workers have lost more than 20% of their pay in real terms in the past 13 years.

As well as that, Unite the Union and its general secretary Sharon Graham have called for an immediate "investigation into potential illegal use of agency workers designed to break Cardiff strike". The use of

agency labour to cover work that would normally be undertaken by workers currently on strike can result in huge fines and punishments for the employer. Cardiff council strikers are livid, and organised a demonstration outside the offices of Acorn Recruitment, calling on it to immediately address their concerns.

A rep, who we now know very well, took a selfie and snatched the paper off me to make sure he was seen holding the paper in the photo! He always pays solidarity price and always asks if the dispute is in the paper. We were talking about the possibilities of the next general election, and when I told him we're thinking of standing candidates in the general election and the next council elections,

he said: "I think we might have to". The desire for a political alternative is clear to see on the pickets. One worker said to me that a few years ago, he was told that if they went on strike, they wouldn't be able to attend pre-planned hospital appointments.

They're thrilled that my Unite union branch pledged £1,000 to the dispute too. We've also organised a public Cardiff Socialist Party meeting on the 9 November to build support for the workers here. I went down with a bunch of leaflets to advertise it, and one rep took them from my hand and said: "Come with me, I'll give them out for you". Everyone was pleased that we've organised the meeting and many of them are planning on coming to it.

Jane Loftus RIP



Jane, the national president of the Communication Workers' Union (CWU), has passed away suddenly after a short illness. The Socialist

Party sends our deepest condolences to Jane's family, and we also send our solidarity to the CWU. Jane was a member of the union since 1982, a longstanding socialist, militant Royal Mail rep, and chaired the union's postal executive.

Gary Clark, CWU Scotland no.2 branch secretary and Socialist Party Scotland member, said: "I was proud to take her around picket lines in my branch area and she spoke at a rally we organised with the RMT and Aslef in Edinburgh where she was in her usual fighting spirit, which gripped the hundreds there. Jane, I will really miss you but your fighting spirit will live on in the comrades you have inspired."

Llandarcy gas workers strike for pay rise



Flogas picket PHOTO: SWANSEA SOCIALIST PARTY

GARETH BROMHALL
SWANSEA AND WEST WALES SOCIALIST PARTY,
SWANSEA TRADES COUNCIL, AND GMB REP

Workers at Flogas, a bottled gas supplier, in Llandarcy near Swansea embarked on five days of strike action from 30 October. Anger over pay, redundancies and management refusing to negotiate has resulted in around 20 GMB union members at the site walking out.

Members of the Socialist Party involved in Swansea Trades Council attended the picket line to bring solidarity and support, where we received a warm reception, despite the extreme weather from Storm Ciarán.

Workers are demanding a pay rise

after two years of unprecedented inflation, and for equal pay with their colleagues in England who, despite doing the same work, are paid £4 to £5 per hour more.

They described the flagrant union-busting techniques that the company has employed, including recently announced redundancies and a refusal to budge on their initial pay offer.

The workers, some of whom have been employed for decades, spoke fondly of working for British Gas in the past, in a nationalised industry, and laid out the drive to the bottom of pay and conditions since the privatisation of utilities like domestic gas.

It's clear that utilities and the

associated infrastructure need to be renationalised, under democratic workers' control and management, as part of a wider planned economy, to meet the needs of society, and to provide decent, secure and safe work for those employed in the industry.

Rail Gourmet workers' win

Excellent result for RMT members working for Rail Gourmet who have won a 21% pay increase!

Academy strike forces offer

Unison members, support staff at Ashfield Academy in Leicester, are to ballot on a new offer from management after 43 days of determined strike action over a six-month period. More to follow in next week's Socialist.

Firefighters' manifesto

Socialist Party members joined a thousand firefighters in the Fire Brigades' Union (FBU) delivering a manifesto from the union to the government (above). The manifesto demands funding for the fire service, climate action, housing safety regulations and more.

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Covid inquiry exposes Tories' profit-driven failings

RICHARD GINGELL
BLACK COUNTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

As a child, I often found myself captivated by the BBC evening news, filled with images of important, suit-clad figures who appeared both official and competent. In those moments, I harboured a comforting belief that these individuals were the true adults entrusted with safeguarding our society from impending waves of destitution for my family and others.



I think we are absolutely fucked... I think this country is heading for a disaster. I think we are going to kill thousands of people

Then deputy cabinet secretary, Helen MacNamara, ten days before the first lockdown

Now I see it as more of a circus than a well-oiled machine. Clowns, figuratively speaking, seemed to be steering our nation through global turmoil, narrowly avoiding disasters by sheer luck. And when things did go wrong, it was ordinary working-class people who paid the price.

The Covid inquiry has brought to light a series of issues within the Johnson government's response to the pandemic. Important decisions were

delayed, investment into the health service neglected for years, and a sense of 'business as usual' prevailed, even as the storm approached.

Profits over health

The Tory government's stark prioritisation of profits over the wellbeing of the population led to thousands of unnecessary deaths. Instead of swift action to protect the public's health, the government put protecting the interests of their big-business backers first.

The inquiry has heard tales of decision makers, including prime minister Boris Johnson, going on holiday and being unreachable as the virus started to spread. Undemocratic and bureaucratic hurdles to take necessary action emerged and a 'toxic' and 'macho' culture within the government crippled its ability to act.

While senior officials began by 'laughing' at other countries as they tried to get a handle on the situation, this callous disregard for life became the centrepiece of the UK government's response. Many marginalised and vulnerable groups were left to fend for themselves. It was workers themselves taking action for their safety that got workplaces closed, including teachers at the start of 2021.

The pandemic brought the Tories' callousness and hypocrisy to the fore for millions of working-class people, as they put the interests of the bosses and their profits before the lives of the majority. The same approach, telling us that we shouldn't fight for pay rises during the cost-of-living crisis, is echoed by all the main parties in Westminster. Working-class people need a mass party of our own.

Housing crisis hits council finances

PHOTO: REPTON/CC

Mass council house building programme needed

NICK AUVACHE
CAMDEN AND HARINGEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Local councils going 'bankrupt' was once unthinkable but now increasing numbers are saying, they will need to stop all non-essential spending. A recent report in the Guardian newspaper identified a number of local authorities at risk. A further report revealed that 99% of councils had missed the deadline for publishing their annual accounts. Late reporting normally indicates that there are outstanding financial concerns.

While this is alarming, it is not surprising. Councils have been starved of cash for years and many have reached breaking point. For many councils, on top of a decade of cuts, the massive rise in homelessness caused by unaffordable rents and house prices has exacerbated the situation. Councils are currently spending 20-50% of their budgets in an attempt to deal with the issue.

Hastings council has seen the

money it spends on providing temporary accommodation rise from £750,000 to £5.6 million within five years, and Basildon has gone from £7,000 in 2017 to a staggering £2 million last year! The number of people in need of temporary accommodation and the cost of housing have both increased. Crawley council has seen the number of people in temporary accommodation double over the last two years, in Hastings it has tripled, and in Havant it has increased ten times!

No solutions

Clearly the situation is unsustainable but none of the establishment parties have any answer. The Socialist Party and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, which it is part of, have been virtually on their own in calling for rent control coupled with a mass council housing programme to build more homes to deal with the crisis. Now even some Tories have been forced to consider some kind of rent control.

But the Tories fail to address the main cause of the current crisis - a massive hike in evictions caused by a combination of low wages, a reduction in housing benefit and rocketing rents.

Even if some limited rent control were to be adopted, it would be wholly insufficient to deal with the depths of this crisis, unless this was coupled with a huge expansion in building more safe, good quality, affordable council housing. The refusal to do this is something that continues to unite Tory and Labour councils, which is why we need an alternative.

The only effective way to safeguard local authorities is to fight for a system which no longer relies on solutions involving the private sector. We need to fight for a mass council house building programme, the nationalisation of the banks, construction companies and all those that dominate the capitalist economy. To achieve that we need a new mass workers' party armed with a socialist programme.



Storm Ciarán exposes the effects of capitalist climate chaos

SAM MORDEN
NEWCASTLE SOCIALIST PARTY

Though scientists have yet to study Storm Ciarán, which caused flooding and damage across the south of England, many factors that cause storms to form and be maintained are known to be likely to be affected by climate change. Warmer air holds more moisture, which increases the likelihood of severe weather events like Ciarán, as there is more 'fuel' for storms to form and intensify, as well as resulting in heavier downpours when storms do occur.

Capitalism - even if it was in the capitalists' interest to do so - is entirely incapable of averting some of the worst effects of climate change. Even if greenhouse gas emissions were eliminated overnight, studies show that there is no way to avoid a temperature rise of 1.5°C given the lasting impact of greenhouse gases already emitted. And global emissions are still growing.

Destruction of natural habitats

and ecosystems exacerbate the situation by reducing the land's ability to contain floodwaters. Increased sewage in our waterways, and the flooding of landfills mean that floodwaters can contain dangerous pollution.

Capitalism = climate catastrophe

The capitalist system is based on competition between individual capitalist enterprises and between competing nation states, acting in the dominant interests of their own capitalist classes. This means cost-reduction and profits are prioritised at the cost of the environment, workers and communities. The level of collaboration and planning needed to stop climate change is impossible on this basis.

Even in the places where there are significant environmental regulations - for example, in some Scandinavian and European countries - this has only served to 'export' the pollution and emissions elsewhere as private industry relocates to places with lower environmental and industrial standards. You cannot control what

you do not own. As such, these countries inevitably increase their reliance on cheap, heavily polluting imports that are not recorded in national emissions data.

Proper climate action would involve the nationalisation and democratic planning of the commanding heights of our economy, which would allow the transformation of the economy to provide a 'green' industrial base to provide for the planet and the people. What we need is socialist change across the world, to put to bed the destructive capitalist system and make sure workers don't pay the price for climate catastrophe.

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Steps towards an anti-war, workers' alternative in Southampton



Southampton Socialist Party campaigning against the war on Gaza

CATHERINE CLARKE SOUTHAMPTON WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

Over the past four weeks there has been a great outpouring of support for the Palestinian people in Southampton, and a weekly vigil outside the council. At the same time there is a feeling of dismay at both major political parties unrepentant in their complete support for the Israeli state and its siege and bombing of Gaza.

attracted seven new attendees. Among them were figures from the city's Muslim community and ex-Labour activists we have met campaigning. One spoke of her desire to see candidates stand in council and general elections independent of Labour and the Tories. When she raised this at the vigil on 4 November it received a great response. The TUSC meeting agreed a number of tasks including:

- Organise a deputation to the city's two Labour PPCs, Satvir Kaur and Darren Paffey, to clarify their position on austerity and war
To start preparations now for candidates in May's council elections, developing a clear anti-austerity and anti-war manifesto based around TUSC core policies and the needs of the Southampton working-class community. To organise a series of meetings in different areas of the city to develop the manifesto
Take part in the trades council open meeting taking place on 14 November to discuss political opposition to the war and the need for working-class political representation

Newham Labour rocked by Gaza criticism

Ex-members stand against them

NIALL MULHOLLAND EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The Labour mayor and council in Newham, east London, have come under fierce criticism. For weeks, Labour locally did not speak out against the Israeli state's attacks on Gaza or distance themselves from Keir Starmer's public support for Netanyahu's government. Residents in the borough with a large Muslim population are furious.

Newham Socialist Labour, which is mainly made up of former and purged members of the local Labour Party. The prospect of Sofia polling very well in Plaistow North, and perhaps even overturning the Labour majority, is not lost on Labour mayor Rokshana Fiaz and the councillors. Belatedly, almost a month after the start of the latest war, the mayor and over half the Labour councillors wrote a public letter to Starmer calling for an immediate ceasefire. But the statement makes no mention of the right of self-determination for Palestinians.

government budget cuts, and introduce an emergency needs budget. Instead, successive Labour councils impose millions of pounds of cuts. Newham now has the highest premature mortality rates of all London boroughs. A strong showing for Sofia or an outright victory would be a big blow against the Starmerite Labour council. Sofia's election literature strongly associates with the Palestinian struggle. She also calls for a council tax freeze, and extending free school meals to secondary schools. Sofia condemns Labour as 'no longer serving the interests of the working people, they are acting as agents of the Tory government and fat cats'. The Socialist Party welcomes these policies. But we go further. If the council used its vast assets to ensure no more cuts to local services, infrastructure, jobs, wages, and conditions, it would buy time to launch a mass campaign that could win the funds from central government. Sofia says to voters that being an independent candidate 'means that I don't have to listen to political parties' instructions or agenda... I only have to listen to you'. It is undoubtedly better not to be imprisoned in Starmer's right-wing Labour Party. But we believe that it is necessary to build a combative, democratically run, alternative party for working-class people, locally and nationally. In this regard, the Socialist Party is part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), and works with others to try to reach agreement on standing in elections and on what manifesto.



Socialist Party member Lois Austin speaking alongside Newham independent councillor Mehmood Mirza against the war on Gaza

Socialist Party out campaigning against war in Gaza

Reading

Some Reading Socialist Party members went to the massive demo in London, while many others dropped by to help our campaign local stall. We gave out lots of our socialist leaflets about the war on Gaza, and invited people to our next meeting. We also raised £53 to help us produce more, including 14 people who bought a Socialist paper.

A lot of people are justifiably angry about what's going on. I'm incredibly proud to belong to a party that offers an alternative to capitalist chaos and inequality.
Swansea Tremendous Socialist Party campaign stall, reflecting growing anger. £116 raised, including 38 people buying a Socialist paper. One young worker, who bought our paper a couple of weeks ago, read it, along with our leaflet, came back to join the Socialist Party. We protested in Castle Square the next day. All of us were wet again, with mashed placards, but flying the socialist flag is important.

Swindon

We were able to organise a stall as well as attend the rally in Swindon. We were able to have a number of really great discussions with people, explaining our position and agreeing that it was only joint working-class action that could truly bring an end to the bloodshed and violence in the region. Sales of the Socialist were frequent and donations were readily made. The response from the public was positive and indicative of the feeling that the bombing and siege must end. With neither the Tories or Labour calling for this though it is more clear than ever that a new mass workers' party must be built.

Fund the fightback DONATE TODAY Visit socialistparty.org.uk/donate or call 020 8988 8777 or make cheques payable to Socialist Party, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT

Table for Socialist Party Fighting Fund showing area, amount received, target, and percentage. Total: 17,247 received, 25,000 target, 69% complete.



Why I joined the Socialist Party

Socialism or barbarism in Teesside

DANIEL TEESSIDE SOCIALIST PARTY

Today I call the Socialist Party my political home at a time when my physical home of Teesside desperately needs the kind of change only the Socialist Party can offer. Teesside is an area riddled with poverty that has been in a period of managed decline since the 1980s. Local Tories will accuse anyone who points out this fact of 'talking down Teesside', in a bid to browbeat anyone who speaks out into sanitising their criticism. Meanwhile, local Labour Party politicians will occasionally point out the symptoms of the problem (which 13 years of Blair's Labour government did very little to alleviate), while failing to properly diagnose the root cause of those aforementioned problems. The root cause is capitalism. The system that makes a few rich on the back of our work, and has now cruelly taken many of those industries away in the name of outsourcing and globalisation of supply chains to further increase profits. All the while leaving areas like Teesside - with a proud industrial, working-class heritage - languishing with some of the highest rates of unemployment, poverty and crime in the country. Only through working-class organisation can we change our course from that of cyclical crisis and continuing deprivation to one of hope of a better world. The Socialist Party offers that kind of hope. That is why I joined; we have a simple choice, socialism or barbarism?

Living with the consequences of Tory rule

SAIGE SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Living through the pandemic, when I had to self-isolate, I experienced NHS waiting times rise drastically. I was pushed to the bottom of so many lists waiting for life-saving care. The anger I hold over this definitely pushed me to sign up and join the Socialist Party at a local campaign stall. Reading articles online and seeing my own views and emotions reflected provided hope that change was possible. Obviously, despite this, I look at house prices and the cost of uni, and things still seem bleak. I am queer, neurodivergent, disabled and transgender - I am a person living with the consequences of the Tory's fearmongering and finger pointing. Being 16 years old, I am only just developing politically, David Cameron is the first prime minister I remember. I may not yet have the knowledge or the language to explain why or how this is the state of the UK but the demands of the Socialist Party, to me, are a way to envision and enact a future where I and those around me can survive. 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!

Northampton students' housing win just a start



Socialist Students stall campaigning against St John's student accommodation charging extra fees outside of the contract agreement

SOCIALIST STUDENTS NORTHAMPTON

Students at the University of Northampton are coming out in protest against appalling conditions and extortionate rent. As part of our campaign led by Socialist Students, we are preparing to protest to voice our anger and disgust at the housing crisis. St John's Halls is a university-owned block of flats, many of which are in dire condition. Students have to pay £153 a week to live in unsafe, unsanitary flats. The campaign's key demand is that the university takes immediate action to improve living conditions at St John's Halls and across all student accommodation. Already, this campaign has been successful in winning one of its demands. At the start of the academic year, the University of Northampton charged an extra week's rent to students living in St John's Halls. There was no prior notification and it was

not mentioned in the contracts. But a groundswell of student anger forced the university to reverse their decision and repay all St John's residents in full. It's obvious that university management is afraid of this campaign and it shows what we can do when we organise. Where does the rent go? Although we won the rent refund, we will continue to fight for better living conditions. Many flats have no running water, hobs and ovens don't work (which the bosses fail to fix) and there are wide gaps underneath doors - a major issue for fire safety and privacy. Students complain of showers not working, poor heating and broken plug sockets. You have to question where the extortionate rent we pay actually goes? At the last meeting of Socialist Students, campaigners came together in preparation for a protest, making placards, writing speeches and

coming up with chants for the big day. The university has already been forced to roll back one of its greedy attacks on student living conditions. With mass coordinated action, just think what could be achieved. Join us in the fight for decent living conditions. Protest on Wednesday 8 November 4pm, University of Northampton Waterside Campus outside the Engine Shed. The campaign demands that the University of Northampton:
Take immediate action to improve living conditions
Introduce rent controls in all student accommodation
Launch a mass building programme with the local council of good-quality, affordable housing for students and local people
No evictions for students who can't afford rent
Emergency cost-of-living grants for all
Ban agency and contract fees

Yorkshire and East Midlands women's day school inspires members

ANNABELLE PHIPPS SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

A Socialist Party women's day school was held in Sheffield on 29 October. In total, 26 members from different branches across the regions were in attendance. The day covered a variety of women's issues and themes of class struggle. The day consisted of a main discussion in the morning titled 'women in broken Britain', delivered by national committee member Heather Rawling, which then allowed contributions and provided a rich conversation, and enabled us to hear multiple perspectives. There also were two expertly delivered workshops, one on Marxist economics and one on dialectical materialism. The Marxist economics

workshop was led by Maddie Rooney and the dialectical materialism session was led by Leah Byatt. Both workshops had very good receptions and lots of contributions which, again, made for rich discussions. At the end of the day, there was time for everyone to gather together and review the day and give feedback. This will inform future events like this one and again, tell people what could be done in the fight for women and to aid the class struggle. The day in general had a really positive turnout and seemed to also have a positive effect on those who attended. Members were motivated after the event. The mood throughout the day was one of inspiration and determination. Overall, a really productive day.



A revolutionary's memoir from Socialist Fight to Militant and the Socialist Party

by Keith Dickinson (from 1950s to Today) Special offer for readers of the Socialist £11 including postage (£13.99 rrp) Order online at leftbooks.co.uk Offer closes at the end of Socialism 2023



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

- A £15-an-hour minimum wage for all, without exemptions. For the minimum wage to automatically increase linked to average earnings or inflation, whichever is higher.
- Share out the work. A maximum 32-hour working week with no loss of pay or worsening of conditions. The right to flexible working, under the control of workers not employers. An end to insecure working, for the right to full-time work for all who want it; ban zero-hour contracts.
- All workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness, parental and holiday rights from day one of employment. End bosses using bogus 'self-employment' as a means to avoid giving workers rights.
- No to austerity through inflation. For all wage rates to be automatically increased at least in line with price rises.
- Open the books of all companies cutting jobs or claiming they can't afford to pay a real living wage. State subsidies, where genuinely needed, for socially-useful small businesses.
- For trade unions independent of the capitalist state, with members having democratic control over their own policies, constitutions and democratic procedures. For all trade union officials to be regularly elected, subject to recall by their members and paid a worker's wage.
- Reduce the state retirement and pension age to 55. For decent living pensions.
- Replace universal credit and the punitive benefit system with living benefits for all who need them.

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

- For local councillors who are committed to opposing austerity and all cuts to local services, jobs, pay and conditions.
- For a socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs, including dental and eye care – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out the private companies! Nationalise the pharmaceutical industry under democratic workers' control and management.
- Renationalise privatised utilities – including rail, mail, water, telecoms and power – under democratic workers' control and management.
- Free, publicly funded and democratically run, good-quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees and write off student debt, end marketisation, and introduce a living grant. No to academisation. For all schools to be under the genuine democratic control of local education authorities, school staff, parents and student organisations.
- The right to a safe secure home for all. For the mass building of genuinely affordable, high-quality, carbon-neutral council housing. For rent controls that cap the level of rent. Fair rent decisions should be made by elected bodies of tenants, housing workers and representatives of trade unions. For cheap low-interest mortgages for home buyers. Nationalise the privately owned large building companies, land banks and estates.

ENVIRONMENT

- Prioritising major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels and nuclear power with renewable energy, and ending the problems of early obsolescence – where products are designed to 'wear out' and be replaced – and unrecycled waste.
- Nationalisation of the energy companies, under democratic workers' control and management, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need, in order to carry out a major switch to clean, green energy, without any loss of jobs, pay or conditions.
- A democratically planned, massively expanded, free to use, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.
- For a major, publicly funded, insulation and energy transition plan for existing housing stock.
- Agribusiness to be taken into democratic public ownership. For a food processing and retail industry under workers' control to ensure that standards are set by consumers, small farmers, and

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

- For united working-class struggle to end discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice and oppression.
- Repeal the anti-trade union laws and all others that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest and to strike! End police harassment. For the police to be accountable to local committees, made up of democratically elected representatives of trade unions, local community organisations and local authorities.
- For the right to choose when and whether to have children – for the right to access abortion, contraception and fertility treatment for all who need it.
- For the right to asylum – with democratic community control and oversight of emergency funding resources. No to racist immigration laws.
- Expand democracy. For the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. For all MPs to be subject to the right of recall by their constituents at any time, and to only receive a worker's wage. 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 management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need, not to the fat cats.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the EU bosses' club. Organise a campaign with European socialists and workers' organisations to use the talks on post-Brexit relations to tear up the EU pro-capitalist rules. For a real collaboration of the peoples of Europe on a socialist basis as a step towards a socialist world.

Kazakhstan: 46 workers killed in explosion at Kostenko mine



Kostenko mine PHOTO: MASTER/LPC/CC

KAZLEFT REPORTERS

ArcelorMittal, the largest steel producer in Kazakhstan, and one of the largest in the world, has, once again, found itself in the spotlight – not because of its profits, but due to a tragedy that has left dozens of workers dead. This event raises important questions about working conditions, trade unions, and capitalist exploitation at ArcelorMittal.

On 28 October, a tragic explosion occurred at the Kostenko mine, owned by ArcelorMittal in Temirtau, Kazakhstan, in the Karaganda region. This resulted in the death of 46 workers, and many others were seriously injured. This is not the first incident at this plant. Many people would think that a major international company that generates enormous profits should provide safe and decent working conditions for its employees. However, the reality is quite different.

It is worth asking how ArcelorMittal managed to achieve its profitability. This is possible only through the exploitation of its workers, and thanks to the blatant complicity of the authorities in Kazakhstan in high government positions. Workers who earn a pittance compared to the profits generated by the company are forced to work in dangerous conditions without adequate protection. Workers are forced to endanger their health and lives for the benefit of a small group of corporate magnates and their lobbyists in power.

Erlan Sairov, a member of the Mäjilis (Kazakhstan Parliament), says that Kazakhstan does not need such an investor. Yet the same Sairov, after which a tragedy in 2008 at the Abai mine, claimed the lives of 30 miners, and another tragedy which occurred that same year at the Tentek mine where five more people died, continued to lobby for work with the 'blood investor'.

Alihan Asqatovich Smailov, who is currently acting prime minister, and a year earlier served as the deputy prime minister, practically ignored parliamentary requests and public outrage regarding the working conditions and many deaths at the company. Indeed, ArcelorMittal's practices were ignored for decades by all government structures, oversight bodies, and company owners.

The latest mining deaths also raises questions about trade unions and their role in protecting the rights of the working class. Unfortunately, many trade unions in Kazakhstan, and other places around the world, have fallen under the influence of large corporations and cannot effectively protect the interests of workers. They often compromise in favour of employers, ignoring the real problems faced by workers.

KazLeft raises the issue of the need to change the system in which corporations make profits at the expense of their workers. We argue for the criminal punishment of all participants in the bloody, corrupt bosses' production chain. Workers must have the right to safe working conditions, fair wages, and protection from greedy corporations. This is not just a matter of the tragedy at ArcelorMittal; it is a matter of fighting for justice and equality. Therefore, it is the workers who should have the opportunity to directly influence the management of the production. And we demand the transfer of ArcelorMittal to not just the control of the state but the control of democratically elected representatives of the enterprise's employees!

So, let us not forget those who have died and suffered because of corporate greed. Let us raise the question of the human cost of bosses' profits, and what we are willing to sacrifice for justice. Only workers can change this system and fight for their rights.

Scottish National Party retreats, once more, over independence

SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND (CWI) REPORTERS

The Scottish National Party (SNP) conference took place in October and was one of the smallest in years. Day one saw yet another retreat by the nationalist leadership on its strategy to achieve independence.

Amid a 10% drop in support during 2023, and the defeat to Labour in the recent Rutherglen and Hamilton West by-election, the SNP conference debated how to take forward its campaign. The outcome was yet another lowering of the bar for what would constitute a mandate for independence at next year's likely Westminster election.

Former first minister Nicola Sturgeon's previous plan followed the UK Supreme Court's undemocratic ruling that the Scottish parliament could not organise a referendum. Sturgeon had proposed making the next election a 'de facto referendum' – with 50% plus one share of the vote for pro-independence parties being a mandate. No one in the SNP leadership believes it can possibly achieve that level of vote and therefore that plan has been dumped.

Conference instead agreed a motion that stipulated if a majority of SNP MPs are elected from the 57 available seats, that would be enough to "begin immediate negotiations with the UK government to give democratic effect to Scotland becoming an independent country". In other words, asking for the permanent powers to hold a second referendum from whoever forms a UK government – most likely a Keir Starmer-led Labour government. Yet Starmer has explicitly ruled out allowing for any second indyref.

However, there will be no intention, even if the SNP wins a majority of the seats, for an immediate referendum. And that is no surprise given the falling support for the SNP. Average polling over the last couple of months puts them on 36% – down from 45% in early 2023. Labour are on 32%. That would mean that around 20 seats could possibly be won by Labour in Scotland next year from the SNP. Labour currently has just two MPs.

It is therefore still possible that the SNP could win a majority of seats in Scotland, even while losing almost half of its MPs. However, also possible is the eclipsing of the SNP by Labour, given the anger towards the SNP-Scottish Green government from big sections of the working class combined with a mood to get rid of the Tories.

The undermining of the SNP is the consequence of the nationalists in power carrying out cuts and implementing other anti-working class policies generally. As well as having no idea of how to overcome the opposition of the capitalist class to the break-up of the UK.

John Curtice from Strathclyde University commented: "Back in the autumn of 2021, on average as many as



SNP leader Humza Yousaf PHOTO: SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT/CC

80% of those who voted Yes in 2014 said they would vote for the SNP. That figure now stands at just 60%. In contrast, Labour's tally among 2014 Yes voters has increased from 8% to 20%. The link between constitutional preference and support has now frayed".

The fact that a minority of independence-supporting voters have shifted to Labour is not an endorsement of the neo-Blairite leadership of Scottish and UK Labour either. There is no enthusiasm for Labour – but there is a strong support to get the Tories out amid an unbearable cost-of-living crisis.

In reality, the current SNP leadership is fighting for its political life. Humza Yousaf would be unlikely to survive if the SNP fails to defeat Labour in Scotland at a general election. More important, with support for independence currently polling at 49%, there is now a significant section of the working class who cannot

bring themselves to vote for the SNP – and no wonder when the role of the Scottish government and SNP-led councils in implementing cuts is factored in.

For these reasons, the SNP leadership will appeal to as many of that 49% as it can to use the general election to advance the cause of independence. Yousaf's pledge is that page one, line one of the manifesto will read: "Vote SNP for Scotland to become an independent country".

The SNP will attempt to tie in independence with the 'Westminster-driven' cost-of-living crisis, and also demand more powers for Holyrood over employment rights and the minimum wage, windfall taxes on energy companies, and employment visas for overseas workers.

Yet claims by the SNP to be anti-austerity are hollow when their track record of provoking strike after strike with trade unions following below-inflation pay deals are the reality.

The SNP leadership is wholly committed to capitalism, and increasingly has returned to the examples of the Republic of Ireland, Norway and Denmark as its economic models for a capitalist independent Scotland.

Stephen Flynn, SNP Westminster leader, called for action on energy and food costs which amounted only to the reinstatement of the £400 energy rebate and a cap on food prices in supermarkets for essential items like bread and milk. But why not demand the nationalisation of energy and the big food producers and supermarkets? That would really tackle the crisis at its root.

Their support for capitalism is also a central reason why they have sought to only use elections to apply pressure on the Westminster government over the right for a second indyref. They have strictly avoided seeking to build a mass movement, on the streets, in the workplaces and communities, for self-determination.

Conference also agreed for the creation of a constitutional convention for independence – predictably made up of politicians and civic Scotland to 'negotiate with Westminster' – rather than a body to organise and lead mass working-class struggle for both democratic rights and socialism to deal with the economic crisis.

The SNP offers no way forward in either the struggle for self-determination or on the cost-of-living nightmare. That's why Socialist Party Scotland has consistently called for the trade unions to build a new mass party for the working class based on socialist policies, including the right to a second independence referendum and an independent socialist Scotland.

These policies should include nationalisation of the rip-off energy companies, public ownership of transport, the major banks and big business as a whole under democratic working-class control and management. As well as the building of a democratic and voluntary socialist confederation of states including Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland as a step to a socialist world.

These were the policies we stood on in the recent Rutherglen and Hamilton West by-election as part of the Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition campaign.

At the forthcoming general election we would appeal to trade unionists to work with us to prepare an election challenge in Scotland that puts public ownership, support for workers striking for pay rises, and socialism on the agenda.



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Issue 1250

9-15 November 2023

formerly **Militant**

Sunak's lame duck King's Speech

TORIES OUT



Fight for a new mass workers' party

OSCAR PARRY
SOUTH WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Rocked by scandal after scandal, including revelations about Boris Johnson's callous disregard for people's lives emerging from the Covid-19 public inquiry, and trailing 20 points behind in the polls, the Tories are scrambling for votes, any votes. People quite rightly want to see the back of them.

Sunak's probably final King's Speech, instead of dealing with the ongoing cost-of-living, housing or environmental crises, was a desperate attempt to create 'wedge issues' to hit the votes for Keir Starmer's Labour party.

In an attempt to force Starmer to oppose them, Sunak plans to legislate for annual North Sea oil and gas licensing rounds. This comes after the government approved the opening of Rosebank oil field. The only way to achieve real energy security

and stop environmental destruction is to bring the big energy companies into democratic public ownership, which Keir Starmer has ruled out under pressure from his big-business backers.

Braverman

Suella Braverman has made disgusting comments that homeless people sleeping in tents is a "lifestyle choice". Braverman's threats to restrict tent use by giving police powers to confiscate tents and ban

charities from distributing them are an attempt to distract from the real reasons homelessness is increasing - rising rents, a chronic lack of affordable housing and the Tories' cost-of-living crisis.

On top of this, Michael Gove rolled back on his 2019 pledge to ban no-fault evictions after landlord lobbying.

Braverman is attempting to whip up further division by calling the protests against the bombing of civilians in Gaza "hate marches."

But Starmer's refusal to call for a ceasefire in the massacre has driven home the complete capitulation of his Labour Party to the interests of the establishment.

It makes you wonder: how different for the majority of us would the laws announced in a Starmer King's Speech actually be?

That's why we need a new mass workers' party that fights for a socialist programme that will make a difference to ordinary people's lives.

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on p14



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