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the Socialist

Issue 1255

14 December 2023 - 4 January 2024

formerly **Militant**

War, poverty, climate destruction...

KICK OUT THE TORIES

Fight for socialist change

As the Socialist goes to press for the last time in 2023, it is not known whether or not Rishi Sunak will still be in Number 10 in the New Year.

The level of devastation the Israeli state forces are yet to inflict on Palestinians in Gaza and on the West Bank is also unknown.

It is almost certain that world

leaders will fail to agree to phase out polluting fossil fuels at the COP28 climate conference. And absolutely certain that households in Britain will face an even more austere festive period than last year.

War, poverty and climate destruction are the symptoms of profit-driven capitalism in crisis. The consequences of a super-rich capitalist elite competing for who can make the most money at the expense of working-class and poor people in Britain and internationally.

2023 has seen no shortage of working-class people fighting back;

through a strike wave on a scale not seen in a generation, and with some of the biggest-ever pro-Palestinian demonstrations.

Starting the year refusing to even meet unions to discuss pay, the Tories were forced by workers' action to concede. The 11 November mass Gaza demo claimed the scalp of hated Tory home secretary Suella Braverman.

The Tories won't survive long in office. Labour's Keir Starmer is dead set on course to be next prime minister, but promising iron-clad fiscal rules (read 'cut-backs') and backing the Israeli state's onslaught on Gaza.

The best new year's resolution you can make is to organise and strengthen the working-class fightback in 2024. Join the Socialist Party in fighting for a working-class stand in the general election. Help us, with others, put up a set of workers' candidates - trade unionists, anti-war campaigners, community campaigners - to take on the Tory-Labour pro-war, cuts consensus.

Help us fight for the socialist policies needed to transform working-class people's lives in Britain such as: a £15-an-hour minimum wage,

fully funded services and council house building. And help us win support for socialist change internationally - taking the vast wealth and resources out of the hands of the capitalist elites, to put into democratic public ownership and planned to meet the needs of all, not profit - the only way to end war, poverty and climate destruction.



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The Socialist is written, read, sold and bought by ordinary workers, trade unionists, young people and Socialist Party members. We want you to write for the Socialist.

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

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Friday before publication, or Monday morning for urgent news, unless otherwise agreed with the editors.

The Socialist goes to press on a Tuesday night. We publish online on Wednesday and in print on Thursday.

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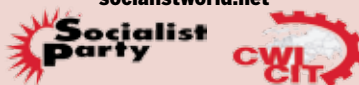
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SOCIALIST PARTY

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



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ISSN 1366-9621

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

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

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

Socialist Party

WHAT WE THINK

Every day in Gaza a new unimaginable horror exceeds the horror of the day before. As winter begins, freezing is being added to bombing, hunger and disease as causes of Gazans' deaths. At the time of writing, the official death toll has reached 18,000, but with hospitals unable to function and many buried under the rubble, the true figure is certainly higher.

And yet still the murderous onslaught continues, backed by the might of US imperialism. US President Joe Biden has repeatedly urged Israel to take precautions against killing Gazan civilians, but this is empty phrasemongering.

The Israeli military (IDF)'s ongoing onslaught on the south of Gaza, where most of the population fled following the destruction of the north, has not prevented the US vetoing - for the second time - a United Nations security council resolution calling for a ceasefire. Predictably, the Tories continued to back US imperialism and Israel, and abstained on the vote. Nor has it stopped Biden from bypassing the US Congress to send an extra 14,000 tank rounds to the IDF so it can continue to rain terror on Gaza.

Nothing could make it clearer that Biden, and behind him US imperialism, care nothing about the fate of the Palestinian masses, but only about the defence of US capitalism's interests - its profits, power and prestige. Nonetheless, no doubt US and Western capitalism believe their interests would be best served by an end to the onslaught on Gaza before too long.

Fears of a regional war are growing, with the hugely disruptive political and economic consequences that would flow from that for capitalism globally. An escalation of the still relatively low-level conflict between the IDF and Hezbollah on the northern Israel-Lebanon border is possible. Israel's national security advisor has declared that it "can no longer accept" Hezbollah on their northern border, in a clear threat to escalate.

A further increase in conflict in the Red Sea is also posed, as the Houthis in Yemen have declared that they intend to try and block all ships heading to the Israeli port of Eilat, not just Israeli ones, until humanitarian aid can enter Gaza.

There are also increasing skirmishes between US forces and mainly Iran-backed militias in Iraq. The Israeli Haaretz newspaper reported that "the heating up of these two arenas, Yemen and Iraq, could oblige the American administration to closely examine its strategic priorities and to dictate a timetable for the war in Gaza".

Haaretz is assuming, correctly, that US imperialism has enormous power to "dictate a timetable for the war". The US has always seen Israel as a bulwark of support for its interests in the Middle East. That doesn't mean that Israeli governments always do the US's bidding but, given its still considerable military and economic strength, the US can exert enormous pressure on the Israeli regime when it

WHAT CAN END HORROR IN GAZA?



PHOTO: WAFAC/CC

chooses to do so.

US imperialism is in decline, leading to an increasingly multipolar world, but it is nonetheless currently still the strongest pole. The US's defence spending is still three times that of its nearest rival, China, and Israel remains heavily dependent on US military support and trade.

So why does the Biden regime continue to back the Israeli state's onslaught against Gaza, despite the possible consequences? One reason is that there have not yet been qualitative steps towards a regional war, reflecting the approach of the Arab regimes. For the corrupt and dictatorial leaders of Arab countries, support for Palestinian rights is no more than empty words uttered to try and stave off the growing pressure from the working class and poor of their countries.

Anti-war movement

That pressure from the 'potential superpower', the working class and poor - from the anti-war movement - is ultimately the most important factor in the global equation. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu himself pointed to the effect of the anti-war movement when he said: "There are huge demonstrations in Western capitals...we need to apply counter-pressure". He is worried about the pressure the mass anti-war movement is exerting on Western

governments.

How can we confirm Netanyahu's fears? We have already seen large anti-war marches globally. The biggest in Western capitals so far have been in London, and the movement in Britain has claimed the scalp of ultra-right wing home secretary Suella Braverman, whose attempts to ban the demos ended in her sacking. This was a direct result of the power and popularity of the movement in support of the Palestinians. There have also been significant demonstrations across Europe and the US.

But of course the movement has not yet succeeded in stopping the slaughter. It needs to be strengthened, both now and for the future. Capitalism is a system in crisis, which increasingly results in war and conflict. This year's 'armed conflict survey' records 183 wars worldwide, the highest number in three decades. Even in more - relatively - peaceful periods, capitalism has proved incapable of meeting the national aspirations of the Palestinians. The promise of a capitalist 'two-state solution' raised by the 1993 Oslo Accords proved, as we warned at the time, to be a cruel illusion.

It is obvious that achieving the immediate demand of the current anti-war movement for a ceasefire will not be the end of the matter. We will still need to learn the lessons of this time to be ready to build mass

anti-war movements in support of the Palestinians and other oppressed peoples.

One weakness of the movement in Britain so far has been the relatively small role played by the organised workers' movement. Opinion polls show that the population are horrified by the suffering of the Palestinians in Gaza. That undoubtedly includes most trade unionists. The trade unions in Britain have over six million members and enormous potential power, which they have begun to demonstrate - on a higher level than for three decades - over the last eighteen months. The working class, ultimately responsible for creating the capitalists' profits and for keeping society running, is potentially the most powerful force in society. However, to realise that potential power it will need both organisation and, crucially, a conscious leadership armed with a socialist programme and a determination to fight for it. Such a programme includes an understanding of Starmer's role as a prop for the capitalist system.

At this stage, there have only been small trade union contingents on the demonstrations. It was positive that when the 11 November demonstration was under threat of banning, the general secretaries of the RMT, FBU and NEU made public statements that they would march regardless. Nonetheless, there has not been a

serious drive by the leaders of the trade unions to build and lead the anti-war movement. The trade union movement putting itself in the leadership of the struggle against the war, starting by seriously mobilising for the demonstrations, would considerably strengthen its power.

Industrial action

Another linked question is the issue of industrial action in opposition to the war. School and college students have begun to show the way with walkouts, and young Socialist Party members are working to build those further. Clearly, however, action by workers for companies that are selling goods which aid the Israeli war machine would have a greater impact. That is why we have been campaigning for the whole trade union movement to back to the hilt any group of workers who take such action.

There is a long and proud history of collective industrial action of this kind, from the London dockworkers who refused to load a ship with armaments that were to be used against the Russian revolution, to the Rolls Royce workers who declined to repair Chilean air force planes after the US-backed Pinochet coup, to the rail workers who blocked the transmission of munitions bound for the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

So far, what has taken place this

time are blockades of arms factories from outside, initiated by a group called 'Workers for a Free Palestine'. These blockades claim to have briefly stopped production and have understandably been greeted by enthusiasm by the anti-war movement, particularly those who are rightly looking to the trade unions to play a role. However, unfortunately it is not clear that these actions are a step in the direction of the kind of action that is needed.

The 'Workers for a Free Palestine' website explains it is acting on the call of Palestinian trade unions for "trade unions in the relevant industries to refuse to build weapons for workers for companies that are selling goods which aid the Israeli war machine would have a greater impact. That is why we have been campaigning for the whole trade union movement to back to the hilt any group of workers who take such action."

What is needed, and is being called for by the Palestinian trade union appeal, is collective action by the workers directly involved - which could of course be supported by other workers from outside. That is why the Socialist Party has raised in Unite, the main union in the sector, the need

for a national meeting of reps in this industry and other related sectors such as docks and logistics, to discuss what action is possible. Even such a meeting being called would put more pressure on the Tory government than the blockades from outside.

To achieve such action on a wider scale, both in this and future conflicts, will require an anti-war movement whose leadership has a starting point of international working-class solidarity, putting the blame for the conflict where it belongs, on the capitalist and imperialist elites worldwide, and not on any section of the working class of the US, Britain or, come to that, Israel. This is the instinctive approach of most participants in the pro-Palestinian demonstrations, the majority of whom are very clear that they do not support the right-wing Islamist leadership of Hamas and its brutal attacks on Israeli civilians.

The growing pressure for a ceasefire today is being exerted by the global anti-war movement, but also by part of the population in Israel, particularly to make more likely the freeing of the hostages still held in Gaza. Israeli society is deeply split, and Netanyahu's ultra-right wing government is extremely unpopular. The Israeli working class is a potentially powerful force if it played a role independent of its ruling class.

A first step to doing so would be for it to have its own independent party. The same urgent need is present in almost every country, and is central to strengthening the anti-war movement. The Palestinian working class and poor need their own party. So do we here in Britain.

Working-class party

While both Sunak and Starmer back the war to the hilt, it could not be clearer that we need a mass political party that stands against it. However, such a party will not succeed if it is confined to one issue alone; rather, it needs a mass democratic workers' party, with a clear programme in opposition to every aspect of both the Tories' and Starmer's pro-capitalist warmongering agenda. The Socialist Party is fighting for the first steps towards such a party to be taken in the forthcoming election - with a workers' list of candidates.

Mass workers' parties would be a huge step forward in every country, strengthening our ability to fight for working-class interests and pressurise the capitalist elites. However, the only road to a world without endless wars, where the national aspirations of the Palestinians and every oppressed people could be met, will be for the working class to not only have its own parties, but to arm them with programmes to take power. That would require taking the levers of power out of the hands of the capitalists, nationalising the major corporations and banks, and beginning to build a new democratic socialist world. If you agree join us.

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



The Socialist Party is fighting for:

- End the siege - for the immediate permanent withdrawal of the Israeli military from the occupied territories
- For a mass struggle of the Palestinians, under their own democratic control, to fight for liberation
- For the building of independent workers' parties in Palestine and Israel and links between them
- For an independent, socialist Palestinian state, alongside a socialist Israel, with guaranteed rights for all minorities, as part of a 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 fights for socialism and internationalism

Record rent rises!

Landlords raked in an estimated £85 billion in rent this year, more than double the £40 billion in 2010. The average rent on a new tenancy rose to an eye-watering £1,348 in November, a 10% rise on the year, and another £125-per-month that can't be spent on food or heating.

Millions live in fear of a dreaded 'no-fault' eviction notice, which the Tories ditched their plans to ban in November. Big corporate landlords are rolling in cash, and many smaller ones struggle to keep up with mortgage payments as banks hike rates.

Ultimately, the super-rich get richer and the poorest pay the most. The Socialist Party fights for rent controls now, to bring an end to rip-off rents; and for the building of council homes to meet need, so everyone has access to a decent home.



The state of ageing 2023: fight for pensions we can live on

STEVE ION
PCS ASSOCIATE AND RETIRED MEMBERS
MERSEYSIDE (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

The Centre for Ageing Better has produced a report on the state of ageing in 2023. This report shows a great divide between rich and poor. The number of pensioners living in poverty has increased. The gap between the health of richer and poorer old people is greater than the difference in living standards between older and younger generations.

Many older people are living with major illness and disabilities, which are not helped by poor housing conditions. Pensioners are increasingly living in private rented accommodation and, on fixed incomes, struggle to find money for increasing rental costs. The private rented sector has the highest proportion of poor housing, 49% of poor housing has people aged 55 and over living in it.

Health inequality was found to be linked to ethnicity as well as age. These negative impacts accumulate as people get older. For example, the proportion of Bangladeshi women aged 50 and over who report being in poor health (22%) is the same as

for white British women in richer areas aged 85 and over. Similar figures show disability inequality too.

Even with an 8.5% increase to state pensions with the triple lock, not all pensioners get this, as some are on earlier schemes and only get divide between rich and poor. The UK State pension remains one of the lowest in Europe. A living state pension is badly needed, with flexible retirement on full state pension from 55 years onwards. The wealth and resources exist to fund dignity and respect in old age for all, not just the wealthy. And advances in production mean work could be shared out.

While we suffer further cuts to the public sector, the trade union and pensioners' movements need to continue to campaign on these issues. Follow the example of the Liverpool 47 council which fought for and won a campaign for extra money for public sector jobs, house building and social services for working and elderly people of Liverpool.

To properly provide for elderly people, we need a socialist society to end the capitalist system, based on profit not need, once and for all.



Workers' unity to fight racism and discrimination

HUGO PIERRE
TOWER HAMLETS SOCIALIST PARTY

The 7 October Hamas attacks and the subsequent revenge war waged by the Israeli state on Gaza have led to consequences for communities in the UK. There have been reports of threats to both Jewish and Muslim places of worship in several towns and cities.

Reports of antisemitic attacks rose up to sevenfold, according to some police reports. There have also been many reports of threats to Muslims with attacks also seven times greater than average. Many have faced abuse and physical threats. While many of those reports are of online attacks, they are probably just the tip of the iceberg, and some have faced physical threats. There has been vandalism of buildings and in some areas precautions are being taken to shield children on their way to school.



Far right

The far right attempted to mobilise on Armistice Day at the Cenotaph in opposition to demonstrations calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. Fearing the potential major reaction from the trade unions and the working class as a whole and in response to violence aimed at themselves, the police intervened to arrest over 100 counter-protesters.

That action was no doubt inspired by right-wing Tory politicians, including the then Home Secretary, Suella Braverman, calling the mass demonstrations against the Israeli state bombings on Gaza "hate marches". The Tories have hypocritically denounced antisemitism while they are currently provoking racist division with their anti-immigration and Rwanda policies, as well as anti-working class measures such as the minimum service level anti-union laws.

Keir Starmer

But Keir Starmer's Labour is also responsible. The uncritical support for the indiscriminate Israeli forces' murderous military campaign in Gaza has also undoubtedly fed racist division. His refusal to allow MPs and councillors to participate in demonstrations and forcing MPs to not support the call for a 'ceasefire' further provoked divisions in his party. Many, not wanting to face the anger of their local constituents, opposed Starmer in Parliament and scores of councillors have resigned from Labour.

The threat to the working-class

movement of both antisemitism and Islamophobia, both specific forms of racism, must be taken seriously and must be opposed. Over the last 18 months there has been a resurgence in trade union action that has mobilised and united workers from a variety of backgrounds against the cost-of-living crisis. While the mass demonstrations that have taken place against the war on Gaza have seen large participation from people with a heritage from South Asia and the Middle East, Jewish people have also attended, appalled at the horrors they are witnessing.

The trade union movement has the enormous potential to unite the working class. Unions must call on members to attend the demonstrations and start to organise them. They must also discuss how to support workers opposing the actions of their capitalist governments both in Palestine and Israel, as well as occupation and war.

But workers must also raise a political voice against racism and discrimination, including Islamophobia and antisemitism. Those that have voted in favour of war and discrimination need to be replaced.

Those same politicians voted for cuts to services in their communities and often come into conflict with workers fighting the cost-of-living crisis. A new mass workers' party, based on the trade unions, could link the fight against war and discrimination with the fight against cuts and for better pay and conditions, to unite workers across religious divides.

Sunak's Rwanda wrangling widens deep Tory fault lines

ISAI MARIJERLA
SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Rishi Sunak has made a desperate plea to his party to save his premiership: "Unite or die". But his plea has done nothing to solve the division that exists in the Tories. As the Socialist Party has been continuously and consistently saying, the Tories are weak and deeply divided. In fact the glue that had held them together was the potential victory of Jeremy Corbyn. But now, with the Labour Party safely for the bosses in the hands of Sir Keir Starmer, who has proved to be their representative, the division in the Tories has exploded to the surface.

The latest issue to further rock the Tory boat is the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill. Robert Jenrick, immigration minister, quit his post over the new bill. He and the right wing of the Conservative Party accuse the bill of being too weak, "not fit for purpose", and are demanding tougher measures.

The bill orders courts to ignore the UK's Human Rights Act and international law, including the UN's Refugee Convention, when considering whether Rwanda is safe for asylum seekers. It is expected to face opposition in the House of Lords and has drawn criticism from lawyers. Veteran British diplomat Lord John Kerr, who is on the international agreements committee in the House of Lords, said the bill would do "immense harm" to Britain's reputation.

Sunak is trying everything he can to try and stop small boats of asylum seekers crossing the channel, one of his top five priorities. Working-class and young people in Britain are facing an acute cost-of-living crisis, and it's stopping small boats that the Tories are fighting over! The Office for National Statistics data shows that people with children and those living in rented accommodation are among the groups more likely to report a range of impacts from cost-of-living pressures, such as running out of food. The NHS and other services are in crisis, but Sunak is doubling the cost of attempting to send refugees and asylum seekers to Rwanda to £290 million.

The end of the Tories?

The question on everyone's minds is whether this will be the straw that breaks the camel's back. Is this going to be the end of Sunak, the third Tory leader in two years, an unelected prime minister with no mandate? The Socialist goes to press before the outcome of and fallout from the parliamentary vote.

Many of those following the 'debate' will think that surely Labour is better than the Tories. They at least are going to vote against this anti-human rights Rwanda bill. But Starmer has mocked Sunak by asking him how many people he would send to Rwanda. Starmer will vote against this bill but his policies on immigration are not that far different from the Tories. In fact, one of his attacks on Sunak is that the government is spending "hundreds of millions of



pounds for nothing in return" and is attacking the Tories for not deporting enough people.

The Labour Party is currently 20 points ahead in polls, but this reflects hatred of the Tories more than confidence in Labour. You'd have to be extremely incompetent to be less popular than the Tories right now. The current government and the one in waiting are not going to address the real issues facing working-class and the young, by building council homes and fully funding our public services.

The Tories and Labour cannot be trusted with our lives and livelihood. We don't want a party that is better than the Tories, we want a party that represents the interests of the

majority. A working-class party with socialist policies. One that will fight for domestic and foreign policies to improve the lives of all, including investing in jobs, homes and services for all, rather than selling arms to repressive states and governments. The Socialist Party is doing all it can to build such a party, including by helping socialists and activists to stand in elections as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition umbrella (see page 12). It is only such a party that will fight for the rights of working-class and young people in Britain and internationally.

● Read more: 'Divisive 'hostile environment' will not stop small boats' at socialismtoday.org



Minimum wage youth rates unfair - fight for £15 an hour for all

ERIS AND SAIGE
SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY

For young people seeking jobs or in employment, wages are pitiful. Even more so when you look at the staggering cost of living. It raises the question of why younger people are paid so poorly. Are we worth less as workers than anybody else?

£5.28/HR

minimum wage if you're aged 16 or 17

The National Living Wage, the minimum rate if you are 23-years-old or over, is £10.42 per hour. The Tories say they're on the side of low-paid workers as they've announced they

are bringing down the threshold to 21-year-olds next year. But then why are 16 to 17-year-olds paid barely over half of that, at a miserable £5.28?

The government website says it's to protect employers, but does food and rent cost less if you're young? Landlords don't charge less for younger tenants. Surely wages should be enough to live on, whether you're 17 or 70.

Since 2013 there has been a 25% increase in young adults living at home, a clear connection to rising rents and house prices.

As young people we need to financially support ourselves as much as anyone else. Not to mention, financing a university degree (to qualify for decent-paying jobs), which is a mammoth task, and bursaries are few and far between.

The Socialist Party fights for 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.

SOCIALISM TODAY



Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

December-January issue includes...

- Roots of conflict - brief history of Israel-Palestine
 - Trade Unions and the early Labour Party
 - Starmer's Gaza crisis
- socialismtoday.org/subscribe
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● Paper sub £3 a month, e-sub £2.50

From the NHS frontline: 'We are the NHS, and we know what's needed'

SOCIETY OF RADIOGRAPHER REP

work in a major trauma hospital as a radiographer, mostly in A&E.

It's not possible to write about the state of the health service without mentioning what is happening in Gaza. We have been left stunned by the targeting of hospitals, with health workers losing their lives trying to save others and as the electricity and other supplies run out having to choose who is treated and who is not.

For many of us it brings back memories of the height of the Covid crisis when hospitals ran short of oxygen and ventilators in intensive care, and doctors were forced to make similar decisions. Although we are not having bombs dropped on us, working in A&E can feel like working in a war zone.

I've worked in the NHS for over 20 years. Back when I started, we were also demanding more resources, more staff, shorter waiting lists and an end to private companies leeching off our NHS. Since, we've made huge strides forward in technology and treatment, but Labour and Tory governments have failed to give us the funding we need to take full advantage of these steps forward.

In my field of imaging, we can take a major trauma patient from helipad, to resus, to a scanner in a matter of minutes to diagnose what would have been a fatal injury, and then onto successful surgery. Many more of these traumatically injured patients are saved today than in the past.

Chaos

But round the corner from resus in the rest of A&E, the picture could not be more different. It looks like chaos and must feel that way to patients.

When I first started there were always empty bays ready for new patients. Now the corridors between are full of patients on trolleys. These patients are still monitored, but dignity and proper care are a real struggle. We come down and collect patients for imaging and usually have to find another space to put them back into.

We try to reassure patients, but many are fearful of what may be wrong or for other family members they would normally look after, and the long waits just make this unbearable. It's incredibly stressful and mental health provision is a struggle. Nurses wear body cameras because of the increasing violence and aggression. As we pass, people call out for help, and we lend a hand where we can, but everyone is so busy.

Targets

Governments like to bring in new targets to make it look like they are doing something, but the maximum four-hour wait, introduced in 2004 with no extra resources, is simply used as a rod to beat us with. Many of our patients are on emergency trolleys for ten hours or more.

When I did my training, anyone

with a broken hip, common in the over 65s, would be seen, X-rayed and diagnosed within the hour, and transferred to an orthopaedic ward to have surgery the following day.

Now it might be several hours before we are asked to X-ray, and hours more hanging around in A&E. Final transfer is made to any ward that has space, regardless of specialism, because we are always in 'black alert' - which means no beds for new admissions. Surgery is delayed for an average of five days. Recovery is far less certain in these circumstances.

In the first quarter of 2012, only 15 patients in England waited more than 12 hours for a bed. In just two months last year, 158,000 were waiting at least this long to be transferred to a ward.

Many are forced to pitch up at A&E because they can't get to their GP, or because they have been on waiting lists for so long that their chronic conditions have become acute, unbearable or even life threatening. Is it any wonder that staff morale is at rock bottom? We know what it's like to give our best and still fall short of the care we want to give our patients.

15

patients waited more than 12 hours for a bed in three months in 2012

158,000

patients waited more than 12 hours for a bed in two months in 2022

The strikes this year have been as much the conditions we work under as on the issue of pay. Back in 1948, the British Medical Association was among the loudest critics of the NHS, now its members are on picket lines with nurses, ambulance crews, physios as well as radiographers.

Breaking point

People are at breaking point with vacancy rates for radiographers at 12.7%, similar to other staff. Everyone is overworked. Nine out of ten patients need X-rays, scans and therapeutic services. But the Tories' Autumn Statement offered nothing new for the NHS.

They claim an expansion of staff training but it is too little too late, and without proper funding or grants. Universities are already struggling to fill places on current courses as - surprise, surprise - people are not attracted to taking on massive debt only to be poorly paid and overworked.

£2.3 billion has been promised for New Community Diagnostic Centres but with no funding for staffing them! This brings memories of the Nightingale centres under Covid which were fully equipped but with no nurses!

Labour under Starmer

And there's also rising anger at the Labour frontbench. Shadow health secretary Wes Streeting demands more involvement from the private sector because we have a "broken system" in the NHS, and he thinks "we can't continue to pour money into the NHS," despite less spent on diagnostics than other European countries.

Clearly, he's been talking to profit-driven big companies not health workers, because private healthcare is generally chaotic and inefficient. His claim that we don't embrace "cutting-edge treatments and technology" is nonsense and insulting. What holds us back is gross underfunding.

The Tories have offered the consultants some concessions but nothing for junior doctors or radiographers still in dispute.

We will now be going into the next pay round in Spring 2024. It was strike action which forced concessions last time. No one has any confidence in the pay review body.

This time we need to be ready and organised for a united fight for real pay restoration. We will need to make sure members are prepared for further strikes, with a lead from the top to organise meetings with members and reps to get the vote out.

We need coordinated action by all health unions, setting our own emergency staff cover for strike days, not those imposed by the government's minimum service levels.

We are the NHS, we know what's needed: decent pay, safe staffing levels and a massive increase in funding to provide the services people need and to fully fund our training.



Barts strikers marching in east London HUGO PIERRE

Barts strike expands

JAMES IVES
LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The courageous strike at Barts NHS Trust has inspired more workers to join the fight. Another boisterous Unite the Union rally outside the Royal London Hospital showed the action picking up momentum.

Dozens of pharmacists walked out during the last round of action on 4-10 December. This is a first! They have a crucial function in hospital care and are fed up with unsafe staffing levels. Pharmacists are now working towards electing reps.

Pathologists and haematologists were also out in force at the 6 December rally. Their work is indispensable to diagnosis. On top of its own five hospitals, Barts supplies

these services to several others across east and southeast London.

The march around the Royal London in Whitechapel stopped off at pathology HQ with a workers' petition, chanting and blasting an air horn. They compelled a manager to come down, hear from the rep and receive the petition.

Emergency Department nurses have suffered a new injury from the trust. Management has barred all further requests for leave to the end of the year. Entitlement will not roll over to 2024. A striking nurse told us that means some of them losing 70 to 90 hours of leave. What a way to deal with a staff morale and retention crisis!

Meanwhile, the 'soft facilities management' staff - caterers,

cleaners, domestics, porters and the like - continue their action on pay. Bosses still refuse to honour the lump sum paid to NHS staff for those sections who were restored from outsourced to direct NHS employment 'too late' for it.

But strike action forced the trust to bring them back in-house. Strike action can win more on pay and conditions across all different parts of the workforce.

The next round of action involves Synergy staff from 18-26 December, and Trust staff 18-22 and 25-26 December.

Where workers get a fighting lead - such as that from Unite Barts branch secretary and Socialist Party member Len Hockey - they will fight, and they can win.

TUC SPECIAL CONGRESS AGREES PLAN TO RESIST MSL ANTI-UNION LAWS

Now build maximum pressure on leaders to see it through

ROB WILLIAMS
SOCIALIST PARTY INDUSTRIAL AND WORKPLACE ORGANISER

Just after the Special Congress of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) on 9 December, called to oppose the Tories' new minimum service levels anti-union legislation (MSLs), the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) tweeted: "The TUC, representing 5.5 million workers, has just agreed a campaign of resistance to the new anti-union laws at a Special Congress. Crucially, unions have agreed they will refuse to tell their members to cross picket lines, a clear act of defiance against the Act."

FBU general secretary and this year's TUC president, Matt Wrack, opened the congress by reminding delegates that the reason why Sunak's government is resorting to their latest attack on the right to strike is because workers are fighting back against the cost-of-living squeeze.

The FBU's motion to the annual Congress in September was one of the main drivers behind the special Congress. It set out what could be a fighting strategy against the MSLs, if implemented seriously. Central to that resistance is non-compliance: unions refusing to follow employers' instructions to police their own strikes and select workers to effectively break their own strikes.

At September's Congress, Matt revealed that the minimum levels in the fire and rescue service could be as high as 70%, and in control rooms 100%, meaning a ban on strikes in that area! Matt said to Special Congress that, while defiance could come with risks, given the stakes, the biggest danger was passivity.

Statement

The TUC General Council had produced a statement which incorporates important elements of the composite motion passed in September. The points that must form the basis of a real plan of action include:

- Develop practical solidarity plans for unions actively engaged in strategies of non-compliance
- Support any worker subject to a work notice, including support from across the trade union movement, if their employer disciplines them in any way
- Ensure that where any affiliate is facing significant risk of sanctions because of this legislation, we convene an emergency meeting of the Executive Committee to consider options for providing practical, industrial, financial and/or political backing to that union
- Refuse to tell our members to cross a picket line
- Call an urgent demonstration in the event a work notice is deployed



Junior doctors are among the strikers that could be in the firing line of MSLs ELAINE BRUNSKILL

The National Shop Stewards Network lobbied the Special Congress PAULA MITCHELL

and a union or worker is sanctioned in relation to a work notice

However, real detail and intent is needed. The fact that the statement was moved and seconded by the right-wing general secretaries of shop workers' union Usdaw and public sector union Unison will raise concerns with many union reps about the seriousness and determination that is necessary. Members of those unions must now apply pressure to their leaders to hold them to their words.

Name the date for a national demo

One of the main weaknesses of the General Council's statement is that it didn't name the date for a national Saturday demonstration in the New Year. This would be a vital step in mobilising workers as well as sending a clear message to the weak and divided Tory government that a real fight was on.

Instead, the statement proposed to "mobilise the whole trade union movement to march with the sacked GCHQ workers through Cheltenham on 27 January", 40 years after Tory prime minister Margaret Thatcher took away trade union rights there.

But there is no contradiction in supporting this march and also calling a national demonstration. Such a demo was called for by an FBU

rep in one of the two panel discussions, which included union reps and members who have been on picket lines over the last year. Rail union RMT rep Jim Buchanan told Congress that striking rail workers had regularly overcome the undemocratic voting thresholds brought in by the Trade Union Act 2016 by then Tory prime minister David Cameron, now returned to cabinet office by Rishi Sunak.

In the debate, Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: "This law puts the Tories at war with workers." She told delegates that Unite had changed its rules so that it is not limited by the law. "The easy part of today is to agree the statement, but hard part will be to act... Real solidarity may take us outside the law. As it was said in 1921 [by the Poplar councillors], it's better to break the law than break the poor."

Labour employers

But, as with a number of speakers, Sharon warned that they couldn't wait for Labour, especially with Starmer praising Thatcher, a reminder of his refusal to support strikes. Matt Wrack reminded delegates that Thatcher had destroyed working-class communities.

The statement demanded that an incoming Labour government honours its "commitment to repeal this

legislation within their first 100 days of office." But it is essential that the unions make demands on Labour now where it is the employer.

Before the Congress, the TUC published a joint statement from a number of Labour mayors and council leaders opposing the MSL law. But with comments such as looking to "explore every possible option", they fall short of a categorical refusal to issue work notices. The unions must demand this.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch demanded that the Scottish National Party-led Scottish government and Labour-led Welsh government refuse to issue work notices, as well as Labour mayors such as Sadiq Khan in London. He said that the RMT, in dispute on London Underground, would stand with train drivers' union Aslef, which is still taking action in the train operating companies.

There was no opposition to the General Council's statement, which was passed unanimously. Communication Workers Union (CWU) general secretary Dave Ward said: "It's a great statement but it doesn't mean anything if we can't look each other in the eyes and put it into action." He called for every union to draw up an action plan of what it can do. But unions need to be serious and committed. "We've got to go further than ever before in collective solidarity."

Pressure

The TUC Special Congress has laid out a general plan of opposition and defiance to the MSL. But it is essential that maximum pressure is built and maintained on the union leaders. A vibrant lobby of the Congress in pouring rain, called by the National Shop Stewards Network, attracted militant rank-and-file union activists, intent on fighting for the action that can win.

In the next few weeks, unions representing rail workers and junior doctors could be in the firing line. The strike wave of the last 18 months against the crisis-ridden Tory governments of Johnson, Truss and Sunak has seen the biggest level of action since Thatcher. It shows that should Sunak and any employers press the MSL button, if action is prepared and built seriously, the Tories can be defeated and thrown out.



Go further than ever before in collective solidarity

Dave Ward, CWU general secretary

Join the fightback
JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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



CLIMATE CATASTROPHE: THERES STILL TIME, STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALISM

RYAN ALDRED
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Human-caused global warming and climate change have been known about for decades but we are now entering a crucial period, after which the consequences of our actions, or lack thereof, could have ramifications that go well into the 2100s and beyond.

At the time of writing the outcome of the COP28 climate negotiations in Dubai are unknown. However, it is certain that the gaggle of capitalist leaders, each interested primarily in looking after the profits of their bosses at home, will not come up with an agreement which adequately deals with the scale of the crisis quickly enough.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), produces annual reports which give an increasingly bleak outlook based on current world trajectories in relation to a myriad of factors. The most significant worry increasingly being realised: "Every increment of global warming will intensify multiple and concurrent hazards."

Human activity has already caused

a 1.1°C increase in global temperatures from 1850-1900 levels. Up to 3.6 billion people live in regions or situations that are highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. For millions - mostly working-class and poor people, victims of forest fires, floods, droughts and other extreme weather events - climate change is already catastrophic.

Climate change-driven desertification of agricultural land, for example, has awful consequences for the food supply to millions. The Economist magazine projects that spiralling food prices will push hundreds of millions into food poverty with an estimated 1.6 billion people already unable to get enough to eat.

Together with anger over government inaction responding to extreme weather events and in taking proactive measures to combat climate change, and anger over other aspects of cost-of-living crises, rising food prices or shortages can fuel upheavals. It was a major feature contributing to the upheavals of the Arab Spring in 2011, for example.

The effects of climate change will, together with all aspects of capitalist crisis, lead increasing numbers to look for an alternative.



PHOTO: KENUEONE/CC



World leaders at COP28 PHOTO: MALDIVES PRESIDENT'S OFFICE/CC

How far off track?

Just 1 of 42 indicators that the world is set to limit global temperature rises to 2°C is on track, according to the World Resources Institute - the share of electric cars on the road.

This is in part because the upscaling of electric vehicle manufacturing has become more profitable - the primary driver for capitalist investment. However, this in itself is problematic as it has prompted a global race among superpowers to secure the rare earth elements and metals like cobalt, lithium and manganese required for their manufacture in order to corner market share.

This is resulting in increased mining, which is adding to the carbon intensity of industry, paradoxically further worsening global warming. Moreover, without a comparable shift in global infrastructure to green energy production, the shift to electric vehicles alone will not be anywhere near enough to stop the rise of,

Capitalist conflict

let alone reverse, carbon emissions. According to figures produced by the World Resources Institute, low-carbon energy production has reached parity with fossil fuels. However, in order to limit global temperature rises to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, as set out in the 2015 Paris Agreement, low-carbon energy production needs to be in a ratio of 7:1 by 2030.

Of the other 41 metrics, which include things like the reversal of rainforest, mangrove and peatland degradation and destruction, phasing out coal, decarbonising steel production and a whole host of others, more than half are way off track and some indicators are even going in the wrong direction.

One example, is of fossil-fuel subsidies surging to a record \$7 trillion, in large part driven by huge amounts of government spending to limit the effects of the cost-of-living crisis brought about by higher fuel and energy costs in the aftermath of the Ukraine war.

Britain's climate course off the rails

Here in Britain, we've seen no bucking of world trends, with the Conservatives ditching a plethora of green policies and commitments over the course of the last 13 years in government.

David Cameron's ending of solar subsidies and energy efficiency schemes were only the tip of the iceberg as he did away with what he referred to as "green crap". Despite the stark warnings of academics and climate activists, Rishi Sunak recently rolled back on the pledge to ban petrol and diesel car production to 2035, with a further delay in the phasing out of fossil fuel boilers and a moving of the target of reaching net zero by 2050 down the list of UK priorities.

Similarly, when he was mayor of London, Boris Johnson's introduction of the Ultra-Low Emission Zone, which has been subsequently expanded under Labour's Sadiq Khan, has seen what is effectively a regressive tax with the poorest and least able to afford to replace their non-compliant cars hit the hardest. Meanwhile, the biggest polluters, including the manufacturers of non-compliant cars, have been let completely off the hook.

Labour under Keir Starmer has been quick to jettison what was, in the grand scheme of things, a relatively modest set of green policies set out by Jeremy Corbyn. Determined to try to show Labour's reliability as a safe pair of hands for capitalism, shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves announced back in June that Labour would be delaying its plans for an annual fund of £28 billion for green investment and jobs until the middle of the next parliament.

It was recently leaked by sources close to Starmer that the plan was to scrap the green investment fund completely, although Labour is now claiming this is one pledge they won't renege on. For them, appearing fiscally responsible in the aftermath of a series of disastrous Tory-led governments, is a higher priority than addressing the looming climate crisis.

A socialist programme

According to the science, there is still time to not only limit but avoid absolute climate catastrophe. At the 2023 Climate in Action conference it was universally agreed among the scientific advisors that not only harm reduction but even reversal of damage done was possible, if only the political will was there.

The window is very quickly tightening and with each passing year that we veer wildly off track, the challenge becomes steeper. But it remains surmountable.

What is needed, and is increasingly being sought out, is a systemic alternative. Capitalism continues to demonstrate that it is incapable of bringing about change with the speed and scale needed, at the necessary planning and coordination. That is only possible with the socialist transformation of society internationally.

Last year, British Petroleum alone made £23 billion in profit. If the commanding heights of the economy, including big oil and big energy, were brought under democratic public ownership, with no compensation to the fat-cat owners, resources and investment could be planned to very quickly end reliance on fossil fuels.

Likewise, a mass programme of eco-friendly council house building, built with the highest energy efficiency ratings and fitted with heat pumps, would not only begin to address the housing crisis but would begin to tackle the one-third of emissions produced from buildings, which come primarily from space heating and cooking. The rental income coming into local authority coffers instead of the pockets of big landlords could then provide revenue for councils to roll out an environmentally friendly retrofitting scheme for heat pumps and other

green alternatives.

Ultimately, with profits being the main driving factor in capitalist economies, coupled with the geopolitical rivalries which are ratcheting up, capitalism offers no way forward in the face of the escalating climate catastrophe which is unfolding. With a socialist plan of production organised under the democratic control and management of workers, we could strip away the unnecessary duplication, wastefulness and overproduction which currently exists under capitalism.

With nationalisation of railways and buses, and an overhaul of services to ensure they are fully electrified and run on renewable energy, high-quality, reliable, safe and free public transport could be provided.

Combining this with the expansion of services, which have been whittled away due to austerity and cost-cutting by privatisers, this would massively aid cutting down on the need to use petrol and diesel cars, without resorting to punishing and regressive carbon taxes.

With an end to fossil fuel industry subsidies, and by investing in green jobs, we could see a reduction in carbon intensity to sectors like the steel industry which, nationalised under working-class control, could ensure the protection of jobs and, where necessary, the transferring of skills to producing other socially useful products and technology that can aid in the pursuit of environmental sustainability.

The desire for fundamental change is being increasingly expressed with the demands for system change that have increasingly become a feature of climate strikes and demonstrations in the recent period. The encroaching climate catastrophe can be averted, but it is dependent on winning support for the socialist programme needed. Join the Socialist Party to help us fight for it.



Is nuclear needed?

Climate change can be averted without needing to resort to the building of new nuclear reactors. Some have begun revisiting the question of nuclear as a so-called renewable option due to nuclear reactors not producing CO₂ or other greenhouse gases.

However, leaving aside the risk of another incident like Three Mile Island, Chernobyl or Fukushima, which have all had environmental impacts over decades, nuclear technology has a whole host of other problems. They are slow and expensive to build with Hinckley Point C in Somerset predicted to be over ten years over schedule, costing over an estimated £25 billion once it is built. It will equally be expensive and will take a long time to fully decommission once it has reached the end of its life cycle.

The other major problem with nuclear fission technology is that spent reactor fuel remains radioactive for tens of thousands of years, and the only viable solution has been to store and bury it, and leave it to decay away.



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

- A £15-an-hour minimum wage for all, without exemptions. For the minimum wage to automatically increase linked to average earnings or inflation, whichever is higher.

- Share out the work. A maximum 32-hour working week with no loss of pay or worsening of conditions. The right to flexible working, under the control of workers not employers. An end to insecure working, for the right to full-time work for all who want it; ban zero-hour contracts.

- All workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness, parental and holiday rights from day one of employment. End bosses using bogus 'self-employment' as a means to avoid giving workers rights.

- No to austerity through inflation. For all wage rates to be automatically increased at least in line with price rises.

- Open the books of all companies cutting jobs or claiming they can't afford to pay a real living wage. State subsidies, where genuinely needed, for socially-useful small businesses.

- For trade unions independent of the capitalist state, with members having democratic control over their own policies, constitutions and democratic procedures. For all trade union officials to be regularly elected, subject to recall by their members and paid a worker's wage.

- Reduce the state retirement and pension age to 55. For decent living pensions.

- Replace universal credit and the punitive benefit system with living benefits for all who need them.

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

- For local councillors who are committed to opposing austerity and all cuts to local services, jobs, pay and conditions.

- For a socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs, including dental and eye care – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out the private companies! Nationalise the pharmaceutical industry under democratic workers' control and management.

- Renationalise privatised utilities – including rail, mail, water, telecoms and power – under democratic workers' control and management.

- Free, publicly funded and democratically run, good-quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees and write off student debt, end marketisation, and introduce a living grant. No to academisation. For all schools to be under the genuine democratic control of local education authorities, school staff, parents and student organisations.

- The right to a safe secure home for all. For the mass building of genuinely affordable, high-quality, carbon-neutral council housing. For rent controls that cap the level of rent. Fair rent decisions should be made by elected bodies of tenants, housing workers and representatives of trade unions. For cheap low-interest mortgages for home buyers. Nationalise the privately owned large building companies, land banks and estates.

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.

There is a lot of hype around the impact and quality of generative algorithms. Under the anarchic capitalist 'market', self-regulation measures will never succeed in creating a research model which prioritises safety and socially useful applications for its products over profit.

Clearly, the internal culture of the organisation doesn't hold up to what's written on paper. In 2019, OpenAI Global LLC (the subsidiary charged with applying the company's research) was changed from non-profit status to "capped" profit – 100 times initial capital investment. Since then, Microsoft has sunk more than \$13 billion into OpenAI.

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

- For united working-class struggle to end discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice and oppression.

- Repeal the anti-trade union laws and all others that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest and to strike! End police harassment. For the police to be accountable to local committees, made up of democratically elected representatives of trade unions, local community organisations and local authorities.

- For the right to choose when and whether to have children – for the right to access abortion, contraception and fertility treatment for all who need it.

- For the right to asylum – with democratic community control and oversight of emergency funding resources. No to racist immigration laws.

- Expand democracy. For the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. For all MPs to be subject to the right of recall by their constituents at any time, and to only receive a worker's wage.

- For proportional representation and the right to vote at 16.

- For the right of nations to self-determination. For an independent socialist Scotland and for a socialist Wales, both part of a voluntary socialist confederation of Wales, England, Scotland and Ireland.

- Oppose the dictatorship of the billionaire owners of the media. For the nationalisation of newspaper printing facilities, radio, TV and social media platforms. Access to these facilities should be under democratic control, with political parties' coverage being allocated in proportion to the popular vote at elections.

- For a new mass workers' party, based on the trade unions, and drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplaces, and community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, socialist political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

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OpenAI sacking shows technology can't be left in hands of bosses

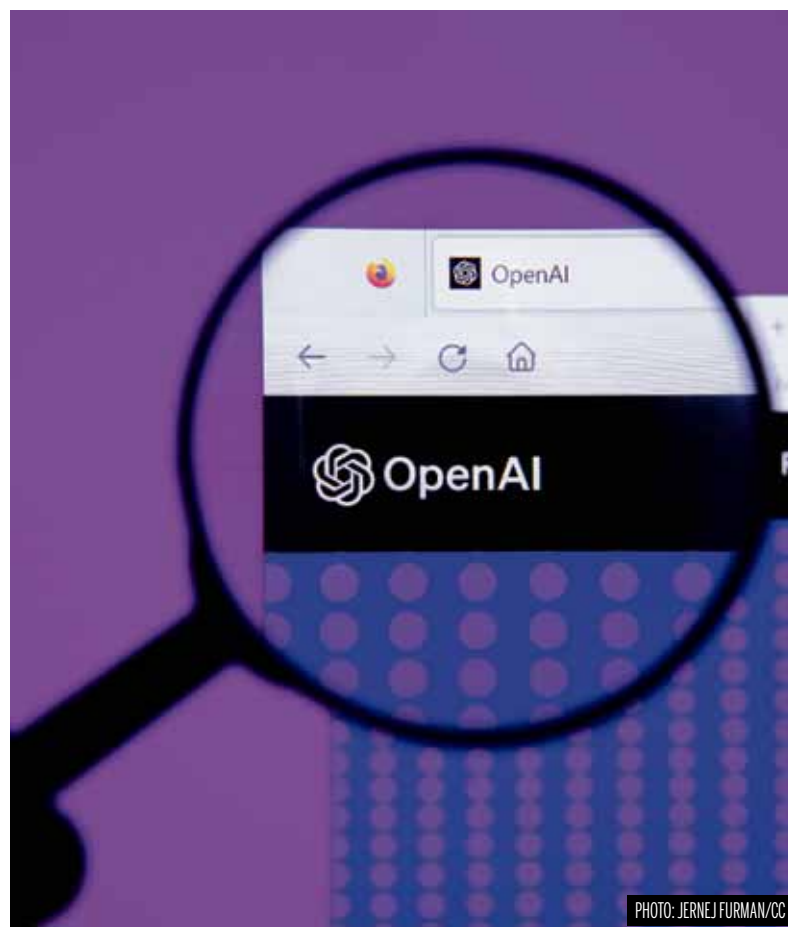


PHOTO: JERNEJ FURMAN/CC

JOE FATHALLAH
CARDIFF WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

OpenAI, the company which owns artificial intelligence tools ChatGPT and Dall-E, able to generate text and images respectively, hit the headlines with the 17 November dismissal and prompt reinstatement of CEO and co-founder Sam Altman. OpenAI describes its objective as developing "highly autonomous systems that outperform humans at most economically valuable work" in a "safe and beneficial" manner. Altman is believed to have been pushing to build the company into a Silicon Valley powerhouse at the expense of this mission. He was rehired, just two days later, after the majority of the company's engineers threatened to resign!

Clearly, the internal culture of the organisation doesn't hold up to what's written on paper. In 2019, OpenAI Global LLC (the subsidiary charged with applying the company's research) was changed from non-profit status to "capped" profit – 100 times initial capital investment. Since then, Microsoft has sunk more than \$13 billion into OpenAI.

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WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

• editors@socialistparty.org.uk
or, if you're not online, write to the Socialist Inbox, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT

Discussions at Unite's Executive Council point to need for political strategy

Unite the Union's Executive Council (EC) met in the first week of December. Discussions included the Workers' Plan for Steel, austerity in local authorities, minimum service levels, and preparation for a general election.

The campaign for a 'Workers' Plan for Steel' has been developed because of the threat of mass redundancies. The campaign is intended to demonstrate that investment in the steel industry, particularly green steel, could protect jobs and skills.

General secretary Sharon Graham explained that this campaign includes an intention to make investment in steel an election issue. Socialist Party members argue that we should demand of an incoming Starmer-led government that it nationalises the steel industry, in order to ensure investment in green steel and job protection.

The mood music from across all political parties signals that, whoever forms the next government, they will be planning 'Austerity #2'. EC member for the South West, Socialist Party member Suzanne Muna, asked that the Workers' Plan for Steel template be used for local government, ie to

change the narrative to 'we can't afford to cut local services'. She highlighted some examples such as cuts to youth services. Any such plan should also insist on job guarantees.

Sharon said that she would convene a meeting of reps in local government so that they can develop a plan. Unite already has a policy of calling for no-cuts, needs-based council budgets.

On Minimum Service Levels (MSLs), Sharon reminded everyone that the requirement to act within the law had been removed some time ago from Unite's rulebook, in anticipation of a moment like this. In discussion throughout the week of the EC, Sharon reiterated that the Labour Party should be saying that where it is the employer it will disapply the MSL legislation ahead of the election, for example in councils and the Welsh Senedd.

There was also discussion about preparation for a general election. Suzanne reminded the EC that in June it had agreed to produce a set of criteria for any parliamentary candidate wishing to qualify for additional support from Unite, similar to what the union has already produced for councillors. Sharon confirmed that

Support Haringey Unite members fighting a Labour council

Members of the Unite Housing Workers branch and of the Socialist Party stood in solidarity with Unite members working for Haringey Labour council when they lobbied the cabinet on 4 December.

The council leadership is refusing to open pay talks. This is despite the fact that, while the national bargaining agreement for local government sets out minimum standards, authorities can agree better locally. Such agreements have already been made following action and ballots in other London boroughs.

Unite reports that the council is also refusing to increase the London weighting allowance for 2022 and 2023, and to increase annual leave for housing repair workers in line with other council staff.

The workers began striking in

November, and have planned more strikes from 18-24 December.

In pledging its solidarity, the Unite Housing Workers branch says: "Haringey are content to continue using contractors and agency workers to cover striking Unite members. It is particularly shameful that a Labour council is reported to be using agency staff in an attempt to break a strike."

A group of councillors in Haringey has broken away from Labour and formed an Independent Socialist Group. They have the support of an ex-Unite assistant chief of staff. This issue further confirms how Starmer's Labour has turned its back on working-class people. We call on the independents to condemn the actions of the council and support the striking Unite workers.

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN HARINGEY

'No snacks at Drax'

"No snacks at Drax" adorned placards at picket lines outside Drax power station as catering workers, employed by contractor Baxter-Storey, picketed the site.

Workers have begun two weeks of strike action, which have seen the cancellation of Christmas dinners and reports of empty vending machines and out-of-date sandwiches on site.

Members of Unite, the workers are fighting to win union recognition from the company, but also to win a

pay rise to keep up with the spiralling inflation of the last year. The company pays the 'real living wage', but only brings it in six months after the rate has been set, keeping workers in poverty pay.

Yet Baxter-Storey made £25 million profit in 2022, and Drax made a whopping £731 million!

Workers in the first week of the strike have braved freezing temperatures and driving rain. As one picket explained: "We're tough cookies - we'll be out next week and for further action if we need to."

IAIN DALTON
YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY



St Mungo's housing workers in Unite, on strike earlier this year

From the picket line: Aslef train drivers strike



Swansea

Train drivers in rail union Aslef took rolling strike action across 16 train operating companies over the first week of December in their long-running dispute over pay.

Iain Dalton reports that drivers in Leeds were angry at stories in the press about their pay being over £65,000 a year. They explained that this is only for drivers at the top of some pay scales. They said the fact that driving trains is a reasonably well-paid job is a result both of the skill and safety responsibilities involved, and that drivers have organised in unions.

Nick Chaffey reports that the trades council in Southampton delivered a message of support to the Aslef picket line: "We do not accept that any worker should see their living standards fall when huge profits are being made. An attack on any of our members is an attack on us all. Unity is our strength. We call on all workers and their trade unions to stand together and defend our pay, working conditions and the right to strike, at a time when this government seeks to add

more draconian anti-trade union legislation to attack working people."

Strike-breaking 'nightmare'

Thousands of Great Western Railway and Heathrow Express passengers suffered "nightmare journeys" on 7 December. Seven trains were stuck near Ladbroke Grove in west London, and passengers on four Elizabeth line trains were stranded in the cold and dark for hours, and had to be led down the track at 11pm.

Aslef union exposed that a manager driving a train as part of the bosses' attempts to break the strike was involved in an "incident" with an overhead power cable.

Strike-breaking attempts are always potentially dangerous, using people who don't have the skills or everyday familiarity to do safety-critical work. Attempting to force 'minimum service levels' on the railways during strike action would potentially lead to more chaos and possible disasters. As Aslef general secretary Mick Whelan asked: "What happens when 100% of passengers try to get on 40% minimum service level trains?"

there would be a draft set of demands drawn up and discussed.

A comment was made that a group called the New Conservatives is trying to get registered with the electoral commission, and that the Tory Party could be dragged even further to the right by such a development, implying that it is therefore necessary to restrict campaigning to support for Labour. This bolsters the argument that a new left-wing party would likewise drag Labour to the left. As such, Socialist Party members will continue to argue that an important tool for unions to apply pressure on a Starmer-led government would be to support a workers' list of candidates in the general election, and to take steps towards the formation of a new workers' party.

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Birmingham primary school strike

There was a constant honking of support for the picket line from passing motorists, as National Education Union (NEU) members at Benson primary school in the deprived Birmingham district of Hockley embarked on seven days of strike action.

The members are striking over bullying, unreasonable workloads, and a lack of consultation on changes. The school is one of the dwindling number of schools directly managed by Birmingham City Council. There is a clear link between the Labour council's refusal to fight local authority cuts and its contemptuous treatment of these teachers and teaching assistants.

The union reported its concerns to the council in both the spring and summer terms and there has been no real improvement in the situation. Staff turnover is high because of these problems and the pupils will not get the standard of education they deserve until these problems are resolved.

Some parents stood on the picket line with their children. Further strikes are planned until the Christmas break if there is no progress.

CLIVE WALDER
BIRMINGHAM SOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

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General election challenge 'organising convention'

TUSC STATEMENT

Outline details have been agreed for a broad convention of campaign groups and socialist organisations considering standing candidates in the general election – to organise a common working-class challenge for the contest that will take place at some point in 2024.

The convention date has been set for Saturday 3 February, in Birmingham, at a venue to be announced.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) all-Britain steering committee had invited around 30 campaign groups and socialist organisations to co-host a gathering to discuss an election challenge (see rb.gy/fqg72Z). TUSC had received replies from organisations representing 14 of them by the time of its 22 November meeting.

Five organisations so far have agreed to be convention co-hosts – the Socialist Party, System Change (formerly Resist), the Campaign for a Mass Workers' Party, Socialist Students, and the TUSC Independent Socialists section. The Social Justice Party and Just Stop Oil are still consulting, and the interim committee of the new Transform Party were not in a position to make a decision before their now-completed inaugural conference on 25 November.

A Convention Arrangements Committee has been agreed, composed of the five organisations and the TUSC officers – which, however, is still open to those who subsequently

decide that they wish to co-host the event.

Convention representation

The proposed representation at the Convention hopefully strikes a balance between making it an open, inclusive event, but also ensuring its 'working character' as a body able to reach concrete conclusions.

- Every campaign group or socialist organisation that is considering supporting or standing candidates in the general election, whether they formally co-host the Convention or not, can appoint up to ten delegates to represent their organisation at the event

- Any individual member of a trade union national executive committee (in a personal capacity), section or group executive committee member, or elected union branch officer or workplace rep, can also attend with voice

- Every resigned-from-Labour or independent socialist councillor can attend on the same basis

- All individual members of TUSC – who are not members of a TUSC component organisation or otherwise represented at the Convention – will also be able to attend with voice

- There will also be Zoom available for visitors

Get involved – get organised!

• Read in full at tusc.org.uk, where further convention information will also be posted as it becomes available

Your donations help build socialist struggle



PHOTO: IAN PATTISON

ISAI MARIJERLA SOCIALIST PARTY TREASURER

The last two months have been a very difficult time. The news of the total bombardment on Gaza and the collective punishment inflicted by the Israeli state has further shown that capitalism is a system of war and destruction.

Capitalism fails to provide the basics for billions of people. But, at the same time, this system makes huge sums of profit for the super-rich and multinational companies. Socialist ideas, an alternative to this chaos, are getting an echo.

Support for the Socialist Party's ideas is reflected in the donations we have received. Our quarterly October-December target of £25,000 has been smashed. We have raised £37,395 campaigning, including people donating to us on the hundreds of anti-war demonstrations across the country.

This has meant that we had the funds to boldly put forward a socialist

programme to end the war on Gaza, and for the national liberation of the Palestinian people. We have produced thousands of placards, and tens of thousands of leaflets. Many agreed with us, and donated to fund the fight for a socialist world.

Throughout the year, Socialist Party branches have been out campaigning for better living standards for working-class and young people.

Our members have been out supporting workers taking strike action, and have joined them at picket lines and protests. And we have organised campaign stalls for an inflation-proof pay rise, for genuinely affordable homes for all, to save our NHS and other vital services.

At the Socialism 2023 rally, we launched a public appeal to raise another £35,000. And we agreed a third of those donations would go towards building the work of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI) – the international socialist organisation that we are a part of.

We are pleased to announce that another £48,000 has been pledged, and £32,692 has already been paid in. Please pay your pledge by the end of December.

We want to thank all those who donated and helped to raise funds. This means that we are able to do all the work that we have done to build the struggle.

Fund the fightback

DONATE TODAY

- Visit socialistparty.org.uk/donate
- or call **020 8988 8777**

- or make cheques payable to Socialist Party, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT



SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q4: OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2023				DEADLINE: 31 DECEMBER 2023
London	11,404	5,000					228%
Northern	968	800					121%
West Midlands	3,194	2,700					118%
South West	2,300	2,100					110%
Southern & SE	2,594	2,400					108%
North West	1,043	1,200					87%
Yorkshire	2,200	2,650					83%
East Midlands	1,221	2,050					60%
Wales	1,296	2,400					54%
Eastern	392	1,300					30%
Other	10,783	2,400					449%
TOTAL	37,395	25,000					150%

London solidarity with textile workers in Turkey



PHOTO: DAY-MER

Members of the Socialist Party joined a protest outside the Levi's store in central London in solidarity with Ozak textile workers that supply the company in Urfa in Turkey. The protest was called by Solidarity with the People of Turkey (Spot).

There have been reports that the workers, many of whom are women, have been protesting against the sacking a colleague. The women workers complain of ill-treatment and harassment by management, and some workers have been detained by the police.

Unite the Union's national lead officer, Onay Kasab, and National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) chair Rob Williams were amongst the speakers.

Obituary: John Morrow 1957-2023 Tenacious class fighter and NHS campaigner

Socialist Party members from Tyneside were saddened to hear that our comrade, John Morrow, has passed away.

Only days before, John had been posting on social media about his time in hospital. Some of his posts were funny, such as being served chicken curry with mashed potatoes, or the "farting mission" of one of the other patients on his ward. Other posts highlighted the pain he was in, and stress from lack of painkillers.

John, in his typical forthright manner, used social media to highlight the "shitshow" of the NHS, but also posted about "staff doing their best under extreme working conditions".

A while back, comrades were impressed when John posted a photo of himself in hospital on a dialysis machine, proudly wearing his brand-new Militant T-shirt (see above right).

For years, John tenaciously fought



for better services for his severely disabled daughter Aimee. This included playing a leading role to save Grove House, where his daughter received respite care.

John, alongside his wife Jacqui and other Socialist Party members, helped set up the Save Grove

House Campaign. He understood the need to fight Labour-controlled Gateshead council's shameful plan to either close or privatise this vital service.

In order to highlight the terrible role played by Labour councillors, John stood as a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidate in Gateshead's Pelaw and Heworth ward, receiving 5.5% of the vote. Other 'lefts' criticised John for standing, accusing him of splitting the vote and, in their view, letting the Lib Dem candidate win the seat. Admirably John faced down these critics, stating that Labour councillors who weren't prepared to fight for working-class people weren't worth voting for.

John was a class fighter and will be missed.

Our thoughts are with his wife Jacqui, and daughters Paige and Aimee.

ELAINE BRUNSKILL AND NORMAN HALL

Students walk out over Gaza



London student walkout LENNY SHAIL

● London – best place to be is on streets

It didn't seem to be a big demonstration at the beginning. But it became larger. On Thursday 7 December, students that had walked out gathered outside Downing Street.

More and more people started joining, and not only young students appeared. Even when events are not highly publicised by the media, people can mobilise together for a common cause.

Is it really that important to organise, and attend these rallies and marches? No matter how big the protest is, it's still the expression of our beliefs, and desire for change.

If we want a better future, and a government that doesn't support terror and the interests of capitalists, we should educate ourselves. And there is no better place to do that than a street full of people with shared values.

ROSE KWIECINSKA

● Sheffield – school and uni students march together

Socialist Students helped organise a variety of student walkouts at universities and schools across the city on 8 December.

On the morning beforehand, we leafleted outside the King Edward's Sixth Form. Almost all of the 250 leaflets were handed out.

On the day, Socialist Party and Socialist Students members arrived outside the school to march with students to the rally. However, a lot of sixth formers encountered difficulty leaving – staff were able to turn many around at the gates.

I commented to a few students that a subsequent demonstration would be more successful if they were able to walk out as a unified group. Nonetheless, a sizeable group were able to make it out.

We made our way down to join the rest of the rally at Sheffield University, about 100 strong in total, creating a significant presence on campus.

TED BOYLE

● Monoux College – already walking out

It was kicking-out time, and Socialist Party members were leafleting for the walkout taking place the next day (see above).

Around 200 leaflets disappeared into the hands of students. Two students grabbed some off me to give to their friends around the bus stops.

Small groups stopped and talked to us. Several of them already included students who had heard about the walkout, with some planning to go already.

Three students at the college have given us their details to discuss organising on campus against the war. A couple more bought copies of the Socialist newspaper.

Young people are outraged, and starting to find their voice.

JAMES IVENS

London – another huge national demo

Minutes after the 12 noon start time, Bank station was filled to brim with people. The majority of younger people there had been protesting for weeks on this issue, aware of the blatant hypocrisy from both the Tories and the Labour Party.

This movement's strength is not going away easily. The Socialist Party's placards, papers and material were grabbed out of our hands throughout.

We put forward the need to fight for a new mass workers' party and a socialist intifada. And seven new people came to our open meeting after the protest to discuss how we fight for Palestinian liberation.

MILA HUGHES



The latest national protest in London IAN PATTISON

MPs face protests

Enfield – Labour shuts down debate

Supporters of the 'Enfield Solidarity With Palestine' WhatsApp group, including Socialist Party members, lobbied the all-members meeting of Enfield North Labour Party on 7 December. A Labour Party member, who is part of the group, had proposed a motion to the meeting, calling for an immediate ceasefire.

The lobby got support from passing motorists who tooted their horns, and even from the neighbouring house, who chanted with us.

We estimate that only 15 or so Labour members actually entered the all-constituency meeting. This is a far cry from the mass membership days under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership.

The Enfield North all-member meeting that passed a 'no-confidence' vote in the right-wing then Labour MP Joan Ryan in 2018 had almost 200 members in attendance.

It was widely assumed that the Palestine motion would be ruled 'out of order'. This is a top-down diktat from

Labour Party HQ, which has ruled out motions on the issue being allowed at any Labour meetings. Apparently Labour Party democracy is: 'Keir Starmer can make a policy decision, and it's not allowed to be discussed in the Labour Party.'

Labour members should ignore this ruling and, where motions are proposed, allow discussion, debate and votes to be taken. This hasn't happened anywhere.

We heard that there was a discussion, where most members spoke in favour of a ceasefire. But no vote was taken.

JOHN DOLAN AND DANA MIROW

Peterborough – Tory 'coward' ignores constituents

Peterborough Conservative MP Paul Bristow met a protest of 30 mums, dads and kids outside his constituency office. They had gathered wondering why he didn't vote for a ceasefire.

In true 'Boris Johnson' fashion,

Bristow greeted those present with tea and biscuits, said "my door is always open," before walking away to his car with questions unanswered, driving over said tea and biscuits, past a heavy police presence, hitting a parked car, then vanishing into the distance.

Bristow felt the pressure from his constituents to actually write to Rishi Sunak declaring his desire for a ceasefire. But when the vote actually came up in the House of Commons, he didn't back a ceasefire, instead abstaining.

But the community wanted a better explanation. After 20 minutes of chanting, an official came out to say the organiser could come in and chat. 10 minutes later, we were told we could all go in.

But why wouldn't he come out? Some mums called out "coward".

The arrival of six teenagers – still in their school clothes – was apparently a deciding factor in getting six additional police officers to protect against any 'violence', which was met with laughs from mums and dads present.

JOHN MCGARRY AND RICHARD TILLEY

Unions oppose war and challenge pro-war politicians

Plymouth District National Education Union (NEU) has passed a motion about what is happening in Gaza.

Alex Moore, Plymouth NEU secretary, in a personal capacity, said: "We

recognise that there has to be long-term political solution to the conflict in Israel-Palestine, which requires building independent trade union-based political organisations in the region that can overcome nationalist divisions.

"We further noted the Labour Party leadership in the UK has refused to call for a ceasefire, and instructed MPs and councillors not to attend rallies to support this. We also recall

the Labour leadership issued similar instructions to MPs and councillors not to support NEU picket lines in our strike last year. We therefore have agreed to welcome independent candidates standing in future elections who will stand up for NEU policy."

Do you agree?
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Salvador Allende PHOTO: BCM/CC

CHILE 1970

HOW A SELF-DESCRIBED MARXIST BECAME PRESIDENT

BERKAY KARTAV
LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

On 4 September 1970, the self-proclaimed Marxist Salvador Allende was elected as President of Chile. Allende's victory came as a shock to the ruling Chilean capitalist class and US imperialism.

This was the first time in Latin America that a coalition comprised predominantly of workers' parties had come to power following an election.

It unleashed a revolutionary movement which sadly ended with a bloody coup backed by the CIA on 11 September 1973.

There are many lessons to be learned from the three years of Allende's Chile, but there are also many lessons from the period that preceded his election. How did a self-proclaimed Marxist come to lead a capitalist state?

Even though the 1970 presidential election results might have been a shock for the ruling class, the events leading up to the elections indicated a changed situation. They took place against a backdrop of sharpening class polarisation and radicalisation of the working class and peasantry in Chilean society.

Successive pro-capitalist governments, led by the Christian Democrats and Radical Party, had failed to raise the living standards of the masses and carry out the social reforms they once promised. By the time of the elections, the representatives of big business and US imperialism were split on how to rule and solve the problems of the Chilean economy.

But events like these were not necessarily unique to Chile. There were upheavals in all parts of the world in the late 1960s.

The year 1968 became known as the year of international revolution. The global economic boom which followed World War Two had come to an end, so too the relative political stability of the international order in which the US had emerged as the single dominant capitalist power.

Around the world, revolutionary and semi-revolutionary movements were erupting, threatening the very foundations of the capitalist system.

France '68

Between May and June 1968, France was swept by the greatest general strike in history, when 10 million workers went on strike. Factories and universities were occupied, and President Charles de Gaulle even fled, fearing revolution. In the US, there were mass movements for civil rights and against the bloody Vietnam war.

Also in 1968, fearing what even the limited reforms of Alexander Dubcek in Czechoslovakia could unleash, the Stalinist bureaucracy deployed 200,000 'Warsaw Pact' troops to put an end to the 'Prague Spring'. From Mexico to Pakistan, revolutionary movements that confronted capitalism spread around the world.

This was the international context to the unfolding processes in Chile, which led to the election of Allende and opened the floodgates for the working class. But there were also unique features in Chile.

The origins of Allende's Popular Unity (UP) coalition went back to 1952, when the two biggest workers' parties in Chile - the Socialist Party (PSCh) and the then-illegal Communist Party (PCCh) - formed the People's Front, in response to attacks by the Radical Party. The People's Front and later Popular Action Front were the forerunners of the UP coalition.

In a country with about 6 million

people, the PSCh and PCCh had tens of thousands of members and were growing fast.

Allende, a member of PSCh, was the Presidential candidate of these left coalitions in the 1958, 1964 and 1970 elections. The PSCh was formed in 1933 and declared itself a Marxist party. In effect, it was founded in opposition to the Stalinist policies of the PCCh.

The PCCh had been putting forward a disastrous policy for the working class since the 1930s. In line with Stalinist stageist theory, it argued that Chile first had to go through a capitalist democratic revolution - elimination of feudal relations, introduction of democratic demands and so on - and only then, after a period of capitalist development, a socialist revolution at a later stage. As in other countries, the Stalinists saw the 'liberal' capitalists, who are tied to landlordism and imperialism, as a progressive force.

Russian revolution

Analysing the social and economic situation in Russia ahead of the 1917 revolution, Leon Trotsky, co-leader of the revolution alongside Vladimir Lenin, developed the theory of 'permanent revolution'. He correctly identified that, in a semi-feudal country like Russia with a weak domestic capitalist class, it would fall to the working class to carry out the tasks of the capitalist democratic revolution, and that it would then be compelled to move towards a struggle for power itself and continue with socialist revolution.

The more revolutionary wing of the PSCh, the Popular Socialists, were politically better than the PCCh. At a conference in 1953, the Popular Socialists put forward the following resolution: "In our countries, the bourgeoisie is not a revolutionary

class. The revolutionary classes are the industrial workers, the miners, the peasants, the intellectual petit bourgeoisie, the artisans and independent workers, and all those sectors of the population whose interests are in contradiction with the established order. Within this framework the organised working class comes more and more to play the decisive role."

Even though the politics of the Popular Socialists were confused, they understood that in countries like Chile, only the working class could play a revolutionary role to undertake the historical tasks of the capitalists and overthrow feudalism and landlordism, and the central role of the organised working class in the struggle for socialism.

Allende himself was from the reformist wing of the PSCh. Failing to understand the role of the state and the forces of reaction, the reformists wrongly believed that you can achieve socialism through gradual reforms under capitalism. The events of September 1973, which ended with the brutal murderous coup by General Pinochet, proved how fatal this position would be.

Despite these differences between the two major workers' parties and also within these parties, the coalition remained intact, in one form or another, throughout the tumultuous period from the 1950s up to the 1973 coup.

But it was the political instability and economic conditions which created the objective conditions for

the forces that made up UP to grow and gain an echo among the working class.

After shock presidential election results in 1958, when Allende came second with 28.5% of the votes behind the candidate of the right, Jorge Alessandri, who received 31.6%, the ruling class in Chile wanted to counteract the growing radicalisation of the working class. They were worried that a self-proclaimed Marxist only narrowly lost the elections.

Cuba

With revolution unfolding in Cuba through the 1950s, US imperialism did not want another revolution in a Latin American country. It poured massive amounts of money into Chile to grant reforms to stave off revolution. By 1958, American investment accounted for 80% of all foreign investment in Chile.

However, it was clear that the ruling Radical Party wasn't able to take the measures needed to undertake the reforms the US imperialism considered necessary. Christian Democrats (PDC), which had a certain base in society at that time, was the choice of US imperialism, which supported Eduardo Frei in the 1964 presidential elections.

While the PDC defended the capitalist system, it appealed to the 'marginals' in society - women, unemployed, peasants, urban dwellers etc - and set up a patronage system. This was a clear attempt to stop UP winning support from wider layers of the society.

The PDC used left rhetoric with slogans such as 'Revolution in Liberty' to appeal to the downtrodden layers and middle classes. Frei promised greater state intervention and land reforms, but the Chilean economy became even more dependent on US finance. By 1970, foreign debt had reached enormous proportions.

Frei's policy of 'Chileanisation' in reality meant the US had more stakes in Chilean mines. These mines were later nationalised by Allende.

Moreover, the land reforms the PDC wanted to implement were met with opposition by the landlords and divisions within the party also grew. Sections of the capitalist class were not happy with the 'radical populism' of the PDC.

Towards the end of the 1960s it was clear that Frei's government was not able to fulfil its promises and its base of support started to shrink. While it was initially able to resolve some of the problems in the economy, high inflation and high unemployment were back towards the end of the 1960s.

Splits were deepening between different sections of the capitalist class on how to rule. In particular there was a growing conflict between the industrial capitalists and agrarian capitalists.

Unlike the presidential election in 1964, by 1970 the right-wing alliance broke down and the National Party and the PDC put forward its own candidates for the presidential elections. The PDC's candidate, Tomic, was on the left of the party.

Chilean workers marching in support of Allende in 1964



Towards the late 1960s, Chilean society was polarised on class, political and social lines. While the capitalist class was split on how to rule, the combativity of the working class and peasantry was on the rise. There were important shifts in the middle classes too.

The false promises of Frei, such as greater state intervention and land reforms, never materialised and failed to lift living standards. The disappointment with the PDC was reflected in the 1970 elections when its vote collapsed from 56% in 1964 to 27.8%.

The year Frei came to power there was a total of 564 strikes recorded, but by 1968 this figure had reached 1,124. But it was not only industrial militancy on the rise. There was a growing number of land occupations too.

Class polarisation

The increasing class polarisation was reflected in the fragmentation of the PDC and the PSCh. Frustrated with the lack of steps for land reform, the left of the PDC split away to form MAPU (Popular Unitary Action Movement) in 1969. This force later joined the UP coalition.

There were also debates on the left on the question of tactics. The student wing of the Socialist Party was disillusioned with the reformist wing of the party. It argued that the reformists focused solely on the elections and had illusions in the 'constitutional loyalty' of the Chilean army.

Inspired by the guerilla struggles in other parts of Latin America, this student group split away in 1963 and formed the MIR (Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria) in 1965. But despite having good intentions, it failed to grasp the potential power of the working class to overthrow capitalism and offered an incorrect programme and tactics.

Ahead of the 1970 elections, the existing left coalition developed into Popular Unity (UP). While the two biggest parties were still the PSCh and the PCCh, four smaller parties were included, including the pro-capitalist, weakened Radical Party.

Allende was actually on the centre-right of the Socialist Party. Failure of the left to put forward a left candidate in the central committee of the party meant that Allende was elected as

the party's presidential candidate by 12 votes to 13 abstentions.

This was the background to the 1970 elections when Allende won with 36.2%, less than what he got in 1964. His coalition UP had a minority in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate.

Despite the fact that the leaders of the workers' organisation lagged behind the consciousness of the working class, the next three years unleashed a phenomenal revolutionary movement in Chile.

Backed by the popular support of the working class - significant sections of which were drawing far-reaching conclusions about what tasks were necessary to bring an end to capitalist rule - the Allende government was able to carry out significant reforms.

Ultimately however, the capitalist state - the armed forces, the police and courts and so on - remained intact. The capitalist class used every tool at its disposal to sabotage support for Allende's reforms, ultimately removing him from power in a military coup in which he was murdered in the presidential palace. In the aftermath, thousands of workers and workers' leaders were executed.

All the conditions for a successful workers' revolution existed in Chile. The ruling class was split, the working class was increasingly willing to confront capitalism, and significant sections of the middle class were looking towards the leadership of the working class.

But the most important factor, the subjective factor, was missing: a Marxist revolutionary party, with roots in the working class, that could have taken the movement further with the correct programme, methods and strategy for the socialist transformation of Chile and the rest of the world.

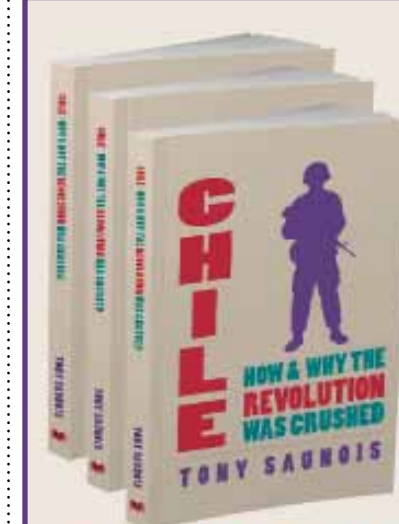
The lessons of Allende's UP government for socialists today are rich, even 50 years after it came to a bloody end. Central is the need to build a mass revolutionary party with the correct programme and tactics to lead the working class in taking power.

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the Socialist

Issue 1255

14 December 2023 - 4 January 2024

formerly **Militant**

TORIES RUIN OUR

NHS

Health workers strike back!

GARETH BROMHALL

GMB AMBULANCE REP, SWANSEA AND WEST WALES
SOCIALIST PARTY

As the NHS faces another winter of Tory misrule, with pressures mounting and as 'business continuity' crises and 'black alerts' become the new norm, one thing is clear: the fightback for the NHS is far from over.

Junior doctors in England resume their action from 20-23 December and 3-9 January. Health workers in east London, members of Unite, continue their action into the festive period from 18-26 December.

Although battles involving nurses and ambulance staff have settled, the passion and desperation that forced these workers onto the picket line, many for the first time and on an unprecedented scale, continues to boil below the surface.

Tory divisions

This is happening against the backdrop of a divided and polarising Tory party, currently having its abject failure during the pandemic laid bare day to day in the Covid inquiry, and that continues to fail our NHS with ideological underfunding.

The Tories' desperation is exemplified by the recently passed minimum service levels legislation that seeks to strip workers of the right to strike, and prevent unions organising effective industrial action.

The NHS workers are among those targeted, ambulance staff in particular. Under guidance recently published by the government, we are expected to provide 80% staffing levels - rendering strike action impotent. Ask any NHS worker and they tell you that that figure is rarely met on an ordinary work day, let alone on a day when workers are using their democratic right to strike!

The Tories are hell-bent on trying to stop workers fighting back, but what does the Labour Party offer our class in terms of the future of our NHS? The simple answer is: profiteering. Keir Starmer and his shadow health secretary Wes Streeting have been quite clear.

Streeting said recently that a future Labour government would "hold open the doors for privatisation" and on a recent trip to Singapore, whilst exalting private intervention and tech integration, stated that he aimed to "shake the NHS and public out of complacency". He declared that "the NHS is a service not a shrine".

His promise of "tough love" and tighter budgets coupled with further privatisation are not designed to save, preserve or expand the NHS; rather, they are excuses for further managed decline and profiteering.

The fight for the NHS is not over, and it will continue under a new Labour government too. Back the NHS strikes, and fight for a socialist political alternative to Tory and Labour cuts and privatisation.

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see page 10



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ISSN 1366-9621