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the Socialist

Issue 1268

28 March - 3 April 2024

formerly **Militant**

END BRUTAL SIEGE ON GAZA

**Democratic mass Palestinian
struggle for national
self-determination and socialism**

**Socialist
Party**
WHAT WE THINK

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UN calls for ceasefire, but only the working-class and poor masses can end war and oppression

Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

After almost six months, after more than 32,000 dead, after more than 74,000 wounded, and after the majority of buildings have been reduced to rubble, the United Nations (UN) Security Council has finally passed a motion calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

Words agreed by the Security Council will not stop the unimaginable horror being inflicted on the population of Gaza. The night after, nothing had changed on the ground as air strikes rained down on Rafah. Starvation is stalking the strip. The Israeli state's refusal to allow adequate aid has created a man-made famine, which air drops and sea deliveries are wholly inadequate to prevent.

Nonetheless, the passing of the UN resolution - with the US abstaining rather than vetoing it as before - reflects a shift in the position of US President Joe Biden and, behind him, US imperialism. Increasingly frustrated with Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his far-right allies in the Israeli government, US imperialism has started to crank up the pressure for a ceasefire.

US hypocrisy

Up until now, in his public declarations, Netanyahu has appeared to openly defy pressure from the US, including continuing to insist that Israel's threatened ground attack on Rafah will take place. Some capitalist commentators have drawn the conclusion that this shows the powerlessness of US imperialism today to control events compared to the past.

This analysis, however, makes the fundamental mistake of accepting that US imperialism and its allies - including the government in Britain - have spent the last five months trying to stop the slaughter on Gaza. In reality, they have backed up the Israeli state's onslaught to the hilt. Israel has always been a base of support for US imperialism in the Middle East and has been funded accordingly. This has not changed one iota in recent months.

The budget agreed by the US Congress last weekend gave \$3.8 billion to Israel's military expenditure, at the

same time as cutting off all funding to the UN Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA). Meanwhile, another \$14 billion in military aid for Israel is in the pipeline. Over recent months, the US had delivered 100 'foreign military sales' to Israel with the sinister description of 'lethal aid'.

It is true in general that we are living in an increasingly multipolar world, with US imperialism increasingly unable to control events. Nonetheless, while the US is in decline it is still more powerful than its rivals, not least militarily. US 'defence' spending is larger than the combined spending of the nine next largest national military budgets. Its role in this conflict has been to back up Israel by militarily intimidating other powers in the Middle East, above all Iran, to try and ensure there is no escalation to a regional war as a result of the IDF's onslaught on Gaza. British imperialism, as a far weaker power, has had an identical approach.

Rotten regimes

However, the reality is that none of the rotten, capitalist regional powers have the slightest interest in coming to the defence of the Palestinian masses. Rather, they are driven by maintaining their own rule and defending the wealth and power of their elites. For the reactionary theocratic regime in Iran, arming Hezbollah, the Houthis, Hamas and others is an important aspect of increasing their influence in the region, but it has no interest in a direct war with Israel.

The Arab regimes pay lip service to the Palestinian cause but the reality is different. The role of the Egyptian regime is correctly seen by the Palestinian masses as aiding and abetting the siege on Gaza. A recent poll of Palestinians in the region showed that 61% assume that the Egyptian army would fire on Gazans if they try to flee over the border in the event of an Israeli assault on Rafah. The new compound - yet another open-air prison camp - built by the Egyptian state on their side of the Rafah crossing, shows clearly the continuation of horror that will be on offer to Palestinians in the event they are forced into the Sinai desert.

Nonetheless, US imperialism is under growing pressure as a result of the huge outrage of the masses in the Arab world, and globally, at events in Gaza. That is reflected in the worldwide anti-war movement, which is pushing Biden to try and find a way out before the famine intensifies. In particular, the hundreds of thousands of 'uncommitted' protest votes in the



Democratic primaries - reaching 19% in the case of Minnesota - have concentrated Biden's mind. This in itself is an indication of how the anti-war movement would be enormously strengthened if there was a clear political expression of its aims. Biden, and US capitalism, would be feeling far more heat if there was a 'third candidate' opposing the war as part of representing the independent interests of the working class in the Presidential election.

Workers' parties

The same task - of creating mass democratic workers' parties - is posed in

every country, not least in the Middle East. Just over a decade ago, mass movements of the working class and poor swept the region, overthrowing dictatorships in the 'Arab Spring'. Ultimately, those movements were defeated because the working class of the different countries lacked their own parties with a programme for the socialist transformation of society. Nonetheless, the working class is potentially the most powerful force in society, capable of overthrowing the existing capitalist order. And that is what is needed in order for genuine right to self-determination for the Palestinian people to be achieved.

On the basis of capitalism, nothing better than one or other form of prison camp is on offer.

The question of the working class in the different countries of the region creating its own parties is therefore urgently posed, and would lay the basis for meaningful solidarity with the Palestinian struggle across the region. For the Palestinians too, the only way forward will be through democratically organising mass struggle - a socialist intifada - based on the interests of workers and the poor, independent of the rich elites.

And Israel is not immune from the class struggle. In the aftermath of the 7 October Hamas attacks, the Netanyahu government was able to mobilise the majority of the Israeli Jewish population behind the horrific onslaught on Gaza. Anti-war activists were left extremely isolated. However, Israeli society is not one homogenous block; it too is a class society and is, in reality, deeply divided. Prior to 7 October, a nine-month-long anti-government mass movement swept the country, including a general strike.

Israel divided

Those divisions are now starting to resurface. Netanyahu's stated war aim of eliminating Hamas is clearly not close to being achieved. Nor will it be. Many Hamas fighters have been killed, but the recent battles in Gaza City, which the IDF claimed to have complete control of, are an indication that the Palestinian resistance still has fighting capacity, even in the northern half of Gaza. At the same time, more than 100 Israeli hostages are still being held in Gaza. As a result, one recent poll found that only a minority of Israelis - 42% - want to continue with the war.

Facing this impasse, open splits in the government are developing over numerous issues, including over Netanyahu's proposal to continue exempting ultra-orthodox students from the army. There are increasing economic strains, with welfare and public service cuts taking place at the same time as a doubling of the military budget.

There are also clearly different views on how to respond to increased US pressure. Netanyahu called off a visit to the US after the UN vote, but the defence minister, Yoav Gallant, was already there and continued meetings with US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, while cabinet member Benny Gantz publicly declared that the delegation should have gone. Netanyahu continues to



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

insist that the ground invasion of Rafah will go ahead, but there appear to be no preparations for it at the moment, with only three and a half IDF brigades in Gaza, compared to a previous peak of 28.

How quickly those splits will lead to the fall of the Israeli government is not clear. Netanyahu will lean on his ultra-right wing allies to cling on as long as he can, justifying his rule by inflicting more horror on the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.

At a certain stage, Netanyahu will be replaced, probably by an Israeli government that more accurately reflects the outlook of the majority of the Israeli capitalist class, and which could acquiesce to US demands for some kind of new negotiations about an alleged 'two-state solution'. However, like the Oslo Accords, on the basis of capitalism any Palestinian entity would prove to only be a new form of prison camp. It would therefore also not be ultimately able to meet the desire of working-class Israelis to live safely, free from violence and war, which can never be achieved via continued repression of the Palestinians.

Workers' negotiation

However, a workers' government in Israel which broke with capitalism and began to develop a democratic and socialist planned economy would be an entirely different prospect. It would, via negotiations with elected and accountable Palestinian workers' organisations, be able to reach agreement on all relevant issues in order to allow an independent, socialist Palestinian state, alongside a socialist Israel, with guaranteed rights for all minorities, as part of a socialist confederation of the Middle East.

The Socialist Party, as part of the Committee for a Workers' International, is fighting to build the potential 'superpower' of the anti-war movement worldwide, in order to force a halt to the current onslaught on Gaza. But we are also fighting for the strengthening of independent working-class organisation in every country, including Britain, as the force that - armed with a socialist programme - can bring a permanent end to the horror of war and national oppression.

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

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

Reality of the student cost-of-living crisis

MOHAMMED OSMAN
SURREY SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Being a student is hard. You constantly have to worry about deadlines and upcoming examinations. Balance that with any extracurriculars you take part in, while also trying to increase your employability - trying to find placements, internships and whatever else you can do to stand out as a worthwhile candidate in the increasingly saturated job market. Now imagine being a broke student which, for many of us, is the case.

More often than not, the student loan you receive is simply not enough to cover the cost of living. I'm 'lucky' enough to come from a poor enough family to receive the maximum maintenance loan, which will be £10,277, for 2024-25.

I study in Guildford and, unfortunately for me, there's no student accommodation available. If I'm lucky enough to find a house on the cheaper side in Guildford, where housing prices rival London, I'll be left with a total of £1,877 after paying rent. That's £1,877 to last me an entire year! With the cost-of-living crisis continuing to run rampant, the money I have left will mostly go to bills, leaving me pennies to figure out how to feed myself. I'll likely be forced to find a job so that I can afford to feed myself and enjoy the little free time I'll have left after all that. And I'm one of the lucky ones.

Many students whose families are

only slightly better off than mine get a significantly smaller amount, often resulting in prospective students being forced out of the opportunity to study. Had the threshold for maximum student loans gone up with inflation since 2016 it would be at £32,535 instead of the measly £25,000 it currently sits at, and more students wouldn't be in such a serious hole.

The burden of student loan debt also disproportionately affects poorer students, who graduate with £63,000 in debt compared to their wealthier counterparts leaving with £43,600. Wealthier students are also much likelier to get higher-paying jobs in the future, while students like me are much more likely to be stuck with this loan, paying off the interest until it's eventually written off in my fifties.

This system is broken. It's unfair and unsustainable and has led to universities caring more about the number of international students they can bring in, whose fees have no cap, and less about the overall quality of education.

We need free universities and living maintenance grants rather than our current system, where universities are run like corporations and top management can make massive salaries, while students are forced to live off bulk-purchased noodles.

Join the student fightback
JOIN socialist students
socialiststudents.org.uk/join



Socialist Students says:

- End the student cost-of-living crisis – we need free education
- Replace maintenance loans with maintenance grants which cover all living costs
- Scrap tuition fees, cancel all student debt – make the super rich pay



Potholes show it's a bumpy ride with austerity

MAX MCGEE
NUMERON SOCIALIST PARTY

Few politicians today factor in the cost of running a car or motorbike. MPs can have their transport paid for by us - in taxis or on public transport - on top of their over-£90k salaries. Is it then any wonder that the state of the roads in Britain today is crumbling? 14 years of Tory government austerity and Labour councils' complacency has led to 2 million potholes needing fixing - up 43% from last year. And the National Highways Agency has scrapped 69 roadwork projects planned for the 2020-25 period.

The AA dealt with over 630,000 pothole-related accidents in 2023, the highest in over five years. Even the Department of Transport admitted that 451 people were seriously injured or killed in accidents involving potholes between 2018-22. There is already a nine-year backlog in road repairs across the UK. When our roads become risks, working-class people are the ones who pay through expensive repairs, injuries and income lost waiting on the side of the road.

This is just another example of the failure of austerity, and the capitalist system that demands it, to provide a smooth road to stability in life. While those at the top get richer and richer, we get broken public services and crumbling infrastructure. Capitalists will try to make the most profit in the

shortest time possible, even if means self-sabotage in the long term.

In 2015, just five years after austerity began, potholes alone were causing £70,000 of damage to emergency service vehicles, including fire trucks and ambulances completely scrapped due to costly suspension and spring repairs, and collisions sustained due to evasive action taken around large cracks and potholes in the road, some as long as one metre!

It would cost £16.3 billion to solve the UK's pothole crisis, according to the Asphalt Industry Alliance. Road maintenance is still a minimum legal duty of local councils, so even

councils like Birmingham which have declared they won't provide services they aren't legally mandated to, would still have to pay for repairs. But council budgets for highway maintenance have only gone up an average of 2.3% this year - with inflation, a real-terms cut.

We say no to more council tax rises on working-class people and to kick profiteers out - bring road maintenance back under public control. We call on councillors to demand the funding we need from central government, not pass on Tory cuts, to fully fund all local services including public transport and maintenance.



Tory minister's policies attack those with mental ill health

SAM MORDEN
SOUTH TYNE AND WEARSIDE SOCIALIST PARTY

Mel Stride, Tory work and pensions minister, said in an interview with the Telegraph that "mental health culture" had "gone too far", and that "work is good for mental health". As someone who could best be described as 'disabably autistic' and with other mental health issues, I find Stride's comments a little rich.

This article is part of the bigoted Tory campaign in the lead-up to the election; in it, he discussed a plan to get 150,000 people with 'mild' conditions back into work through the use of even more draconian sanctions and requirements on already stretched and stressed Jobcentre workers and claimants. This includes abusing the "work from home" revolution to trap those with anxiety-related issues at home, where they can be used up like batteries for capitalism's benefit. What is really needed is the consistent help and care that should be available as part of the NHS, if not for its chronic underfunding and privatisation initiatives.

Universal Credit

None of this comes in a vacuum, however. This is all part of an overhaul of how Universal Credit (UC) approaches disabled people and those who are long-term sick, set out by the Department for Work and Pensions back in 2023.

In the short term, the Work Capability Assessment will be significantly tightened; later this decade, it will be scrapped. Employment and Support Allowance and UC Limited Capacity for Work and Work-Related Activity (LCWRA) will then be replaced with a new UC health component that is dependent on eligibility for the significantly more exclusionary, discriminatory and bureaucratic Personal Independence Payment (PIP). Alongside this, the Limited Capacity for Work (LCW) group will be brought into the work-search-related sanctions and conditionality system. People most affected will be those with mobility impairments or those at risk of harming themselves and others if forced to engage in work-search activity.

Labour has - under pressure from Unite, Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC), and other groups - hinted that it will stop the managed migration if, and only if, it is not already in process by the time Labour comes into office. Labour can't be trusted even that far. Working-class people need our own party that will fight for what we need.

What is needed is a fully funded and democratically organised social security system that works alongside health and social care and unions to provide a good standard of living for all, regardless of capability for work.

Do you want to be kept up to date with Socialist Party news, analysis and events?

Then join the WhatsApp channel to hear about the fight against war and attacks on living standards. Socialist events and meetings to find out more. And socialist analysis and theory to learn the lessons from past struggles and what's needed to fight for socialism today.
bit.ly/SPWhatsappChannel



WASPI women win – now pay up!

CLARE WILKINS
SECRETARY OF EAST MIDLANDS NATIONAL PENSIONERS' CONVENTION (PERSONAL CAPACITY).

Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI) and other campaigners finally have a victory. Now we need compensation!

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) produced his second report on 22 March. He agreed that women born in the 1950s were not informed adequately and timeously about the increase in their state pension age from 60 to 65 (now 66) by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). He recommended compensation of £1,000 to £2,950 to women who have lost tens of thousands of pounds in pensions and - in many cases - their lives, their health and the retirement they had planned for.

The DWP has said all along that it would not pay. The ombudsman has

asked Parliament to decide on compensation payments.

I received my first state pension payment last week. I am 66. I worked and paid National Insurance all my life towards my state pension and my contract with the government was that I would get it at 60.

In response to the PHSO report, the DWP said that the government supported all pensioners in 'a dignified retirement whilst also being fair to taxpayers.'

But our state pension is the lowest in Europe and with tax thresholds frozen till 2028, even pensioners who only receive the new State Pension

will be paying tax before then. Those with even small work pensions already do. This makes a mockery of any pledges to honour the pension triple lock in the future, as it will be taken away in tax! Many older pensioners on the basic State Pension are much worse off than even pensioners on the new State Pension, introduced in 2016.

Will Tories or Labour deliver?

With a general election looming, politicians are under pressure from campaigners and pensioners to pay compensation. Both the Tories and Labour are saying that 'they will look closely at the report.' Only continued pressure will get compensation. Even if compensation is paid, many women have died and will die before getting it.

Trade unions must take up the issue of pensions as an integral part of campaigning. We have to fight together for a state pension that can be lived on with dignity.



Newton Aycliffe Hitachi train plant closure threat

Only a national plan of production can save our train production!

DANIEL FORREST
TEESSIDE SOCIALIST PARTY

The Northern Echo painted a grim picture for workers in County Durham this week, reporting that 750 jobs could be at risk at the Hitachi train manufacturing plant in Newton Aycliffe. Local Conservative politicians hailed the plant's acquisition of a contract to supply trains for HS2 in 2021 then, three years later, applauded the cancellation of the

high-speed rail line, putting the plant in jeopardy.

This comes after the contract to provide new trains for the Tyne and Wear Metro was given to a Swiss firm, rather than the Newton Aycliffe factory just a few miles down the road. As one of the last bastions of heavy industry in the North East, it is essential that workers and socialists stand up for local jobs and manufacturing.

The only way to provide a stable, long-term future for the plant is to

bring our railways and related manufacturing into public ownership under workers' control and management. Democratic planning could provide a world-class transport network and maintain and expand good manufacturing jobs for working-class people.

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



Wales junior doctors strike against worst pay offer in UK

On Monday 25 March, 3,000 junior doctors in Wales started their longest strike yet.

The four-day strike is the third period of action this year.

The BMA Cymru/Wales Junior Doctors Committee says pay has been cut by almost a third since 2008. The Labour-led Welsh government's 5% offer is below inflation and the worst offer in the UK.

The BMA told the press: "We don't want to be in this position but again, faced with inaction, we are left with no choice... Junior doctors are

starting their careers earning £13.65 an hour in Wales. Is that all they are worth? They are providing lifesaving care after training for years, and are shouldering up to £100,000 of debt. We will continue our fight for fair pay for all doctors working in the NHS. It is no surprise that we are losing doctors as they search for better pay and conditions elsewhere."

- Socialist Party members visited the picket lines - and at Morriston Hospital in Swansea were entrusted with delivering the pickets' breakfast!



Cardiff, in February KATRINE WILLIAMS

Sanctuary housing workers vote to escalate action



Sanctuary strike picket meeting UNITE HOUSING WORKERS BRANCH

PAUL KERSHAW
UNITE HOUSING WORKERS BRANCH CHAIR

Sanctuary housing maintenance workers once again had a good turnout for the picket line on Monday 25 March.

The strike of these London-based workers has got off to a brilliant start. They are fighting for union recognition and a pay rise that compensates for real-terms cuts in pay.

Sanctuary Housing Association

is a large national employer that refuses to recognise unions and has never before faced strike action. Its revenues for last year stood at £943 million, and its surplus increased by 73% to £101.3 million.

Monday's picket meeting voted unanimously to escalate action – a further nine days starting on 10 April.

Despite a bullying approach from local managers, confidence is high, with new members signing up to the

union and joining the strike every day. Support from tenants has been overwhelming.

Sanctuary has a presence throughout England, Wales and Scotland, and it is very significant that workers are joining Unite around the country, as they face similar issues to the London team.

- Contact the branch for speakers, donations and to give support: info@housingworkers.org

TUC Young Workers Conference

JOSHUA BOYLE
GMB MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The Trades Union Congress (TUC) Young Workers Conference, from 23 to 24 March, was well attended by a number of different unions, with delegates representing a wide range of sectors and regions.

What united everyone were two things: being under the age of 30, and having a desire to see the trade union movement change! It was refreshing to see so many young faces, considering that, by the TUC's own metrics, only 1 in 20 young workers under 30 is in a trade union.

There were international speakers including from Norway, Palestine, Turkey, Brazil and Colombia. It was

great to hear about the struggles extending much further than the UK's borders.

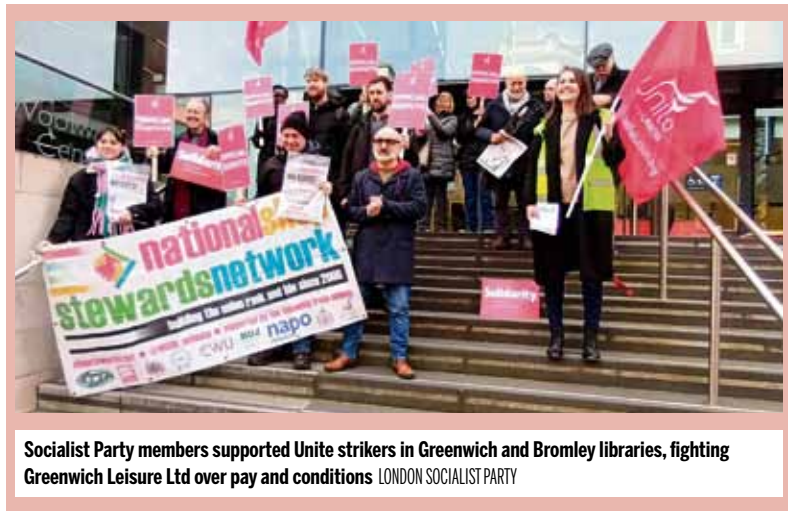
Motions on various issues such as the future of Artificial Intelligence in the workplace, fighting against the minimum service levels legislation, and Usdaw's Freedom from Fear campaign were all passed.

A motion around expanding provisions for mental health in the workplace was raised by Unison, with an emotional speech from the speaker.

One delegate came up to speak in support, but urged unions to move past awareness campaigns, and instead campaign to tackle contributors to mental health issues: low pay, poor contracts, poor housing – all the

product of the capitalist system that puts profit before people.

The strike wave has already shown that young workers can be attracted to unions if they are seen as giving a fighting lead. In my own region of the GMB, young members have been involved in strike action across ASDA stores. If trade unions are to recruit more young workers, they need to be seen to fight on the issues that matter: for decent pay, secure jobs, and for demands such as housing and full funding of services like the NHS and schools. That means being prepared to build and lead action, and to tackle the crucial question of political representatives that stand in the interests of working-class young people.



Socialist Party members supported Unite strikers in Greenwich and Bromley libraries, fighting Greenwich Leisure Ltd over pay and conditions LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Uni of Birmingham staff strike for decent contracts

TOM PORTER BROWN AND CLIVE WALDER
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Unison members at University of Birmingham (UoB) working in a variety of support staff roles took another three days strike action in their months-long campaign against contract changes. These would see more evening and weekend working for less reward, with the lowest paid earning less than £12 an hour.

Socialist Party members visited the picket lines. Catering workers told us that, following the disruption to working patterns with the pandemic, management attempted to force through a number of permanent changes. A lot of people were made redundant by default and those who remained were presented with a 'choice': sign a contract that would make their conditions and hours worse, or get kicked out.

Security staff told us how they thought they had a decent deal when the new contracts were first proposed, but they were on strike for two main reasons: firstly, in solidarity with the catering and library staff, and secondly, because the university changed their deal after it had already been presented!

Library staff told us how management had offered one-off payments to anyone who signed a sketchy contract.

The rally on the first day of strike action brought together 70 workers who had been picketing around the campus that morning. Many were there for the first time, having joined the union in the course of the strike.

If UoB management thought they could bully staff into signing away their pay and conditions, they had another think coming!

NEU conference: Preparing for a Starmer-led government

SEAN MCCAULEY
WORCESTERSHIRE NEU DISTRICT SECRETARY,
PERSONAL CAPACITY

Members of the National Education Union (NEU) meet from 3 April for our national conference.

In 2023 our members fought magnificently, and forced more money from the Tories than they wanted to give us. Our union grew, and thousands stepped forward as reps. Striking works! In the summer, following our national strike action, the NEU leadership recommended acceptance of 6.5%. But in the Socialist Party, we agree with the many members who believe more could have been won. We warned that the 6.5% was not fully funded.

In recent weeks, reps and members have worked hard on an indicative ballot. Conference will learn the results of that consultation and decide whether to go to a statutory strike ballot.

If we are to build the confidence of members, we need to continue to campaign for a serious, fighting, democratic lead from the top in our union, that can help to build the confidence and organisation of members from below. We need a leadership that is up to the challenges we will face as a general election looms.

lead from the top, mobilising the full forces of the union nationally to win on workload, funding, pay, recognition for support staff, and rights for supply staff.

General election

We face a general election. We need a union leadership that puts forward clear demands and prepares members for the serious action necessary to win them - no matter who is in government.

Our fight should not end with just improvements in the pay and conditions of education staff. Forcing governments of whichever shade to reverse 14 years of funding cuts must be integral to that fight.

We should also fight to end PFI and its associated debt, with its corner-cutting construction methods, now crumbling at the core, which are crippling a whole swathe of schools and colleges. Fighting to end the PFI repayment crisis, with costs soaring by over 10% in the coming year, is essential.

The fight for the heart of education will need to continue, whether it be under the Tories or Labour. The crisis-ridden Tories are on their way out. Good riddance! But Labour offers no hope to our decimated public services. New Labour Mark 1 massively accelerated PFI, mortgaging the future of schools and hospitals to multinational finance companies, and introduced the fragmentation of education and often union rights in the form of academisation. New Labour Mark II, under Starmer, has made no bones about it: it will be a government in the same mould, big business-friendly with a firm rein on public sector finances.



Newham, East London, 2023 JAMES IVENS

Socialist Party NEU conference fringe meeting

Speakers include **Sheila Caffrey**, exec member and candidate for vice president, and **Rob Williams**, Socialist Party trade union organiser

12.30pm Thursday 4 April

Clifton Suite, Hermitage Hotel, Bournemouth BH2 5AH

Food provided - donations welcome

NEU Exec discusses 2024 campaign

SHEILA CAFFREY
NEU NEC, PERSONAL CAPACITY

We're all working hard in the National Education Union (NEU) indicative ballot for sixth form members, and teachers and support staff in schools.

At February's Exec meeting there was a discussion about leaving the support staff ballot until other unions had decided whether to take action, possibly after Easter. But members want to run united campaigns for teachers and support staff, and so, alongside other more serious lefts on the NEC, I argued to ballot support staff as soon as other support staff unions put in their pay claim. That amendment was successful and we are now balloting teachers and support staff at the same time.

March's Exec meeting was more focused around how to build the turnout in the indicative ballot. Myself and my fellow South West NEC member successfully argued that, in order to assist reps who are working hard to encourage members to vote, national motivation including slogans around funding would help.

The Executive will propose at annual conference whether to move forward to a formal ballot or to try a different approach to win. Our second amendment argued that the Exec should look at areas where turnout grew as well as the final turnout figures to aid the decision. This was also agreed.

In the view of the Socialist Party, a strong lead that prepares the members for a serious campaign of national action is essential to help build the confidence of members.

Udaw members take to the picket line in Swindon

HELEN HARRIS
SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY

A bright and breezy spring day welcomed Swindon's GXO drivers at their Upper Stratton warehouse onto the street, at the start of the Ushaw union's 48-hour strike.

The dispute, over equal pay, has been rumbling for over ten years. Workers at the B&Q warehouse are paid nearly 10% less than those in similar workplaces in the north of England, where the cost of living and especially house prices are lower.

In addition, Swindon's workers

cover London, with all the difficulties that driving in the city entails.

The dispute has finally boiled over into action, partly through the impacts of the rising cost of living, but also through the mobilisation work of the Ushaw rep, and the frustration engendered by GXO management.

They recently called a meeting but failed to put an improved offer on the table.

Ushaw has 135 drivers at the site, plus a few agency workers. Ushaw membership is over 90% and has risen in recent years due to the activities of the local rep.

The disparity in pay exists because


historically Swindon's workers are members of Ushaw, whereas the northern workers are members of Unite. There was a previous attempt by workers in Swindon to join Unite, but the complex procedure of getting a union recognised did not succeed at that time.

GXO is a US-based company which has reported over 12.5% increase on earnings for 2023 and over 25% increase over the previous year.

Morale and determination are high and the workers are being well supported by the Ushaw officials, as well as some of the agency drivers and passing traffic.

of proven need, and the vast accumulated profit reinvested back into schools and colleges. Academy trusts should be brought into democratic control in the public sector. Pearson made £498 million in profits alone in 2023, up from £271 million in 2022. Just think how we could use that money to rebuild schools and invest in education, if only we had control over that wealth. Socialists argue for democratic public ownership.

We can fight for that through action, but also at the ballot box. A workers' list of candidates – trade unionists, anti-war campaigners, socialists, including former Labour MPs now barred from standing for Labour – would bring the pressure of the strike wave into parliament. That would be an important step towards a new working-class-based party that would fight for the fully funded, public, democratically controlled education system we really need.



NSSN conference 2024

Saturday 22 June 11am-4.30pm

Tories Out – fight for a workers’ manifesto!

Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1R 4RL

Get all the latest union news... with the NSSN bulletin shopstewards.net

THEO SHARIEFF

SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The list of issues landing in the next Labour-led government's in tray is going to be a long one. But high on the priority list for millions of working-class and young people will be the rotten state of British public services and infrastructure, in some cases literally.

14 years since the unleashing of Tory austerity, the reality of what those policies have meant for public services and working-class people in Britain is abundantly clear. A report by the Progressive Economy Forum last year found that, for the period covering 2010 to 2019, public spending would have been £540 billion higher had austerity not been implemented.

And the result for us? Teachers face longer and longer working hours while schools and other public buildings are left crumbling. Elsewhere, the NHS now faces the highest waiting lists in its history; 9 in 10 NHS dentists no longer accept new patients; and council housing waiting lists are decades long.

Meanwhile, local councils have seen a £15 billion cut to central government funding since 2010. In addition to the slashing of thousands of well-paid and secure jobs for working-class and young people, council-run services have been slashed to the bone.

"More potholes on the roads, fewer bus services, and libraries and leisure centres shutting their doors for good" is how an article in the Guardian looking at council cuts summarised the situation, a statement which no doubt chimes with the day-to-day experiences of millions of working-class people across Britain.

Local authority spending on youth services in England has been cut by £1.1 billion in a decade, down 74% in real terms from £1.48 billion. Between 2009-10 and 2017-18, average per-person spending on social care for the over-65s fell by 31%, leaving more people vulnerable and more pressure on working-class families to make ends meet.

Between 2010 and 2023, spending per person on cultural services was cut by 43% in real terms, by 40% on roads and transport, and by 35% on housing.

Funding has been cut so dramatically that so far since 2020, eight councils

have issued section 114 notices, signalling effective 'bankruptcy' - limiting spending to statutory services only. But with an estimated 127 more councils threatened with the same in the next five years under a likely Labour-led government, the question of how the crisis in local councils can be fought - and how money stolen from local jobs and services since 2010 can be won back - will be central for working class and young people fighting for their futures.

Privatisation failure

Then there are the other daily reminders of the reality of 21st Century British capitalism. In many now-privatised industries, the lack of investment by the bosses in infrastructure means that simple things which we could once take for granted - such as being able to travel somewhere and to expect to arrive on time - is far from guaranteed, while the fares we pay to use those services are the highest they've ever been. Meanwhile, the capitalist class - the individuals who own these industries and services - have gorged themselves on profits.

Despite the fact that this tiny minority are swimming in wealth, most discussions in the capitalist press about the state of Britain's public services are accompanied by references to the thin 'fiscal headroom' of the British government to navigate the approaching period economically. This is especially so since the Truss-Kwarteng mini-budget in Autumn 2022, since when interest rates on new government borrowing have remained higher than for the whole preceding 20 years.

Keir Starmer and shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves have both repeated ad nauseam their priority commitment to 'iron-clad fiscal discipline' in government. The 'fiscal rules' bogeyman is used to argue that Britain cannot afford to properly fund or even reverse the cuts sustained to public services in the last 14 years.

But what are they and other capitalist politicians and commentators talking about when they refer to these apparently magical 'fiscal rules'? Why can Britain apparently afford so little?

Fundamentally, they're talking about what policies are deemed 'acceptable' to the capitalist class and their profits in a new era of capitalist crisis. The economic meltdown triggered by the Truss-Kwarteng 2022 mini-budget, which featured the biggest tax cuts for big business

since the Second World War against the backdrop of a low-growth British economy, gave a glimpse of what could happen under capitalism when this 'fiscal headroom' is ignored.

The 'markets,' concerned that the UK government may not have been able to meet its debt obligations to investors, demanded higher interest repayments on new government borrowing, sending the bond markets and the wider British economy into a tailspin. Rishi Sunak, assuming the leadership of the crisis-ridden Tory party as a more reliable representative of the interests of the capitalist class, took measures to restore the confidence of the markets, reversing the tax cuts and introducing further budget cuts to public spending.

With Starmer and Reeves set to take power against the backdrop of continued weak and stagnant economic growth, the capitalist class will continue to demand policies from the pro-capitalist

Labour Party which satisfy their interests and profits - again at the expense of the working-class majority and the public services which we still rely on.

None of this alters the fact however that the wealth and resources exist in Britain to provide fully funded and expanded public services, infrastructure, decent housing and jobs for all. The Sunday Times Rich List revealed that in 2023, 171 billionaires owned a combined wealth of £684 billion. A fraction of that wealth could, for example, reverse the cuts to central government grant funding made to local councils since 2010.

But the contradictions of the profit-before-all-else system of capitalism are a block on the mobilisation of those resources. Despite its decline, British capitalism remains the sixth-richest economy on the planet, but it increasingly resembles an emerging economy in terms of its infrastructure and public services.

As the Thames Water scandal last year demonstrated, infrastructure might well have decayed under successive pro-capitalist Tory and New Labour governments, but the money



The wealth and resources exist in Britain to provide fully funded and expanded public services, infrastructure, decent housing and jobs for all

didn't just turn into steam! While British water companies were racking up collective debts of over £60 billion since privatisation in 1989, and pipes were bursting and pollution increasing, profits totaled a staggering £72 billion in the same period. A socialist society, and the democratic planning by the working class of society's resources which it would entail, could mean the reinvestment of that wealth back into the service and to bring down our bills.

Do the economic constraints of the capitalist system mean then, that nothing can be done to change things? On the contrary. Mass working-class struggle, particularly when it threatens the stability and rule of the capitalist class itself, can push back attacks, like attacks to public services or cuts to wages, and increase the confidence of working-class people to struggle.

The strike wave, which peaked in March 2023, won pay rises for workers which the bosses originally said were impossible to grant. London Mayor Sadiq Khan found £30 million down the back of the sofa to avert further

RMT-organised strikes on London Underground. The public sector general strike in Northern Ireland in January forced the extra funding offered by the Tory government to Northern Ireland of up to £3.3 billion.

Pandemic spending

The experience of the Covid pandemic also demonstrates the measures the capitalist class can be forced to take when their system is threatened. Corbyn's 2019 manifesto, which proposed an additional £82.9 billion of spending over five years, was mocked and castigated by the big business press and their political allies as 'unrealistic' and economically nonsensical, a clear warning to workers and young people who looked towards Corbyn to not dare vote for him.

But the outbreak of the pandemic just three months later saw extra spending by the Tory government which dwarfed what was proposed by Corbyn - estimated between £310 and £410 billion - to prop up their rotten system of capitalism.

Much of that money went directly into the pockets of big business. A

smaller proportion of it went into the pockets of working-class people for the furlough scheme, which in reality saw workers taking a 20% pay cut.

But all of that spending was necessary from the point of view of the capitalist class to save their system from complete collapse, and to stem the threat of potentially massive explosions of anger from working-class people if such measures weren't taken. It was tolerable for capitalism, on the condition that the working-class majority be made to pay for those emergency measures through further austerity attacks.

Class struggle

Looking forwards, the most important thing now is that the workers' movement prepares for the bold fight which will be necessary to struggle for the funding our public services need, including above-inflation pay rises in the public sector under a Starmer-led government.

That means not only preparing for the fight industrially, but politically as well. Workers' candidates who could clearly answer the lie, repeated time and again in Parliament and the council chambers by Starmer and all shades of pro-capitalist politicians, that the money doesn't exist in society to provide working-class and young people with a decent standard of living.

But any of these hard-fought-for gains - be it extra funding for the NHS or above-inflation pay rises - would inevitably be temporary on the basis of crisis-ridden capitalism, and pose the need to fight for a fundamental socialist transformation of society.

The basis of that transformation would start with the nationalisation of the banks, finance houses and monopolies which dominate the British economy under democratic workers' control and management, with compensation paid out only on the basis of proven need.

With those resources in the hands of the working-class majority, the potential to finally mobilise society's resources where they're desperately needed would finally be unlocked. The Institute for Public Policy Research in summer 2023 published a report which found public sector investment trailed the G7 median by £208.4 billion between 2006 and 2021. Additionally, private sector investment since 2005 in Britain was £354.3 billion below the G7 average. Taken together, that's £562.7 billion the bosses and their political representatives have refused to reinvest - the equivalent of 30 Elizabeth Line developments!

Publicly owned services and infrastructure - water, mail, the NHS, housing, roads, rail lines, as well as cultural services - on a socialist basis, could be given the investment they've been starved of for decades. This could create millions of socially necessary and well-paid jobs, and be linked to a socialist green transition to reverse capitalist-driven environmental destruction.

A socialist society wouldn't only mean the harnessing and planned rational use of the wealth and resources which have accumulated and exist under capitalism currently, but through a massive expansion of investment would massively lift

productivity and increase the size of the 'real' economy and the potential for the further development of society.

With the economic levers of power democratically resting in the hands of the working class, other decisions considered 'no-goes' under capitalism could be made. In 2020, total UK government debt totalled £2 trillion. Of that debt, 18% was owned by foreign investors and 35% was owned by UK-based banks, building societies, pension and insurance funds. And in 2022-23, 9.7% of all government spending - £112 billion - went towards interest repayments on government-owned debt. Why should that money continue to line the pockets of the super-rich in Britain and around the world, instead of being put to use to meet the needs of the majority in Britain and internationally?

This would also raise the need for a struggle against the system of capitalism globally. However, with the example of what thoroughgoing socialist measures would mean for the mass of working-class and young people here in Britain, the potential would exist for it to spread like wildfire across the globe.

The experiences of the struggles which will inevitably develop under a Starmer-led government for adequately funded and high-quality public services and wage rises will provide massive lessons not only in the potential gains mass collective working-class action can achieve under capitalism, but also for the need for an entirely new kind of system, based on the democratic planning of society's resources to meet the needs of all. Join the Socialist Party in that fight.

Come to a Socialist Party meeting near you

The Socialist Party has regular meetings in towns and cities across the country.

If you would like to participate:
 ● Go to socialistparty.org.uk
 ● Or text 07761 818206 with your name and postcode.



PHOTO: WALES SP



PHOTO: PAUL MATTHESSON



WE CAN CHALLENGE SUNAK AND STARMER AT THE BALLOT BOX!

Stand with us as part of TUSC



The question asked by hundreds of thousands on the Gaza protests, ‘but who can I vote for?’ is increasingly being supplanted by another question: ‘How can we challenge Sunak and Starmer at the ballot box?’

That is what dozens of Socialist Party branches have been discussing in public meetings up and down the country. The Workers’ Party victory in the Rochdale by-election, winning George Galloway a seat in parliament, by campaigning against the Israeli state’s onslaught on Gaza, has raised the sights of many of the prospect of a left-wing, working-class challenge winning seats in the next parliament.

Increasingly Socialist Party activists are meeting campaigners prepared to take the fight to the ballot box, many have attended our public meetings, some too have already begun exploring the idea of standing as independents themselves.

It is likely a whole number of

deselected or suspended Labour lefts will stand, that could include Jeremy Corbyn and Diane Abbott, for example. A whole array of initiatives have sprung up promising to support anti-war candidates, or those calling for an immediate ceasefire. For example, now ex-Labour-supporting columnist Owen Jones has publicly resigned from Labour and launched a crowdfunding project, ‘We deserve better’, to back candidates deemed worthy, suggesting this could include independent and Green candidates.

We, the working class, do deserve better, and we need a new mass party of our own. A list of workers’ candidates for the general election would be an important step in the process of one developing. As Rochdale shows, a number could be elected as a left-wing bloc under a Starmer government, acting as a lightning rod for workers’ discontent that will inevitably develop.

Even in the relatively short period between now and when a

general election is called, there is time to bring together the different forces looking to build a working-class socialist challenge. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) exists to do just that. It offers a common banner under which organisations and individuals can come together provided they agree to sign up to its minimum policies. All those participating are free to campaign with their own independent campaign material and political programme, as the Socialist Party will be doing.

Standing under one banner, the 100-candidate threshold for ‘fair media’ coverage could be met – enabling a television election broadcast. Running as an anti-war, anti-cuts independent - and appearing as simply ‘independent’ on the ballot paper - risks not being distinguished from any number of other individuals, with any number of views on Gaza or otherwise.

The Socialist Party says: stand together with us as part of TUSC!

Trade unionists - join the stand!



The following model motion, distributed by the TUSC steering committee, is drafted to be amended to take account different trade union rules and relationships to the Labour Party.

1. This [union branch] notes that 2024 is highly likely to be the year that we finally see the back of the Tories, after five Tory prime ministers and 14 years of devastation inflicted on our services, communities and living standards generally.
2. Millions hope against hope that a government led by Labour’s Sir Keir Starmer will be different. What is needed is money for council services, investment in our NHS, and a fully funded decent pay rise for public sector workers.
3. But Starmer has promised none of that. His watchword is ‘fiscal discipline’ – cuts. The backing given by Starmer’s Labour Party to Israel’s barbarous war on the Palestinians, meekly following the Tory government’s lead, is another indication of what we can expect from them in office. If they won’t protest against the mass murder and the destruction of Gaza, what confidence can we have that they will fight to protect local services, jobs, wages and benefits here?
4. We agree that we oppose Labour councils continuing to carry out Tory cuts and note that the council elections that will take place on 2 May will be the last round of local elections before the general election. The councillors elected will effectively be our communities’ negotiators with the new government – for the funding we need to protect, improve and expand our vital local public services. But this will be against the backdrop of a funding crisis for councils, and clear signalling from all the establishment parties in parliament that the austerity squeeze on public spending will continue.
5. We acknowledge that our union [is affiliated to the Labour Party]/[does not currently have any political affiliation] and this frames what our branch can do within our union’s rules to ensure that workers’ interests find representation in the elections taking place this year.
6. Nonetheless, and within those rules, this branch resolves that, where they are taking place, our members should be encouraged to consider standing themselves as anti-cuts candidates in the local elections scheduled for May, noting that there is nothing in the rules that prevents them standing as candidates, in a personal capacity, for any party which truly supports trade unionist and socialist principles.
7. In addition, this branch resolves [as a branch to join]/[to support individual branch members acting in a personal capacity joining] with other local trade unionists, campaigners and socialists, where opportunities arise, to meet and discuss further what needs to be done to ensure there is a workers’ voice in the general election on the ballot paper, that defends the basic policies and principles of trade unionism and socialism.

Socialist Party public meetings



● Cardiff

SOCIALIST PARTY AND PCS MEMBER

“At last, something that gives me some hope”, was the reaction of a woman who had just attended the launch of Cardiff Socialist Party’s campaign in anticipation of the general election at some point this year.

Nearly 40 were present, including striking Unite refuse workers in Cardiff, along with a victimised rep. There were also members of Unison, NEU and PCS unions, along with community activists prominent in the Ely area and further afield, as well as a number of young people.

The prospective candidate, Unite the Union hospitality campaigner and Socialist Party member John Williams, who will be applying to stand as part of TUSC, spoke in person. Alongside him, on Zoom due to ill health, was former Militant Labour MP and national chair of TUSC, Dave Nellist. A supporter from Cardiff Trades Union Council also spoke.

The speakers talked about the crisis facing British and world capitalism. Dave explained it is crucial to build an alternative – at the ballot box, through mass movements, and by taking steps towards a new mass workers’ party.

Many workers will likely hold their nose and vote Labour to get rid of the Tories at the general election. But Labour’s honeymoon period will be short, as it inherits all the systemic problems of capitalism that face the Tory party.

Labour will have no fresh answers to the crisis, because they essentially serve the same interests as a probig business party, like the Tories. Therefore, TUSC is offering a socialist platform for workers looking for an alternative to Labour.

The trades council member explained the importance of a political voice for workers fighting the cost-of-living crisis and austerity, as well as how we can get organised in the unions.

The enthusiastic buzz of the meeting, reflected in the contributions from the floor, was also shown in the response to the Socialist Party’s general election financial appeal, with nearly £1,200 pledged at the meeting. One Unite member attending his first meeting paid £100 there and then towards the Socialist Party’s £50,000 target.

● South London

MARK FINUCANE
SOUTH WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The south London branches of the Socialist Party had a public meeting in Brixton on 20 March, to discuss the current political environment, and what we should do in the coming elections. Hannah Sell, Socialist Party general secretary, led the discussion entitled: “What do we do at the ballot box: How can we achieve a political voice for the working class?”

Thanks to the hard work of members across south London, we had fantastic attendance for the meeting, with a mixture of current Socialist Party members, and members of the public, eager to learn more. Socialist Party members were out in the days and weeks leading up to the meeting, with the Socialist paper, talking to people about the meeting, and phoning people we met to invite them along.

With Greater London Authority elections on 2 May, and a general election before the end of January, this topic could not have come at a better time.

Labour is likely to form the next government. But Labour’s response to the anti-war demos, its refusal to support striking workers, and its commitment to “fiscal responsibility” – code for more austerity – as well as Labour politicians’ veneration of Margaret Thatcher and her Tory government, show that Labour will not govern in the interests of the working class.

The Socialist Party’s Hannah Sell outlined many ways we can help fight for a political voice for the working class – through strike action, demonstrations, and trade union organisation. And elections give another important opportunity too.

There is clear appetite and opportunity for a workers’ alternative in Britain, seen by George Galloway’s by-election victory. The Socialist Party is standing with other left-wing candidates under the TUSC banner, campaigning for socialist change, standing candidates who will push back against the capitalist policies of the Tories and Labour.

Labour’s polling success is because of the failures of the current Tory government, and will likely come to power on a wave of disillusionment. If ever there was a time to build for an

alternative, one that will put the people first, and look out for the workers instead of the 1%, it is now.

● West London

DARA FITZGERALD
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

With the general election looming, and London mayoral and General London Assembly elections coming in May, and Labour’s shift to Tory-Lite, the interest in alternative candidates to the mainstream parties standing in elections has never been greater.

Hanwell, in West London, hosted one of many Socialist Party public meetings. Lyla’s coffeeshop was standing room only (and barely that).

Bill Reed, a local government trade unionist and Socialist Party member chaired the meeting. Hannah Sell, General Secretary of the Socialist Party raised the energy of the room

with a speech about the need for socialists to help develop mass working-class political representation. She also outlined that this is one of many tasks to advance the interests of our class.

She gave an overview of TUSC as an umbrella organisation which has a multi-organisation steering committee, of which the Socialist Party is a member, and each has democratic rights.

Emma Dent Coad, the former Labour MP for Kensington, spoke vividly about her experiences within the Labour Party, as well as working on Kensington council, and how she is now running her own campaign, independent of Labour as a socialist candidate.

Bill then took contributions from the floor. Two potential people considering standing as independent candidates in Ealing gave details of their campaigns, how they have lost trust in the Labour Party, and why they are standing. We also had contributions from a member of Ealing Friends of Palestine, several TUSC candidates, an Ealing trades council member, and various members of the community. There were various opinions on method and

formations, but the uniting factor was the need to stand left candidates outside of Labour. Socialist Party members made the case for candidates to come together under the TUSC umbrella.

● Bradford

TOM GIBSON
BRADFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

The Socialist Party decided to hold a meeting on George Galloway’s victory in the Rochdale by-election. It has even more relevance to Bradford with Galloway’s past as an MP in the city, and Bradford also having had big Gaza protests.

The discussion was very lively and productive, discussing what Galloway’s victory meant – a kick in the teeth to the Labour Party for becoming a right-wing party and backing the Israeli state’s war on Gaza.

It was a successful meeting. Our message of a new mass workers’ party resonated with the public attendees. We plan to hold another meeting in April before the May local elections.

SOCIALIST ELECTION APPEAL



SCAN TO DONATE

Help us raise £50,000 to stand 30-40 Socialist Party candidates in the general election



SOCIALISTPARTY.CO.UK/DONATIONS/ELECTIONAPPEAL

£50,000

£40,000

£30,000

£20,000

£10,000

£2,926

SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party
April issue also includes...

- Mick Lynch - An industrial and political balance sheet
 - Unite and Gaza - Unions and the anti-war movement
- socialismtoday.org/subscribe / 020 8988 8777
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Editorial:

Building on Rochdale - the fight for a new workers' party

Read now online
visit: socialistparty.org.uk

Help us campaign for a Socialist voice in 2 May local elections

The TUSC steering committee has approved 240 candidates for the local elections on 2 May. TUSC will also contest the directly elected Salford city mayor election and four constituency seats for the Greater London Authority.



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

- A £15-an-hour minimum wage for all, without exemptions. For the minimum wage to automatically increase linked to average earnings or inflation, whichever is higher.
- Share out the work. A maximum 32-hour working week with no loss of pay or worsening of conditions. The right to flexible working, under the control of workers not employers. An end to insecure working, for the right to full-time work for all who want it; ban zero-hour contracts.
- 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.
- For the right to asylum – with democratic community control and oversight of emergency funding resources. No to racist immigration laws.
- Expand democracy. For the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. For all MPs to be subject to the right of recall by their constituents at any time, and to only receive a worker's wage. For proportional representation and the right to vote at 16.
- For the right of nations to self-determination. For an independent socialist Scotland and for a socialist Wales, both part of a voluntary socialist confederation of Wales, England, Scotland and Ireland.
- Oppose the dictatorship of the billionaire owners of the media. For the nationalisation of newspaper printing facilities, radio, TV and social media platforms. Access to these facilities should be under democratic control, with political parties' coverage being allocated in proportion to the popular vote at elections.
- For a new mass workers' party, based on the trade unions, and drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplaces, and community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, socialist political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations!
- Take the wealth off the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need, not to the fat cats.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the EU bosses' club. Organise a campaign with European socialists and workers' organisations to use the talks on post-Brexit relations to tear up the EU pro-capitalist rules. For a real collaboration of the peoples of Europe on a socialist basis as a step towards a socialist world.

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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

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As workers fight back, Socialist Party northern region is growing

CRAIG WORSWICK
SOUTH TYNE AND WEAR SOCIALIST PARTY

The fight for socialism flowed through our five-hour northern regional conference, with members contributing from our Carlisle, Teesside, and Tyne and Wearside branches, some for the first time.

Theo Sharieff, Socialist Party executive committee, started by setting out a perspective on the world stage, citing that one quarter of the world's population currently lives in a conflict zone at the outset of a new era, in which capitalism lurches from crisis to crisis.

Elaine Brunskill, Socialist Party northern region secretary, then led a discussion on the situation in Britain, as a general election draws closer, and the Tories brace themselves for a hammering.

The crucial tasks for us were set out, such as the vital necessity of working in the trade unions, at a time when workers once again show

their willingness to reach for the strike weapon, as a means of winning pay rises and defeating efforts to cut jobs.

A key focus was how the Socialist Party is building across the region. Our branches continue to grow, while the working class is fighting back against Tory cuts, unconvinced by Keir Starmer's pro-austerity, pro-war Labour Party.

Just as important is the need for a new mass workers' party to challenge Labour from the left, with a fighting, socialist programme in the interests of workers. There will be at least nine candidates from the region standing for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in the upcoming council elections – contributing to the stand of 240 TUSC candidates across the country.

To help produce and circulate election material, the fighting fund appeal raised £585.41. And a further £75 was raised through the sale of socialist books.



Parents will fight nursery closures by Leeds Labour council

Parents were shocked to receive letters as they dropped their children off at council-run Little Owls nurseries across Leeds, letting them know whether they could face imminent closure.

Without any prior consultation, the council are proposing closing three of the 24 nurseries as soon as

May. And the future of a further 12 nurseries remain in doubt.

The anger and worry of parents has already been shown in interviews with local media. Over 300 parents have joined a Facebook group that I set up, and a Zoom meeting is taking place on 27 March. Parents at affected nurseries have been leafleting to promote both.

If the Labour-run council thought parents would accept this as a done deal, then they will be made to think again!

IAIN DALTON
PARENT OF A CHILD AT A LITTLE OWLS NURSERY

Cirencester College – Socialist Students is growing

SAIGE MULDOON
CIRENCESTER SOCIALIST STUDENTS

The town around Cirencester College has a Conservative MP, and a mostly Lib Dem council. Despite this, the college has become a melting pot of political ideology for people from around Swindon and the Cotswolds.

Most students make a journey of around an hour to the college. This is almost entirely due to the deterioration and reputation of other surrounding sixth forms and colleges – a result of government funding cuts.

There is a large working-class population in the college, and class consciousness is growing among the student body. Young people need a new political space, especially now.

Witnessing capitalist crisis

We are living through the destruction of our world at the hands of the capitalist class. And we witness it every day – online, through the news, or even personally.

Being subjected to footage of massive destruction takes a substantial toll on mental health. We desperately need a place to voice our concerns, and to incite radical change among the society we will inherit.

We, as socialist youth in Swindon, are trying to create this space. We have garnered serious interest from roughly 20 people at Cirencester College regarding a Socialist Students weekly meeting.

Finding a space to hold our

meetings is proving to be the only hurdle to having an official group. Staff members must book rooms for us, but aren't permitted to display 'political affiliations' on campus.

As a result, after Easter, we will start holding meetings in a public space outside of campus. Students are also joining Swindon Socialist Party, with two new members, and serious interest from five more. This keeps our Socialist Party branch on track to be roughly 50% young members in the coming months.

Socialism

Students of Cirencester College are mostly interested in social issues, such as LGBTQ+ rights. We see this as a brilliant jumping off point, since many people already agree with most of the socialist programme we put forward.

In a system where the two major parties – Tories and Labour – are becoming indistinguishable from each other, we must show young people that we put people over profit, and that we will fight for the rights of the working class.

A study found that 67% of young people in the UK want a socialist economic system. It is up to us to find those who will fight for it. Those who will push for a socialist world.

● **Read about the walkout Saige organised with Socialist Students at Cirencester - see 'Another huge Gaza demo as Britain bombs Middle East' at socialistparty.org.uk**



Fighting for the rights of Black and Asian workers



My first months in Socialist Party have been brilliant – you should join too

ROZA KWIECIŃSKA
NEWHAM AND EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Having certain views and opinions doesn't always lead to action. It seems to me that we often believe that there's no time for active participation in politics, or that getting involved is difficult and tiresome. The truth is, it couldn't be easier. When I moved to London, I knew that in some way I wanted to expand my knowledge about socialism – how should it work and is it even possible. I didn't expect that a few months later, I would be so much into that.

Young socialists

During my first month here, I was looking for some kind of a socialist group – to meet people with similar beliefs, have discussions, and learn about British politics. First thing that showed up after searching for 'young socialists London' in Google was the Socialist Party. And I was lucky that it was that.

Going on the first small pro-Palestine demo, and talking with some Socialist Party members made me interested in how the party works. Then I've started attending more protests and demonstrations, mostly regarding the horrible war, but also other social problems.

It was easy to get involved in current affairs, but also to get some knowledge at local branch meetings, where every week there's a discussion not only about British politics, but also history and world matters.

Doing a lot of campaign stalls at different campuses in London was an easy way to talk to other people, mainly students, and see what they are thinking. It so important to have discussions with others, because through them it is possible to let people know what we stand for.

A psychological study by William Richard Miller finds that when we want to combat another person's ignorance of proven scientific facts, it's crucial to focus on the relationship

with the people we're trying to persuade. Put simply, it's not just about altering people's thoughts – we should also focus on touching their emotions and values.

Heart from you

It's the same with politics. It's most likely to change when influenced by someone who understands and truly listen to us, or someone close to us.

In my case it was similar. When, as a teenager, I started to be interested in politics, long discussions with my brother slowly introduced me to leftist ideas and a socialist view of the world.

That's why it's crucial to have these conversations with your family and friends. If they hear about politics from your point of view, they can relate and understand it more.

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

MILA HUGHES
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

The Socialist Party's Black and Asian members' group had its first meeting of the year on 24 March. This was our first meeting with people participating in person, not just online, since the pandemic.

Socialist Party National Committee member Hugo Pierre introduced the political discussion on the consciousness of Black and Asian workers today. He explained the historical development of racism to the modern day, and how it affects us.

We crucially outlined the need to intervene in Black and Asian struggles now more than ever, and how our demands to fight for the rights of Black and Asian workers are intrinsically linked to the need for a new mass workers' party.

The discussion moved on to how the fight against racism becomes

more and more complex, as capitalism continues to exploit the working class. A Middle Eastern member invited the meeting to think about how many Black workers carry dual consciousness – on one hand facing the struggle as a working-class person in Britain, and on the other acknowledging the international perspective of their respective nationality.

We discussed our participation in the protests against the onslaught on Gaza, and other campaigns that the Socialist Party supports, including Tamil Solidarity and Nigerian Solidarity UK.

Many people come to politics through struggling against their own specific oppression. We explain the roots of oppression, and the need for socialism to end all oppression.

● **Read 'Black Workers' Charter 2023: a programme for fighting racism' at socialistparty.org.uk**

Russia terror attack ignites further instability and tensions

NIALL MULHOLLAND
INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT, COMMITTEE FOR A
WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL

The horrific terror attacks on the outskirts of Moscow on 22 March shocked and repulsed Russians and people everywhere. At the time of writing, the death toll is officially 139 and rising. Over 180 people have received hospital treatment for injuries in Russia's worst terror attack in 20 years. It is expected that more bodies will be found in the debris of the burnt Crocus City Hall.

The CWI condemns these indiscriminate attacks against civilians, no matter who the perpetrators are.

The attack began when gunmen opened fire inside the Crocus City Hall before a rock concert was due to take place. The assailants set fire to the building and part of its roof collapsed. Within hours, an offshoot of the Islamic State group claimed responsibility. The slaughter is the worst such attack in Europe and Russia since the 2004 attack on a school in the town of Beslan in southern Russia.

Hours after the attack, the Russian security service, the FSB, claimed it arrested several of the attackers while they were trying to flee from Russia to Ukraine. Four alleged attackers were brought to an Investigation Committee headquarters in Moscow on 25 March, showing signs of beatings and torture. Videos of what happened have been circulated on social media.

Blame game

Within hours of the atrocity, Russia, Ukraine and the West started pointing fingers at each other over the real identity and motives of the attackers. The Islamic State group claimed responsibility, but the Kremlin has linked the attack to Ukraine. The four suspected gunmen are reportedly from the central Asian country of Tajikistan, an impoverished state which borders Afghanistan, the basis of the Islamic State Khorasan group, also known as ISIS - Khorasan (IS-K), which claimed to have carried out the atrocity. The group released pictures of the attackers before they launched their assault and body-cam footage made by attackers of the slaughter.

However, in his first televised statement about the attack, President Vladimir Putin made no mention of IS-K. He claimed the attackers were caught while "moving towards Ukraine where, according to preliminary information, a window was prepared for them from the Ukrainian side to cross the state border".

Putin's claims were furiously denied by Kyiv. "Putin and other scoundrels simply tried to blame everything on someone else," remarked Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukrainian President.

Certainly ISIS has reason to want to strike against Russia. Russian military intervention was instrumental in saving the Assad regime

in Syria during the civil war, often striking against ISIS targets. ISIS has carried out deadly attacks against the ruling Taliban in Afghanistan, which ISIS regards as an ally of Moscow. Islamic terror attacks emanating from central Asia against Russian targets took place in the 1990s and early 2000s when Putin was mercilessly crushing independence movements in Chechnya and other parts of the region. However there have not been Islamic terror attacks on Russian soil for some time.

Ukraine and Western politicians allege that Putin is using the atrocity to further whip up Russian nationalist outrage against Ukraine to prepare the way for wider troop mobilisation in the war against its neighbour, and to provide a pretext for more repressive legislation domestically to shut down any anti-war and oppositionist voices. They argue that Putin seeks to falsely hold Ukraine responsible as he has been badly exposed by the attacks, seen as incapable of providing security for Russian people while at the same time conducting a war in Ukraine involving hundreds of thousands of Russian soldiers. Some

politicians in Ukraine have gone as far as to directly blame Moscow for orchestrating the Crocus City Hall massacre.

Western intervention

In return, Moscow has indicated that the attacks were the dirty work of the Zelensky regime backed by US and other Western powers. Putin has now conceded that the attack was conducted by "radical Islamists" but reasserted the claims that Ukraine could have been involved in the shootings. "We are interested in who ordered it", Putin told government officials. "This atrocity may just be one part in a whole series of attempts by those who have been at war with our country since 2014 by the hands of the neo-Nazi Kyiv regime".

Kremlin sources point out that the CIA has had long involvement with Islamic terror groups in Central Asia and parts of the Middle East, and it is not beyond them to have used IS-K as a cover or 'flag of convenience' to carry out attacks to destabilise the Putin government. Firefight between Russian neo-Nazi paramilitaries that are pro-Ukraine and

Russian police have been reported in recent weeks. Only last week Putin emerged as the clear winner of presidential elections, which saw no real opposition, and the war in Ukraine has been steadily going in Putin's favour. Moscow sources imply that the IS-K assailants were manipulated by Ukraine and the West, with FSB claims that one of the four detained attackers confessed that he was paid to carry out the massacre.

Dirty history

None of the claims being made by either side can be dismissed as completely implausible given the history of murderous dirty tactics used over decades by Western powers in many parts of the world, and also by the Putin regime against its opponents. It is widely thought in Russia and beyond that the FSB had a hand in the blowing up of four tower blocks in Moscow and two other Russian cities in September 1999 to provide the pretext for Russian military invasion of Dagestan, triggering the Second Chechen War, and consolidating Putin's rule. But US, UK and French imperialism also have a long history of covert activities in many countries, including helping to create and direct terror groups, and infiltrating paramilitaries for their own ends.

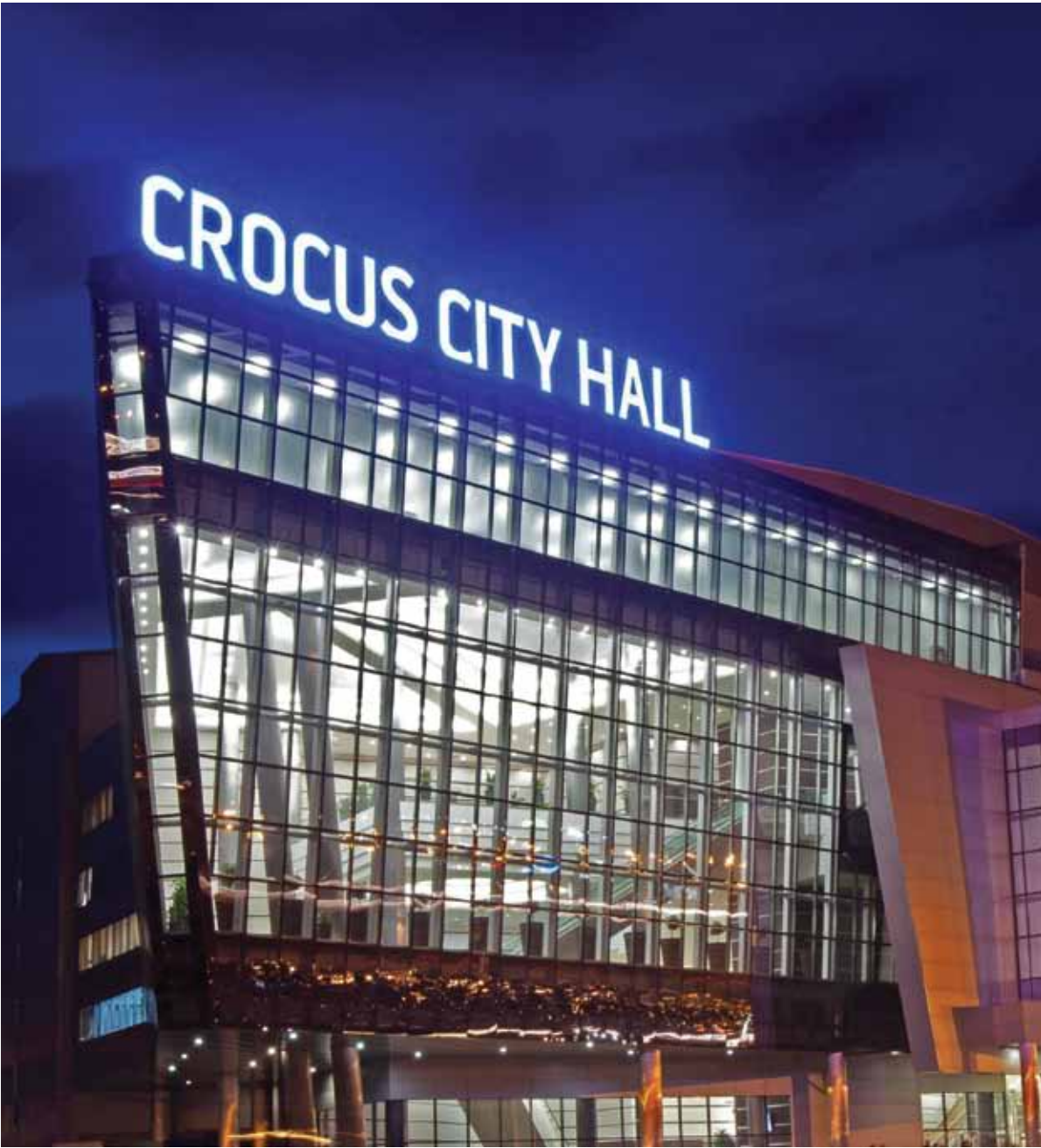
It remains to be seen if any hard facts emerge from the Crocus City Hall massacre over the next weeks and months, and from the trial of the four suspects, albeit it is highly unlikely this will be a fair trial. It has already been announced by Russian authorities that it will be "closed".

At the same time, questions have been raised about the relative slowness of the Russian security forces to respond to this attack which took place on the edge of Moscow, not in some provincial backwater. Putin may attempt to use to this as an excuse for a further tightening of controls in Russia. The popular welcome which Prigozhin's attempted military uprising last June received among sections of the population in Russia was a warning of Putin's potentially fragile base, and the regime will try to use this massacre to strengthen its internal position.

For socialists, it is clear that whoever was behind the Crocus City Hall mass slaughter acted with thoroughly reactionary motives. The attacks will heighten ethnic tensions in Russia and the region. In response to last Friday's massacre, both Putin and Zelensky pit worker against worker with their right-wing nationalist rhetoric and propaganda. Western powers hypocritically condemn the concert hall attacks and also Putin's war machine, but have armed and abetted Israel's six-month-long bombardment of Gaza.

The Crocus City Hall massacre is a symptom of the devastating impact of the war in Ukraine, now in its third year, and simmering ethnic and national conflicts across the region, and ultimately of the system of barbarous capitalism imposed after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Only a mass united struggle of working people against the rule of the oligarchs and for the socialist transformation of society can bring lasting peace and prosperity.

- Read more: 'Ukraine war drags on as Putin gains upper hand' visit socialistparty.org.uk



Crocus City Hall prior to the attack
PRESS SERVICE OF THE GOVERNOR OF THE MOSCOW REGION/CC

Ireland PM resigns in wake of heavy defeat of ‘family’ and ‘care’ referenda

Leo Varadkar, the Taoiseach [Irish prime minister] made a surprise resignation speech on 20 March. He indicated various reasons behind the decision, including 'political and personal' factors. An important factor will have been the recent humiliating defeat of the three-party ruling coalition's referenda. **Militant Left (CWI Ireland)** looks at the reasons for the heavy defeat and lessons for the Left in Ireland.



PHOTO: STEVE P/B/CC

On 8 March, voters in the South of Ireland decisively rejected both the 'Family' and 'Care' referenda. The scale of the 'no' votes to both were a considerable surprise to all and unpredicted. One incorrect conclusion drawn by some is that these votes represent some sort of shift to the right or even far right. This is not the case.

A more accurate conclusion would focus on the confusing nature of both votes. An added factor was a clear desire to kick back against an out-of-touch government. The crass opportunism of holding the vote on 8 March, International Women's Day, can't have helped either.

Family referendum: wording the key issue

The rejection of the 'Family' referendum is a blow to many whose family structures do not match the traditional one based upon marriage. The confusion about the proposed change of text, of what a 'durable relationship' meant, was probably the decisive factor in the 'no' vote. No-one in the government, from the Taoiseach (prime minister) right down to backbench TDs (MPs), could give any coherent explanation of what a 'durable relationship' would mean if this referendum was accepted. And we now know that some government

TDs campaigned for 'yes' but voted 'no'!

This lack of clarity allowed prominent right-wing figures, particularly lawyers like Michael McDowell and Maria Steen, to exploit ambiguity in the amendment's wording to sow doubt in people's minds.

Disabled people mobilise to defeat the Care amendment

In the weeks leading up to the vote, there was a concerted mobilisation of disabled people, and their carers and advocates, to call for a 'no' vote in the Care referendum. This mobilisation rightly focused on the severe limitations of the use of the word 'strive' in the proposed amendment.

As people who have been at the very sharpest edge of the Irish state's capacity for cruelty since 1922, disabled people and their carers correctly intuited that this word would be used to restrict the state's responsibility to provide meaningful care and the right to live independently. This intuition has been confirmed by a subsequent report in The Irish Times newspaper, that officials in the Department of Finance believed that the word "strive" was chosen explicitly "... to avoid a concrete and mandatory obligation to provide support."

Care referendum poses severe challenge for the left

The Care referendum posed a severe challenge to the left and labour movement. If the proposed amendment was rejected, the archaic language of a 'woman's place is in the home' would remain in place. But, if the amendment succeeded, the wording could see disabled people placed in an even worse position in their struggle to receive meaningful care from the state. It would have also meant that the family would remain almost solely responsible for the provision of care to disabled people, with the state's role merely to 'strive'

to support this. As Marxists, our position is that care should be provided by the state through the public health system. Families should not have to shoulder this responsibility.

People Before Profit [which has several TDs] campaigned for a 'yes' vote. In an article on 6 March, it argues correctly that, regardless of the result, it would be necessary to continue to fight for carer and disability rights. Despite its official position in support of a 'yes' vote in this referendum, many grassroots members publicly supported and called for a 'no' vote.



It is impossible to build, under conditions of capitalism, the type of health and care system that genuinely meets human need

The Socialist Party [which has one TD] campaigned for a 'yes' vote in the Care referendum right up to 4 March, four days before the vote, at which point they abruptly shifted to calling for a 'no' vote. The ostensible reason they gave for this was that they had listened to disabled activists and carers and decided, as a consequence, to call for a rejection of the Care amendment.

Before the Socialist Party's U-turn, by applying a Marxist analysis, Militant Left (CWI Ireland) had clearly identified the problematic nature of the Care referendum. (see "Carer's

referendum' exposes rot in Ireland's capitalist constitution' at socialist-party.org.uk)

Limits of 'parliamentary socialism'

As these referenda proved, socialist forces in parliament face real dilemmas when called upon to take a position on changes to a capitalist constitution. Under capitalism, these are reactionary documents. The Irish constitution, Bunreacht na hÉireann, is no different.

The Care referendum is a good example of how socialist organisations are sometimes forced to take a position on a terrain not of their choosing. This can lead to political confusion, errors, opportunism and, ultimately, demoralisation.

Following the votes on 8 March, no new rights or advances have been won. The status quo remains in place. Many families remain on legally uncertain ground, while disabled people must continue to face the ferocity of the Irish state in their fight for a better life.

It is impossible to build, under conditions of capitalism, the type of health and care system that genuinely meets human need. The tension between the capitalists' demands for profit and the need to provide decent care can never be resolved.

The degeneration of the care system in England, following its takeover by 'for-profit' care providers, is a clear warning of what 'striving' to provide care could mean in practice. We need to build mass struggle by the working class to push for a decent care system in the here and now. We need to build a revolutionary force of the working class to end capitalism, once and for all.

SOCIALISM: THE PODCAST Crisis and class struggle in Germany

Sascha Stanicic, national spokesperson of the Socialist Organisation Solidarity, Sol, the CWI in Germany, discusses the CWI's analysis of the crisis and class struggle in Germany with Sean Figg, from the CWI's International Secretariat.

For a whole period German capitalism has been a bulwark of stability for capitalism on the European continent. Now it has entered a period of turmoil, unprecedented since reunification more than thirty years ago.

In this podcast we cover the political crisis of the German 'traffic light' coalition, the rise of the right-populist Alternative for Germany (AfD) and the mass movement against it, the Sara Wagenknecht-led split from DIE LINKE (the Left Party), the protests of the small farmers and the important strike-wave involving workers from multiple sectors.

The Marxist podcast from the Socialist Party/CWI

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RAE COX
OXFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

Years of brutal cuts by the Tories and Labour have left their wounds. In Britain, four million people are more than 50% below the poverty line!

As of the last budget, a further £19 billion has been taken from services such as the courts - suffocating from caseloads; transport - coming off the rails; and councils already on the verge of collapse.

One in five council leaders in England think it is very or fairly likely their council will need to issue a Section 114 notice this year or next - unable to fund more than the services they're legally obliged to, if that!

And who are they trying to make pay for the budget shortfalls? Those already desperate for homes, jobs, and services. 9 out of 10 councils are planning to raise council tax in April, many by the maximum amount allowed without a referendum - 4.99%.

The government sees no issue with £50 billion of 'defence' spending while letting a fifth of people languish in poverty. All of this while globally, the top 1% owns as much as the bottom 70%. In Britain, 50 families own as much as the bottom 33.5 million people. (See 'What can Britain afford?' on pages 8-9 for more)

But it doesn't have to be the case, not by a long shot. We only have to look back at the Militant-led Liverpool Council from 1983-87 to see what socialist councils can do, with the support of workers and some backbone. 5,000 new council houses, thousands of jobs created, mass rallies in support numbering up to 50,000 people, and £120 million in today's money won from the Thatcher government!

Change is possible, we can fight back, but we need socialist councillors who are willing to stand up and fight. Socialist Party members are standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, alongside others, armed with a socialist programme to fight the cuts and win the resources working-class people need.

No council cuts and tax hikes

FIGHT FOR THE FUNDING WE NEED

Take the wealth off the super-rich



PHOTO: TOMMY LIVERPOOL

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

