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# the Socialist

Issue 1262

15-21 February 2024

formerly **Militant**

# STOP GAZA SLAUGHTER

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

**Build a working-class political alternative to Tories and Starmer's Labour**



**The Socialist Party is fighting for:**

- End the siege – for the 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 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

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

7 Feb workplace day of action against war on Gaza

Bristol

At the end of the workplace day of action, 150 education workers from the NEU, UCU and Unison gathered in central Bristol to commemorate the lives of children and education workers who have been murdered in Palestine.

It was a sombre event as so many have died, but whilst remembering the dead, we have to continue to fight as hard as we can for the living!

Trade unionists have been making links internationally to provide solidarity, and we will continue to attend and support marches and workplace actions here, until a ceasefire is called and Palestine is rebuilt for the Palestinians.

SHEILA CAFFREY

Tower Hamlets, East London

"We've got members of Unison. We've got members of Unite. We've got members of the National Education Union (NEU)."

"And the Royal College of Nurses (RCN)", somebody shouted from the crowd. And a doctors' union BMA member also spoke at the protest later too.

200 people protested outside Tower Hamlets Town Hall. "We're here to get our feet-dragging politicians to back a ceasefire now", the organiser from Tower Hamlets Unison told the crowd.

Teachers kicked off the protest, before marching to join the council workers outside the town hall. They



Tower Hamlets protest IAN PATTISON

were joined by NHS workers from Royal London hospital next door, and more. And more and more local residents joined when they saw what we were protesting about.

Almost everyone we asked agreed to sign the Socialist Party's petition to get anti-war, anti-cuts candidates standing against the Tories and Labour. Only one person refused, because they were certain there was going to be an independent candidate standing anyway! There was a queue to sign our petition at one stage.

IAN PATTISON

Students protest on day of action

Queen Mary University London

Students walked out of classes to protest the suffering of Palestinians under siege by Israeli state terror in Gaza.

Queen Mary University invests in Barclays, which invests in Israeli arms companies. Students have been calling for the university to divest for months; we are not okay with our tuition fees being used to arm the occupational forces. The university has not complied and has yet to release any statements.

The university workers' union, UCU, supported this walkout and members spoke to the crowd. Socialist Students members also spoke, expressing our disappointment and anger in our university. The youth and working class, together, hold a lot of power; we need to use it to fight for those who are under attack.

NANDI SHALITA

UAL and Goldsmiths

Around 100 anti-war demonstrators marched from the University of the Arts London (UAL) Camberwell campus across south London to Goldsmiths, where hundreds of students handed in a list of demands to senior management. The demands called for the university to issue a statement calling for an immediate ceasefire, to uphold academic freedom and to protect students' and staff's right to protest.

Socialist Party and Socialist Students members gathered names of people to help us stand candidates against Starmer's warmongering Labour in the local and general elections this year, as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. We spoke to people about the need for a socialist transformation of society, which would put an end once and for all to the endless cycle of war and oppression that the capitalist system generates.

OSCAR PARRY



Socialist Party member Seamus speaking in Northampton ABDUL AU

Northampton students protest in solidarity with Palestine

Protesters marched across the University of Northampton's (UoN) Waterside campus.

Chants of "Rishi Sunak/Keir Starmer you can't hide. We charge you with genocide," rang out across campus, along with, "Free Palestine," "Genocide is crystal clear."

Speakers outside the Learning Hub highlighted UoN's ties to Hewlett Packard. The tech corporation provides the Israeli state with computer hardware and high-end servers. Israeli police use data collected on HP systems to enforce segregation.

Socialist Students and Socialist Party members spoke out and helped lead chants on the march. We highlighted the need for political action

in solidarity with Palestine and criticised all major British parties for being complicit.

As one Socialist Students organiser told the protest: "The horrors carried out by the IDF every day expose the rotten brutality of the capitalist system. If the politicians say that 'coming out [protesting] does nothing,' don't listen to them. They are lying. Millions of people in the anti-war movement across the world add pressure on the Israeli government to stop its brutal assaults. In Britain, the movement already forced the hated Home Secretary Suella Braverman to resign. Imagine what can happen if we keep going."

BEN EDGE

BUILD MASS DEMOCRATIC STRUGGLE FOR PALESTINIAN NATIONAL SELF-DETERMINATION AND SOCIALISM



WHAT WE THINK

From the start of the war on Gaza, the ferocity of the firepower marked a horrific new departure compared to previous Israeli military offensives on the Strip. Over four months later, slaughter, terror and devastation are still being inflicted, on what has become a mercilessly pursued population. The trapped Palestinians are repeatedly forced to move, with no safe destination or the basic necessities of life available anywhere.

Over 28,000 have been killed, 67,000 injured, and large urban areas have been flattened to rubble. Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's war cabinet now has its sights on starting a ground invasion into the 1.3 million people struggling to survive in Rafah, a southern town that has already been bombed from the air.

Joe Biden's US administration, Rishi Sunak's UK government, and all the other governments that have grotesquely supported this war are complicit in it. Included in the supplies of weaponry from the US to Israel have been heavy 'bunker buster' bombs, which have caused widespread and indiscriminate destruction. Overall, Israel has received over 10,000 tons of military equipment from the US, Britain and other countries since the start of the war.

Working-class action

This reflects the staunch support given by western imperialism to the Israeli capitalist class and its state, in turn a reflection of imperialist geopolitical and trade interests. There is also another side to the situation, however. The potential to counter those interests lies with working-class people in the western countries and across the globe, through further building the anti-war movements and workers' participation in them, including the development of democratically decided trade union actions, such as by workers in the arms, logistics and transport industries, and supplementary actions such as student walkouts.

That Biden and Co are not immune from the outrage from below can be seen by their verbal twists and shifts. In the US, a majority of young people think an Israeli ceasefire should be declared, a mood which Biden has been unable to completely ignore, although so far - in the absence of a strong enough anti-war movement - he has only responded in a tokenistic,



PAUL MATSSON

meek way. He merely called the war "over the top", and quipped that the starvation and death of innocent people has "gotta stop". He, and others around him, have called for the protection of civilians in Rafah, but without yet making any threats against Israel's military or economic interests.

Britain's Tory government has faced a larger anti-war movement, which last year succeeded in getting Suella Braverman sacked as home secretary. It has not yet achieved a powerful enough level to move Sunak and foreign secretary David Cameron beyond expressing 'deep concern' about the prospect of a full-scale Israeli offensive on Rafah. As well as shedding those crocodile tears, Cameron has tried to pose as being more keen than Labour's Keir Starmer on pushing ahead the idea of a Palestinian state, no doubt with the proximity of a general election in mind.

He isn't the only capitalist politician speaking of the need for a Palestinian state. Yet, for years they have gone along with Israeli leaders' creation of 'facts on the ground' - mainly in the form of expanding Jewish settlements - designed to ward off any prospect of a Palestinian state. It

is only now, with the war on Gaza causing increased instability across the Middle East and anger over it in their domestic populations, that Cameron and other strategists of Western imperialism, along with the Arab elites, are once again raising the need for a turn to 'talks with the promise of some kind of Palestinian state entity.

Genuine self-determination

That path will only lead to new blind alleys and rounds of conflict. The Socialist Party has always warned that a genuine Palestinian state will not be possible on a capitalist basis. While most of Israel's capitalists don't advocate the agenda of mass expulsion of Palestinians promoted by Israel's far-right parties - and they view those parties as endangering their interests - no wing of that capitalist class is in favour of an independent Palestinian state coming into existence in the occupied territories. At the same time, along with other capitalists internationally, they have no solution to the national conflict, and so perpetuate the status quo of brutal repression and rounds of outright war, with the occasional diversion and smokescreen of negotiations in between.

The Socialist Party is at the forefront of helping to build mass pressure and workers' actions against both our own government and that of Israel, with the necessary demands including a ceasefire and an end to the war. An immediate ceasefire is essential both for humanitarian aid to reach Palestinians in Gaza and for progress to take place towards the release of the thousands of Palestinians held in Israeli jails and the Israeli hostages held in Gaza. Also essential is the immediate withdrawal of the Israeli military from the Gaza Strip and an end to the blockade.

'Socialist intifada'

Beyond that, how can the Palestinians achieve full liberation? During such a shockingly savage war this can seem like a question for the 'day after', but addressing the roots of the conflict is crucial to ending the rounds of bloodshed. First and foremost, while Palestinian workers and the poor need the support and solidarity of workers internationally, they can lead the way with their own struggle in the form of a 'socialist intifada' - in other words, a mass movement that takes up socialist ideas. Their first intifada began in 1987 as a spontaneous mass uprising of

the entire Palestinian population in the occupied territories, which was powerful enough to force the Israeli regime at that time to recognise that brutal repression was not working, and that some kind of Palestinian entity would have to be conceded. That led to the Oslo Accords and setting up of the Palestinian Authority, which the Socialist Party always warned would not solve any of the issues in the conflict, as capitalism remained. The second intifada broke out in the year 2000 as a further revolt against oppression, but much less effective than the first intifada because the struggle lost its mass character. It became dominated by secretive armed actions by individuals and groups, including indiscriminate suicide bombings inside Israel which played into the hands of the Israeli right wing.

A socialist intifada would draw on the effective method of mass action of the first intifada, but combine it with developing democratically organised, fully accountable committees at every level of society. Those bodies could organise mass participation in discussion and debate on the methods of struggle and the socialist policies that will be needed for achieving full liberation from both national oppression and capitalist exploitation.

Socialist programme

One aspect of that programme will need to be advocating for workers in Israel to break from the agenda and interests of Israel's capitalist class. The Israeli ruling elite will never bring physical and financial security for Israeli workers, just as it will never allow genuine self-determination for the Palestinians. Even at present in Israel, during the heightened nationalism and general support for the war following the 7 October Hamas-led offensive, there are limits to reaction shown by the fact that most Israelis reject the agenda of the far right that proposes full Israeli control of the Gaza Strip and the rebuilding of Jewish settlements there.

The building of workers' parties independent of capitalist interests, in both Israel and the occupied territories, would lay the basis for links and cooperation between workers on both sides of the national divide. On the basis of adopting programmes for replacing capitalism with socialism - including socialist economic planning, public ownership of the top companies and democratic workers' negotiations over natural resources and land - an independent, socialist Palestinian state will be possible, alongside a socialist Israel, with guaranteed rights for all minorities, as part of a voluntary socialist confederation across the Middle East.

Join the student fightback! JOIN socialist students Visit socialiststudents.org.uk/join or text your name and school, college or uni to 07749 379 010



## Rochdale by-election: A chance to shake the establishment



### WHAT WE THINK

Starmer's New Labour is on course to win the general election as the only available governmental alternative to Sunak's hated Tory government. Nonetheless, millions will not be able to bring themselves to vote Labour, given Starmer's programme of continuing Tory austerity, and his support for the Israeli government's murderous and appalling onslaught on the Palestinian people trapped in Gaza.

Events in the Rochdale by-election, being held on 29 February, were looking set to be an illustration of the anger at Starmer's pro-capitalist New Labour even before the national party withdrew support from their candidate, Azhar Ali. For 24 hours Labour tried to maintain support for Ali, a loyal supporter of the party leadership, despite reports that he had spoken at a meeting about Israel "allowing" the deadly 7 October attack on Israeli civilians, in order to justify the brutal invasion of Gaza.

Last October it was widely reported, including in the Israeli press, that right-wing Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu had been warned by Egyptian intelligence that some kind of attack from Hamas was planned for Gaza. It is not unlikely that his motivation for not acting on the Egyptian warning was the hope of a pretext to go to war.

However, Starmer's machine has cynically used false charges of antisemitism as a bludgeon to justify driving Jeremy Corbyn and the left out of the party. Andy McDonald MP, for example, still remains suspended merely for saying: "We will not rest until all people, Israelis and Palestinians, between the river and the sea, can live in peaceful liberty." While just last month Kate Osamor MP was suspended for referring to the horror in Gaza as genocide. In those circumstances it became unsustainable for Labour to continue to campaign for Ali.

For many of the voters from Muslim backgrounds, who make up around 20% of the electorate in Rochdale, he had already lost their vote exactly because he was standing on a Labour ticket, and has been a loyal supporter of the Starmer leadership. There have been reports of him being shouted down with chants of 'Free Palestine' when he visited a local takeaway.

George Galloway, standing for the Workers Party of Britain, is attempting to mobilise

that anger, and is the only anti-austerity, anti-war candidate on the ballot paper. He is urging voters to lend him their vote as "the ultimate protest vote", and there is no doubt that a vote for him is the best way in this by-election to send a message to all the pro-capitalist parties in Westminster.

However, Galloway is not the only means of protest being offered. Simon Danczuk, previously Labour MP for Rochdale before being suspended, is standing for the right-wing populists of Reform UK. Some Labour activists are reported to be campaigning for him as the best means to stop Galloway! Danczuk's 'attack line' on Galloway is to argue that "If elected, I will prioritise Rochdale over Palestine." But a Reform UK MP will do nothing for the fight against the austerity and cuts to public services suffered by all working-class communities in Rochdale.

On the other hand, if Galloway was to achieve a victory it would send a shudder through the capitalist establishment, and would raise the sights of all those looking for a party that represents the working class, indicating that it is possible to stand a significant workers' list in a general election, which suspended and expelled left Labour MPs should take part in.

However, it is not automatic that those possibilities will be realised. George Galloway has twice before been elected as an MP outside of Labour, first in Bethnal Green and Bow, and then in Bradford West. Unfortunately, the opportunity for this to be a step towards a democratic mass workers' party was not taken. A parliamentary figurehead alone is not an alternative vehicle for working-class political representation.

This time, with a pro-capitalist Starmer-led government looming, it is urgent that this election campaign forms part of the process, collaborating with others in the trade union and socialist movement, towards building a powerful political voice for the working class. The Socialist Party is calling for a vote for George Galloway in Rochdale with that goal firmly to the fore.



# What trade unions can do against the onslaught on Gaza



Sheila marches with Bristol Trades Council banner on Gaza demo ROBERT THOMAS

**SHEILA CAFFREY**  
CANDIDATE FOR NEU VICE-PRESIDENT

Like hundreds of thousands of people, including many National Education Union (NEU) members, I have marched and protested against the Israeli state's onslaught on Gaza.

Some of the organisations that are calling the demonstrations, such as Stop the War and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, have also called for protests and meetings at workplaces, including the day of action on 7 February (see page 2).

### Trade unions should take a lead

As a result of the strike wave that started in 2022, trade union leaders have gained a huge authority, but the full weight of the six million-strong trade union movement in Britain is yet to be brought to the heart of the anti-war movement. With a strong lead, unions could mobilise much bigger numbers onto the demonstrations, which would have a greater impact on the Tories and on Keir Starmer. They could bring their weight to demands on Keir Starmer to stop backing the Israeli state war machine.

Trade union leaders should also encourage regions and branches to work together with other unions, including through trades councils, to organise local protests. The NEU should also lead calls on the TUC to coordinate a strategy, which should include readiness to defend any group of workers who face victimisation for anti-war stands, as the TUC has correctly committed to in relation to the minimum service level anti-strike laws.

### In schools

For NEU members, the war on Gaza is particularly important because of the children, students and families we support who are directly affected, and who in general face a world of war and conflict. That matters in the classroom, and it matters when our

students want to protest, perhaps take part in walk-outs, or show solidarity in other ways such as by wearing badges.

While some school leaders have been supportive, many of our members work in an environment of bullying management that takes draconian measures against both children and staff. Some school managements have reported children to Prevent, the government's anti-terrorism programme, just for showing support for Palestine, which we must oppose. In such toxic workplaces, young teachers can feel unable to ask for professional guidance.

That is a reflection both of the woeful role of local authorities and of academisation. Labour-led local authorities should implement pastoral, educative and consistent discussion between staff and school leaderships on how to address such issues, using them as opportunities to listen to each other with respect. Academisation has allowed 'rogue' management to operate unchecked, without any even partial democratic accountability.

NEU groups should approach heads collectively, calling not for punishment but discussion.

NEU groups should also reach out to parents for discussion and collaboration, to try to avoid pitting parents against staff. A working group in schools with union members, reps of students and parents, could discuss and negotiate. Collectively we can develop our union response to protest, Prevent, antisemitism and Islamophobia, rather than leaving it to individuals.

If an individual school leadership is unreasonable, the union should

collectively respond in an organised and democratically agreed way. Many campaigns against academisation have demonstrated the strength of organised union, parent and student action.

### We need our own voice

The onslaught on Gaza and Palestinians has highlighted for even bigger numbers of people that the Starmer-led Labour Party does not speak for them. The latest example being the suspension of Labour MP for Edmonton, north London, Kate Osamor. We want to get rid of the Tories as soon as possible, but the reality is that a Starmer-led government would still back Israeli state repression and violence.

That's why in my vice-presidential campaign I have highlighted that I would welcome candidates in local and national elections that support our members and our union's policies. That means vital issues like inflation-proof pay rises and full funding for education, and should also include solidarity with the people of Gaza.

A workers' list of candidates – trade unionists, anti-war campaigners, socialists, including former Labour MPs candidates now barred from standing for Labour, such as Jeremy Corbyn, Emma Dent Coad and Kate Osamor – would bring the pressure of the mass movement outside into parliament. They could move amendments, like the SNP did, and apply big pressure to a Labour government. That would be an important step to the new working-class-based party I believe we need.

We have to fight together for the fully funded, public, democratically controlled, inclusive education system we all need.

## Vote Sheila Caffrey #1 for NEU vice-president

Sheila, an Executive member of the National Education Union and Socialist Party member, has been to the fore fighting for the trade union movement to put its full weight behind the anti-war movement.



# World climate heats up

## Tories dig for more oil and Labour abandons green pledge

ALI COOK

DORSET SOCIALIST PARTY

Last May, the World Meteorological Organisation projected a 66% likelihood that the rise in annual global temperatures would surpass 1.5°C for at least one year between 2023 and 2027. 1.5°C is a target set to reduce the deadliest effects of climate change – it has now been exceeded for a 12 month period for the first time.

You would think that the ruling capitalist classes globally would get together and decide to put an end to climate change – pull all their hoarded wealth to solve the crisis. That would be the rational response given the severity and seriousness of climate change.

However, capitalism is not a system based on the needs of the many or of future generations, but rather a system that is dedicated to the maximisation of profit for a tiny minority of super-rich bosses.

The estimated cost to avoid the worst impacts of the climate crisis is \$4.5 trillion a year by 2030, according to the IEA (International Energy Agency). Given the



competitive nature of the profit system, where nation states compete to maximize profits for their own bosses, no capitalist state will prioritise such a significant level of investment without a guarantee of future profits, for fear of putting itself at a disadvantage.



**The climate crisis is threatening the very existence of humanity, but our priority must be to follow the diktats of the market and let future generations suffer the consequences!**

And the Tories are still pressing ahead with fossil fuel investments! An illustration of this was Sunak's proposal to grant new North Sea oil and gas licenses at the end of last

year. Furthermore, an anti-green rhetoric was a common theme of the Conservative Party conference in 2023, this has led to a roll back of their policies.

Meanwhile, the Labour Party under Keir Starmer, most likely to lead the next government, has scrapped its proposed £28 billion green investment policy. The reason given is that the "Tories have done terrible damage to the economy".

What could be a more damning indictment of capitalism? The climate crisis is threatening the very existence of humanity, but our priority must be to follow the diktats of the market and let future generations suffer the consequences!

### Capitalism must go

Clearly, there is no way out of climate change on a capitalist basis. The vast wealth and resources, the main levers of the economy, need to be taken into public hands, so that a democratic plan can be developed whereby it can be put to use to improve our lives and reverse climate change. And it's the working-class majority that has the power to bring about that kind of change.

## Fight for fully funded, fully public dental care

KRISTOPHER BARKER

BRISTOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

What do you expect from an industry in private hands since 1951, after a brief flirtation with being in public hands as part of the NHS?

Queues hundred's in length were the sight on a cold and miserable Bristol pavement on a Monday at 6am, just to be placed on the register of the NHS dentist. The ex-Bupa dentist practice, now accepting NHS patients, reopened the same day.

This clearly shows the vacuum of NHS dentistry in Bristol. The Save St Pauls Dentist Campaign, a grassroots movement, has been praised as being instrumental to the return of such a vital public service.

The £3 billion NHS dental budget has not changed in a decade,

equating to a £1 billion cut in real terms. 6.5 million children in England alone have not stepped foot in an NHS dentist for at least a year, an increase of a third since 2019.

The queues in Bristol aren't just a one-off. There was a very similar story in Kings Lynn in 2023 (see 'NHS dental crisis' at socialistparty.org.uk), it's clear more will happen in the future.

And yet we are expected to accept the myth that the private firms are the most efficient method of resource distribution! Faced with ever-shrinking funding for delivering NHS services, dental practices are choosing to operate privately. Instead, we need dental care fully funded and fully in public hands, so that services can be planned to meet need.



## Tories attack right to protest



The mass Gaza demo that brought down Braverman ROBERT THOMAS

JUNE ANGUS

WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Rishi Sunak has announced plans to launch yet another round of restrictions that attempt to limit and curtail peaceful protests.

Some of the anti-protest measures to be added to the new Criminal Justice Bill include giving police the power to arrest protesters wearing face coverings, banning the use of flares or pyrotechnics, and criminalisation of climbing on national memorials.

While the National Police Chiefs' Council claims that such measures are a response to "reckless and criminal acts" during recent protests, this Bill is little more than another futile

attempt to silence growing discontent. Just like with the Public Order Act 2023 and the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, the new Bill shows how scared Sunak is of the increasingly vocal majority of working-class people frustrated at years of government incompetency and economic instability.

The last few years have seen a historic rise in mass public protests against climate change, social inequality, stagnant wages, and most recently, the bombing of Gaza. In November, Tory home secretary Suella Braverman tried to get a Gaza protest banned. But when an estimated 800,000 people turned up, she was forced to resign!

We must fight to defend our right to protest against any and every attack. But no doubt the new measures will fail to stop protests. With a string of failed pledges and policies in his wake, Sunak is resorting to a now familiar Tory tactic – throw everything at the wall and see what sticks.

The Tories' days are numbered. Will Labour leader Keir Starmer promise to reverse the Tories' anti-protest laws in office? So far he has completely failed to challenge them, and is at pains to show he stands on the bosses' side.

Working-class people won't be silenced. Build the movement to fight for our rights and freedoms!



# Unison's role on local government pay and cuts

HUGO PIERRE

MEMBER OF UNISON LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICE GROUP EXECUTIVE, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Over one million local government workers and others on National Joint Council (NJC) terms and conditions have faced more than ten years of below-inflation pay rises. For many, this has meant the value of their pay is now worth 20% less than it was back then – effectively that means they are working an extra day on no pay!

The largest union in the sector, Unison, has just finished a consultation exercise among its members for the pay claim that is due from 1 April 2024. The last two years have seen most NJC unions accept a flat-rate increase of £1,925. This below-inflation increase was rejected by Unison and Unite members in ballots for national industrial action. However, they only passed the Tory anti-union 50% turnout threshold in a small number of branches.

Lambeth and Knowsley Unison were the only two large Unison branches covering top-tier local authorities that got over 50% of their branch members to vote in the ballot.

## Strategy to fight on pay

Knowsley branch, where Socialist Party members play a role in leading the branch, argued that the union should start industrial action in those areas, while teachers in the National Education Union (NEU) and others were on strike, and rebalot a number of other branches that narrowly missed the threshold.

At that stage, this was rejected by the 'Time for Real Change' left coalition leadership of Unison's Local Government Service Group Executive (SGE). Unfortunately, the leadership of the NEU recommended teachers settle their pay claim soon after.

This time round, Unison members have agreed a claim for £3,000 or 10%, £15-an-hour minimum pay within two years, and joint monitoring of ethnicity pay gap information. Unison's NJC committee is now approaching the other NJC trade unions - Unite which has consulted on and agreed a similar claim, and GMB which is still consulting - to submit the joint claim at the end of February.

## Demands on Labour

It is unclear what the employers' response will be at this stage. It is more than likely they will call for a lower offer this year, as even the higher measure RPI inflation fell to 5.2% in December. However, this is an ideal time for the unions to mobilise for above-inflation pay increases to get back some of the last decade's lost pay.

All three of the trade unions back Labour. Labour councils now make up the largest bloc on the employers' negotiating side.

Unison members know only too well that, in councils, Labour has

failed to defend their jobs over the last 15 years of austerity. It is estimated that one million local government jobs have been axed during this time. And now some Labour councils, alongside some Tory councils, have handed over political control to unelected officers or commissioners to make more swingeing cuts under Section 114 provisions.

Unison members should demand that Labour councillors pay up and end the cost-of-living crisis we have endured for over a decade. But this demand will not be heard unless the Unison leadership mobilise a campaign that engages the mass of the membership for action. A serious discussion must take place throughout the union to support the best practice that can push more branches over the 50% turnout threshold.

## Fighting cuts and section 114

Some members may be concerned about losing their jobs, especially as they have seen some councils facing serious financial straits. The largest council in western Europe, Birmingham City Council, was recently put under Section 114 measures.

So far, the trade unions nationally have not given backing to a plan of action to win more resources for the council, or demanded a commitment from an incoming Labour government to provide the resources they need.

The fight for council funding, where Unison's own estimates show

that £3-4 billion is needed now in England alone, must be a part of the campaign. Instead of pledging to cooperate with unelected Tory government-appointed commissioners, Unison should demand that councils refuse to pass on the cuts and join with unions in a campaign to demand the funding necessary. Unfortunately, when Socialist Party members proposed no-cuts budgets at the recent SGE meeting it was not supported – including by Socialist Workers Party members.

Unison, for example, should give a firm commitment of support to branches like Nottingham Unison, which has pledged to fight any cuts, with resources for action. Unison could organise a national meeting of all affected branches to coordinate a campaign against the slaughter of jobs and services.

And, like Unite have done with steelworkers facing the decimation of their industry in Port Talbot, try to force a commitment from Labour to end the funding crisis.

This year's local government pay claim could be a major turning point for Unison. A plan of action could draw in new layers of activists, just as other unions have seen, and revitalise the union into a fighting force. This could force concessions now from the employers but also prepare the ground for campaigns in the future to defend jobs, pay and conditions of local government workers under a Starmer-led national government.

# Unison Black members' conference: Challenging racism in the workplace and community

APRIL ASHLEY

UNISON NEC, BLACK MEMBERS' REP, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Unison's annual national Black members conference in January attracted hundreds of Black trade union activists to discuss campaigning and organising against racism in the workplace and in the community. It is the biggest gathering of Black trade unionists in the UK, with over 600 regularly attending.

The conference followed Unison's 2023 'Year of Black Workers' campaign which was "a renewed and focused approach to challenging racism in the workplace and improving the experiences of Black workers both in the workplace and wider society". The 2024 conference

sought to "secure the legacy", with an anti-racist toolkit and anti-racist charter for public sector employers to sign up to.

Conference motions ranged from mental health and racism, to the history of Black women in the trade union movement, citing the likes of the heroic Jayaben Desai who led the Grunwick strike 1976-1977 for higher pay and trade union recognition.

The conference was set alight debating the use of the term 'Black' as a political expression. Whilst some young members called for the abandonment of the term 'Black' as alienating other communities, most delegates argued against this as a backward step for unifying the movement against racism.

## 'An activist's journey' – fighting against racism and for socialism

The Socialist Party had a successful intervention in the conference led by Hugo Pierre, previously a Black members' rep on the National Executive Committee (NEC), who was invited as a special guest speaker to the conference to talk about his activist's journey.

Hugo's speech highlighted the fight against racism, from early migrants into the UK - using his father as an example of supporting black workers against employers; to driving the racists and fascists off the streets in Tower Hamlets, led by the YRE (Youth Against Racism in Europe); to leading the Windrush campaign against the Tory 'hostile environment', by supporting Camden Unison member Michael Braithwaite, cruelly threatened with deportation like thousands of other Caribbean migrants.

His speech was punctuated with applause as he emphasised the need to organise in the workplace, and expressed confidence in Black workers who are leading the fight against racism.

He declared he was a socialist, and he urged the importance of organising to change society - and again was confident that Black workers will be in the lead of the struggle to change society. A delegate said his speech was "brilliant" and was needed at the conference.

## Barnet Unison strike

Mental health social workers in Barnet Unison are rebalotting to renew their strike mandate after taking 28 days of strike action, the latest of which was Friday 9 February

PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY



HUGO PIERRE PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY

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## PCS leadership nominations

# Fight for a campaigning NEC

## Nominate Marion Lloyd for PCS president

In December 2023, Socialist Party member Marion Lloyd came within 800 votes of becoming general secretary of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS), as the candidate of the PCS Broad Left Network (BLN).

Nominations have now opened for elections to the PCS National Executive Committee (NEC) and for president and vice-presidents. BLN activists continue to work jointly with the Independent Left, and now also a broad range of reps from right across the union to campaign for a leadership capable of tackling the challenges we face.

### The BLN says

It took huge effort by reps and members to break the 50% voting threshold imposed by the Tories' 2016 anti-union law and win a mandate for strike action. This action, in 2023, targeted and national, forced £1,500 out of the government.

We were having an effect. But at that pivotal moment, the union leadership cancelled strikes, cancelled reballots, and cancelled the strike levy that had helped to fund our campaign. They dishonestly called this "continuing the national campaign". Time has proven they had no intention of fighting on pay and jobs.

On top of this, the national union ignored the huge appetite for action in the devolved nations. They capitulated, and they must be ousted.

### What the BLN stands for

- Pay justice
- Build a national campaign to protect jobs, prevent office closures, improve pensions and fight to stop the attacks on hybrid/flexible working
- Rebuild our union
- We need a strong political voice: we will support those politicians who support our members and policies
- Back our private sector members
- Defend and expand democracy in PCS
- Future-proof members' terms and conditions: home-working and artificial intelligence are here to stay – but both must work for our members. We will fight for national agreements covering both
- Promote green issues in our campaigns and demands
- Equality and no discrimination in the workplace or union
- Promote green issues and campaign for a socialist just transition

Marion Lloyd on BEIS PCS picket line 2023 ROB WILLIAMS



### Please nominate

#### President

Lloyd, Marion (DSIT)

#### Vice-presidents

Carlsen, Bryan (HSE)  
Laidlaw, Bev (DWP)  
Semple, Dave (DfE)  
Wesley, Hector (HMRC)

#### NEC members

Bishell, Tom (DWP)  
Brittle, Fiona (Scottish Govt)  
Carlsen, Bryan (HSE)  
Chown, Josh (Home Office)  
Clarke, Eleanor (Cabinet Office)  
Criddle, Gemma (HMRC)  
Cuckson, Victoria (HMRC)  
Davidson, John (HMRC)  
Day, Chris (National Archives)

Dennis, Alan (Defence)  
Hamer, Chip (Culture)  
Heemskerck, Rachel (DWP)  
Jones, David (DLUHC)  
Laidlaw, Bev (DWP)  
Lawton, Reece (DWP)  
Lloyd, Marion (DSIT)  
Marks, Chris (DWP)  
Menezes-Jackson, Vijay (DWP)  
Norris, Liat (MoJ)  
Ritchie, Rob (Met Police)  
Rosser, Jon-Paul (HMRC)  
Semple, Dave (DfE)  
Smith, John (HMRC)  
Spencer, Gary (DLUHC)  
Tweeddale, Saorsa-Amatheia (DWP)  
Virtue, John (HMRC)  
Williams, Katrine (DWP)  
Worswick, Craig (Home Office)  
Wright, Annette (HMRC)  
Young, Bobby (HMRC)

# RMT London Underground victory

## Prepare for the next round

JOHN REID  
FORMER RMT EXECUTIVE MEMBER

The RMT, by being prepared to take strike action on London Underground, has won an extra £30 million from Labour's London mayor Sadiq Khan and the Greater London Authority. This will be a yearly amount.

Following a meeting of reps, the RMT National Executive Committee (NEC) will now consider the offer in detail.

Senior management had told tube unions that the final pay offer was 5%, and Aslef settled for the offer.

However, the RMT rejected it, as did Unite and TSSA. Members voted to strike, and our reps steadfastly refused to call off action, indeed they threatened to shut down the Underground for a week through rolling action.

Suddenly, at the beginning of this action, £30 million extra funding was found. Once again, we have shown that militancy wins.

As a result of the determination of our members to fight, an extra £1,000 a year, at least, has been added to the vast majority of our members' annual wage, plus an additional £200 and £400 p.a. to lower-paid grades. The blanket refusal to increase pay bands in line with the offer was removed.

However, increases to salary bands do not fully cover the additional £1,000 pay rise now being applied.



Victoria station picket LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

This will mean that a few members will receive a small part of their 2023 pay rise as a non-consolidated payment. Further, pay bands will be capped at salaries of £99,500, and any payment above this will be paid on a non-consolidated basis.

The terms and conditions of these highly skilled and loyal RMT members have been won by years of unified struggle by the RMT, an all-grades union.

Therefore, while it was right to accept the offer, we should make it clear that, in the imminent 2024-25 pay claim, we will be demanding that the freezing of pay bands must be

removed, and that all future pay increases are consolidated. We should also seek to further cut the gap between workers on lower and higher pay grades.

The battle continues in the coming pay year, and we need maximum unity for the upcoming battles. With the mayor and Greater London Assembly elections looming, and in a general election year, we must put clear demands on Khan and Keir Starmer, and be ready for fight for them.

We need all our strength to defend our pay, conditions, jobs and pensions. Unity is strength.

## Barts strike:

# Kent workers win – now Barts must 'do the right thing'!



Barts strikers at Canary Wharf HQ, with Len speaking JAMES IVENS

Domestics, porters, catering staff and other 'soft facilities management' workers at Barts NHS Trust, members of Unite, are embarking on their seventh tranche of strike action from 19-21 February. While there has been progress in talks on some of their demands, there is still more to be won.

The workers are demanding that they are all paid the Covid bonus that was paid to NHS staff last year. This group of workers successfully fought to be brought back into the NHS in 2023, but due to the bosses' decision to stagger their entry, scandalously some of the workers were paid the bonus and others weren't.

Barts workers have linked up with workers in Dudley and East Kent striking for the same thing.

### Addressing a strike rally outside the Trust HQ in luxurious Canary Wharf, Unite branch secretary Len Hockey said:

"We were outsourced for 25 years, treated as profit fodder to pay dividends to shareholders, and so that the trust can make savings out of our worsening terms and conditions.

"The trust said 'We are doing the right thing' when they took us in-house. That implies they'd done the wrong thing for years. But taking us back in-house and then failing to pay the lump sum is unacceptable. We are 'part of the Barts family' we are told. Well, I would say we are in an abusive relationship until they make this payment!"

"They say they have no authority to pay us. That their bosses in the Integrated Care Board and NHS England have to sign off for them to pay it. So, even if they had the money, they can't pay it. And if they did pay it, other workers would want it as well.

"Too bloody right! Everyone who worked through the pandemic should receive that payment! And they say: 'Then other trusts would be under pressure.' Too bad!

"But now our sisters and brothers in Kent, 300 members striking – their trust has done a U-turn and is giving the lump sum. That blows the argument that trusts do not have discretion completely out of the water. You need to have the political will and the moral compunction to do it!"



# TATA STEEL DECLARES WAR

# NATIONALISATION NOT DEVASTATION

## ALEC THRIVES

SWANSEA AND WEST WALES SOCIALIST PARTY AND SWANSEA TRADES COUNCIL

**T**ata Steel bosses have declared the start of a legally obliged, 45-day formal consultation process, which could culminate in the initial loss of 2,423 jobs across the UK, with 1,929 of those in Port Talbot, representing exactly half the workforce.

Tata's phoney war is over after TV Narendran, the global chief executive of Tata Steel and the CEO of Tata Steel UK, told a hearing of parliament's Welsh Affairs Committee that his "shareholders had grown weary over the billions of pounds spent on the plant during 15 years of ownership". When asked if the closure of the furnaces was a 'done deal' he said "given our financial situation and the quality of assets, we are pretty much there."

This brutal and intransigent message from Tata was reinforced after Labour shadow business secretary Jonathan Reynolds' plea to keep one of the furnaces operational

during the green transition was contemptuously dismissed as "not operationally feasible and financially not affordable"

Even the unanimous support of all the Labour-led Welsh parliament's Senedd members to support and retain primary steel making at Port Talbot has not dented Tata's determination to shutdown both the furnaces! But steel unions must now demand that this support be turned into intervention to keep the furnaces firing. The unions should demand that the Welsh Labour Government seize ownership of the steelworks if any attempt is made by Tata to switch off the blast furnaces.

The bosses of Tata couldn't be clearer - the shareholders and their profits always come first. Steelworkers, their families and our communities, are just collateral damage to be thrown on the scrapheap.

40 years after the Tories' destruction of the mining

industry in South Wales, which devastated communities in the Valleys forever, Tata's chief executives were using the 'Thatcher Room' in Westminster to announce a similar plan for the destruction of Port Talbot steelworks!

The thousands of job losses, both inside and outside the steelworks, will turn Port Talbot into more of a ghost town than it is now.

## Huge support for workers

On the streets and housing estates of Port Talbot and Aberavon there is almost unanimous support for the steelworkers' struggle.

This was highlighted at a recent protest organised by Unite the Union outside the steelworks. Local resident Kirsty McCusker, who like most people in Port Talbot has a relative working in the plant, said at the protest if these jobs go: "The town is not going to be the same, it's going to be empty, it's going to devastate it. The workers are spending their money in the shops and takeaways. We haven't got much here as it is and what we have got here, they only keep going because that's where the steelworkers

spend their money. So, it's going to affect everyone!"

Mike Rivers, a retired steelworker, and previously Unite deputy convenor at the plant, reiterated the impact on the wider community: "It's going to affect all the communities, from Bridgend up to Swansea, and of course all the valleys."

That's why there is huge support for demonstrations called by the steel unions in Port Talbot and Newport on 17 February. These need to be built as mass mobilisations.

It will send a loud message to Tata and the government that the fight is on to defend jobs and our communities. It will also send a message to Keir Starmer and Labour, which could be in office in a matter of months, that steelworkers have no trust in Tata nor any other big corporation to invest in the transition to 'green steel'.

Unite the union, under the fighting leadership of general secretary Sharon Graham, has turned its considerable resources in support of the steelworkers, with numerous public events in Port Talbot, regular meetings with members and propaganda material distributed widely outlining the case to Save Steel.

There are tactical differences between Unite and the other two steel unions Community and GMB, which had put forward a compromise position to Tata (which was dismissed), on how to resist the jobs slaughter. These differences must now be overcome in order to have a united response to save jobs.

The 'Syndex plan', drawn up by consultants and supported by Community and GMB, proposed a phased transition to green steel which would have seen several hundred jobs disappear, mainly through voluntary redundancies, with the retention of one blast furnace during the green transition to electric-arc production.

Unite correctly opposed the loss of any jobs during the transition period and put its own plan forward, 'A Workers' Plan for Port Talbot', with the central argument that 'workers must not pay the price for the transition'.

A 'Workers Plan for Port Talbot' contains many positive and practical alternatives to retain primary steelmaking in Port Talbot on a 'green' basis.

It argues that to move to green steel and double production capacity, investment of £12 billion by 2035 would be needed, a significant portion made up of public money. It also states "public investment for steel must

come with solid job guarantees - and a public stake in the industry".

## Labour must pledge Nationalisation

But Tata's actions show that it can't be trusted with public money, or to stick to 'job guarantees'. Only by taking the steelworks into public hands, nationalising it under democratic workers' control and management, can jobs be secured into the future.

Unite and the rest of the trade union movement should be demanding Keir Starmer pledges now that a future Labour government would immediately nationalise the plant to save jobs. 'Nationalisation not devastation' should be the rallying call. In response to the Labour leadership's inevitable argument that this would be 'unaffordable' - there should be compensation only on the basis of proven need. Investment should be to develop the site and create jobs, not pay off Tata's fat-cat bosses.

Starmer and his shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves are repeatedly parroting their mantra of 'fiscal responsibility', reassuring the bosses that they won't spend public money. They are already backtracking on their promised £28 billion of green investment.

But in the 1970s, even Edward Heath's Tory government was forced to nationalise Rolls Royce 'in the national interest'. Working-class pressure and trade union action can force government intervention. The steel unions must put both Starmer and the Welsh Labour government under severe pressure to intervene to stop the virtual destruction of Port Talbot steelworks.

Industrial action and mass public support, mobilised in mass

demonstrations, for nationalisation is absolutely necessary to save our steel and jobs!

The fuse has been lit on the 45-day legal consultation process, needed when a company announces large scale redundancies.

Despite all unions agreeing that the timescale for this process is far too short for adequate negotiations, the fact remains that, by the middle of March, Tata can legally sack 1,929 steel workers in Port Talbot.

The urgent and immediate course of action is to use the planned demonstrations in Port Talbot and Newport on 17 February as a launching pad for a massive 'yes' vote for industrial action.

A positive mandate for industrial action by all the unions will have a huge impact on the energy and

morale of steelworkers and the community, who will enthusiastically support such direct action to protect their livelihoods.

With such a mandate, the steel unions can then discuss how to organise the most appropriate forms of strike action, including a warning strike, 24-hour strikes or longer, combined with other industrial actions inside the plant, such as occupation, if that becomes necessary.

This is a fight for the survival of not just a steelworks but of a whole community, and with a bold and determined leadership this can be successfully won, and becoming a beacon for future struggles.

Nationalisation not devastation!

● Read 'Why socialists call for nationalisation' at socialistparty.org.uk



Port Talbot steelworks GARETH THOMAS/CC



Steelworkers lobby parliament, January 2024 ROB WILLIAMS



## WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

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

across the world. Our demands include:

### WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

where genuinely needed, for socially-useful small businesses.

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

### PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

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

### ENVIRONMENT

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

insulation and energy transition plan for existing housing stock.

- Agribusiness to be taken into democratic public ownership. For a food processing and retail industry under workers' control to ensure that standards are set by consumers, small farmers, and 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.

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

### SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need, not to the fat cats.

- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the EU bosses' club. Organise a campaign with European socialists and workers' organisations to use the talks on post-Brexit relations to tear up the EU pro-capitalist rules. For a real collaboration of the peoples of Europe on a socialist basis as a step towards a socialist world.

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

## JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

- Visit [socialistparty.org.uk/join](http://socialistparty.org.uk/join)
- or call 020 8988 8777
- or text your name and postcode to 07761 818 206 to find out more today!





# May Day greetings 2024: Back the paper that backs the working class



SCOTT JONES  
MAY DAY GREETINGS CAMPAIGN ORGANISER

Millions of days of strike action have taken place in the last couple of years as workers fight back. Picket lines are now part of the landscape almost everywhere - outside stations and hospitals and on industrial estates and high streets.

A feature of many of these picket lines is the Socialist newspaper, as Socialist Party members join these workers in struggle as supporters, or as workers on strike themselves. These hundreds of struggles, including many victories, are reported every week in the pages of the Socialist.

The Socialist carries reports of these strikes, quotes from the workers, and an industrial strategy to take disputes forward and win, such as against the new anti-union minimum service levels legislation.

We put forward a socialist programme against the Israeli assault on Gaza at every Palestine demonstration too.

It's clear that the rest of the media does not do this, either repeating misinformation or only putting forward the bosses' side of things. We need organised workers to support the alternative - the Socialist.

So celebrate International Workers' Day 2024 in the traditional workers' movement way, by sending May

Day greetings to help fund the Socialist. May Day is an annual celebration of workers' struggle against capitalism. Its origins lie in the general strike for an eight-hour working day. Each year, we ask groups of workers and trade unionists to support the Socialist newspaper and its revolutionary, anti-war, pro-working-class ideas by financing a May Day greeting.

Can your trade union branch, community campaign, workplace colleagues, trade union council, or student society send us a donation and short message of solidarity? We publish these each year on International Workers' Day to help fund the socialist press.

The Socialist says what most people are thinking: "Get the Tories out!" We will be supporting workers fighting to defend pay, conditions and services, even if it is against a Starmer-led government. The best way to prepare for that is to take steps towards the development of a new mass workers' party now.

Help us get that message out there and continue to report and support workers in struggle by backing the paper that backs the working class.

- Send greetings, see prices and make payments: [socialistparty.org.uk/mayday](http://socialistparty.org.uk/mayday)
- Resources and enquiries: [scottjones@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:scottjones@socialistparty.org.uk)

# New Croydon and Sutton Socialist Party branch launches

DEJI OLAYINKA  
CROYDON AND SUTTON SOCIALIST PARTY

The Croydon and Sutton Socialist Party branch was officially launched at the end of 2023 thanks to the combined efforts of party members across south London throughout the year. At the start of the year south London branches agreed to work towards building a new branch, but it wasn't guaranteed to be based in Croydon.

But when Croydon's Tory mayor proposed a 15% council tax hike, we sprang into action. With support from members from around south London we organised stalls and a protest against the tax increase. The broad anger against it and the previous years of Labour rule were clear,

our high street campaign stalls were swamped with people buying the Socialist.

While other left groups were at the community protests too, we were the only ones to not only criticise the Tory and Labour councillors, but to give people a concrete way to get rid of them and to vote for an alternative to austerity through the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

This meant we could bring many people to a bustling public meeting on how to fight the council tax hike and make gains. But it wasn't a straightforward journey to create the branch. Despite our best efforts as a small but growing force, once the tax increase was voted through - due to labour councillors abstaining - the movement lost momentum. And over summer we struggled to

keep to the plan of regular stalls and activity.

It could have felt like the opportunity to build the branch was slipping away but our efforts outside of Croydon became key. The work of building socialist students in London unis, and bringing our socialist politics to a Black LGBTQ+ event and the national Gaza demos got us in contact with the socialists that would eventually form the branch.

By explaining the role a fighting trade union leadership could play in the struggle for socialism, we were able to bring future members along to leafleting sessions for Marion Lloyd's PCS leadership campaign at the government office hub in Croydon.

When the council threatened to close down nurseries we got members and non-members to join the protest that eventually succeeded in stopping the closures. Croydon council was declared 'bankrupt' for the third time in two years last March, and so there will inevitably be more battles for the branch to be involved in. We will continue to do that and develop the forces of socialism. Through our branch meetings, reading group and interventions, we will continue to do all we can to develop the forces of socialism in Croydon and Sutton.



Protesting outside Croydon Council PHOTO: CROYDON AND SUTTON SP

JESS HINZ  
LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT SOCIALIST PARTY

Growing up an observant, working-class kid, I became accustomed to feeling like something just wasn't quite right with the world around me. The more I lived, and delved into the state of capitalist politics and media, the more it became apparent - the system is broken, and those at the top have little intention of changing what has been designed to suit them so well. Feeling daunted by it all as an individual, I was unsure of how to turn my desire for change into something tangible.

Being in my early twenties, Jeremy Corbyn's leadership campaign in 2016 was the first time my young wannabe-activist self, along with countless others, was presented with the idea that things could be different. However, it has now been

made incredibly clear to me that the Labour leadership is not concerned with the lives of the many.

By upholding the interests of the capitalist class and big business above all else, all that is on offer is growing economic inequality, systemic injustices and a never-ending cycle of war and crisis. I realised I couldn't support a party like that in good conscience.

My first contact with the Socialist Party was speaking to a now fellow student member at a stall near my university. I remember being inspired by the dedication I saw. After getting involved myself, I've found that the Socialist Party is the breath of fresh air I've been gasping for ever since Corbyn's defeat.

Since joining, I have felt energised in the active struggle for a better, more equal society where people take precedence over profits, and

strengthened by being a part of an organisation that is demanding radical change.

I know that the only way we can challenge the myriad of injustices in society, domestically and internationally, is through collective action, and I'm proud to be with the Socialist Party.

**Join the fightback**

**JOIN THE SOCIALISTS**

- Visit [socialistparty.org.uk/join](http://socialistparty.org.uk/join)
- or call **020 8988 8777**
- or text your name and postcode to **07761 818 206**

to find out more today!

# Socialist Students conference 2024 Preparing to fight for socialist change in our schools, colleges and universities



ADAM POWELL-DAVIES  
SOCIALIST STUDENTS NATIONAL ORGANISER

Nearly 100 young socialists met in Birmingham on Saturday 10 February for Socialist Students national conference. Held annually to decide the political direction of Socialist Students for the coming year, the conference brought together student organisers from over 30 university and college campuses, as well as young workers and trade unionists bringing solidarity as visitors.

This year's conference took place in the midst of the huge protest movement against Israel's brutal onslaught on Gaza, which has seen thousands of students across the UK protesting. Delegates from a number of Socialist Students groups reported on successful protests and walkouts they had organised in their colleges and universities. Conference agreed unanimously that Socialist Students should "continue its campaigning to build a young, socialist pole of attraction within the current anti-war movement".

The importance of building support for socialist ideas to end war was underlined in the opening discussion on the global crisis of capitalism, which outlined the growing

fault lines for conflict around the world. Added to the deepening environmental crisis, the soaring cost of living and attacks to our democratic rights, the recent outbreak of major wars - first in Ukraine and then in Gaza - shows the dystopian character of capitalism today. That's why delegates voted for Socialist Students to "reaffirm our commitment to fighting for a socialist world, free of exploitation and oppression".

The rest of the conference was all about how Socialist Students groups go about doing just that - practically putting forward what steps we can take now to organise the fight for a socialist world within our schools, colleges and universities.

Socialist Students organisers reported different initiatives that they had taken, or were planning to take, on their campuses - campaigning for things such as rent controls in student housing, and standing candidates in student areas in the upcoming local elections. Speakers emphasised the need to link our immediate campaigning demands to the fight for a socialist system, as the only way for improvements to our lives to be won on a stable basis.

All of those demands - whether it's defending our right to protest, or ensuring we can afford to keep a roof

over our head - point to the need for a political voice to fight in the interests of students and young people in parliament and the council chambers. This year's conference identified the upcoming general election as a crucial opportunity for Socialist Students to organise a political fight-back among students - to kick out the Tories, but also to offer a socialist alternative to Keir Starmer's Labour Party.

Multiple speakers reminded conference about Jeremy Corbyn's time as Labour leader, which saw the biggest youth movement of the past decade in support of his left, anti-austerity policies - including the call for free university education.

Socialist Students organisers have previously stood as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in local elections. This year, conference decided that Socialist Students should approach TUSC about affiliating nationally, as the best way to coordinate with other groups putting forward a "working-class challenge to the pro-austerity and pro-capitalist parties at the next election".

The mood of delegates throughout the day was determined and optimistic. There was a real back-and-forth exchange of ideas among all the young people gathered, which continued into the breaks and the post-conference evening social. Dozens came in to speak throughout the day, including many attending their first Socialist Students conference. The sense was that we've got work to do now, and a world to win - and this year's conference has put us in the strongest possible position to do that.



**Join the student fightback: join...**

**socialist students**

- Visit [socialiststudents.org.uk/join](http://socialiststudents.org.uk/join)
- or call **020 8988 8761**
- or text your name and school, college or uni to **07749 379 010**

**Selling the Socialist**

Just some of the events where the Socialist newspaper was sold in the past week...

## Hackney, east London

We held a paper sale in the 'Narrow Way' near Hackney Central station.

It was a very fruitful and useful session. Our main theme was campaigning for an alternative party to represent the working class as Labour has turned its back on us.

The party's stance on Gaza in particular has caused dismay. "Children are dying and the Labour Party says nothing - what ever happened to them?"

EDDIE BLINDEL



Hackney

## Salisbury

Our campaign stall turned out to be very lively. The conversations we had were well-considered and thoughtful even though most of the people we spoke to had no particular political affiliations.

Benjamin Netanyahu was likened to a dictator and the US involvement and support for the war in Gaza was highlighted. The UK government's increasingly restrictive legislation on protesting was a concern for one young person we spoke to, as well as the lack of democratic process in this country. As always, there was universal bewilderment regarding the purpose of the Labour Party and what Starmer stands for.

MARK RICHARDS

## Loughborough

Leicester Socialist Party now has the capacity to do an extra Saturday campaign stall in Loughborough.

One person we spoke to said they were part of Reform UK, and their main concern seemed to be immigration. But they agreed with us 100% on our demands for decent jobs for all, a £15-an-hour minimum wage, and to fully fund the NHS. Reform UK doesn't even say if it will keep any form of guaranteed minimum wage!

A Muslim woman who had seen us on protests asked if we would stand a candidate in the general election, because they couldn't support any of the other main parties.

We had a good discussion with one man who who supported what we had to say but was unable to read our leaflet. But he took it away, saying he would scan it into his computer and translate it into audio.

HEATHER RAWLING

## Bulwell Academy joint NEU and NASUWT strike

Staff at Bulwell Academy, Nottingham, have taken strike action in January against unacceptable management behaviours, to improve consultation, and reduce excessive workload. Pickets of both NEU and NASUWT education unions were 40-50 strong, and got support from parents and students. Socialist Party members have visited the picket lines in support.

Sheana Wheatley, NEU secretary, said to the Socialist:

"Thanks to all for solidarity. There have been some developments. [At the end of January] we picketed and then had a meeting to decide next steps. Members decided that although the dispute is not fully resolved, the barrier to resolution is not present on site. In those circumstances, members suspended the rest of the action and returned to school.

"We agreed to continue to support and engage fully with improving processes for communications and T&L (Training and Learning). But additional strike dates have been asked for and approved for after half term if they are needed.

"They are a really fantastic set of staff and have put the children and community first throughout."

## Asda workers strike

GMB union members at Gosport Asda store, in Hampshire, walked out for 48 hours on Friday 9 February. In all weathers, the members stood firm on the picket line against manager intimidation and harassment, and caused disruption to trade.

The members had balloted before Christmas over a catalogue of 21 points, primarily around health and safety concerns, cuts to hours, poor contracts and bullying from management.

Several other stores across the country, including Wisbech, Lowestoft, Brighton Marina, Brighton Hollingbury and Skelton, have either begun or are beginning to ballot their own members for industrial action.

A GMB MEMBER



PHOTO: NICK CHAFFEY

## Why I joined the Socialist Party

**"The Socialist Party is a breath of fresh air"**



Jess speaking at Socialist Students conference (see page 11) PHOTO: ALEX SMITH



# Be part of socialist election stand against war and cuts

The Tories have to go. They've backed the murderous assault on Gaza.

They don't care about working-class people, wherever they live. Our public services have been destroyed, and the Tories help the rich get richer.

And who's there backing Tory policies every step of the way? Keir Starmer's Labour.

Starmer can't bring himself to even firmly oppose the war on Gaza, and he suspends any Labour MP that does.

So we've had to protest against the war in our hundreds of thousands.

We've had to strike for a pay rise. We've had to protest to save our communities from cuts.

We need those people, like you, to stand at the next election to provide an alternative. The Socialist Party is part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), trying to gather the biggest working-class challenge possible for May's local elections.

Stand with us.

Do you agree?  
**GET IN TOUCH**  
socialistparty.org.uk



## Call for anti-war, left-wing election stand in Lancashire

DAVE BEALE  
LANCASHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

130 people crowded into a Preston community centre on Saturday 10 February for a public meeting about the Israeli onslaught on Gaza.

Since October, Preston has had a well-supported campaign calling for a ceasefire, an end to the genocide and Israeli occupation. Almost every week there have been either coaches to the big London protests or local marches, rallies and meetings.

### Bombing

The meeting heard speakers including a Palestinian speaker who was born in Gaza and has spent most of his life in Rochdale. He had been visiting Gaza for a family wedding prior to the 7 October Hamas attack and was then unable to leave. He described the dreadful scenes he witnessed as a result of Israeli bombing.

Other speakers, which included a rabbi and two Stop the War organisers, described the horrors inflicted by the Israeli state, some of the central historical factors in the situation and the impact that the global protests, especially in Indonesia and London, are having. Unfortunately, none described the vital class dimension needed to find a way forward, and none mentioned the 's' word - socialism.

Perhaps the most telling point of the evening for many was when Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) supporter Jenny Hurley asked Michael Lavalette, a Stop the War coordinator, if he was going to stand against Labour in Preston in the coming general election - a question he declined to answer. Michael has been a left-of-Labour councillor in Preston previously, including as part of TUSC. When Stop the War convenor Lindsey German spoke later, she stated in response that "Palestine has to be on the ballot paper at the next election" - but again, it was unclear what that means.

### "No vote"

There is little doubt in Lancashire that there is now a real appetite for standing left and socialist candidates against Labour. This has been bubbling under the surface in recent years, but the Gaza catastrophe has definitely brought it out into the open. At Preston's Gaza protests, Michael has repeatedly called for a "no vote" at the coming election, but if that only means abstentionism, that would be a very serious missed opportunity!

The potential of left community candidates standing on a core programme that links Gaza and anti-war issues to a no-cuts, no-privatisation programme could achieve widespread support from many sections of the community in Lancashire and generally. Socialist Party members would encourage others to stand with us under the banner of TUSC in May's local elections.

## Nottingham Labour plans cuts on scale we've not seen



National Education Union on strike in Nottingham in 2023

TRADE UNION MEMBER AT NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL, AND SUPPORTER OF NOTTINGHAM SAVE OUR SERVICES

Nottingham City Council faces a growing tide of anger from the trade unions and local community. Proposals by the Labour-run authority will cut services and jobs on a scale not previously seen.

Equity, the union for performing arts workers, has joined the campaign, outraged at a proposed total end to spending on culture and the arts. In particular, this threatens their members who work at the Nottingham Playhouse theatre. The Musicians' Union has stated that funding to the Playhouse would reduce from £433,000 to zero if the proposals go through.

### Eviction

There are 44 council-owned properties - 40 are occupied - that are rented out at market rents, as opposed to being social housing. These are being sold to raise money. Shockingly, the occupants have been served with Section 21 'no-fault' eviction notices - a further consequence of the council's long-term strategy of not fighting cuts.

Writing in the Socialist, a Unison member in Nottingham said: "554 full-time-equivalent (FTE) posts are at risk... three council adult residential homes are threatened, as is the much-loved Jackdawe homecare service for adults with complex and challenging behaviours.

"The library service faces 31 FTE jobs being cut, although the council

campaign organising meeting of 48, shows that people want to fight, and want the council to fight and not pass on the Tory government cuts. A steering committee of nine has been set up for the campaign, with flexibility for more community groups and trade unions to join it.

Further protests will take place, including the day of the council budget meeting - 4 March. Council trade unions have met with a large group of Labour councillors, putting our position to them that they need to publicly fight these cuts.

The council has asked the government for £65 million Exceptional Financial Support, and is still waiting to hear about this. This is not new money from central government, but permission to use money received by the council from the sale of assets, such as property.

Labour councillors must not accept and pass on these cuts, but use any available money, such as reserves, to offset cuts and to mount a political challenge to central government to fully fund services. This should start with councillors voting against the proposed cuts budget on 4 March.

### Say now

It is not sufficient for councillors to abstain or not turn up. If they oppose cuts, they must publicly say now - not on budget day - that they are going to vote against a cuts budget.

is likely to think twice about further library closures after a recent magnificent campaign saved three libraries. The welfare rights service is under threat, as is the remaining young people's centre, and an adventure playground, with many other services at risk."

### Protest

People were set to protest at the council's Executive Board on 13 February. But councillors were feeling growing pressure at the scale of proposed cuts even before this.

Replies to the public consultation were overwhelmingly opposed to cuts. However, Labour's council leader David Mellen has said that there are only limited opportunities to influence, citing the role of the chief financial officer and the Improvement and Assurance Board.

However, that's not our approach. Our two protests, a public meeting of 70 that established Nottingham Save Our Services, and a subsequent

- Read 'Unison's role on local government pay and cuts' on page 6, and 'Nottingham council cuts: Fighting section 114' at [socialistparty.org.uk](https://socialistparty.org.uk)

## Convention agrees plan for united general election challenge to Sunak and Starmer

Representatives of 12 different campaign groups and socialist organisations - including the Socialist Party - met in Birmingham on 3 February in a convention to organise a working-class challenge at the

general election. The convention was initiated by the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

- Read the full report at [tusc.org.uk](https://tusc.org.uk)



Nadia protesting against Southampton Labour council closing the Venny adventure playground

## Why I'm standing in Southampton 'We've been neglected, but no more'

NADIA DITTA  
SOUTHAMPTON EAST SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER  
AND TUSC CANDIDATE FOR BEVOIS WARD

Since December, we have had two successful meetings (see below). The first was to introduce the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), explain what the Socialist Party is, and why we stand in elections under the TUSC banner.

The second successful meeting was to allow the people to choose where they want their council tax money to be spent. New people also joined this 'People's Budget' meeting.

### Buzz

We circulated 5,000 leaflets. So even if people were not able to attend they were aware it took place. There is a real buzz in the air.

The Tory government has done nothing. And it's the same for the Labour Party, which has had a 40-year hold in Bevois ward. We have become one of the most deprived areas in Southampton.

We have been neglected and faced every cut - closures of youth clubs; rubbish tip usage restrictions; roads not being cleaned; CCTV not working - the list goes on.

We have had two successful meetings in one part of Bevois ward - Newtown. But in the Northam

area, people have also faced so many cuts, and now council tax and is going up.

The council does nothing about the horrendous conditions that people live in, however, they want to put the rent up. So we want to hear from the people of Northam.

We have arranged a community meeting for 15 February in Northam. We will:

- Introduce ourselves
- Ask about where they want their money spent
- Talk about council property rent increasing
- And talk about why we're standing

It's our responsibility to put ourselves out there. Our numbers as a socialist group are increasing. But this will only happen if we reach out, and don't stop.

As a person who only heard of the Socialist Party and TUSC in October, I know we are the working class, for the working class.

- See Southampton socialists' previous successful community meetings at [socialistparty.org.uk](https://socialistparty.org.uk)
- 'Southampton Bevois - ready to support one of their own as TUSC candidate'
- 'Southampton meeting says: 'We are together, join us, and speak out'

## We stand against cutting councillors in Woking

CALLUM JOYCE  
SOUTHERN SOCIALIST PARTY ORGANISER

Woking Borough Council has issued a Section 114 notice, declaring that it has effectively run out of money, and will only continue to provide 'statutory' services. All 'unnecessary' spending will be stopped.

In reality, this means no more money for numerous care homes, leisure centres, public toilets, and a raft of other public services. Over 100 people protested outside the council meeting to vote on this year's budget, against the onslaught of austerity facing the area.

The lobby was made up of local residents, trade unionists, community campaigners, and a large delegation from Citizens Advice, one of the services facing a cut.

### Crowd

Paul Couchman - Socialist Party member, and secretary of Save Our Services in Surrey - spoke to the crowd. Cuts will largely be carried out by unelected commissioners being paid £1,000 a day each!

Paul made clear that there should be no compromises, such as proposing to cut one service in order to save another which is 'more important'. All the £8.4 million cuts must be opposed point blank.

Paul called on those assembled to consider standing in the upcoming local election in Woking, to put forward a genuine anti-cuts alternative at the ballot box.

In the council meeting itself, not a single councillor spoke out to oppose all the cuts. Lib Dem councillors

- who run the council - suggested twice, unsuccessfully, that the budget should go straight to a vote without further discussion.

Speaking in support of the cuts budget, one Lib Dem councillor said: "What can be done by this council has been done", and that "not once has this administration flinched" in putting it together.

Perhaps the council's determination not to 'flinch' should have been used to oppose austerity, and launch a mass campaign for more funding from the central government, instead of dutifully carrying out cuts on the Tories' behalf.

Save Our Services in Surrey will be holding a public meeting in Woking soon to discuss the next steps for the campaign, including standing its own anti-austerity council candidates in May. Anyone in Surrey who wants to fight back can sign up at [socialistparty.org.uk](https://socialistparty.org.uk).

- Read what local anti-cuts campaigner Paul has said before - 'Woking Council pays commissioners to destroy services' at [socialistparty.org.uk](https://socialistparty.org.uk)

## Campaign to save Hackney children's centres already shows its power

BRIAN DEBUS  
HACKNEY UNISON CHAIR AND SOCIALIST PARTY

The planned cuts to Hackney children's centres could lead to 50 redundancies, and the loss of 25% of council nursery places across the borough.

Management, in their haste to implement cuts at Fernbank, tried to

end the contract of the centre managers prematurely. This, in the first week of a three-month consultation period, gives a glimpse of the climate they would like to create.

However, management were forced into a humiliating U-turn after a deluge of protest letters and emails from parents and users of the centre. The contracts have now been extended to August 2025. This demonstrates the power of protest, and is the first win of the campaign.

### Devious

Hackney Council has deviously planned to remove extended-services staff - which provide support to vulnerable parents and their children - from the Sebright centre, without informing parents. The council will also change the jobs, hours, work location of staff, with enforced weekend working, and potential redundancies.

The campaign against cuts to children's centres is very much on the front foot. There is a protest photo leading on the front page of the Hackney Gazette, and there is also coverage in Nursery World magazine.

The campaign has organised a Hackney-wide lobby of the full council meeting on 28 February. And two workplace site meetings of staff at Fernbank and Sebright have now taken successful indicative ballots for strike action against these proposals.

The parents' campaign has submitted a 40-page dossier to the council's scrutiny committee - which meets on 19 February - on the flaws in the proposals, and the impact it will have.

The Labour council needs to grow a spine, and tell this weak Tory government that it will not implement any more of its cuts, and, in fact, needs more money to fund plans for free childcare that are due to be implemented from April this year.

## No to Sunak, No to Starmer! We need our own voice! Donate to the Socialist Party fighting fund

ISAI MARIJERLA  
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL TREASURER

Socialist Party members across the country have been campaigning against the Tories, and putting forward a real alternative to the pro-cuts politicians. On the huge Gaza demos people chant "No to Sunak! No to Starmer!" And why wouldn't they? Both sing from the same hymn sheet, backing up the Israeli state's onslaught and joining the US in bombing Yemen. There is an urgent

and dire need for a political voice for the working class which fights for our interests against the bosses.

### How?

But how do we build such a voice? Socialists Party members are fighting for a workers' list in the upcoming general election - workers, trade unionists, socialists, standing on an anti-cuts, pro-worker and anti-war policies. And for May's local elections, preparations are starting now for a stand as part of the Trade

Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

Reflecting the growing support for this idea, more and more people have been buying the Socialist and making donations to back our campaigning. Supporters have donated to our fighting fund on picket lines, on campaign stalls in Port Talbot fighting to defend jobs at the steelworks, and on protests against the slaughter in Gaza.

### More leaflets, posters & placards

The financial support we receive means that we are able to take our ideas and programme for a socialist alternative further and wider - with more leaflets, posters and placards. Please make a donation or help us with fundraising.

Every quarter we set a target of £25,000 and we are currently on £12,965. The quarter ends on the 31 March. If you are already a member of the Socialist Party, contact your branch to get more involved. If you are not yet a member, join us today and help us fight for a socialist alternative.

- [socialistparty.org.uk/donate](https://socialistparty.org.uk/donate)

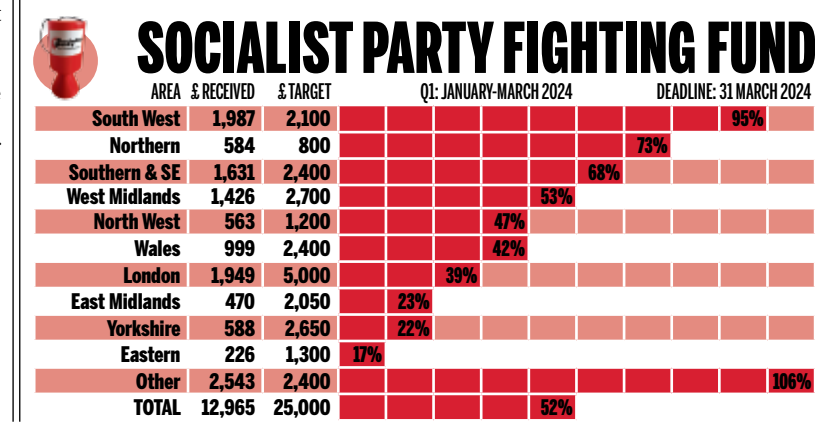






PHOTO: ZXC00DE/CC

## 'British Homes for British Workers': a toxic policy

PAUL KERSHAW

CHAIR UNITE LE11111 HOUSING WORKERS BRANCH

The Conservative Party has been trumpeting "British Homes for British Workers" as a slogan linked to a government policy consultation officially titled 'British Homes for British People'. The right-wing populist party Reform UK has a point when it accuses the Tories of stealing its policies.

Ministers talk of the scarcity of social housing as if it resulted from homes being used by non-British people, yet over 90% of social lettings already go to UK nationals.

homes – that means building more and reducing the loss generated by policies such as right to buy."

The Tories' proposals must be opposed, and they are a warning of their willingness to stoke up racism and xenophobia to try to divide workers. This is likely to become still more toxic when they are pushed into opposition. Such policies would be effectively countered by a Labour government expanding the supply of social-rented housing and stopping the right to buy. Unfortunately, Labour is now explicitly committed to not carrying out either policy.

### Refusal to invest in council housing

SHAC (the Social Housing Action Campaign) was widely quoted in the media arguing that: "The real issue is not immigrants taking homes, but the acute and long-standing refusal of successive governments to invest in council housing. This is what needs to be addressed, and it is exactly what they don't want us to discuss."

In a letter to the prime minister and housing secretary, 17 housing sector bodies correctly write that the plans would amount to "further rationing of an already scarce resource" that would not address the housing shortage and the net loss of social-rented homes since 2011.

### Social-rented homes decline

Meanwhile, in an interview on BBC Radio 4's Today programme, housing m-inister Lee Rowley, rejected claims the Tories had not built enough social housing since 2010. The government's own Regulator of Social Housing reports that there has been a decrease of 225,102 genuine social-rented homes since 2012. Rowley seeks to mislead by blurring the definition of social housing.

In 2010, funding for affordable housing in England was cut by 63%, causing an 81% fall in delivery of new social-rented homes. In 2022-23, only 9,561 social homes were delivered in England, compared to nearly 40,000 in 2010. In the same year, 52,800 households were accepted by councils as requiring help because they were homeless or in danger of becoming homeless.

### Homelessness at record levels

Stating the obvious, Gavin Smart of the Chartered Institute of Housing commented that: "We've currently got 1.4 million people on the social housing waiting list and it's growing by the day. Homelessness is at record levels and councils are struggling with the cost of rising temporary accommodation. We urgently need to increase the supply of social-rented

### Unite policy

Unite can play an important role in communities facing a desperate housing crisis by pointing to the real causes and campaigning on Unite policy of a mass council house building programme and ending 'right to buy'. Along with rent control and restoring benefits, these policies would make a real difference in working-class communities.

In a warning of the dishonest role right-wing politicians will play under a Labour government, former home secretary Priti Patel wrote to the prime minister and secretary of state for levelling up, housing and communities to press the government for more funding for councils. Of course, she didn't think of this in the years she spent as a minister! But the right will feel free to attack Labour using these dishonest arguments under a Labour government.

### Not on offer from Labour

Labour has repeatedly pledged to Social Housing reports that there has been a decrease of 225,102 genuine social-rented homes since 2012. Rowley seeks to mislead by blurring the definition of social housing. In 2010, funding for affordable housing in England was cut by 63%, causing an 81% fall in delivery of new social-rented homes. In 2022-23, only 9,561 social homes were delivered in England, compared to nearly 40,000 in 2010. In the same year, 52,800 households were accepted by councils as requiring help because they were homeless or in danger of becoming homeless.

Fighting for Unite's housing policy will be a crucial part of the fight against the far right. We need to keep our union's political strategy under discussion. How can we get election candidates who support the unions policies? News that Birmingham City Council is considering closing its housing waiting list as part of its plan to implement 28% cuts rather than fighting the cuts is a further warning; a party of brutal austerity will not be able to answer the far right.

# Evicted with two kids and determined to fight for socialist change

## We need council homes now!



PHOTO: OLLIE AUVACHE

ALEX SAMPSON  
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

As I write this, I am surrounded by boxes, my family is scrambling to pack up all of our belongings ready to go into storage. Three weeks ago, completely without warning, we were presented with a Section 21 'no-fault' eviction notice, from the house we have lived in for six-and-a-half years, the only home my daughter has known.

This is deeply upsetting, especially for my children, who will now be separated from the community and friends they have grown up with. It is also extremely problematic on a practical level!

Although our household income is above the national average, we have, like most other working-class households in this country, been squeezed drastically by the cost-of-living crisis. We have no savings, and no way of putting down a rental deposit prior to our current one being returned.

Also, thanks to austerity measures over the last decade, our household salary has only increased by about 5% in cash terms in the last seven years - mostly thanks to a large pay

were living in temporary accommodation - 7,510 of which were living in hotels or B&B's. A further 8.6 million households are renters (4.6 million in private rentals, 4 million in social housing) which is also, by the very nature of rolling rental agreements and 'no-fault' evictions, insecure.

### Insecurity

This very insecurity is a stressful and exhausting way to live; never knowing how long your home will remain your home. This is now, unfortunately, a feeling that my 13- and 9-year-old children have to face and I do worry about their mental health as a result.

A Harvard University study report from 2023 found that children who experience housing insecurity are more likely to develop anxiety or depression at some time in their lives than housing-secure children. That is millions of children and young adults whose mental health has been, or could be, impacted by the scourge of landlordism.

The housing crisis is not a new phenomenon. The seeds were sown in 1980 with Margaret Thatcher's 'Right to Buy' act, which allowed council tenants to buy their homes and continued into the 1990's with the 'buy-to-let' craze. People bought up houses to boost their retirement income, without necessarily continuing upkeep on those properties.

Unfortunately, successive Westminster governments and local councils over the last 40 years have not replaced council housing stock, preferring to back public-private initiatives or leaving renters at the mercy of exploitative private landlords.

The Tories had promised to ban 'no-fault' evictions as part of the Renters (Reform) Bill. That was ditched. 87 MPs are landlords themselves after all...

Everyone deserves good-quality, long-term-secure and healthy council housing. If the capitalist system can't provide that, then we need to fight for socialist change - where things can be planned to meet the needs of all rather than the profits of the few.

**WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?**  
editors@socialistparty.org.uk

rise this year forced out of the bosses by the threat of strike action.



**Our situation is not isolated, and not uncommon. As of July 2023, 68,070 families with children in England were living in temporary accommodation**

Over the same seven-year period, the cost of renting a comparable house in the area we currently live in has increased by 60-80%. We do not have the ability to meet the outlay needed to rent a new house. Therefore, next month, my family will find itself technically homeless. Our only real option is to move into my mother-in-law's two bedroom flat with her.

Our situation is not isolated, and not uncommon. As of July 2023, 68,070 families with children in England

## Socialist Party fights for

- End 'no-fault' evictions. Secure tenancies for all
- Slash the rents – introduce rent controls now!
- Compulsory licensing of all landlords to ensure decent housing standards
- A mass programme of council home building. Councils should fight the cuts, by setting no-cuts, needs-based budgets as part of building a mass campaign for the funding they need
- Nationalise the large building companies, land and banks, under democratic workers' control and public ownership, to ensure enough good-quality council housing and cheap mortgages
- For socialist planning to end the housing crisis and ensure a decent future for all!

# Pakistan: Millions look to Khan in chaotic elections

## Build a working-class socialist alternative

TONY SAUNOIS  
CWI SECRETARY

The general election in Pakistan saw a surge in support for Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, despite not officially being on the ballot paper. The surge was so strong that the military was compelled, despite ballot rigging and delays in announcing the results, to accept that 'independent' candidates aligned to the PTI emerged as the largest bloc in parliament with 90 seats. This result, which underplays the backing won by the PTI-supported candidates, represents a significant blow to the military.

Once again, it is the Pakistani military wielding power behind the fig leaf of a parliamentary 'democracy'. The military was - and remains - totally opposed to Khan's PTI returning to power.

On this occasion, the military backed Nawaz Sharif and his Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) party which won 66 seats and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) which won 52 seats. Election fraud probably denied the PTI even more seats in the parliament. The results of the election are a blow to the military which has struggled to prevent the PTI returning to power. In the run up to the election, the PTI was banned from participating. Khan was imprisoned for ten years. Internet and mobile phone connections were cut on election day.

### Law change

The farce of democracy in Pakistan was illustrated by a change in the law. Sharif had been imprisoned with a 14-year prison sentence and lifetime ban from contesting elections. Hypocritically, the ban was lifted to allow him to stand in this election while Khan was prohibited.

Since the election the PTI says it will form a government and at the same time the PML-N and the PPP are attempting to form a coalition. It means a totally unstable situation has begun. Social and national struggles by the peoples of the Sindh, Balochistan and elsewhere are certain to erupt. Anger at the vote rigging, corruption and the dire economic situation will fuel social upheavals. This is likely to have major repercussions in the entire region, including Afghanistan and India.

Protests throughout the country have already taken place against the vote rigging which people think took place.

Pakistan has been ruled by the family dynasties of the Sharifs and Bhutto families, sanctioned at various times by the military. Sharif, should he become prime minister, will be returning to office for the fourth time. He was replaced by his brother as prime minister, Shehbaz, in 2022. Each time he came into collision with the military at the end of his terms. Until now, he had not even set foot in Pakistan since 2019 having gone into self-imposed exile



PHOTO: COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT

following a 14-year prison sentence for corruption.

Having clashed with Shehbaz Sharif, the generals then switched horses and backed Imran Khan in the 2018 election, which he won. He was toppled with the support of the military in what amounted to a parliamentary coup in 2022. Khan is popular in Pakistan and is perceived as being opposed to the establishment and corruption which riddles the political elite. The lack of an alternative has allowed him to win massive support. However, he is wedded to the rule of capitalism, of which he is a part.

Both are among the richest politicians in the country. Sharif has an estimated wealth of US\$31 million to Khan's US\$50 million.

Khan, as a bourgeois nationalist populist in office, clashed with the IMF and Western imperialism over the Ukraine war, which increased his popularity. Refusing to condemn Russia, he slammed Western leaders asking: "Are we slaves that just do what you say?" This and other issues brought him into collision with his former backers in the military. The clash with the IMF was over the crippling debt and harsh conditions that it imposed in return for a further loan. At one point, the finance minister refused to even meet IMF officials due to the harsh conditions

they were demanding.

From prison he published speeches and declarations which his supporters, especially among the middle class, have circulated on social media using AI to reproduce his voice. His support, especially among the youth, and the momentum his party has gained, are political gamechangers and represent a challenge to the military. The youth now account for approximately 50% of the electorate. Khan has denounced the military as a "deep state" operating and controlling things from behind the scenes. Repression and harassment of Khan's supporters in the run up to, and during the election campaign, only strengthened his support.

### Desperate crisis

Pakistani capitalism and landlordism are in a desperate crisis which is having devastating consequences for the mass of the population. 40% live below the official poverty line of under US\$3.5 per day. The foreign debt of US\$223.86 billion is crippling the country further. State reserves fell to mere US\$3.1 billion. Food prices have more than doubled. The devastating floods which hit in 2022, made worse by the feudal landowners' use of the land, cost the economy an estimated US\$24 billion. Up to 1,600 clothing factories closed, costing an



The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the international socialist organisation which the Socialist Party is affiliated to. The CWI is organised in countries across the planet. We work to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against capitalism, and to fight for a socialist world.  
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estimated 700,000 workers their jobs. With the lowest per capita income in South Asia, Pakistan stands on the brink of a social explosion. Hunger is rife amongst the poorest. The elections mean a greater instability and a sharper polarisation is certain to follow.

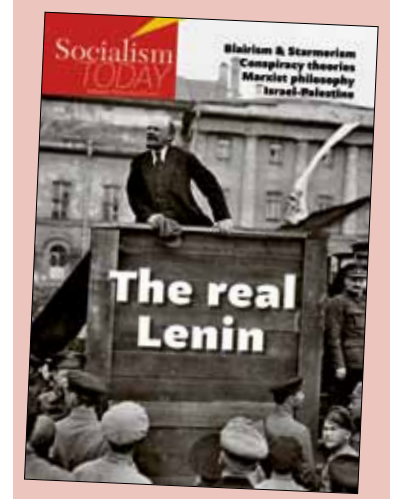
Capitalism and feudalism can offer no way forward or solution to the extreme social and economic crises gripping the country. At this stage, the military is, in reality, managing the political process from behind the scenes. It has not sought to openly intervene through a military coup or formal take over. This may change with a prolonged social, economic, and political crisis. The military ruled Pakistan between 1958-71, 1977-88 and 1999-2008. The need for a mass party of the working class, the peasantry and middle class, with a revolutionary socialist programme, is the only road forward. This is an urgent task and part of the struggle to establish a voluntary democratic socialist confederation of South Asia.

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# the Socialist

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## Tata Steel

# NATIONALISATION — NOT — DEVASTATION

### ● Join the demos 17 February

Port Talbot – 1.15pm Civic Centre SA13 1PJ

Newport – 11am Gilligans Island NP20 2PA

● Vote yes in the strike ballot – support workers' action to defend all jobs

● Demand Labour pledges nationalisation now!



“WILL WE BE ABLE TO BUY IT BACK AGAIN WHEN I LEAVE SCHOOL, DAD?”

More on what we say on how to save jobs see pages 8-9

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on pages 8-9

