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# the Socialist

Issue 1251

16-22 November 2023

formerly **Militant**

## Mass Gaza demo brings Braverman down



IMAGE: @LUCACEY

# KICK ALL TORIES OUT

## End the Gaza slaughter

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# BRAVERMAN GONE, TORIES IN TURMOIL

## PREPARE AN ANTI-WAR WORKING-CLASS ELECTION STAND AGAINST TORIES AND LABOUR



### WHAT WE THINK

**'C**ruella' Braverman is out. The anti-war movement – whose demonstrations she tried and failed to ban – has scored a victory!

She has been ditched as Tory Home Secretary just 13 months after having been forced to resign from the same post the first time around! Numerous capitalist commentators insist she had been trying to get sacked. She did at least do all she could to avoid her own personal brand being associated with the still deeply unpopular Rishi Sunak.

In Sunak, Britain's capitalist class hoped it had found at least a period of short-term stability. It was very short-term. Sunak made it to office, without a vote of even his own party members, by packing his cabinet with figures from a myriad of party factions, but in doing so he packed it full of explosive matter. As the prospect of an electoral landslide wiping out huge numbers of Tory MPs gets closer, things just get more volatile. The general election has to happen before January 2025, the latest explosion makes it more likely to be sooner rather than later.

There will be further volatility with the decision of whether the cruel policy of sending asylum seekers to Rwanda is legal pending for 15 November. Pre-election spending plans in the 22 November Autumn Statement will be another major point of conflict.

The Tories are 24% behind Labour in the polls. A summer of ramping up rhetoric about migrant barges and asylum seeker hotels didn't help. Neither did the autumn anti-green measures assault. Each 'populist' move proved to be a polling flop.

But for Braverman and others, the objective might not be winning popular support, but shoring up a base of support in a shrinking layer of Conservative Party activists – preparing for life after a general election defeat and post-Sunak.

In his October Conservative Party conference speech, Sunak pledged to break from "30 years of political consensus", scrapping HS2 as "the ultimate example of the old consensus". The man who announced the project as prime minister in 2013, David Cameron, said it was "the wrong decision". Now Sunak has offered him a life peerage to sit in the cabinet as unelected foreign secretary!

The man seen as responsible for the capitalists' nightmare of Brexit, who was forced to resign and has had practically no political role since, is now supposed to be the 'adult in the



PHOTO: HOUSE OF LORDS/CC

room'. No doubt though, much of the capitalist class will hope that Cameron's appointment will be a step back towards the Tories reliably representing their best interests.

However, the latest fallout from explosions in Sunak's volatile cabinet is definitely not what the majority of the capitalist class wants. Overwhelmingly they want stability, economically and politically – something that capitalism in crisis is incapable of providing.

The sharpest expression of this internationally is the devastation being inflicted on Palestinians. And importantly, from the capitalists' point of view, the popular mass protests in response that threaten to develop into regime-threatening mass movements in the Middle East.

#### "Hate marches"

Braverman's branding of the protests in Britain as "hate marches" was totally inaccurate and deliberately provocative. But from the capitalists' point of view the red line crossed was bringing into question the 'neutrality' of the Metropolitan Police, accusing it in the Times of being biased towards pro-Palestinian protesters.

This further undermined state institutions, at a time when the Met is already facing a crisis of public confidence and labelled institutionally racist and sexist.

Her appeal for help to defend the Cenotaph (that was never under

threat) on 11 November, was the last thing the Met wanted. In the end a few hundred far-right hooligans fought with police, declaring 'Braverman told us to be here'.

Meanwhile a peaceful protest of hundreds of thousands marched. Its sheer scale was the central factor in Braverman's sacking.

Had it been officially 'cancelled', it would inevitably still have taken place in defiance. The government and police would have been shown to be incapable of stopping it.

The Tories walk a similarly dangerous tightrope in progressing the new Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act, threatening to try to impose MSLs on pre-Christmas strikes. Again, no doubt many employers will want to avoid risking re-escalating tensions with the unions. And more strategic capitalist thinkers will correctly fear workers' defiance of such laws and the movement that could develop in defence of trade unionists or unions facing penalty.

A special Trades Union Congress has been arranged in London for 9 December. The National Shop Stewards Network will lobby it demanding the Congress makes serious preparations for "100% solidarity with any trade unions attacked under these MSL laws" and to "build an appropriate industrial response to defend workers' right to strike", as agreed at the September Congress.

Mick Lynch, RMT general secretary

says: "We believe employers have the discretion not to issue minimum service work notices and as such we are calling on them not to issue them. Any employer that seeks to issue a work notice will find themselves in a further dispute with my union". Demands should be made on all Labour employers, including Sadiq Khan-led Transport for London, to pledge now that they will not issue work notices.

The majority of the capitalist class has long drawn the conclusion that it would prefer a Labour government led by Starmer to the current Tory soap opera. Since the beginning of Starmer's leadership he has done all he can to try to prove that a government led by him would be able to withstand the huge working-class pressure that it will come under, presiding over continued economic hardship for working- and middle-class people. The British economy remains stagnant, as it has been for over a year. That is unlikely to get better by the time Starmer takes office and could get substantially worse with a global recession on the cards.

By pegging his position on the Israeli onslaught on Gaza to that of US imperialism, Starmer is again performing the same act of obedience to the interests of the large capitalists.

The Labour rebellion and resignations over a ceasefire don't look likely to seriously threaten the chances of a Starmer-led government. But it has provoked thousands to consider what steps need to be taken towards developing a political alternative.

The organisations with the most authority to take steps towards a mass working-class political alternative are the trade unions, which have led the fight against the Tories during the more-than-a-year-long strike wave. Socialist Party members in those unions are fighting for them to take steps towards a new party by backing a list of workers' candidates for the general election.

But preparations for a general election stand need to begin now. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, which the Socialist Party participates in, has written to other left-wing and campaigning organisations inviting them to co-host a convention in the new year to make such preparations.

The political divisions at the top of the Tory party are a symptom of the depth of the crisis facing British capitalism. A future Labour government – overseeing a further eroding of working-class living standards, and the working-class movement that will develop in response – will also be beset by crises. Fighting for the steps towards mass working-class political representation now is vital preparation for those events. So too is winning working-class and young people behind the socialist programme needed to bring an end to crisis-ridden capitalism.

# London anti-war demo of historic proportions

HELEN PATTISON  
SOCIALIST PARTY LONDON REGIONAL SECRETARY

**O**nce again, the streets of London were filled with protesters against the war on Gaza on 11 November. Hundreds of coaches bringing protesters from around the country packed one whole side of Hyde Park.

Socialist placards and papers were enthusiastically snapped up and demonstrators thanked us for our continued support for the growing movement. The Socialist Party has been building and taking part in these protests, pointing the socialist way forward with demands for 'a mass struggle of the Palestinians under their own democratic control to fight for liberation' and 'for the building of independent workers' parties in Palestine and Israel and links between them'.

The demonstrations are heaping huge pressure on rotten capitalist governments across Europe and in the US. Suella Braverman has been forced out after intentionally whipping up far-right protests to "protect the Cenotaph". There were over 85 arrests of far-right protesters who fought amongst themselves over a mile away from the anti-war demonstration route.

Though one Tory sacking is a start, it is not enough. This movement poses the potential to bring down the whole rotten Tory government. But to do this it has to continue to build and spread. The Socialist Party is campaigning for the trade unions to play a leading role in this movement, which would add enormously to its power.

We also raise the need for a trade union-led electoral alternative to Starmer's anti-worker and pro-war policies at the next election. Socialist Party members will continue to push for the workers' movement to take steps in this direction.

Over a month into the conflict, many can't believe that the horrors continue. Over 10,000 are dead and the humanitarian crisis deepens as food, water and medicine run out. At the same time, people are utterly disgusted by the role of many western capitalist governments and politicians that have refused to call for a

ceasefire. That includes labour leader Keir Starmer.

It's clear that it is in the interests of the major imperialist powers, including the US, for there to be a de-escalation of the conflict. In lieu of calling for a ceasefire they have called for "pauses" in the conflict. Not because they want to stop the atrocities being faced by people in Gaza but because they have come under growing pressure from below in their own countries to try to stop them. Also they don't want to see the war spread any further across the region given the precarious state of capitalism internationally. That said, it won't necessarily be in their control to stop the conflict spreading.

As one group of lads walked past our stall, they said to each other "this is my first-ever protest". Meanwhile others chatted about the previous week's demo and how this one was clearly much bigger. Still, it's clear these demonstrations are mobilising people who haven't taken part in political movements before. Many were in awe of the people power on display. The protest was so big many people didn't make it to the end, before they had to turn around to get their coach home.

Discussing with people on the demos, many have said that they never expected the Tories to support the movement against war. But because they did expect Starmer's Labour to at least support a ceasefire, his refusal is being described as even more of a betrayal. People saying things like 'you expect this of the Tories but we didn't expect it from Labour'.

Many told us they have left the Labour Party, or that they would refuse to support them at the next general election, and wanted to discuss how we could build a political alternative to both Labour and the Tories.

People will draw many conclusions from this movement, including that the working class needs its own political voice. Many will also conclude that capitalism internationally is incapable of offering us a world free of war, destruction, and oppression. To fight for a real alternative means organising around a socialist programme. Join us in the Socialist Party to fight for socialist change.



PHOTO: PAUL MATTISSON



PHOTO: PAUL MATTISSON



The Socialist Party at the demo PHOTO: ESSEX SOCIALIST PARTY

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

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

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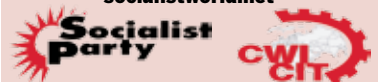
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."  
Karl Marx



## Consequences of Welsh NHS cuts

BEN GOLIGHTLY  
CARDIFF EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

The Welsh Ambulance Service recently declared an 'extraordinary incident' in Swansea, with 16 ambulances simultaneously queuing outside A&E, one waiting 28 hours.

It's a shocking headline, but I found nothing extraordinary about it at all. A few weeks ago, my gran broke her leg in a fall, spent 23 hours waiting for an ambulance, and ten hours outside A&E. When I spoke to her by phone, she still had nothing except wonderful things to say about the lovely healthcare workers who looked after her.

But when she had a similar fall about 20 years ago, the ambulance was there within an hour. This time, my nan died in hospital. We don't know if the delay contributed to her death.

This shows starkly just how far the Welsh NHS has deteriorated under 25 years of a Welsh Labour government.

The Welsh government should refuse to pass on any more cuts, and fight for the funding we need from the Westminster government for proper healthcare, planned democratically to meet the needs of patients and health workers. Instead, it is raiding other services to "simply maintain the [health] service as it is." "As it is" - not what it needs to be! The whole history of Welsh Labour is proof that this strategy doesn't work. If it did, it wouldn't have taken 33 hours to get my nan to a hospital bed.

**33**  
hours spent  
waiting to  
get into A&E

## Welsh Labour government fails to tackle child poverty

MARK EVANS  
SWANSEA AND WEST WALES SOCIALIST PARTY

The Senedd's (Welsh Parliament) Equality and Social Justice Committee report 'Calling time on child poverty; how Wales can do better' highlighted what most working-class people already knew in Wales; the Welsh Labour government is failing to tackle child poverty.

The committee, taking evidence from experts, was told that the Welsh government lacked ambition, was averse to setting targets and blames the UK Tory government when there is plenty they can do.

Wales now has 28% of children living in relative poverty. That is a scandalous figure when you consider Labour has been in government in Wales for over 20 years. Labour in Wales, as would be the case with Starmer's Labour in power in Westminster, works within the confines dictated by the capitalist system. The consequences for working-class people of the failure of the Welsh Labour government to oppose and mobilise against cuts is apparent in the above figures. We pay for their lack of fight.

The Welsh Labour government's 'style over substance' approach was exposed by the Bevan Foundation and Joseph Rowntree Foundation charities which gave evidence to the committee. They told the committee that the Welsh government strategy risks being "warm words" and "bells and whistles" with no real plan. The



Swansea Socialist Party members campaigning against the cuts

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children told the committee that there should be "more focus on what Welsh government can do, rather than focus on what they cannot do."

### What could they do?

The Socialist Party agrees that the Welsh Labour government should not just oppose Tory cuts in words but in deeds. It could set a no-cuts, needs-led budget that among other things tackles poverty, fully funds public services and massively expands NHS and council services. It should immediately implement a £15-an-hour minimum wage, nationalise Tata Steel, transport, utilities and the top companies, and

**28%**  
of children  
in Wales live  
in relative  
poverty

organise a mass campaign around this with the trade unions and working-class people in Wales.

The Welsh Labour government and Starmer's Labour have no solution to the growing levels of poverty and the crisis of capitalism. We cannot wait for 'jam tomorrow' that Starmer is offering, i.e. wait for the British economy to start growing again before public services get more funding. British capitalism cannot deliver for working-class people and that it is very evident in Wales with the levels of poverty.

To provide an alternative to the Tories and Labour, who both represent the interests of the bosses not the masses, we need a new mass workers' party implementing socialist policies.

## Steel plans put 2,000 jobs at risk in Scunthorpe

JOE SHAKESBY  
HULL SOCIALIST PARTY

The news that Jingye Group, the owner of British Steel, proposes to cut up to 2,000 jobs at the British Steel works in Scunthorpe is yet another brutal kick in the teeth for the town and British steelmaking. The group, which posted profits of £329 million last year, has said the proposal will make British Steel "a clean, green and sustainable business." However, these plans are cost-cutting measures to slash the group's wage bill by throwing workers by the wayside to protect their profits.

The replacement of the current furnace with electric alternatives and the resulting job losses will place immense pressure on an already struggling town. This latest attack on the steel industry is driven by greed; it is possible to transition to zero-carbon steelmaking and still protect jobs. Backed by the Tory government, this is driven by the desire to cut costs at the plant and hand higher profits to Jingye Group's shareholders.

### We say:

- Nationalise the steel industry under democratic workers' control


Moving to electric arc furnaces would essentially turn the Scunny steel works into a steel recycling plant. There are similar plans for Tata Steel's Port Talbot plant (see 'Tata steel: Nationalisation not devastation' on socialistparty.org.uk). This has caused rage and fear amongst residents and will do immense damage to an already deprived community. Unsurprisingly this is immaterial to the bosses and the Tories. What is even more appalling is that Jingye Group is set to receive £300 million state aid to carry out these plans. So much for private enterprise!

Labour's opposition to nationalisation and Starmer's pro-business outlook mean a joined-up political struggle from the unions, as well as industrial action, is needed to prevent the decimation of the steel industry and working-class communities.

and management. No job losses or compensation for the fat cats

- A socialist plan of production to protect the environment and people's livelihoods. Workers shouldn't pay the price for capitalist climate chaos
- We need a new mass workers' party, armed with a socialist programme, to fight back against cuts, job losses and closures. Take into democratic public ownership the big banks and businesses that dominate the economy and put them to use for need not greed

40 YEARS SINCE  
THE MINERS'  
STRIKE -  
LESSONS FOR  
TODAY



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Part of Scunthorpe steelworks  
PHOTO: ALAN MURRAY-ROST/CC

## NHS workers striking for pay and safe staffing

LEN HOCKEY  
BARTS NHS TRUST UNITE BRANCH SECRETARY

Domestics, porters, catering staff and more are continuing strike action at Barts Health Trust, across five hospitals in east London. Unite members are fighting over pay, including for a lump-sum payment that was paid to some but not others when we transferred from private company Serco back to the NHS last year, following a victorious strike campaign.

Another element to the dispute is safe staffing, which is obviously linked with pay. Unite is conducting a broader campaign on this issue. Unite London and Eastern Health is organising a special conference on 2 December for reps.

In this dispute we've pushed Barts management into discussion. The Trust is entering into discussion on safe staffing in specific areas, including the maternity labour ward at

the Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel and pathology services across the East London and South East London Pathology Partnership (an 'arms' length' organisation), of which Barts is the central hub.

This campaign is linked up with recruitment to the union.

The current two weeks of strike action, following strikes in September and October, concludes on Friday 17 November, with a demo at Royal London.

HOW CAN THE  
MINIMUM SERVICE  
LEVELS LAWS BE  
BEATEN



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Royal London Hospital  
picket line HUGO PIERRE

## CWU victory over suspended and sacked reps

CWU MEMBER

The Communication Workers Union (CWU) has got back 93% of the members who were suspended then sacked during the Royal Mail strike. Welcome back!

But it must be said these brothers and sisters have been put through hell by management, who used the strike as a way to try to get rid of activists; these workers couldn't pay their bills.

This is a victory for the CWU but we still need to rebuild the union in the workplace after the strike, as the attacks were a big setback for members.

As our reps and members get back to work, tensions will run high and we must protect them from any attempt by management to goad

We should also be pushing for an investigation into the management who sacked our members, as they clearly abused their positions.

And let's remember the 7% who remain sacked: we should be re-looking at the cases to work out a way forward for them.

Let's use this news as an opportunity to rebuild the CWU as an active fighting union. Some activists think, 'What's the point of the CWU?' after the long, bitterly-fought strike ended. Management attacks were pushed back by the strike but Socialist Party members and others thought more could have been won, and the union's leaders made mistakes. But now there is an opportunity to rebuild, and bring those activists who want a serious fighting union together into a left force in the union.

## NSSN calls lobby of TUC special Congress

### Defend the right to strike!

NATIONAL SHOP STEWARDS NETWORK (NSSN)  
STATEMENT

The NSSN welcomes the convening by the Trades Union Congress (TUC) of a special Congress on Saturday 9 December. This is in response to the Tory government laying out "regulations for minimum service levels in rail, the ambulance service and border security. Ministers have said these new rules will be rushed into force by the end of the year. Ministers are also consulting on rules affecting workers in hospital settings, schools, universities and fire services."

TUC general secretary Paul Nowak said: "The UK already has some of the most restrictive trade union laws in Europe. Now the Tories want to make it even harder for people to win fair pay and conditions. That's why we are calling this once in a generation special Congress."

The NSSN is organising a lobby of the special congress from 9-10am outside Congress House, 28, Great Russell Street, Camden WC1B 3LS. The Congress will take place from 10am-1pm.

### NSSN chair Rob Williams said:

"This is a vital conference, which we welcome. We have been calling for it to be convened since the annual TUC Congress in September passed the motion that agreed the basis for the fighting strategy that the trade union movement and over 6 million workers need against the Tory minimum service levels (MSL) anti-union legislation.

"That motion stated that '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' and 'organise a special Congress, size to be determined, to explore options for non-compliance and resistance.'

"Therefore, the special TUC Congress must be a real 'council of war', setting out concretely the mass collective action needed for 'non-compliance and resistance.' That should start with the announcement of a mass national demonstration, linking together the fight for the right

to strike with the Tory cost-of-living squeeze, that has triggered the incredible strike wave of the last two years, the biggest level of workers' action for over three decades.

"But it should also agree the process of solidarity action if, as a result of the Tory MSL legislation, any unions are fined or any workers are sacked.

"This is a massive moment. Workers are showing on a daily basis that they are prepared to fight to protect their living standards. The response of the Tories is to attack our rights. But this is a weak and divided Tory government, reeling from yet another crisis that has seen Braverman sacked, exposed for her and the Tories' toxic divide-and-rule tactics. But if we fight together, we can defeat both these anti-union laws and Starmer's Tory government."

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NSSN lobbying the TUC in September MILA HUGHES

## Coventry Amazon strikes a clear rejection of poverty pay

ADAM HARMSWORTH  
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

On 7-9 November, over 1,000 Amazon workers at Coventry 'BHX4' site went back out on strike after another insulting pay award. Amazon's latest pay rises will have the lowest-paid workers on £12.30 an hour by April. This is far off the £15 an hour demanded by the workers.

It couldn't be clearer that the wages aren't enough, when workers are grabbing every bit of overtime available. Amazon workers on the picket line have told Socialist Party members that overtime is gone almost as soon as it is offered, with many workers doing 60-hour weeks!

The striking GMB members have shown they are eager to break this cruel cycle of poverty and overworking. On Wednesday, a team went from BHX4 to another Amazon 'fulfilment centre' to convince more workers to join the union and to

strike. Reportedly over 2,000 GMB flyers were given out! There is also an upcoming strike ballot at Amazon's Sutton Coldfield site.

The next strike day is 24 November - Black Friday - coordinated with strikes at Amazon sites internationally.

The latest Socialist Party strike bulletin raised the importance of breaking the isolation at BHX4. The bulletin also has a focus on the unavoidable issue of the horrendous attack on Gaza. Many strikers eagerly bought the Socialist on the picket line after seeing the front page on Gaza and discussing the crisis with us.

Our bulletin pointed out how Starmer's Labour, funded by GMB, is failing to stand up for workers and the oppressed both in Gaza and in Britain. GMB should support candidates that support its members, and work towards building a mass democratic party of the working class.

## Hundreds turn out to Go North East strike

SAM MORDEN  
SOUTH TYNE AND WEARSIDE SOCIALIST PARTY

There was a huge turnout of hundreds of striking Go North East bus workers at a combined picket at their Gateshead depot, so big they spilled out onto the road. It was a sea of Unite flags and hi-vis, with a mood that even the arrival of the police couldn't dampen. Small drones were used to record footage for the union. Music and food fuelled the enthusiastic strikers, who are determined to fight for pay to match their colleagues in Go North West, which is owned by the same company, and to stop the attacks on their conditions.

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# RMT on the Train Operating Companies: Reject the memorandum!

## WEST MIDLANDS RMT MEMBER

The Rail Delivery Group, representing Train Operating Company (TOC) bosses, and rail union RMT have published a 'Memorandum of Understanding' (MOU) which aims to provide a breakthrough in our long-running national dispute of nearly 18 months, which has seen determined and resilient action by our members.

The massive U-turn over ticket office closures, forced on the Tories by a campaign led by the rail unions with huge public support, represents a defeat for the TOCs and has lifted rail workers.

However, while it is obviously welcome that the mass ticket office closures and 'driver only operated' trains have been taken off the table, the offer still falls short of RMT members' aspirations and should be rejected.

It proposes a 5% pay rise or £1,750, whichever is greater, backdated to April 2022, and negotiations on 2023 pay which would include "workforce reforms" – ie attacks on terms and conditions. In other words, we would have to pay for 2023's deal from our own pockets. This is unacceptable.

To catch up with inflation since 2022 we need 10-15%, so what is currently on offer is effectively a pay cut.

They propose a 'no compulsory redundancy' agreement until the end of 2024. However, if we decide not to go ahead with selling off our

terms and conditions next year they have the right to unilaterally withdraw the no compulsory redundancy agreement.

In the main, they are offering us the same deal that our leadership correctly rejected earlier in the year. The main difference now is that Christmas is just around the corner, and they hope we will vote to accept because the substantial amount of back pay would be welcome this time of year.

The RMT's ballot comes with no recommendation from the union's National Executive Committee. What is particularly concerning is that if the MOU is accepted, it will break the united front of the union negotiating collectively over the 14 TOCs, instead it will be company by company. This will inevitably weaken our position.

## Very little time

They want us to vote from Friday 10 November, despite the memorandum only being circulated on Wednesday 8 November! The vote runs till 30 November. This leaves very little time for members to digest the offer, meet and discuss it with colleagues.

Mass meetings should have been organised involving members and reps at all levels before it was decided to put this offer out to referendum.

What makes it worse is that we



Birmingham New Street NICK HART

delivered a massive 'yes' vote in the latest rebalot, which shows that most members are prepared to fight for a just settlement. If this offer is accepted, that ballot can now go in the bin instead of organising a campaign of industrial action.

We haven't finished the job yet, but we need a fighting strategy that can convince our members that it's possible to win more.

There is no word about an offer

for drivers' union Aslef at this stage. RMT and Aslef both need to stay in the fight and find common ground, so that all rail workers can win a proper, no-strings, cost-of-living pay rise and protect our terms and conditions.

A joint meeting of RMT and Aslef national executive committees to discuss a strategy of coordinated action, in order to put maximum pressure on the weak and divided Tories, would be a significant step forward.



London, 25-26 November  
tickets and info at [socialism.org.uk](http://socialism.org.uk)

# London tube workers still fighting cuts - and now balloting on pay

## SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS WORKING ON LONDON UNDERGROUND

RMT members working on the London underground have voted for the fifth time to continue the union's mandate for strike action against attacks on jobs, pensions and

conditions. The long-running dispute is a response to a massive cuts programme demanded by the Tory government, supported by the Labour Mayor of London, and implemented by an enthusiastic Transport for London (TfL) London Underground (LU) management.

£600 million of cuts remain to be found from an initial target of £1 billion. Pension attacks have been put off until October 2026 in an effort to stop strikes. But on the same day that TfL told workers the pension was safe till 2026, they wrote to the government promising to start a formal

consultation by July 2024, to transfer the TfL pension into an inferior scheme.

Workers on the stations have secured significant improvements on LU managers' plans. 200 jobs were restored and some of the other reorganisation plans that management were implementing have been shelved. Protection of earnings was enhanced, but the demand to maintain all substantive salaries on a permanent basis has not been won. Nevertheless, the feeling of station members is that an effective defensive struggle has paid off.

The attention now turns to train operators and fleet maintenance workers. Management is pushing plans to make job cuts and impose flexible working conditions to cover up the shortage of remaining staff. In addition, the pension threat and attempts to impose more draconian sickness and attendance policies continue. Members have understood the need to keep fighting.

And now that fight is opening up over pay. Unlike the national railways, RMT members on the tube had a long-term RPI-based pay agreement in place up to April 2022. No pay rise has been agreed for April 2023 yet and with an offer of only 5% on the table, which will not even be paid in full to everyone, the mood of RMT reps is to demand better.



Cockfosters tube ENFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

# Members want a fighting PCS leadership Vote Marion Lloyd for general secretary, John Moloney for AGS

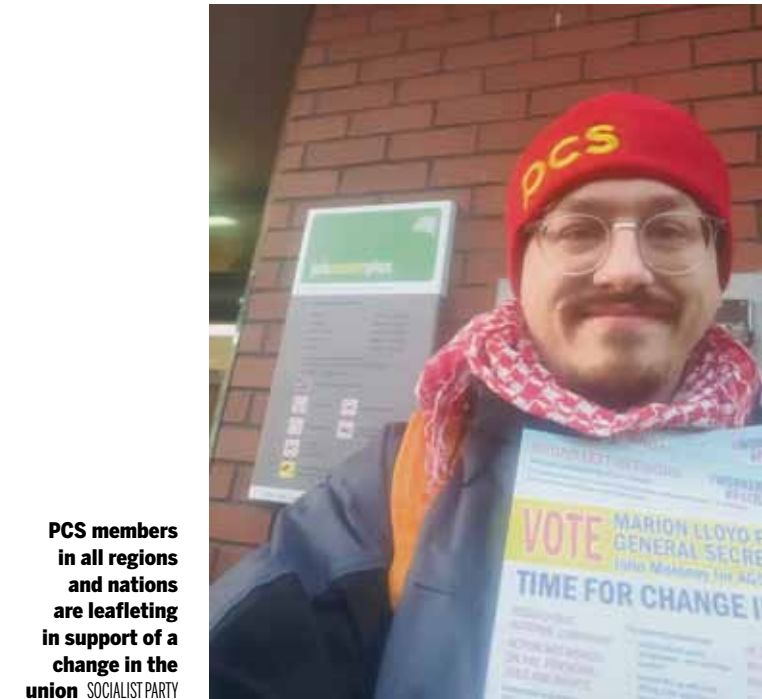
## PCS REP AND JOBCENTRE WORKER

The campaign to elect Marion Lloyd for the position of Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) general secretary is well under way. At the time of writing, ballot papers are hitting members' doormats. The PCS has 190,000 members across the civil service and the private sector.

Marion is a Socialist Party member and chair of the PCS Broad Left Network (BLN), which brings together union members who fight for PCS to be a socialist and member-led union that represents members' interests and improves their lives. Her running mate John Moloney, from the Independent Left group, is standing to be re-elected as assistant general secretary (AGS).

Activists across the union have been leafleting and speaking to their fellow PCS members to encourage a vote for Marion.

We receive almost exclusively



PCS members in all regions and nations are leafleting in support of a change in the union SOCIALIST PARTY

positive feedback. Members are keen to have change in the union. They want reps who speak with them about issues and who put forward a clear, fighting programme. Many activists and members are fed up after the lacklustre national pay campaign was ended at the first sign of an inadequate offer from the employers, following a deliberately confusing ballot.

Our opponents, who are from the Left Unity (LU) grouping which currently dominates the leadership of the union, are Fran Heathcote, who is the current national president, for general secretary, and Paul O'Connor, who is currently an unelected full-time officer, for AGS.

When invited to hustings they instead send a statement, which many members have summed up as: 'No one turns up, it is a waste of time, and we are too busy!' When branches were deciding on nominations, only a handful of hustings were attended by the LU candidates, whereas

Marion attended and won all she was invited to.

We need a leadership that clearly lays out what needs to be done to reverse falling rates of pay, attacks on redundancy rights, staffing and poor working conditions. We need to restore members' control. We need to show members that this is their union – that they choose how it should be run and who runs it.

Our platform has gained particular resonance amongst those in the most understaffed areas, where the union leadership has not launched a staffing campaign. Members are also impressed with Marion's pledge to reject the inflated general secretary salary, stay on her current civil service wage, and donate the difference back to the union.

Maximising turnout in these elections is vital if we wish to improve our pay and conditions. If you want to get involved in the campaign to transform our union, join [bln.org.uk](http://bln.org.uk).

# University workers vote for more action but miss Tory threshold

## BEA GARDNER UCU MEMBER

University and College Union (UCU) members in higher education have voted by 68.32% to continue with industrial action, including strike action, as part of the ongoing 'UCU rising' pay and conditions dispute.

However, because of the Tories' anti-democratic requirement for a ballot to achieve at least a 50% turnout every six months, the union cannot legally take action, having achieved a turnout of 42.59% in this rebalot.

Having reached the threshold in the last two consecutive ballots – first 57.71% in November 2022 and 56.41% in April 2023 – many members, reps and activists are disappointed.

Members have not voted to end the dispute, it is the Tory anti-union laws that are preventing further action.

However, the increase in the 'no' vote and abstentions is a reflection of a lack of confidence in the union's leadership, headed by general secretary Jo Grady, and confusion caused by the mishandling of the dispute, particularly in the past nine months. We have seen the bypassing of democratic decisions, delays and inaction, and a last-minute shift from national to local action in September.

Fatigue from extensive strike action and bosses' punitive pay deductions during the marking and assessment boycott are also factors. So too the fact that some other high-profile national disputes have come to an end.

But despite all that, members still showed their determination and

voted overwhelmingly to continue the dispute.

All of the issues that have driven members to take significant levels of industrial action are unresolved – cost-of-living pressures, underfunding and attacks on conditions.

The general secretary and national executive elections, starting 25 January 2024, give an opportunity to elect a new union leadership with a fighting strategy of well-prepared strike action, and bring an end to the undemocratic manoeuvres that have taken place with Grady.

But it is vital that the newly elected union leadership is also willing to put demands on what is highly likely to be a government led by Sir Keir Starmer. Demands must be made now for Labour to fully fund higher education and support UCU members' demands for fair pay, terms and conditions.



Plymouth FE UCU SOCIALIST PARTY

# Further Education UCU members fight on pay and workload

## DUNCAN MOORE PLYMOUTH UCU MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

University and College Union (UCU) members struck on 13-15 November at eleven further education (FE) colleges across England.

The dispute, launched by the UCU for a 15.4% pay rise, action on workloads, and binding national negotiations, saw staff at 85 colleges across England balloted for strike action.

Of these, 43 missed the Tories' anti-democratic strike ballot thresholds, despite 90% of those who voted backing strike action.

A further 35 colleges have since settled for pay rises of between 6.5 and 8.5%. That the mere threat of strike action was enough to force college employers to offer far bigger pay rises than they were at first willing to concede proves that striking works, and will embolden UCU members in the battles to come.

These pay offers go a little way to addressing the 35% cut in real pay suffered by further education lecturers since 2009. But crippling understaffing and unsustainable workloads continue to blight the sector.

The current round of strike ballots have won some pay improvements for many FE staff already, and those at colleges going ahead with strikes can fight to win more.

But we need a national bargaining framework for the sector, as our colleagues in schools have. At present, outcomes of national pay talks are non-binding, with college bosses free to ignore the recommendations of the employers' body, the Association of Colleges.

While continuing to build support

for this wave of FE strikes, reps and activists across our union should prepare the ground to build towards an aggregated, nationwide ballot in future pay rounds, to beat the Tories' anti-union thresholds and fight for binding national agreements on pay and workloads. We also need to campaign for a strong union leadership, with a national executive committee prepared to fight for all our members and a general secretary who will lead from the front.

● Duncan Moore has won sufficient nominations to stand for a national Further Education seat in the NEC elections that will take place in early 2024

## Pay us already!

### IAN PATTISON REPORTS FROM THE PICKET LINE

Whistles, tambourine, megaphone, wailing sirens, and a sea of pink placards. You couldn't miss the picket line at Conel College's Enfield campus.

UCU rep Sue Ives-Moiba, spoke to striking workers. "What are we worth? We are worth more than the management are offering us."

Then the strikers started chanting: "What do we want?" "More pay!" "When do we want it?" "Last year!" the crowd chanted back.



Sheffield HE UCU SOCIALIST PARTY

Get all the latest union news  
[nationalshop.org.uk](http://nationalshop.org.uk)  
[stewardnetwork.org.uk](http://stewardnetwork.org.uk)  
NSSN bulletin: [shopstewards.net](http://shopstewards.net)



Socialism 2023 programme of workshops

ANTI-WAR RALLIES AT SOCIALISM

SUNDAY 26 NOVEMBER

3-4PM - JOIN US

YOUTH AGAINST WAR

BUILDING A WORKERS' VOICE AGAINST WAR & CAPITALISM

FIGHTING FOR A SOCIALIST WORLD



25 & 26 NOVEMBER

ALL RALLIES AND WORKSHOPS

AT INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION,

20 BEDFORD WAY, LONDON,

WC1H 0AL. REGISTRATION OPENS

AT 10AM ON SATURDAY AND

9.30AM ON THE SUNDAY

Hosted by the



A WE DISCUSSI

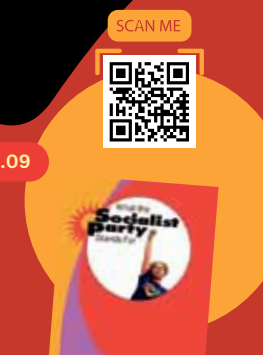
Theme	Saturday 11.30am-1.30pm	Saturday 2.30pm-4.30pm
Revolution and counter-revolution	Germany 1923: challenges of a revolutionary period <b>Speaker: Bob Labi, Committee for a Workers' International Secretariat Chair: James Ellis, Socialist Party NEU group</b> C03.09	Building Marxism in the trade unions and workplaces <b>Speakers: Reece Lawton, Socialist Party PCS group &amp; Alec Thraves, SP National Committee Chair: Max McGee, West Mids SP organiser</b> 784/790
Fighting for a workers' voice	Post-2007: whatever happened to the 'new left' parties? <b>Speaker: James Ivens, Socialist Party NC Chair: Ryan Lydall, Guildford Socialist Party organiser</b> C03.13	Liverpool 1983: lessons for Birmingham 2023? <b>Speakers: Dave Walsh, Liverpool Trades Council president (pc) &amp; Alex Smith, Liverpool Socialist Students organiser Chair: Nick Doyle, Portsmouth SP</b> C03.13
Where is Britain going?	How radical really is the Green Party? <b>Speaker: Scott Jones, Socialist Party editorial team Chair: Adam Gillman, Reading Socialist Party secretary</b> C03.15	Preparing for a Starmer-led government <b>Speaker: Sarah Sachs-Eldridge, Socialist Party Executive Committee Chair: Paola Sanchez, Bristol North SP</b> C03.15
Getting to grips with Marxism	Marxist theory of the state: spy-cops and Met Police scandals <b>Speaker: Dave Nellist, former socialist Labour MP Chair: Oscar Parry, Socialism 2023 organising team</b> 739	Is there still value in Marxist economics? <b>Speaker: Theo Sharieff, Socialist Party youth organiser Chair: Pippa Evans, Socialist Party London youth committee</b> 739
Bolshevism and Trotskyism	<b>JOIN THE SOCIALIST PARTY</b> There will be a meet-up in the Saturday and Sunday lunchtimes where you can come along and find out what becoming a member will mean for you. Room 739	
Working class fighting back	Housing: translating socialist ideas into bricks and mortar <b>Speaker: Paul Kershaw, Unite Housing Workers branch chair (personal capacity) Chair: Rob Thomas, Hackney and Islington SP secretary</b> 736	Can our NHS survive the Tories? ...and Starmer's Labour? <b>Speakers: Holly Johnston and Maggie Fricker, Socialist Party NHS workers group Chair: Josh Curtis, Northampton Socialist Party secretary</b> C03.12
Capitalist crisis	<b>SOCIALIST BOOKSHOP</b> There will be a large book shop during the event selling Marxist literature	
Big issues	AI - will it threaten or advance humanity? <b>Speaker: Mark Best, Socialist Party NC Chair: Dara Fitzgerald, West London Socialist Party secretary</b> C03.11	The Ukraine-Russia war - fighting for workers' unity to end war <b>Speaker: Niall Mulholland, CWI IS Chair: Marco Tesei, Socialist Party UCU group</b> C03.14
Socialist ideas to change the world	Will India be a new China? <b>Speaker: TU Senan, CWI IS Chair: Mila Hughes, Coventry SP youth organiser</b> 777/780	Gaza under siege: How will a Palestinian state be achieved? <b>Speakers: Helen Pattison &amp; Judy Beishon, Socialist Party EC Chair: Oisín Duncan, SP North West organiser</b> C03.09
Our rights under attack	<b>SOCIALISE WITH SOCIALISTS</b> Don't rush off after the rally. Continue the discussions over a drink.	
Fighting racism and fascism	Reparations or revolution? <b>Speaker: Hugo Pierre, Socialist Party NC Chair: Nandi Shalita, Queen Mary Socialist Students organiser</b> Nunn Hall	From Windrush to hostile environment: fighting racism <b>Speaker: April Ashley, Unison NEC Black Members rep (pc) Chair: Lawanya, Tamil Solidarity leading activist</b> 736
Working class life	Sport: plaything of big business or a right for all? <b>Speaker: Ian Pattison, Socialist editorial team Chair: Lindsey Morgan, Bristol Socialist Party</b> 784/790	A graphic history of Militant and the Socialist Party with artwork by Alan Hardman, Militant cartoonist <b>Speaker: Iain Dalton SP NC Chair: Dan Smart, SP Unison members group</b> Logan Hall

Join us!

The Socialist Party hosts the Socialism weekend to bring together people who want to change the world. Discussing ideas, debating, learning from each other and the history of workers' struggle strengthen our movement.

We stand for an end to war, poverty and inequality, and transforming society, taking the top industries into public ownership and democratically planning the economy to meet the needs of all. 020 8988 8777 www.socialistparty.org.uk

The Socialist Party is internationalist, standing in solidarity with workers and young people across the world, part of the Committee for a Workers' International: socialistworld.net



Read our 'What we stand for' and come and discuss with us



Sunday 1

Chile 1970 - but... **Speaker: ... Secretariat** C03.09

DEBATE: How should we prepare for the General Election? **Speakers: Lenny Shail, SP EC & Student Federation Student Society, A**

How can the anti-union legislation be defeated? **Speakers: Williams, SP EC; Jan... organiser (pc); Ona... lead officer (pc) Ch**

Understanding chaotic capitalism **Speaker: ... South West secret... Dorset Socialist Pa**

120 years since the Bolsheviks: What is the legacy? **Speaker: Isai Marije... & Asian members g... Chair: Liam Ball, Sh**

40 years since the 1983 election: lessons for today **Speakers: ... Gorton, Chesterfield Griffiths, SP NC Ch... Sheffield South East**

Global debt and inflation - developing a socialist world **Speaker: Nick Hart... Hunter, Socialist Pa**

Is there still time to stop climate change? **Speakers: ... Aldred, SP NC Chair... Peers, Waltham Fo**

Can Africa break the cycle of poverty? **Speaker: Deji Olayinka, SP secretary Chair: ... London Socialist St**

Why are the Tories so obsessed with trans rights? **Speaker: Michael J... Party LGBTQ+ mem... Chair: Rae Cox, Oxf**

Combating Tory division: the right to asylum **Speakers: ... Kartav, London SP... Jeyanayagam, Birn... Central SP secretar**



Programme can be subject to change - especially with the need to protest the onslaught on Gaza. Ticket holders will be emailed with updates.

Abbreviations: SP: Socialist Party NC: National Committee EC: Executive Committee CWI: Committee for a Workers' International IS: International Secretariat pc: personal capacity



# SOCIALISM 2023

WEEKEND OF  
LIVING MARXISM!

SATURDAY RALLY  
SATURDAY 25 NOVEMBER  
5.30-7.30PM

# CAPITALISM MEANS WAR AND CRISIS

TORIES ON THE WAY OUT

FIGHT FOR A  
SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

HANNAH SELL

Socialist Party general secretary

MARION LLOYD

Left candidate for PCS general secretary

EMMA DENT COAD

Socialist ex-MP standing  
against Starmer's Labour

TONY SAUNOIS

Committee for a Workers'  
International secretary

GARFIELD HYLTON

Amazon striker

MILA HUGHES

Youth Against War

CHAIR: SHEILA CAFFREY

Socialist candidate

for NEU vice-president

WWW.SOCIALISM.ORG.UK

10am-12noon	Sunday 1pm-2.45pm
10-11:30: socialism is possible but heroism is not enough. Speaker: Tony Saunois, CWI Secretary Chair: Joe Fathallah, Socialist Party Wales committee	What is communism? C03.09 Speaker: Matt Dobson, Socialist Party Scotland Chair: Gareth Bromhall, Socialist Party NHS workers group
12-1:30: Revolutionary students and general election? Speakers: Invited from: Marxist Education, Socialist Workers Alliance for Workers' Liberty	Can Labour be a vehicle for socialism? A decade on, invite to a re-match with columnist Owen Jones Nunn Hall Speaker: Clive Heemskerck, Socialism Today executive editor Chair: Paula Mitchell, SP EC
1:30-3:00: Union Minimum Services cut? Speakers: Rob Wood, RMT London Chair: Jaime Davis, Wales SP	Why can't the post-war boom be repeated? Speaker: Robin Clapp, SP NC Chair: Ali Mansfield, York Socialist Party secretary
3:00-4:30: Change - dialectical Speaker: Tom Baldwin, SP Secretary Chair: Ali Cook, Party secretary	Historical materialism - a tool for changing the world Speaker: Adam Powell-Davis, Socialist Students Chair: Alex Gillham, Leicester Socialist Party organiser
4:30-6:00: The formation of the Socialist Party? Speakers: Carla, Socialist Party Black Group organiser Chair: Sheffield SP organiser	Is Trotsky's idea of the 'transitional programme' still relevant? Speaker: Callum Joyce, Southern region SP organiser & Nick Chaffey, SP NC Chair: Noah Eden, Sheffield Socialist Students organiser
6:00-7:30: Miners' strike - Speakers: Dave Wood SP & Dave Chair: Alex Brown, SP Secretary	Fighting for a socialist education system Speakers: Sheila Caffrey, NEU executive (pc) & Heather Rawling SP NC Chair: Jane Nellist, Coventry Trades Council president (pc)
7:30-9:00: Globalisation crisis - Socialist programme SP NC Chair: Scott Party Swindon secretary	Capitalism's 'democratic' crisis - how far can authoritarianism go? Speaker: Sean Figg, CWI IS Chair: James Collett, Gloucestershire SP secretary
9:00-10:30: Stop catastrophic Speaker: Ryan Chair: Ellen Kenyon, SP organiser	Prospects for Scotland under New Labour #2 Speaker: Philip Stott, Socialist Party Scotland EC Chair: Chris Newby, Tower Hamlets SP organiser
10:30-12:00: The chains of imperialism? Speaker: Georgia Germani, Students	Egypt: from the Arab Spring to today Speaker: David Johnson, Chair: Lily Douglas, Liverpool Socialist Party
12:00-1:30: Women's rights? Speaker: Johnson, Socialist Members coordinator Chair: Ford SP secretary	Class and identity: What kind of movement and ideas are needed to end women's oppression? Speaker: Bea Gardner, SP NC Chair: Leah Byatt, Sheffield Socialist Women organiser
1:30-3:00: Divide and rule: defend Speaker: Berkay Chair: Piri Birmingham	Fascism: what it is and how to fight it Speakers: Seamus Smyth, East Midlands SP youth organiser & Steve Score SP NC Chair: Dan Ford, Worcester Socialist Party organiser



CHILE: HOW AND WHY THE  
REVOLUTION WAS CRUSHED  
AVAILABLE AT SOCIALISM 2023  
BOOK SIGNING 12 NOON SUNDAY  
ROOM C03.09

NEW BOOK FROM SOCIALIST PUBLICATIONS:



# WHAT COULD A SOCIALIST TRANSPORT SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?



KRIS O'SULLIVAN  
TRAIN DRIVER

The simple fact is that the UK transport 'system' is broken. The word 'system' conjures up an idea of organisation or method. But really it is chaos. That is the everyday experience.

Whether you are trying to catch a train to work, a flight home from your holiday, or a bus to the shops, delays and cancellations of all means of public transport are pretty much the rule not the exception.

By many of the metrics that matter to the traveling public - such as frequency, reliability, comfort and safety - our transport system is not fit for purpose. It is in a race to the bottom of quality and efficiency. And that's without even mentioning the biggest elephant in the room - the cost! The only thing that the UK is leading in at the moment is having one of the most expensive public transport systems (especially rail) in all of Europe.

Rail unions RMT and Aslef have been in industrial disputes with the Train Operating Companies (TOCs). Rail bosses, with the Tory government behind them, want to rip up the

pay, pensions, terms and conditions of thousands of workers. The government has been forced to U-turn on ticket office closures. (Read more about the RMT dispute on page 7)

What or who is the culprit? Well, it's not you or me! It's not public transport service users or workers. It's the chaotic profit-driven system of capitalism we live under, with the profits of a few the starting point instead of the collective good. Instead of a rationally planned and integrated systems there is a messy patchwork of companies all raking in a profit. A variety of companies run buses and coaches. Different companies compete in the skies, and the airports are owned by other companies again.

## Railway franchises

On the railways, there are 23 different franchise-owning TOCs, four main freight operating companies, and the track is owned separately by Network Rail, which is an 'arms-length' body of the Department of Transport. And then there are the parasitic rolling stock companies, that serve zero purpose apart from leasing trains to the TOCs - not building the trains, not regulating the trains, just leasing

them. They make hundreds of millions in profits mainly for monopolies based abroad and banks, while making no real investment into services, personnel or infrastructure.

This for-profit model wreaks havoc. Since the privatisation and deregulation of buses in 1986 and of British Rail in 1993, it has been open season for cowboy operators, siphoning off billions into the back pockets of shareholders and in bosses' bonuses.

Even the bosses of some TOCs have effectively admitted that the rail franchise system has failed. Some operators, like Virgin and Stagecoach, handed back the keys, others like Northern Rail were taken over by the Department for Transport.

No wonder the TOC managements have been so happy with these new national rail contracts (NRCs), whereby private companies are paid 'management fees' by the government to run the services and all the risks are covered by the government. This bailing out has restored the TOCs' profits to £600 billion in 2020-21. Companies that were in the red are now making hundreds of millions of profit, regardless of whether

services are late or cancelled. Their income is guaranteed during a strike. According to the RMT, in just one year, Abellio Greater Anglia went from a £300 million loss to a £295 million profit for the year, for example.

In total, public subsidies are currently to the tune of around £6 billion a year, compared to around £1 billion for pre-privatisation British Rail.

As outlined in an RMT report, "The government likes to talk about how it has sunk public money into the railway, but it doesn't like to talk about the fact that rather than ensure that all that money was spent on the railways, it deliberately chose a funding model designed to restore and boost fat cat profits."

Buzzwords like 'modernisation' are banded about by the bosses and Tory government. In reality it means the cannibalisation of Britain's already-archaic rail and road infrastructure. The government demands cuts to rail maintenance of 50%, and to skim billions off National Highways, and councils' road-repair budgets. There are Roman roads in this country in better condition than my local priority expressway in a major metropolitan city!

entire country together, protecting the environment.

That would be a world away from the capitalist idea of taking companies into public ownership temporarily before selling them back to the private sector - where the public sector takes the losses and puts in the investment, and the private sector rakes in the profits.

Socialist nationalisation would also be unlike previous nationalisations, such as British Rail, that were intended to maintain infrastructure for the benefit of capitalism, keeping managers and directors in place from the previous privately owned companies.

Nationalisation under democratic working-class control and management would involve national planning and coordination by a government operating in the interests of the working class. And local and regional bodies made up of elected worker, trade union and service-user representatives, for example, could discuss, debate and plan what transport services working-class communities need.

Enacting a national public works programme could create thousands of well-paid, unionised, green jobs to restore thousands of miles of track, stations and ticket offices on the railway. Restoring, in a way suitable for today's society's needs, the massive 'Beeching' rollback of infrastructure in the 1960s, which amounted to the loss of 55% of stations, 30% of route miles, and 67,700 British Rail jobs. We could plan to bring back and improve the hundreds of bus routes, coach stations and shelters removed over years due to 'unprofitability'.

## Free public travel

The Socialist Party campaigns for free public travel. Free public travel on an expanded transport network would drastically cut carbon emissions from traffic congestion, with the added health benefit of reducing pollution, instead of methods such as taxes and restrictions which penalise working-class and poor people.

Alongside a programme of mass council house building, and secure jobs on decent pay, etc, free public transport could be a building block to uplifting millions of working-class people out of poverty by not forcing them to fork out thousands each year for ever-increasing ticket prices.

A socialist transport system would involve a real 'levelling-up' programme across the north and rural areas of Britain, by connecting villages, towns and cities in a universal transport system accessible to all communities.

We reject the suggestion that the only means of regaining control and ownership from private hands is by buying it back at extortionate rates. Why should we have to sacrifice billions more into the already overflowing pockets of the privatisers? They have done enough wrecking and asset-stripping of our transport system. You wouldn't expect to pay the burglar to get back items stolen from your house!

We need to integrate different branches of public transport to work in cooperation not competition. Investment and democratic planning would enable the development of a connected transport system that drastically improves access to all, with the potential for a single ticket, multi-service system linking the

It could also play a massive role in how we could design new and existing urban centres, shaping public spaces and utilities in a more harmonious way. Democratic user and worker input would mean transport facilities being user-friendly, including the removal of hostile infrastructure (such as anti-homeless sloping seats etc).

Eliminating the profit motive, with its wasteful competition and short-termism, would enable the development of technological improvements such as full electrification of the railway or upgrading bus and coach fleets to greener designs and improved accessibility. It would give us an opportunity to explore technologies that could add auxiliary support to local transport, such as ride-share programmes, and community car-pooling and taxi services.

Public safety and access for disabled people could become a priority, with well-designed and fully staffed stations, accessible information and support services, and investment in accessible trains, buses, taxis etc.

Socialist nationalisation would ensure good wages, terms and conditions of workers. This includes kicking out the blacklisting operated by railway construction companies, such as Costain-Skanska Joint Venture. A nationalised transport system would only contract companies that pay full trade union rates of pay and proper contracts. But socialists would also campaign for the nationalisation of construction companies too.

The list could go on, but the crucial point is this is not only vitally necessary but possible.

Many people on the left argue that the UK was able to construct an NHS out of the rubble of post-World War Two Britain, and so we can build a nationalised transport system out of the disorganisation and dysfunction of a privatised 21st century system. But today's capitalist world is very different from the post-war situation, including the existence of a political alternative to the Tories that could channel the pressure on the capitalist establishment to make concessions.

Today's capitalism faces economic crisis and instability. But there is no mass working-class political party now championing the fight for a fully public transport system. The basic infrastructure is there and the privatised model is generating massive profits for the few, while the state steps in to prop them up when necessary.

That's why working-class people in our trade unions must actively

## High-speed rail

As a railway worker and public transport commuter, I think the potential of high-speed rail is a great achievement of the collective effort of the workers involved. Its planned use on a democratic basis, discussing with local communities and planning the needs of different parts of the country, could have significant environmental impacts, reducing domestic air travel for example.

But HS2, now partially scrapped, was lauded as a poster boy of grand infrastructure projects by capitalist politicians, became a £100 billion money pit, with constant overspending on budgets at every stage going into private pockets, meanwhile local, inner- and inter-city services for cities and towns outside of London are starved of basic resources. It is a vanity project instead of providing the basics of public transport.

Socialists welcome new technology and application that can improve the lives of workers, but instead of capitalist implementation which is all about short-term profit and competition, we focus on the long-term planning of services and resources. That would include democratically working with local communities to safeguard our historic and natural sites and green spaces.

## The Socialist Party says:

- Support the rail workers' fight to defend jobs, pay, terms and conditions
- End rip-off ticket prices - free public transport for all, paid for by taking the wealth off the super-rich
- Stop bosses' profiteering - nationalise the whole network under democratic workers' control and management, with no compensation for the fat cats
- For a democratically planned expansion and upgrade of the whole public transport network, overseen by elected bodies of rail workers, trade union and service users
- For a new mass party of the working class with a socialist programme based on democratic public ownership of the banks and big business
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and developed in a way that safeguards the environment

demand nationalisation and take steps to build a party that will fight for it.

We must fight to nationalise the main parts of the economy so we can democratically plan our resources. For a socialist society to replace the system that actively prevents a rational, planned transport system coming into existence.

A socialist society with a democratic transit culture is worth fighting for, to tackle our day-to-day problems now and to begin the collective stewardship of our resources for future generations.

For a transport system for the millions, not millionaires.





# Unite's role in movement against war on Gaza

## SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN UNITE

A well-attended special online meeting of the Unite Broad Left (BL) took place on Sunday 5 November. The BL meeting had been organised to report back on the two emergency Unite Executive Council (EC) meetings that took place on 26 October and 3 November, called to discuss the union's approach to the crisis in Gaza.

The Unite BL has been formed over the last few months to bring together all those in the union who want to defend the manifesto on which Sharon Graham was elected in the 2021 Unite general secretary election. Sharon's victory has been the basis for the union building a militant industrial strategy that has seen Unite wage over 900 disputes, winning 80% of them.

Socialist Party members have warned that a new left was also needed in Unite because the Unite United Left (UL) has not accepted Sharon's victory nor the militant industrial trajectory of the union under her leadership. With a Labour government on the cards, the UL is fighting for Unite to retreat from its position under Sharon Graham's leadership of being prepared to take action against Labour-led authorities. On this issue, the UL has the weight of the capitalist class behind it, who are betting on a Labour government attacking workers' pay and conditions with less industrial opposition than they faced under the Tories. Starting to build a strong left in the union, fighting to defend and extend Sharon's fighting industrial stance, is therefore urgent.

## Socialist Party motions

In the 2021 Unite policy conference, a motion inspired by Socialist Party members was passed, calling on Labour councils to stop passing on Tory cuts and instead pass no-cuts needs budgets. This was reaffirmed at this year's conference against the UL's recommendation, with the conference also seeing a Socialist Party member successfully move the motion opposing the new Tory Minimum Service Levels anti-union legislation, calling on the Trades Union Congress (TUC) to organise a mass demonstration and to coordinate action, including in the form of a 24-hour general strike.

EC members reported to the BL meeting that it was clear that the UL, particularly on the EC, unable to openly oppose the union's strike strategy, is using the issue of Gaza to attack Sharon's leadership, following an insufficient initial statement produced by the union. They reported to the meeting that UL supporters were the main elements that prevented the first emergency EC meeting approving a better union statement on Gaza. They tried to justify this because the draft didn't mention 'Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions' (BDS) against Israel. The second EC meeting, eight days later, did agree a statement, calling for "an immediate unconditional ceasefire" - a position in clear contrast to Starmer - but the UL supporters abstained.

The EC report and subsequent discussion did allow an airing of the key



PHOTO: NICK AUVACHE

issues necessary both for Unite and across the unions and the workers' movement in opposing the Israeli state's attack on Gaza.

Socialist Party members argued that there are key issues which BL supporters need to raise within the union. Primary in these are the central role that the unions must play in the anti-war movement, both on a national scale in mobilising for the mass demonstrations in London and around the country, but also in defending workers who refuse to carry out work in industries and services that aid the Israeli war effort.

This would be a far more concrete expression of resistance than the BDS imagined by the UL - in reality it would amount to 'workers' boycotts' - following in the tradition of reps and members of a forerunner union of Unite at Rolls Royce in Scotland in the 1970s who had 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. Unfortunately, this vital issue was not included in the executive statement.

However, the meeting heard the welcome news that BL supporters had played a key role in producing a statement from the Unite EC members for the aerospace and shipbuilding sector

and its lead defence convenors and reps. It condemned "the massacre of Israeli civilians by Hamas on 7 October", but opposed "the bombardment and blockade of Gaza and calling for an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages in Gaza, an end to the Israeli blockade and international aid to Gaza with water, food, fuel, medicine, and electricity being restored to the levels that existed before the current conflict started."

Such a statement could be an important step in opening up a discussion between union reps and members working in affected industries.

In addition, Socialist Party members argued that Unite needed a political dimension to its opposition to the Israeli state's horrific offensive against Gaza and the Palestinians. The union should clearly criticise Starmer for his tail-ending of the Tories, in refusing to oppose the war or even call for a ceasefire. It was pointed out that the Unite National Labour Party Liaison Committee, made up of Unite members with Labour Party positions, passed a motion to "demand that Keir Starmer immediately issues a public statement calling for the above two demands, an immediate ceasefire and allowing in humanitarian aid, and that any

prohibitions issued by David Evans on elected Labour representatives attending or speaking at Palestine events is rescinded."

Unfortunately, at the second emergency EC on 3 November, a number of motions were ruled out, including one that Socialist Party members had moved. Apparently, this was done on the grounds that it would allegedly have led to Unite being disaffiliated from Labour. But this is a contestable argument.

## Starmer's New Labour

The resolution included criticism of Starmer's New Labour writing "to Labour MPs and councillors saying 'they must not, under any circumstance' join Palestinian solidarity protests. We need political representatives who oppose the capitalist elites and stand for the rights of the working class and oppressed here in Britain and internationally." It went on: "That has to include standing in solidarity with people in Gaza today. We would welcome trade union-backed candidates standing in the general election on that programme, including Jeremy Corbyn, who has been banned from standing for Labour."

The argument used at the EC echoes that used in the debate over the union's relationship with Labour at this year's rules conference. We have to only back candidates endorsed by Starmer, it was argued, or be expelled from Labour.

But in reality, there is nothing in Labour's rules that says Labour affiliates - as distinct from individual Labour Party members - cannot support candidates outside of Labour. No action was taken against those Labour affiliates who supported anti-Labour candidates when Jeremy Corbyn was leader, nor against the Jewish Labour Movement - an affiliated society - agreeing a 'work to rule' at the 2019 general election, to only support Labour candidates who supported them. It would be the decision of Starmer and the Labour right, against the background of these profound events, if they wanted to interpret their own rules in this way and expel their party's biggest financial backer for daring to back candidates who called for a ceasefire in Gaza!

Disgusted by Starmer's role, many in the BL meeting were supportive of our criticism of the Labour leadership and were prepared to listen to the idea of the need for Unite to develop a political strategy that supported our policies and members taking action, as well as opposing this brutal war.

Many of the themes in the meeting will be carried forward into the union by BL supporters in ensuring that Unite plays an essential role in the anti-war movement.

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# Protests against slaughter in Gaza

## ● Travelling to support enormous London demo

### Birmingham – huge

Following hundreds of University of Birmingham students walking out the day before, Birmingham Socialist Party headed down to London for the national march. The march was peaceful, highly emotive, with people from all walks of life and all ages.

Protesters were very supportive of the Socialist Party. We sold lots of Socialist papers, and our material was visible throughout the protest.

Our posters and placards were used up. People were happy to donate to the party to cover the cost of materials. One man personally thanked me for coming out to support.

Another woman expressed her dismay at the complicity of Labour and the Conservatives. We saw lots of signs expressing similar sentiment.

The numbers were so huge we didn't manage to make it through the whole protest before we had to return to the coach taking us back.

RUBY CUNNINGHAM

## Black Country – sea of protesters

We were absolutely blown away by what we saw. The local organisers facilitated coaches at fair rates, emphasising solidarity over profit. We were warmly provided with food and water to keep us going on the long drive.

We arrived amidst a sea of hundreds of thousands of supporters. Contrary to government claims of a "hate march", families were present. The speeches, particularly one by a doctor honouring fallen colleagues, resonated with emotion.

Establishment media tried to downplay the number. A desperate and futile attempt to contain our message. A collective call for action has reverberated across the globe.

RICHARD GINGELL

## ● Protesting around the country

### Cardiff – 'I had to do something'

Many out on the Cardiff protest have been marching every week. Others came to the demo because Suella Braverman said they couldn't.

They all felt the same: "I just had to do something".

"This isn't war", said Terence from Neath. "They're clearing Gaza the way the American army cleared the Old West".

Sherifa, attending with her two

young daughters, was furious with Braverman. "This isn't about race. It's about justice – for all".

And so they marched. Young people of all backgrounds. Mothers and fathers. Grandparents. Little kids with placards.

I approached them with a friendly: "Would you like to sign our petition?" Without hesitation, hands reached for the clipboard.

"We need a socialist uprising of working-class people – on both sides of the border", I'd tell them. "You're so right", they'd say.

They bought our Socialist paper. Six filled in 'join the Socialist Party' cards.

All over Britain, there's a thirst for a way out of crisis and war. Don't hold back. Ask the marchers to join us in the Socialist Party.

MARIAM KAMISH

## Southampton – stand up to pro-war politicians

Hundreds of people attend the vigils each week. Socialist Party member Maggie Fricker, a Southampton health worker, spoke about the grief and solidarity felt by the local hospital workers towards the brave and resilient hospital health workers in Gaza.

Ali Haydor, also a Socialist Party member, spoke about his anger and frustration with local Labour councillors, who have remained silent on the issue. Ali said we need the need to stand in opposition to local politicians who are willing to walk the Labour, Tory and Lib Dem line.

Southampton Trades Union Council is holding a meeting to plan what local unions and community organisations can do, including standing in elections.

And Southampton Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is working closely with the trades council to hold elected representatives to account, and developing an anti-war, anti-austerity manifesto with the Southampton community – organising to field candidates in every ward for the May council elections, and the general election when called.

CATHERINE CLARKE

## Leicester – coaches sold out

Coaches for the London demo sold out well over a week before. Organisers said that at least two coaches were cancelled the night before by the coach company. They suspect that Tory rhetoric about 'trouble' was a factor.

Socialist Party members were warmly received on the coaches, with people taking our leaflets, and some bought the Socialist. After waving the coaches off, we made our way to the 200-strong Leicester vigil.

Four or five far-right supporters ended up looking pretty pathetic.

London - biggest ever Palestine march in Britain ROGER THOMAS



This is the first time we have seen them on protests in Leicester, emboldened by Suella Braverman.

HEATHER RAWLING

## Leeds – 'we expect better'

Through the weekly demonstrations, the focus has moved to Labour and Keir Starmer. "We expect better", a speaker said.

And the political awareness of demonstrators is growing as the demos go on. People are realising that Labour does not represent the working class anymore.

Mentions of socialism are met with cheers and applause. A Socialist Party member spoke at the demonstration, addressing how capitalism breeds conflicts, like the one in Gaza.

After the demonstration, 100 protesters moved to the train station for a sit-in. A constant stream of chants filled the station for over two hours.

LOUIE FULTON

## ● International solidarity in Genoa, Italy

Sheffield South East Socialist Party member **Andrea Ugolini** is originally from Genoa.

Port workers physically blocked the traffic of arms passing through the

port, with the support of other workers and political groups too – 500 participants. Demonstrators marched to the headquarters of the maritime companies Zim and Bahri, defacing them with red paint.

Zim is an Israeli shipping company that transports weapons to Israel. It has faced protests from workers in other ports, such as Livorno in Italy and Oakland in the US.

The weapons passing through Genoa are not only destined for Israel. Bahri is a Saudi Arabian company that transports radar components produced by FDS Italy to be used in the war in Yemen.

In 2019, Genoa port workers protested against arms traffic. After the protests, Bahri ships were no longer loaded in Genoa port, until now.

Workers of all countries, unite against war and against capitalism.

● Andrea was able to relay a message of solidarity from the Socialist Party's Alistair Tice to the Genoa protest

## ● 'Protest' trial won't stop movement

Activists gathered outside Snaresbrook Crown Court in east London to support Palestine Action campaigners who are on trial for attempting to disrupt Israel's UK arms business. The defendants are known as the Elbit Eight after the Israeli weapons manufacturer that they targeted.

They face serious charges – assault by beating, conspiracy to commit

burglary, conspiracy to destroy or damage property, and conspiracy to blackmail. Most of the charges involve alleged pouring of red paint on the outside or inside of premises belonging to or rented by Elbit, with the daubing of slogans such as "war criminals".

Unlike most cases against members of Palestine Action, the Snaresbrook trial will be by jury. All but one of the initial prosecutions either collapsed or resulted in acquittal.

However, the Court of Appeal has since ruled that activists accused of causing "more than minor damage" cannot rely on human rights protections as a defence of their actions. Since then, there have been more convictions.

'Conspiracy to blackmail' charges are based on letters campaigners sent to a real estate firm, demanding it evict Elbit, or disruptive protests would continue. These crude attempts by the state and Tory government to cow and demonise protesters has already failed, as seen by the enormous demonstration in London on 11 November.

East London Socialist Party member Lois Austin spoke at the protest. She condemned local Labour councillors and MPs, and Lynn Brown MP in neighbouring Newham, who do not call for an immediate ceasefire and an end to the massacres in Gaza.

NIALL MULHOLLAND

## ● Fury directed at Labour during Palestine meeting

Almost every speaker, from the platform and the floor, criticised the Labour Party for its awful position at a meeting about Palestine in Enfield, north London. And every time it happened, the audience of 130 clapped.

The speaker from Black Lives Matter was particularly angry. "What's the point in a pause? After the pause we start bombing again?!" "You cannot vote for politicians that do not stand on the side of innocent victims".

Socialist Party member Paul Kershaw spoke on behalf of Enfield Trades Union Council: "It's important that organised workers stand in opposition". And that "solidarity does not stop at borders".

Paul also said that this issue and others – like Camden Labour council destroying homeless people's tents after Suella Braverman described homelessness as a "lifestyle choice" – show we need new political representatives that will stand up for us.

IAN PATTISON

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# 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.
- Allow 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.

**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

**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.

- 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.

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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.
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• 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.

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# Help fund the struggle for socialism worldwide

ISAI MARIJERLA  
SOCIALIST PARTY TREASURER

At Socialism 2023 you will have the opportunity to discuss ideas that can change the world.

You will have the opportunity to practically help in that struggle by joining the Socialist Party, but whether or not you decide to join immediately, at the Saturday night rally you will have the opportunity to donate to the Socialism fighting fund appeal.

One third of the appeal will go to the Committee for a Workers' International, the socialist international to which the Socialist Party is affiliated. The horrors of the Israeli state onslaught on Gaza underline the desperate need for mass working-class organisations in both Palestine and Israel, struggling for socialism. The money that you donate can help fund attempts to try to link up with socialists in Palestine, Israel, and other countries around the world, to begin to build such organisations.

In the mass demonstrations in Britain the demand on our placards to 'build a mass working-class alternative to Sunak and Starmer' is getting a lot of support. There are many on the demonstrations who really identify with this and support the call for a new workers' party.

The crisis in the Tory party and the lack of an alternative from Labour shows the desperate need for such a party. We are the only party taking part in these demonstrations that is putting forward a clear socialist message including this demand. But we can only continue to do so with your donations.

Your donation at Socialism will play an important part in making sure we are able to reach out to many more thousands with our socialist ideas.

Every donation, whatever its size, will be vital to help fund our work. Make sure you don't miss out. Come to Socialism 2023 and make your donation count.

• See pages 8-9 and 16 for more

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AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q4: OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2023	DEADLINE: 31 DECEMBER 2023
London	7,317	5,000		146%
Northern	795	800		99%
South West	1,637	2,100		78%
West Midlands	1,844	2,700		68%
North West	814	1,200		68%
Yorkshire	1,595	2,650		60%
Southern & SE	1,061	2,400		44%
East Midlands	858	2,050		42%
Wales	763	2,400		32%
Eastern	161	1,300		12%
Other	5,909	2,400		246%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22,753</b>	<b>25,000</b>		<b>91%</b>

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- See pages 8-9 for more

# Bangladesh garment workers strike

PETE MASON AND AKHTER KHAN  
NEWHAM AND EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Another female striking worker has been killed by police in Bangladesh as garment workers fight for higher pay, in what has become the biggest industrial battle for a decade, hitting major industrial areas across the country.

Attempts by the bosses to reopen factories, in this two-week-long strike, resulted in mass protests of tens of thousands to try to prevent them. The workers blocked roads and stopped vehicles. Police used tear gas and rubber bullets to try to disperse them, and the protesters threw stones.

Three have died as workers fight a desperate struggle against starvation wages. The minimum wage has not risen for five years. Workers are demanding a tripling of their pay.

When the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) offered only a pitiful 25% rise at the end of October, the workers exploded onto the streets in protest.

Bangladesh capitalism earns \$55 billion in annual exports from the super-exploitation of some four million workers, mostly women, in 3,500 garment factories across the country, who live on \$75 a month, a little over \$2 a day.

The proposed rise would take them to \$90. They are demanding \$208, and this insult of an offer caused outrage.

On 7 November, after two weeks of protests and strikes, the Bangladesh government offered to increase the minimum wage to \$113, a 56% increase, but percentages are meaningless when wages are so small. Rising inflation, now 9.5%, has eaten away at what little their wages buy.

A significant number of members of the ruling party in parliament are also garment business owners, exerting a substantial influence on the



Bangladesh garment workers' protest PHOTO: SOLIDARITY CENTRE

government. Politics in Bangladesh is widely perceived by workers as merely an instrument to oppress the working class and exploit labour in Bangladesh's sweatshops, all to maximise profit.

The hugely valuable products of the workers' labour accounts for around 85% of Bangladesh's exports. Many of the world's top names in fashion, including Levi's, Zara and H&M, make their money from this exploitation.

The workers' union president Kalpona Akter, of the Bangladesh Garment and Industrial Workers Federation, told the AFP news

agency: "Many workers are half-starving. The brands and retailers only care about smooth shipments and profit. But they don't care about the wellbeing of the workers at the bottom of the supply chain."

The capitalists must be made to pay a decent wage, at least the \$208 demanded, together with decent working hours of no more than eight hours a day without loss of pay.

According to the Dhaka Tribune, garment worker Rasel Howlader, 26, died after Gazipur Industrial Police personnel allegedly shot him at close range, and on 8 November, Anjura Khatun, 28, a sewing machine

operator of Islam Garments in Gazipur, died of gunshot injuries after police opened fire on protesters.

In Gazipur about 6,000 workers walked out of their plants and staged protests. Most of the factories remain closed. Elsewhere workers sat on the production floor, suspending work.

Workers in the industrial sector of the capital city Dhaka blocked roads. A sit-down strike hit around ten open factories after clocking in in the same area.

Showing how seriously the capitalist class take the situation, the Dhaka Tribune reported a statement issued by the student leaders that played a

major role in the people's uprising in 1990 that led to the fall of the dictator, President Ershad.

Akhter Khan, one of the signatories and a member of the Socialist Party in England and Wales, told the Socialist:

"Our statement condemned the use of state force against the workers' just democratic movement, expressing outrage at the unfortunate deaths of some workers during the protests.

"We demanded an immediate end of repression and urged the government to re-evaluate.

"We warned that unless the workers' wage demands were met, potentially the entire four million garment workers could strike and bring the industry to a standstill."

This movement takes place while the capitalist opposition parties are calling for repeated two-day hartals (general strikes) and blockades across the country, in an attempt to close all businesses and force the government to concede to an interim caretaker government to conduct fair elections. A huge number of opposition leaders, supporters and activists have been arrested.

These parties do not support the workers, but the government is under siege. This political movement and the garment workers' movement developing simultaneously are putting significant pressure on the ruling party. The garment workers must continue to expand and consolidate the strike and can win a significant victory.



The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the international socialist organisation which the Socialist Party is affiliated to. The CWI is organised in countries across the planet. We work to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against capitalism, and to fight for a socialist world.

[socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net)

# Support for TUSC, collapse for Labour in Hackney mayoral election

BRIAN DEBUS  
HACKNEY AND ISLINGTON TUSC CONVENOR

Following a very short election campaign, Annoesjka Valent, Socialist Party member and Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate for Hackney mayor, received a very creditable 1,265 votes, 3.42% of the vote.

We stood on a programme of building 100% council housing on land the council owns, and rent controls in the private sector to reduce the current housing crisis. We said: take over empty properties and house the homeless.

Since the advent of mayoral elections, Labour has always won with ease in Hackney. On this occasion it succeeded in halving its vote from

36,000 in 2022 to 18,474. Apparently half its vote was made up of postal voters.

With an electorate of over 180,000 this means only one in ten of the population voted Labour, in what is traditionally seen as a rock-solid Labour area.

Our campaign included attending two hustings meetings where our policies received widespread support, and organising a public meeting of 25, which raised close to £800 for the election campaign.

We displayed posters proclaiming: "Build council homes! Rent controls now! Restore youth services! Reverse all austerity cuts! Make government and the rich pay, not workers and young people!" into over 150 local shops and cafes.

We leafleted parents at local primary schools, some facing closure, which we totally opposed. We called for reduced class sizes, and more funding from central government.

We distributed 5,000 leaflets via campaign stalls in local shopping areas, canvassing local estates and outside transport stations.

This was our first outing in a mayoral election and we are very pleased with our vote, and more importantly, the opportunity for our socialist ideas and programme to be delivered to every household in the borough.

**PREPARING FOR A STARMER-LED GOVERNMENT**

Come and discuss at **SOCIALISM 2023**

London, 25-26 November

tickets and info at [socialism.org.uk](http://socialism.org.uk)

# Why I'm going to Socialism 2023

EWIN WILLIAMS  
CAMDEN AND HARINGEY SOCIALIST PARTY

If you've just purchased this paper from one of our members, you may have been invited to join us at Socialism 2023 or perhaps you're a member who regularly attends Socialist Party branch meetings and is frequently reminded to get your tickets.

Our party strives to unite the workers internationally to bring about a socialist world in which each individual has enough to eat, a secure home and a stable life. At Socialism 2023 we will discuss how to achieve this.

Socialism always has discussions on past revolutions (this year discussion will be on Germany in 1923, the 1970s revolution in Chile, as well as the Arab Spring) not only to introduce prospective members to such topics but to ensure that we learn

from past struggles.

As well as past struggles we need to understand current political developments to adapt to the most pressing issue thrown up by capitalist crisis and to combat them. Perhaps most pressing, the war in Gaza will be discussed. The wide variety of other topics includes how we can prepare for a Starmer government, what AI means for humanity, and there will also be discussions on big ideas, such as what communism actually is.

Socialism 2023 is a place for real discussion where all in attendance can contribute and ask any question they like.

On the Saturday evening of Socialism we hold a rally where all attendees stand united and are ready to take socialism forward. To me at least, this is what always sticks in my mind after leaving Socialism.

- See pages 8-9 and 16 for more



£1 / £2 solidarity price

socialistparty.org.uk



# the Socialist

Issue 1251

16-22 November 2023

formerly **Militant**

# CAPITALISM MEANS WAR AND CRISIS

## Fight for a socialist alternative

### Rally at **SOCIALISM 2023**

#### Speakers include:

- **Emma Dent Coad**, socialist ex-MP standing against Starmer's Labour
- **Hannah Sell**, Socialist Party General Secretary



### End the war on Gaza

Saturday 25 November, 5:30 – 7:30pm  
Institute of Education, London, WC1H 0AL

Sunday 26 November rallies, 3-4pm  
**BUILDING A WORKERS' VOICE AGAINST WAR AND CAPITALISM**

YOUTH AGAINST WAR

FIGHTING FOR A SOCIALIST WORLD

## For more info and tickets visit [www.socialism.org.uk](http://www.socialism.org.uk)

Full programme pages 8-9



### Fight together to defend the right to strike

Lobby TUC special Congress  
9-10am Saturday 9 December  
TUC Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS  
Organised by NSSN, [shopstewards.net](http://shopstewards.net)

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



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