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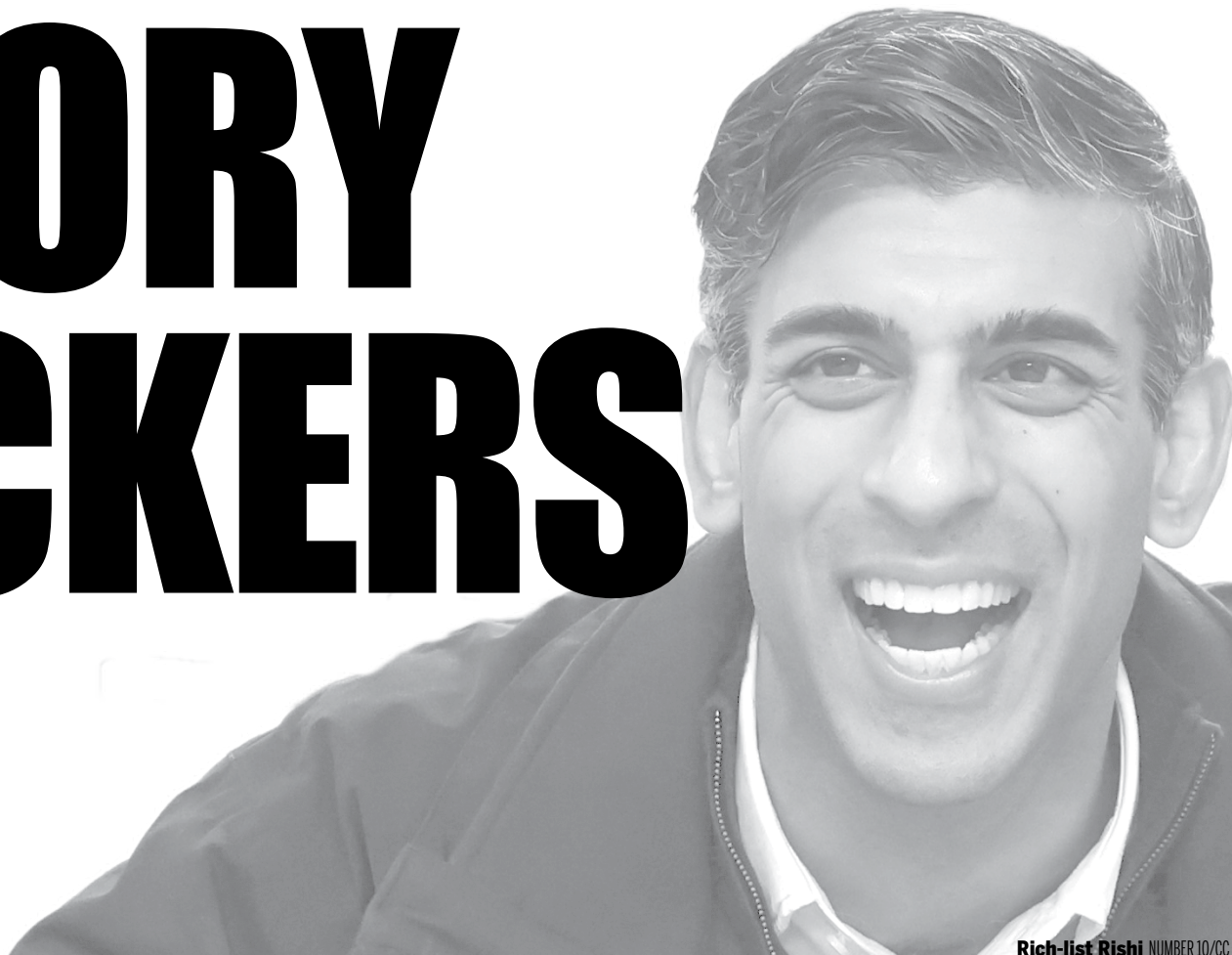
the Socialist

Issue 1270

11-17 April 2024

formerly **Militant**

GET TORY WRECKERS OUT!



Rich-list Rishi NUMBER 10/CC

Back candidates who will fight for the working class

Vote TUSC on 2 May

The Tories have spent 14 years hammering services and living standards down.

Costs of bills, housing, food and fuel are still rising with no sign of it ending. Public services face cut-throat cuts. Industries that used to be public - energy, water, mail, rail, steel - are in private hands, the bosses raking in monster profits.

The rich keep getting richer while everything crumbles.

During and after every crisis of the bosses' system, they and their politicians get the working class to foot the bill. We are continuously paying more with cuts, to be met with fewer and fewer public services.

Instead of standing up and protecting working-class communities from Tory cuts, Labour councils across the country vote for further huge cuts and even more charges!

Keir Starmer's Labour seems to be cut from the same cloth as Rishi Sunak. Labour's

shadow health secretary Wes Streeting took to the pages of the vile anti-worker Sun to have a go at NHS workers, threatening to withhold extra NHS funding if they refuse to work weekends. It's clear that they would look to prioritise the interests of big businesses over the working class.

This has to end. We need a party to fight on our side against the bosses - a working-class alternative to take on the super-rich.

Britain is the sixth-richest country in the world, no one should have to go without food or a roof over their heads. We can

afford decent health and social care, free education, council services. The wealth is there but it's in the wrong hands. We need socialist change.

A starting point is to vote for socialist candidates in the local elections on 2 May. Socialist Party members are standing in the elections as part of TUSC (Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition). Get involved and help our campaigns.

MILA HUGHES
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

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

INDEPENDENT WORKERS' ORGANISATION TO STOP ARMING ISRAEL

No trust in the bosses' institutions WHAT WE THINK



Outrage at the massive death toll, destruction and famine in Gaza rose even further worldwide at the start of April when seven charity workers from World Central Kitchen were added to the victims of the Israeli military brutality.

A certain tipping point was reached for a layer of people within the structures of the UK establishment, alarmed at the consequences for their system at such brazen flouting of all humanitarian considerations. More than 600 people associated with the legal profession, including three former high court justices, argued in a letter that the government is breaking international law by continuing to allow arms exports to Israel.

A number of Tory and Labour MPs, including some associated with the New Labour Mark II leadership of Sir Keir Starmer, also called for arms exports to be suspended. They included Alicia Kearns, Tory chair of parliament's foreign affairs select committee, who was reported as stating that the exports are breaching international law.

Governments in several other countries have suspended arms transfers to Israel, though notably not the two countries supplying 99% of Israel's arms imports, the US and Germany. In Britain, the debate on arms supplies that has now broken out is a marked departure, as it comes after six months of a virtual taboo in the mainstream media of anything other than the Tory and New Labour narrative of refusal to condemn the terrible bloodshed inflicted on Gaza.

Huge discontent

Lying behind the debate is neither a change in the material facts of the war, nor a sudden awakening of moral consciousness, but the growing awareness by a layer at the top of society of the huge disconnect between the stance on the war of Sunak, Starmer and Co and that of ordinary people - a majority of whom supported banning arms to Israel in a recent poll. They also no doubt fear that their own capitalist institutions and professions are becoming discredited in the eyes of the working class, through association with inaction regarding the war.

Sunak and Starmer have partially shifted their stance under the pressure from below, echoing Biden in the US - last month the US abstained on a UN 'immediate ceasefire' motion rather than vetoing it as before - but they haven't yet threatened weapons sanctions. Rather, they have maintained the sickening hypocrisy of approving the deadly weaponry while at the same time pledging to increase the grossly inadequate aid being sent to the victims of those same weapons.

In the face of government ministers



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSOON

holding back from castigating the calls for an arms embargo, the role of doing so was taken up by Boris Johnson, who wrote: "If the west continues to crumble... then the Israelis will be prevented from achieving their objective", and this would be "a total moral repudiation of Israel!". In previous years, opposition to right-wing governments in Israel was equated with antisemitism as an ideological tool used against Jeremy Corbyn and other Labour lefts, an accusation that has ceased to hold weight due to the widespread anger over the Israeli military's mass killing of civilians in Gaza. But this doesn't stop the likes of Johnson from trying to portray anti-war positions as opposition to

the existence of Israel, and in the process obscuring the class nature of Israel, which has a ruling capitalist class that oppresses the Palestinians and that can't meet the security and financial needs of Israeli workers. Israel has a large domestic arms industry so sanctions against sending weapons exports wouldn't necessarily on their own entirely stop the war. But overall, Israel can't detach itself from the world economy and would face a cumulative effect from sanctions, which would apply additional pressure against the war. However, for socialists, a crucial question is who is applying sanctions: pro-capitalist governments or workers' movements - and for what

purpose? The Tories are resisting introducing any sanctions, and even if they move to, or if Labour introduces some after the general election, they won't be motivated by the interests of ordinary people in Gaza, Britain, or Israel, but by the interests of British imperialism.

The Tory government inflicts poverty on British workers, Starmer's Labour will do the same in government, as it does now in local authorities, and both refused to call for an immediate ceasefire in the war on Gaza for many months while tens of thousands of Palestinians were being killed. Regarding Israel, they will never support strike action by Israeli workers for decent living standards, just as they don't in Britain.

No confidence can be placed in those parties implementing sanctions in the interests of ordinary people; only sanctions applied by the workers' movement can be trusted and reliable. Socialist Party members in the trade union Unite have called for a national meeting to be convened of all Unite reps in companies that supply or transport goods used by Israel in the war to discuss applying workers' sanctions against those supplies. Crucial to such a stance would also be preparation for being ready to organise action against any disciplinary threats faced by any workers involved in implementing sanctions, and to combat any attempts by the bosses to attack the pay and conditions of workers in Britain, blaming the consequences of sanctions.

Workers' sanctions

Examples of previous workers' sanctions can be pointed to, including when dockworkers at the Stanlow Oil Refinery near Liverpool refused to unload Russian oil after Putin's invasion of Ukraine, action that was backed by Unite's general secretary. Contrast that to the Tories' long history of taking money from oligarchs in Russia and elsewhere. Just last month Sunak gave a knighthood to Tory donor Mohamed Mansour, whose company only disinvested from Russia in May 2023!

Leading reps in the PCS and FDA civil service unions are looking into taking legal action to potentially enable their members to legally refuse to work on arms licences regarding Israel. This type of recourse to the capitalist justice system needs to be accompanied and backed up by democratic discussion among the trade union members directly involved about what steps they might decide to take independently of both their employers and any court processes. Democratic discussion involving all sectors of those unions is also necessary - as in every union

- on the role the entire union can play in the anti-war movement, including on boosting the turnout on demonstrations, and on how to support and defend any section of workers who carry out specific anti-war actions.

One important question is to what extent can deliberations in the international justice system be used in the anti-war movements? In January, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) held open the possibility that the Israeli military is committing - or might commit - genocidal acts in Gaza. Millions of people globally hoped that the ICJ case might lead to an end to the war. However, the ICJ didn't rule that the war should stop and its ongoing investigations into it could take years. Also, even if the ICJ had declared the war illegal, Israel's leaders wouldn't have recognised that decision and neither necessarily would their main international backer have done so, the US, the predominate military power on the planet.

The global framework of international treaties are important to the different national capitalist classes as a way to negotiate potential conflicts via diplomatic rather than military means. But of course, all the international treaties on war are subject to how the capitalist powers decide to interpret and use them at any one time - on the basis of self-interest - and they can decide to exclude themselves, as the US does from the International Criminal Court.

Workers and the poor across the world can have no trust in those international treaties and legal institutions, any more than they can in their own capitalist state's justice system. The lack of regard by capitalist governments for human rights and fundamental freedoms is clearly revealed in their willingness to ally and trade with authoritarian, highly repressive regimes, like Saudi Arabia.

In Britain, last year new legislation was enacted to further erode trade union rights, the right to protest and the right to asylum. The working class has the real power in society, as it is the class that keeps production, services and the entire economy functioning, and it is precisely its potential to use that power that lies behind the government's attempts to strengthen the hand of the police and judiciary. The more the workers' movement moves to act for itself, independently of capitalist interests, the more it will be able to aid workers' interests both in Britain and internationally, including those of the Palestinians.

- Read more 'Unite and the movement against the war on Gaza' at socialistparty.org.uk from Socialism Today magazine

Labour has abandoned workers - donate to fund a socialist general election stand!

BEA GARDNER SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Senior Labour politicians have dismissed the tens of thousands leaving the party over its stance on Gaza by proclaiming Labour is no longer a 'party of protest'.

Since January alone, more than 23,000 members have resigned, with the decline attributed to Starmer's refusal to call for a ceasefire in Gaza. The party now has 165,400 fewer members than at the end of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership.

Shadow minister Darren Jones told ITV's Good Morning Britain that the fall reflects the "difficult decisions" and "trade-offs" the party has made under Keir Starmer's leadership. He explained the surge in membership under Corbyn was due to the party being seen as a 'protest party' - quite clearly signalling that it no longer is!

In the last 18 months, workers have taken historic strike action, fighting for pay rises to end the cost-of-living nightmare. Yet Starmer told Labour politicians not to speak out on picket lines.

Hundreds of thousands have joined marches and rallies against the horrifying slaughter in Gaza, while Starmer suspended Labour MPs speaking out.

1.4 million young people in 128 countries participated in the largest youth-led day of climate protests in history in March 2019 - now Labour has slashed its green investment fund.

If this isn't enough evidence that Labour is not a party prepared to fight in the interests of workers and young people, just look at how its funding has changed.

Under Keir Starmer's leadership, donations from businesses and individual donors have skyrocketed by

SOCIALIST ELECTION APPEAL



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

- To make a pledge, email isai@socialistparty.org.uk



A working-class socialist voice on 2 May



Birmingham council by-election Socialists are real alternative to largest council cuts ever Vote Corinthia Ward in Bournbrook and Selly Park

BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY STATEMENT

Labour cuts councillor Brigid Jones resigned her seat, after years of picking fights with bin and homecare workers, and helping draw up the council's latest £300 million cuts plans. On 2 May, there will be a by-election in Bournbrook and Selly Park.

The largest-ever cuts in the history of local government include at least 600 job cuts, the closure of 25 out of 35 local libraries, and 50% cuts to both special needs transport and youth services.

Already, in 12 years, the Labour council in Birmingham has cut over £820 million from our services – robbing over 13,000 jobs from our city, closing 43 youth centres, 12 nurseries, 21 children's centres, five children's homes, four libraries, and countless community and leisure facilities.

Paying for it

And we're paying for it, with a 21% council tax increase over two years – on top of years of wages covering less and less of the spiralling cost of bills, food, rent and more.

With thousands of people asking 'who can I vote for?', Socialist Party member Corinthia Ward is set to stand.

Corinthia campaigned in 2018-19 against cuts to council homecare workers' hours, participating in the mass canvasses of Selly Park and other leading councillors' wards. And was regularly on the picket lines during the bin strikes in 2017-19, and more since.

CORINTHIA SAID:

Since 2010, Birmingham has lost at least £1 billion in funding. The Labour council argued cuts would prevent commissioners from coming in. Well, it did the dirty work for the Tories, and the commissioners have still shown up.

"We cannot just wait for a Keir Starmer government. Starmer said he cannot 'turn on the taps' for local government funding, and there is 'no magic money tree', with no pledge to reverse cuts to councils.

"We've heard this from politicians since 2010. But the UK has 171 billionaires, with a combined wealth of £684 billion. There is vast wealth in our society, but we need political



Corinthia campaigning with homecare workers striking against council cuts in 2018

representatives who are prepared to fight for it.

"Bournbrook and Selly Park is the only council ward election this year. The rest of Birmingham isn't set to vote for their local representative until 2026.

"The seven commissioners have said they may be supervising the Labour council's austerity plans for a further five years – on £1,000-plus per day each. But councillors have only decided the headlines of how much they want to cut, and not the detail of which libraries, youth centres, etc will close."

"We have to start now"

"There is still time to build mass opposition to these attacks. But it has to start now.

"The Tory party is weak and divided. Any serious pressure would strain the already existing cracks, and force them to make concessions. And imagine if our Birmingham councillors led a national campaign of councils, taking the funding demand straight to Downing Street.

"The election of a socialist councillor can help raise the confidence of people in Birmingham. We need a workers' candidate on an anti-cuts and anti-war programme, who will stand up to the commissioners, careerist councillors, and austerity-driven

central government – no matter what colour rosette they wear."

We have a public meeting to give people a chance to discuss how a fighting strategy could defeat the council's cuts, and how we can build a mass party for working-class people, as a step towards getting the socialist change we need.

MONDAY 29 APRIL, 7PM
BOURNBROOK & SELLY OAK SOCIAL CLUB, 13A HUBERT ROAD, B29 6DX

Corinthia will be the socialist alternative on the ballot paper in the by-election but not, on this occasion, representing the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

She applied to TUSC to use its name and emblem but, with the Workers Party of Britain also standing, under the TUSC 'consensus rule' – that all decisions made in the name of the coalition need unanimous agreement – the all-Britain TUSC steering committee could not issue a certificate to any candidate in the contest.

The Workers Party has participated in TUSC meetings since March 2022, and while, alongside the Social Justice Party, still only wishes to have observer status at this stage, in practice has been given the same rights as the coalition's other constituent parts.

How are you going to make your distrust and disgust with the establishment politicians known on 2 May?

In 263 local election wards, there will be an opportunity to vote for working-class, anti-cuts, socialist fighters, standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), Socialist Party members among them. TUSC is also standing for Salford mayor and

in four Greater London Assembly constituency seats.

These will be the last elections, on a nationwide scale, before the impending general election that will almost certainly usher in a Labour government led by Keir Starmer, set to continue cuts to local services. Socialist Party members up and down the country are fighting for candidates on the side of workers, not the bosses – making the case for socialist change. Join us, help our campaigns.

TRADE UNIONIST AND SOCIALIST COALITION



TUSC supporters campaigning in Southampton

Reading – we can't make ends meet

MELANIE DENT
READING SOCIALIST PARTY

Are you aware that 44 of Reading's 48 councillors voted for a cuts budget on 27 February? Not to mention a 2.99% council tax increase for the coming year.

As a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate, this is a question that I will be asking Reading residents in the run-up to the May council elections. Alongside rent increases, and £8.5 million more cuts by the Labour council, things look pretty bleak for local residents.

This is my second time standing for TUSC. We are campaigning against

The local bus service is owned by the council. But many routes have been cut back, and services are not regular enough, especially at peak times through residential areas.

If they prefer people to use public transport, they're really not selling us on it. Constant complaints at bus stops on routes I use are about frequency, roadworks and diversions, not to mention the cost.

I will be taking up these, and other local issues in my TUSC campaign, as will others. We need to get the TUSC name out there, and say no to cuts and austerity.

• Melanie is the TUSC candidate in Redlands

Southampton – Bevois socialist campaign going down a storm

NADIA DITTA
SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER AND TUSC CANDIDATE IN BEVOIS WARD

We've been extremely busy here in Southampton.

We have eight mosques in Bevois ward. Ten of us were out after Friday prayers, handing out special cards with a strong message of voting for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). This was received very well.

I spoke at the council's budget meeting about the damage cuts are doing. I said:

"Investment is needed in people, and the quality of life we offer them. Areas such as Bevois ward need to stop being neglected, and to be invested in, or this horrendous poverty cycle we are in will just keep going around and around.

"When a country like the UK can send £100 billion to support wars, but then closes youth centres, closes old people's homes, struggles to keep leisure centres open, stops meals on wheels, and hardly has fully functioning libraries, people are entitled to ask questions of the people who are supposed to be looking after their needs."

The Daily Echo reported our Labour council leader saying that "over £500 million has been stolen from local residents". So I said: "Now with the likelihood of a Labour government coming in, will the councillors be asking their Labour leader for this money to be replaced?"

Campaigning 7 days a week

We've been campaigning seven days a week – twice a day, with two different groups going out everyday.

We managed to get lots of women together for our campaign day, led by the community, organised by Noreen Younis. They managed to put 72 posters up in windows.

We have been invited to the local mosque for iftar. It gave us an opportunity to speak to the community.

I was also invited to Awaaz FM, a local South Asian radio station. It was the community hour, and really good questions asked.

We held a successful open Socialist Party meeting to discuss challenging Keir Starmer and Rishi Sunak to the ballot box. How George Galloway winning shows a strong sign that things are changing. People are looking for an alternative.

We still have a Socialist Party campaign stall in the city centre every Saturday. And we attend protests for Palestine in Southampton.

We support local strikes. For example, giving solidarity to striking train drivers in Aslef union at the Northam



Nadia campaigning against council cuts

▶▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 - READ MORE ABOUT THE TUSC CHALLENGE

Local councils should demand arts funding communities need

SAM HEY
MANCHESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Arts Council England (ACE) is being 'reviewed' by the Tory government, after coming under scrutiny due to a change of guidance earlier in the year. In January, ACE released guidance warning artists 'political statements' that may lead to 'reputational risk' towards an arts organisation could be grounds for a loss of funding. This blatant attempt at silencing the voices of political artists was met with outcry from a range of artists and Equity, the performing arts and entertainment union, resulting in the guidance being revoked. (See 'Arts Council England attacks 'political' artists funding' at socialistparty.org.uk).

Chronic underfunding

The Tories' chronic underfunding of the arts has bred a competitive culture when it comes to funding applications. Smaller arts organisations compete with funding bids, while large organisations can be included in the 'National Portfolio', with guaranteed funding for three years straight from ACE. Currently, ACE is responsible for allocating £445 million of spending.

A centralised public body, supposedly 'independent' from the government, is poorly placed to deliver art projects tailored to local communities. A move to a more devolved funding system, with decisions made democratically at the local level by councils, would lead to projects focused on localised and long-lasting impact. This model would encourage publicly funded projects to be tailored to specific communities' needs.

Arts funding can be used in a variety of ways that transcend entertainment. In 2021, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority funded a political art project that used 'legislative theatre' to inform the new Greater Manchester Homelessness Prevention Strategy. This project provided work to a group of artists and a large group of people who had experienced homelessness, or were currently homeless, and empowered

them to make a legislative impact on local council policy moving forward. This use of arts funding to promote participatory democracy was effective because the people it impacted could see the change they were making in real time, in the area they live in. The review of the project highlighted how underfunded the project was. It stated: 'The cost is fairly minimal for the amount of engagement, knowledge produced, and relationships fostered.' We need to campaign for the resources needed to turn this participation into material improvements for people hit by the housing crisis.

Equity has launched a campaign called 'Stop the Cuts', demanding local election candidates oppose cuts to existing funding and pledge to ring-fence culture funding in the May elections. It also demands a requirement for union contracts, terms and conditions for all public funding of the arts. I would go one step further, and demand candidates lobby government to increase cultural funding and begin reversing the 40% reduction in funding per person since 2010. This has to be linked to refusing to implement all cuts, using councils' reserves and borrowing powers and launching working-class campaigns to demand the funding needed from central government.

Candidates

With local elections on the horizon, I encourage you to ask candidates if they will commit to enriching and strengthening the communities they stand in and support arts funding. Will you vote for someone who will be complicit in the closure of arts venues, companies, and communities across the country, as our cultural heritage is undermined by turning to corporate backers to survive?

In the upcoming local elections, every Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidate will, if elected, stand against the cuts and support local art near to you.

• Sam is standing for TUSC in Harpurhey ward

Depot in Radcliffe Road. They are on strike to protect their working conditions from management attacks, and campaigning to renationalise rail from private profiteers.

Buzz
I have made four short videos, and sent them out to the community. They're doing the rounds, and have a real buzz going around the area.

I've seen the videos up on people's WhatsApp statuses, as well as other social media platforms. They are being viewed by thousands of people now.

What we are doing in Bevois ward is amazing. We are interacting with 40 to 60 people a day.

We are listening to the concerns of people. We explain what the Socialist Party stands for.

People want to join
We have people wanting to join the Socialist Party, and come to our meetings, as we resonate with them. They want to be able to feed their children, without using food banks.

So far, most of the people we speak to say they will vote TUSC. We haven't really stopped since December, but more so since March!

We are giving people a different way of thinking. That we can fight for our future if we join together.

So bring on 2 May, and until then we keep going, we keep building!

Cheltenham – money doesn't 'trickle down' to working class

JOE WATERS
GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Cheltenham is a supposedly well-off town, with a higher median salary and lower unemployment than the national average. The town's economy is worth over £3 billion, with skilled jobs in cyber-security and tech. The Lib Dem council recently approved spending up to £95 million developing a business park, hoping to further the town's reputation as a high-tech hub.

However, investment doesn't flow so freely into working-class neighbourhoods. Basic services are left to crumble, and there are few good jobs.

While local politicians spend millions to draw in private sector investment, they can't find any economic justification for providing local residents just down the road with regular access to a library, or even a halfway reliable bus service so they can get to work.

Cheltenham is home to prestigious private schools, where the wealthy can have their children groomed to follow in their footsteps. However, Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates are standing

in wards where there's child poverty, and the social problems it creates.

The town and surrounding countryside is full of shockingly opulent homes for the rich. But for many people, even the most outdated and degraded housing options are increasingly unaffordable.

Landlords cram in more and more people to make easy profit. In student areas, parking is a constant issue. But across town, properties might have multiple luxury cars parked up behind tall, heavy gates.

Most working-class people are well aware of these disparities, and of how little of a priority their needs are to the local authorities. Lots of people have long ago lost interest in voting, as they see no real change on offer.

When we've spoken to people in these communities about TUSC, we find real enthusiasm for the idea of standing up for working people, and spending what is needed.

While TUSC standing, the best that could be hoped for at the local elections would be apologies or excuses. We hope to inspire as many as possible to join us in fighting back.

• **Joe is the TUSC candidate in Hesters Way**

Young people like me should be allowed to stand



ADAM GILLMAN
READING SOCIALIST PARTY

14 years of austerity means that schools are crumbling, bus routes are cut, and youth services are almost non-existent.

Austerity has caused an increase in crime, and violent crime too. This is not surprising. Austerity means worse and less services, and private companies taking over public services, running them for a profit.

With cuts to public services, plus all the other issues, such as the cost of living, vulnerable people are hit hardest. Young people have to live through austerity, not knowing when things were better.

The Tory government has not given the money necessary to councils in order to fund public services. But councils have power, they can use their reserves to fund public services. Then take the fight to the government by mobilising trade unions, activists and the community against cuts. It's a political choice to not fight back, no matter the party in power locally – Tories, Labour, Liberal Democrats, Greens, or Reform.

In the 1980s, we in the Socialist Party (then known as Militant) did this in Liverpool. We won and got the funding from Thatcher's Tory government. This led to Liverpool running a massive council house building programme, and investing in public services.

Why can't this happen now? If Labour aren't going to do it, then we must stand.

It's clear what will be delivered by a Keir Starmer Labour government by looking at the track record of Labour-run councils, like Reading, implementing massive Tory cuts to services, and raising council tax. We are paying more for worse services.

Why I couldn't stand

In this year's local elections I was going to stand as a candidate for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in Wokingham. A day after I handed in my forms, and the council finding no problems, I got a call from electoral services. Despite being 18 years old and eligible to vote in the 2 May election, they explained that I couldn't stand, because the

nomination deadline was three days before my 18th birthday.

Despite being old enough to vote, old enough to travel alone, and do many things, I still couldn't stand. The need to lower the voting and standing age to 16 years old is clear.

In Scotland and Wales, the voting age is already 16. Younger people, who can get a job, and are effected by things such as austerity, should have a voice at the ballot box.

The argument that young people don't have the capacity to make these decisions is utter nonsense. You have rich right wingers, who have hardly any experience with the day-to-day struggles of working people, who have never worked a day in their lives. Then there are 16 year olds, working long hours on a zero-hour contract, who need to be able to make their voices heard.

This is not an issue of age or generation. The issues facing working-class people affect all ages.

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

Sunak 'too left wing'

Ask most people if they are happy with Tory leader Rishi Sunak and the response is likely to contain expletives. Ask most Tory councillors, and they are unhappy too – 65%, according to one poll.

Have they seen the light? Are they fed up of carrying out endless cut-backs to local services? Do they think it's wrong that the rich keep getting richer and we pay the price?

No. 47% think he is too left wing!

Rotten Reform

Some Tories have already jumped ship to right-wing Reform UK. Its leader had to tell its prospective candidates: "For heaven's sake, if you're going to have a glass of wine on a Friday night then don't use social media, it's not sensible."

Five in a week have been suspended for making disgusting racist and sexist comments.

Vote TUSC

We need a real alternative – a new mass party of the working class. That's why we are helping to plant a flag in the 2 May local elections, standing candidates as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.



Amazon 'not-so' Fresh

Amazon made a splash launching automated grocery shops in 2020, but behind the curtain of the hyped-up automation appears to be standard capitalist cost-cutting and exploitation.

You could go to Amazon Fresh shops, put your shopping in your trolley and cameras tracking your every move would use AI to detect what items you buy. Amazon wouldn't have to pay 'expensive' shop workers who demand things like breaks and decent pay.

But in the majority of cases, it

turns out, instead of computers working out what you were buying, it was outsourced workers in India. The over 1,000 workers, likely paid lower wages than Amazon would have to pay in Britain, have turned out too costly themselves. Amazon is ending this scheme, to be replaced by making shoppers scan their own items!

This is how technology is used by capitalism; to drive down costs, generate buzz to raise share prices, and increase exploitation to generate greater profits for a few.



First till-less Amazon Fresh store ROGER GREEN/CC

SOCIALISM: THE PODCAST

Special episode 130 - The fight for workers' politics now

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Riches of the rich list grow



Luxury yacht GERD FAHRENHORST/CC

JOHN WILLIAMS AND BEN GOLIGHTLY
CARDIFF EAST AND SWANSEA SOCIALIST PARTY

As the cost of living continues to bite, and real wages fall, ordinary people are feeling the pinch. But things have never been better for a few! Forbes reports on the 141 new billionaires who join a group whose collective wealth has jumped an inflation-busting two trillion dollars this year.

When workers' wages fall in value behind inflation, the difference has to go somewhere. What happens is theft – increased profits for the bosses and the transfer of wealth to the rich. With even less in our hands, is it any wonder that our personal budgets are squeezed, and around us public services crumble?

The wealth exists in society to provide a decent standard of living for everyone, with services run democratically and funded to meet people's needs.

The capitalist bosses will always find any way possible to increase their share of the wealth. When workers get organised and take

\$14.2 trillion
Total wealth of the billionaires

strike action over pay, we can defend or increase our share. But the system is rigged. We fight for a socialist programme to take the wealth and industry off the rich, nationalising the banks and big industries under democratic workers' control. Instead of 2,781 billionaires, let's run society in the interest of the 8.1 billion humans who live here.

If you want to fight for a socialist alternative to the capitalist system, which piles greater wealth at one end and misery for the other, then join the Socialist Party today.

16%
increase from the previous year

SOCIALISM TODAY
Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

April issue includes...

- Building on Rochdale - the fight for a new workers' party
- Mick Lynch - an industrial and political balance sheet
- Unite and Gaza - unions and the anti-war movement



socialismtoday.org/subscribe



Socialist Party banner in Leeds

TUSC and no-cuts independent standing in Sheffield

LIAM BALL
SHEFFIELD SOUTH EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) launched its campaign for all 28 Sheffield wards, as well as announcing its parliamentary candidates ahead of the general election, in a well-attended public meeting.

Speaking were Sahar Awadallah, a local health worker and Palestinian peace activist, and Mick Suter, a Socialist Party member, and TUSC parliamentary candidate for Sheffield Heeley in the general election.

Mick is going against Labour MP Louise Haigh, a Starmer loyalist who recently announced that the Labour Party would not renationalise any industry if it wins the general election.

Since then, TUSC has stepped

down in one ward for the 2 May council election, after discussions with a local community group in Darnall, wanting to put their own anti-war candidate forward. Darnall Independents has agreed to carry our no-cuts platform, alongside their anti-war stance, as a condition for TUSC standing down.

If elected, Qais, the Darnall Independent candidate, like all TUSC candidates, is committed to campaign and vote against any cuts or privatisation of council services. We have raised with the Darnall Independents about their candidate standing under the TUSC banner.

Members of the Socialist Party and TUSC then attended the Darnall Independents' campaign launch at their mosque, which more than 100 members of the community attended.

Socialist Party member and TUSC election agent Alistair Tice spoke on the reasons for standing down, as well as why we asked for a no-cuts policy to be considered.

We were very warmly received, as were our anti-austerity ideas. We stayed for an hour after the meeting, continuing the discussion with dozens of attendees.

Many said they were inspired by the Rochdale by-election, and of their disgust in Keir Starmer's stance on what is happening in Palestine. All agreed it was time for change and that potential success could motivate other groups from working-class areas to challenge the political status quo.

• **TUSC is still standing in Sheffield's other 27 wards, and we will carry our fight against cuts and war to the ballot box and beyond**



Attending Gaza demo in Sheffield SHEFFIELD SP



DAVID TOTTIERDALE/CC

1 in 5 adults on NHS waiting lists Fight for the funding we need

KATIE HOLDEN
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Almost 10 million people across England could be on NHS waiting lists.

The Office for National Statistics survey found that 21% of the 90,000 adult participants were on a waiting list for a hospital appointment or to start receiving treatment on the NHS. According to official NHS data in January, the waiting list stood at 7.6 million treatments for 6.3 million people. A gap of millions!

The survey also found that waiting list delays were more common among 16 to 24-year-olds. Students and young people are being disadvantaged by the Tories once again. Waiting times for 16 to 24-year-olds of over a year mean that students,

graduates and young workers may not receive the treatment they dearly need in time. If that treatment is for terminal illness or mental health-related, this can lead to dire consequences, seen in recent spikes of suicide in young people.

Rishi Sunak has failed to meet his pledge to cut NHS waiting times. Instead of investing the money needed and paying NHS staff wages they can live on, he has instead blamed doctors and nurses' strike actions.

Even Sir Julian Hartley, chief executive of NHS Providers which represents NHS bosses, recognised the cause of the backlog. He said: "Hospital, mental health and community trusts are working incredibly hard to bear down on backlogs and deliver timely, high-quality patient care. But

they are up against deep-rooted challenges including workforce shortages and a lack of physical capacity across the NHS and social care."

Labour's shadow health secretary, Wes Streeting, says he has a plan to cut back the waiting lists. But so far he has raised more private involvement in the NHS, more companies making profit from our health service, and has refused to back striking workers demands for the pay they deserve.

We need to fully fund our NHS and kick out all the private profiteers making money from our ill-health. We need a fully public NHS including nationalising pharmaceutical and medical manufacturers, under democratic control and management of workers ourselves.

BATTLE LINES AT NEU CONFERENCE REINFORCE THE NEED TO CAMPAIGN FOR A FIGHTING UNION

SHEILA CAFFREY

NEU NEC MEMBER AND RECENT VICE PRESIDENT
CANDIDATE, PERSONAL CAPACITY

In the run-up to its 2024 conference, members of the National Education Union (NEU) were voting in indicative ballots on pay and funding.

The NEU took its first significant national strike action last year. It gave members a taste of the understanding that if you fight, you can win; and the leadership a taste of the experience that if you give members a lead, they will follow.

Unfortunately, these feelings don't last if they are not built on and workers are isolated. The daily grind of workload, lack of funding, and the difficulties of providing children and young people what they need in a capitalist education system, start to weigh heavily.

Eight months ago, the current leadership recommended accepting a below-inflation 6.5% rise and 'paused' the campaign. Our strike action forced the Tories to increase their offer, but Socialist Party members believed more could have been won – not least on funding.

Pause

The 'pause' put on our action meant that in reality this indicative ballot was starting from scratch.

The NEU ran indicative ballots of teachers and support staff in schools and sixth forms in England and Wales. Unfortunately, an unconfident leadership meant that those voices who have always voted against action were boosted, and that led others to lose the confidence that the union could win. It led the National Executive to impose a 60% turnout threshold – 10% higher than even the Tory government's! So, when reps and activists were fighting to cross the magical 50%, they then discovered once the ballot for teachers had closed with over 50% turnout, that the Executive majority didn't think this was enough to proceed to a formal ballot.

However, this was by no means a unified position on the Executive. An emergency motion to the conference, which proposed turning to individual workplace disputes and putting a Labour government 'on notice', just scraped through the Exec by four votes.

Various facts were shared from the indicative ballot, but one that was skimmed over by the leadership was that the biggest leaps in voting came each time after a national communication. Where many activists hoped

that going out and asking people to vote would be enough, this data again showed the need for real leadership. If there had been a vocal, confident leadership calling out the government and MAT (multi-academy trust) CEOs, and laying down a call to arms, then members would have turned out to vote in much higher numbers. This was evident in places where there was a local leadership doing this, as those branches were well past the 50% turnout.

There is also the ongoing indicative ballot of support staff, which, with two weeks to go, passed 50% turnout

with 30,000 already voting. Sixth-form teachers also balloted higher, which hopefully can also be a group that motivates the wider membership.

Role of leadership

This is one of the points Socialist Party members have continually raised in our articles, conversations and on the Executive. We wrote an amendment to the main conference motion, putting forward a strategy and timeline to build the bold fightback needed to win on pay and funding, including being ready for action in the summer term. However, in the interests of unity and maximising the push for action, we withdrew this amendment in favour of one with a longer timescale, that allowed more time to build in areas that have previously struggled to get the turnout in ballots.

The leadership were clearly worried that the conference was going to back the amendment and push forward to strike action. They called a fringe meeting arguing against that approach at the same time as the one called to build for a formal ballot. Daniel Kebede, general secretary, took time away from scheduled debates to address conference with his opinions on why he felt the union couldn't win a formal ballot. All of this obviously influenced the debate.

Our programme was received extremely positively at the 'yes to a ballot' fringe meeting, where we spoke from the top table and the floor. It was disappointing that no Socialist Party members got called into the conference debate to speak, where we may have pulled in more support.

The original motion didn't just shoot through though. It was amended to include workload as a key demand; to ensure that support staff members were included in the fight; and that a 'snap poll' would be called as soon as teachers' pay for September is formally announced, if the offer isn't in line with inflation or isn't fully funded.

Pressure

This is certainly not the timeline for action we would have chosen, as it spreads out the campaign again, meaning that again momentum will be lost, with members being consulted when they're most exhausted, just at the end of the summer term.

We are in a general election year. A serious campaign of action would not only have put pressure on the Tory government, it would also have given the likely incoming Starmer-led



2023 NEU strike demo in central London. PAULA MITCHELL

Labour government a clear message. We have consistently warned of the pressure that would come on union leaders to hold back action around a general election. In pulling back from action, the current leadership has weakened our pressure on Starmer.

But Socialist Party members will remain among the most committed, active fighters! We need to continue to build in our NEU branches so members understand that, although we've lost the battle this term, we haven't lost the war!

If a potential 'snap poll' in July is to be successful in building action in the autumn term, we will need rank-and-file activists to keep pushing for it over the next four months. We need to reach the members who joined the action last year, including the 12,000 new reps and 60,000 new members, who have subsequently felt the lack of a confident leadership.

There is also the ongoing indicative ballot of support staff, which, with two weeks to go, passed 50% turnout

majority. But in between, the SWP backed the two establishment NEU Left candidates for vice-president, covering over the fact that these candidates were not serious about action, rather than backing myself as a socialist candidate who has continually argued for action.

We need a new left in NEU

The biggest thing to learn from this current debate though, is the need to build a new, fighting left force in the NEU. The 'NEU Left' group currently leads the union. It was created from across the political spectrum of the old National Union of Teachers' leadership when it merged with the Association of Teachers and Lecturers to form the NEU three years ago. It has split for the second time in a year on whether to continue to fight.

The more activist wing (including the Socialist Workers Party - SWP) campaigned against calling off the action last year, when the majority of the NEU Left recommended the 'pause'. And Socialist Party members worked with them on the amendment calling for strike action at this conference, against the position of the NEU Left

Workload: Conference votes to campaign for a new national contract

DAVID

NEU MEMBER WORKING IN SIXTH FORMS

Workload remains the biggest issue facing NEU members. Nearly 60% of teachers feel that their workload is unmanageable. The government survey 'Working lives of teachers and leaders' reported a year ago that a quarter of teachers and leaders were considering leaving the state sector in the following 12 months. The most commonly cited reason was high workload.

Socialist Party members and supporters have campaigned for some time for the union to adopt a serious campaign on workload, and for a new national contract with a limit on hours worked.

For the first time, on the back of the national strike action last year,

delegates at NEU conference overwhelmingly agreed an amended motion, proposed by East Riding and Norfolk NEU districts, calling for a campaign of action for a new national contract for education, including removing the clause in the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document that "a teacher must work such reasonable additional hours as may be necessary to enable effective discharge of a teacher's professional duties."

This clause leaves teachers working 54-56 hours a week, and many over 60 hours. The motion calls for a maximum, quantified limit on the hours teachers can be expected to work.

It was agreed that the union should launch a campaign to highlight the intolerable conditions that

school staff are working under, the damage that is causing education, and the consequent need for a national contract binding on all employers. The union is now committed to seek negotiations with the government and employers, and to draw up plans to build for national ballots for industrial action for a new National Contract for Education by September 2025.

The motion includes the need for binding pay and conditions across the whole workforce, including supply staff and support staff, so that no education worker is under a separate set of inferior pay and conditions arrangements.

A limit on working hours would strengthen reps and members taking on management over excessive workload.



"Don't turn your back on support staff" KEN MCCALL

Campaigning for support staff

DAN WARRINGTON

SURREY NEU DISTRICT SECRETARY, PERSONAL
CAPACITY

This year's NEU conference was a good one for support staff, with motions passed calling for a national campaign for support staff pay and rights, for the return to 52-week contracts, and for an extension of the introductory rates for new teacher members as well.

These successes did not come overnight, but after years of campaigning by support staff NEU activists. After reaching a turning point last year following a Trades Union Congress (TUC) fine for balloting support staff, as one support staff worker told conference, "It was nice to be able to

represent of support staff should not be viewed as a turf war between unions. Indeed, the current NEU leadership put significant effort into suppressing the growing support staff campaign prior to the TUC fine in 2022.

Instead, this is a campaign by some of the lowest-paid workers in the sector to get organised within the union they joined because they saw it as fighting for better pay and conditions. This campaign is an opportunity to bring together different layers of workers within the education sector that have far too often remained isolated from one another into a unified voice for education workers. That also means continuing to campaign for a fighting union leadership in the NEU, and for a united fightback between all education unions.

The push for an expansion of NEU

Conference agrees to encourage members to stand in elections

ALEX MOORE

PLYMOUTH NEU MEMBER, STANDING AS A TUSC
CANDIDATE IN THE LOCAL ELECTIONS

Given the instructions issued to front-benchers by the Labour Party leadership not to support pickets, and their backing of the Israeli government's onslaught on Gaza, in February Plymouth NEU members agreed that they would welcome anti-war candidates standing in elections.

We were pleased to support the Worcestershire amendment moved by Socialist Party member Sean McCauley on Palestine, which argued that a wider mobilisation of NEU

and other unions' members on Gaza would further increase the pressure on political leaders. The amendment encouraged NEU members to consider election candidates' views on Gaza, alongside other union-related policies, and to consider whether they should stand as candidates themselves.

This was overwhelmingly agreed, and demonstrates the views of delegates in contrast to those of the NEC majority, which, in abandoning building support for national strike action at this stage, has adopted an unspoken 'strategy' of waiting for a Labour government.

JAMES ELLIS

NEU MEMBER IN HASTINGS

The Socialist Party hosted a fringe meeting at NEU conference under the banner of building for action on pay, funding and workload no matter who is in government.

The meeting came at just the right point in the weekend: the amendment calling for an immediate strike ballot had been lost that morning, but discussing the Socialist Party's programme for building a fighting socialist union lifted attendees' spirits.

Sheila Caffrey, a member of the NEU executive and Socialist Party member, spoke first about how the NEU can continue to build its membership and reps and win a strike ballot in the future. She explained how, with a bold left leadership, the NEU could empower and embolden its

members to win on pay, funding and workload.

Rob Williams, Socialist Party workplace and industrial organiser, put our work in the NEU in a wider context. In order to win lasting gains, having a fighting union wouldn't be enough on its own – we also need a new political party that represents the interests of trade unionists and campaigns for socialist policies.

The debate from the floor was lively and wide-ranging. The discussion included the need for strike action to win our demands and build the union, campaigning for support staff, protecting trans students, and the need for a new left formation in the NEU.

Our fringe meeting, and our participation in the conference more generally, showed that there is a real appetite for a serious socialist leadership of our union, and socialist solutions to the crisis facing education.



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Students standing against cost-of-living crisis on campus and in our communities

OWEN CROFT
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST STUDENTS

I recently ran to be a student officer at the University of Liverpool, on a platform of scrapping tuition fees, nationalising public transport, and fighting the cost-of-living crisis. We didn't win, but the election was a success in other ways.

about socialism. It has built a basis to stand candidates in future student elections too.

Me and other fellow student members of Liverpool Socialist Party are standing in the local elections on 2 May.

Although there will be clear differences between running in a student union election and a council election, students need to get involved in local elections. With the workers' struggle closely linked with the struggle faced by students, having young people fight to build a mass workers' movement is necessary for a socialist future, and standing in local

elections is a means to build such a movement.

I first got involved in Socialist Students in 2021 when I met two Socialist Party members who had set up a campaign stall on campus, to talk to people about socialism.

After talking for a while, I decided to go to the Socialist Students meeting they were advertising, and have been active since. Since joining, the student group in Liverpool has grown substantially and we now have a growing group of young, committed socialists - many joining the Socialist Party or having a big involvement in meetings and demonstrations.



PHOTO: LIVERPOOL SP

Campaign to save Leeds nurseries steps up a gear

IAIN DALTON
LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

Parents of children at Little Owls nurseries across Leeds are not resting on our laurels after the Labour-led council delayed the closure of three nurseries.

Since, we've elected a campaign steering committee, with representatives from all but a few of the 15 threatened nurseries across the city. We now have sub-groups working on different aspects of the campaign.

As well as a lobby of the council's executive on 17 April, we will be holding a rally outside another threatened Little Owls nursery, in Gipton North, on Saturday 20 April from 10am.

We are demanding the council withdraw its proposals for closures and stop exploring handing other nurseries to other providers.

The council has said it believes there to be adequate provision of nursery places to meet their statutory duties without running these 15 nurseries. But we haven't been provided with any evidence of this! We challenge the council to put evidence being used to try to justify the closures into the public domain.



Protest against the closure of Little Owls PHOTO: YORKSHIRE SP

Why I joined the Socialist Party: 'The state of affairs was impossible to ignore'



PHOTO: ISAI MARJUELA

ELE JANE
CARDIFF EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

Growing up, we were taught about the brutal histories of colonialism and imperialism as if they were from the distant past. But, confronted with the images coming from Gaza and the sociopathic response from western capitalist leaders, the state of affairs was impossible to ignore.

I should not have needed the extreme scale of the Gaza genocide as a wake-up call, but I had been disillusioned ever since the defeat of Jeremy Corbyn.

The list of crimes of capitalism is never-ending: destroyed rainforest, dumped sewage, sweatshops, wars and conflict. Large businesses find loopholes to treat the planet and their employees in the cheapest manner possible, to create an

abundance of goods that often get thrown away.

In the UK we are experiencing the biggest squeeze on workers I have seen in my lifetime. Each year brings more work and less money for the working class, while the big bosses reward themselves with bonuses.

My friend introduced me to a Socialist Party branch meeting and I was immediately impressed. I had been living in a void of any principled leadership or any clear purpose on the way out of the capitalist crisis. It was a breath of fresh air to speak to people committed to not only doing what is right but finding out what is right, through debate and inclusivity. Immediately I felt respected and my opinions valued.

I feel energised that we can make change, that we can win support for socialism. Come and join the Socialist Party to help us fight for it.

Moreover, alternative places may be unaffordable (with extra charges more common in private nurseries) or simply not practical for people without cars.

The steering committee agreed that myself and other TUSC candidates could distribute campaign material alongside our election material. We've already been out canvassing people near the Gipton North Little Owls.

Many people were shocked it's been proposed for closure. One parent said he hadn't been able to get a place for his daughter there. Another wanted to know all about the

campaign and bought the Socialist to read about what we've been doing. Another local resident had all their children go to the nursery and worried what the impact of closure would be on future parents in the area.

Nine threatened nurseries lie within the seven wards on Leeds City Council being contested by TUSC, so every vote for us will represent a rejection of these callous proposals.

• Iain is a Save Little Owls nurseries campaign steering group member and TUSC candidate for Gipton and Harehills, Leeds

MAY DAY GREETINGS IN the Socialist

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Unison health conference: Fighting campaign urgently needed on pay

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN UNISON

The main debate at Unison's National Health Care Service Group conference was on pay, with an indicative ballot of members having started just days before. Socialist Party members were prominent among those delegates demanding that the conference debate be turned into a real launch of the fighting campaign that's needed.

The Socialist Party organised the only fringe meeting before the pay debate. Adrian O'Malley, currently seeking re-election to the health service group executive (SGE), described how NHS pay has fallen so much over the last 14 years of Tory rule that the lowest-paid NHS workers are only just above the national minimum wage.

The Unison leadership will point to the 34% turnout in the national ballot last year that meant there couldn't be national action on pay. That was the highest vote the union has ever achieved, but fell foul of the undemocratic Tory anti-union laws. Adrian asked the question: with the annual

pay review date of 1 April, why are we waiting till now to really launch the pay campaign?

In the pay debate itself, Socialist Party member Dave Byrom said that of course delegates would support the emergency motion from the SGE, the only pay motion on the agenda, but that the conference should go further. The SGE motion calls for a real-terms pay rise, the right band for the job and a shorter working week, and calls for direct pay talks rather than the allegedly 'independent' pay review body. Dave argued that there should be a rallying point for a fighting campaign launched urgently with other health unions. We cannot repeat the mistake of allowing the Tories to impose a below-inflation rise before a campaign gets off the ground.

Dave pointed to the increasing number of local disputes by Unison members in health, as well as national action by other health unions, including nurses in the RCN and doctors in the BMA, that show the potential. "It shows we can win if there's a real

campaign." Socialist Party member Brian Loader called for Unison to campaign for its policy of £15 an hour as a minimum NHS wage.

Delegates were well aware that Labour's shadow health minister, Blairite Wes Streeting, had given his apologies to conference because of a "clash of dates". But he had been in the press criticising "middle-class lefties" for opposing his intention to increase private sector involvement in the NHS.

Yet Unison general secretary Christina McAnea said to conference that while we won't agree on everything with a Labour government, we will be "around the table" with them.

In contrast, Socialist Party member Paul Tovey asked: what is Labour's position on NHS pay? "We've heard nothing - they expect us to go away, but we won't!" In chairing the Socialist Party fringe meeting, Sally Griffiths made the point that a fight on pay is not only vital to win the rise members need, but will also send a signal to Labour leader Keir Starmer.



Teesside picket line PHOTO: UNISON TEESIDE

Teesside Unison health workers strike

JOHN MALCOLM
TEESIDE SOCIALIST PARTY

More than 1,000 healthcare assistants (HCAs) on Teesside, members of Unison, have taken to the picket lines for a further three days of strike action from 8-10 April (see 'Teesside

and North Yorks hospital strikes' at socialistparty.org.uk)

The action is part of a campaign to improve pay and move HCAs from Band 2 to Band 3, with four years' back pay. This has been won in a number of trusts, most recently in the Wirral, where 650 staff took six months of strike action and won six years' of back pay!

With the increase in the national minimum wage, many Band 2 health workers will now only receive 1p

Aslef strike: 'No chance of us giving up now!'

Train drivers who are members of Aslef have taken part in another round of rolling one-day strikes over pay and threats to terms and conditions. The action is against 16 train

operating companies. Neither the Tory transport secretary Mark Harper, nor rail minister Huw Merriman, nor the bosses of the rail companies, have met with Aslef for at least a year.

Socialist Party members once again visited picket lines. A Swansea picket told Alec Thraves: "We've been out for so long, there's no chance of us giving up now!"

Birmingham Socialist Party members report that strikers explained it's now five years since train drivers have had a pay rise. And for the last two years the train companies, with the Tory government

The following Socialist Party members are seeking nomination for the 2024 Unison service group elections

- Health**
Steve Bell,
Adrian O'Malley
- Local Government**
Mathew John,
Angie Waller
- Community**
Helen Couchman

above the minimum wage!

Other Unison branches in the northern region are consulting their members. The support for industrial action remains solid, despite attempts from management to try to divide staff and isolate local reps.

PCS: Border Force workers ready to strike



PHOTO: PAUL MATSSON

PCS MEMBER IN THE HOME OFFICE

More than 600 Border Force workers at Heathrow Airport have voted for strike action over proposed changes to rosters and working conditions. The Border Force officers, who carry out immigration controls and passport checks, voted by nearly 90% for strike action and are represented by the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS).

The strike ballot was called after Border Force, a law enforcement command within the Home Office, sought to impose a new 'team-working fixed roster' from 29 April, and remove workers' legacy terms and conditions, reasonable adjustments, and flexible working arrangements. This could leave 250 staff on passport control without a job, and force them to find a new job elsewhere in the Home Office.

On 28 March, PCS announced four days of strike action at Heathrow Airport from 11-14 April, after issuing written notice to the employer. However, on 5 April the PCS announced

strike action was suspended "following the Home Office's desire for clarification and in the spirit of collaboration". This suggests that PCS has been forced into taking a back-step following a challenge to the contents of its written notice by the Home Office.

The use of the word "collaboration" by the PCS leadership will raise concerns among members about the basis on which the action has been suspended. Have any concessions been won? Although no additional detail has been released by the union, another reason given for suspending the action was to "seek further negotiations" with the employer.

Marion Lloyd, chair of the Broad Left Network, a group of socialist activists in PCS, and presidential candidate in the upcoming national elections, said: "The membership has voted for action; we should serve notice again and keep up the pressure".

The PCS elections for president and the National Executive Committee open on 18 April and close on 9 May.

Vote Marion Lloyd for president and for a fighting left PCS NEC

See the full list of candidates at socialistparty.org.uk/PCScandidates2024



Swansea PHOTO: SWANSEA SP

Councils can fight back against climate chaos

Kick profit out of public transport



PHOTO: SPSMILER/CC

BASIL BOWDITCH
CRAWLEY SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

As the current climate crisis hurtles us towards an 'apocalyptic' future, many people are searching for how we can reduce and reverse the damage caused by nearly two centuries of fossil fuel use.

This damage is largely due to the massive amounts of pollution produced by global corporations in their obsessive and dangerous pursuit of accumulating wealth at any cost. An Oxfam report last year found that the richest 1% were responsible for producing the same amount of carbon-based pollution as two thirds of the planet's population!

Need for public transport

Nearly 30% of greenhouse gas emissions in Britain came from domestic transport, the majority from cars. There are also massive negative health implications; pollution from motor vehicles costs the NHS £6 billion, according to an Oxford University study in 2018. A high-quality, free public transport system would have a huge impact.

Public transport services have been brought to their knees by privatisation. Private companies have hiked up ticket prices, cut staff and neglected the needed technological upgrades. We have seen a massive drop in the standards of service, resulting in a huge disincentive for many in using it. A nationalised system, controlled by workers as part of a democratic plan, would mean we

could invest in workers and customer satisfaction. Allowing workers to investigate environmentally friendly travel would benefit us all.

Local councils could put this into action today. They could bring bus services back in-house, kicking out the profiteers. They could invest in alternatives like safe cycling routes across counties and more public walkways from town to town.

However, with the current state of council funding, due to nearly fifteen years of Tory austerity, improving public transport seems to be an almost impossible task. Environmental campaigners should support councillors who refuse to implement Tory government cuts and mobilise working-class people, trade unions and community campaigns to demand the funding needed.

This year gives workers another chance to fight against austerity, with the general election just around the corner, and local elections on 2 May. We have the opportunity to vote against cutbacks and to back candidates who will fight to bring many of our services back into full public ownership. Socialist Party members are standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, fighting to put an end to the system that leaves our public services in the hands of private owners with one overriding objective of maximising profits. We are fighting for a socialist solution to end climate change - for mass investment under democratic workers' control and management by nationalising the big banks and businesses.

TV review: Crash Landing on You - insightful drama set in North Korea

PETE MASON
NEWHAM AND EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Kim Jong Un, North Korea's 'Supreme Leader', hit the news in February with a declaration that the country was abandoning its long-cherished desire for peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula.

Hundreds of thousands of families were torn apart by the division of Korea. They cannot visit each other. North Korea is completely closed to the rest of the world. Even the internet has not penetrated its borders (with a few elite exceptions).

With this in mind, a drama which portrays in extraordinary detail the daily life of the ordinary people of the North, advised by several North Korean defectors, makes fascinating viewing.

It is perhaps not surprising that the 2020 South Korean Netflix drama became the highest-rated South Korean tvN network drama, and is ranked the fourth-highest terrestrial TV drama in the country. It was also well received internationally.

Korea was divided in a 1948 face-off between near neighbour 'communist' Soviet Union and the capitalist USA, from 11,000km across the Pacific Ocean. South Korea became a client state dictatorship of the US ruling class until 1987, when a student was tortured to death by the regime and a popular uprising established

modern, but still-capitalist South Korea. This long history of oppression in the South still informs the consciousness of the working class, and if there is one single message in *Crash Landing on You*, it is that corruption and nepotism affects both North and South.

The long arm of the US government is still visible - or rather, visible by absences in the series. The South Korean 1948 National Security Act forbids public praise or propaganda of North Korea (DPRK). The series therefore makes no direct reference to the leadership of the despotic regime which has no more in common with socialism or Marxism than did the 1948 Soviet regime the US ruling class was so afraid of.

Good vs bad?

But this is by no means a story of a good South vs a bad North. The haughty South Korean chaebol (big business) heiress - from "the 0.001% in South Korea", she boasts - her father just out of jail for corruption, learns to love the ordinary North Korean villagers, and the soldiers she crash lands on. Falling directly into the embrace of an army captain, she faces arbitrary arrest and indefinite detention.

We see a North Korean village at dawn, an ox-drawn cart, the unlit, unpaved streets entirely devoid of cars. Children march in military

formation to school, chanting patriotic songs. And there is no electricity. It comes on only for the dawn's early morning exercise routine, in the town square, announced on loudspeakers. The whole town gathers to exercise in formation.

With two hours of unreliable electricity a day, we see fridges dating from the 1940s used as cupboards. In the streets, gangs of roaming orphans, termed 'Kotjebi', eke out an impoverished existence stealing food, with, once again, the US behind the total blockade and sanctions against North Korea - as if starving its people would enamour them to US imperialism. Instead, as clearly portrayed, it has created an ossified regime, with its 1940s-made equipment and even hair styles, an eternal kicking post for US capitalism, notwithstanding the fleeting Donald Trump 'love affair' with Kim Jong Un.

The scarcity of food is often indicated, but the comedy-drama series portrays a spirited people in a perpetually stalemated war against the capitalist west, and no one denies the true situation is worse - even Kim Jong Un admitted this January to a new, severe famine.

Military tensions are felt throughout the series, the overwhelming fear of arbitrary arrest informing the plot at all times. South Koreans will guess why our heroine's planned escape by



Crash Landing on You PHOTO: NETFLIX

sea is thwarted by a sudden, unexplained coastal lockdown - the eternal US 'joint' naval exercises, one of the largest annual military exercises in the world, right on North Korea's doorstep, with South Korea in tow, throwing the DPRK into panic. And it is the imperious US ruling class that is behind the refusal to agree even to a ceasefire, with the compliance of the South Korean ruling class.

Combining everything from slapstick humour to shocking tragedy, replete with the usual K-drama tropes, this drama touches ordinary

Koreans' yearning for reunification, often mentioned in the series. The only mild criticism I have is that the piano music featured in a key subplot is uninspiring.

The series was popular in the USA, and a US version is under discussion. Commentators envisaged a Mexican heiress accidentally paragliding into the USA and being forced to go into hiding in the desperate US slums for fear of arbitrary arrest and indefinite detention. Hmmm.

● **Crash Landing on You is available to stream on Netflix now**

Scotland: The SNP in crisis one year on

Build a new workers' party with a socialist programme



PHILIP STOTT
SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND

A year has passed since the SNP was thrown into a huge crisis following the resignation of Nicola Sturgeon as party leader and first minister. As we pointed out at the time: "The crisis facing the SNP is rooted in its implementation of austerity and anti-working class policies generally. The 2022-23 strike wave also played a decisive role in exposing and undermining Sturgeon's government."

The erosion of working-class support for an SNP leadership, that had filled part of the vacuum that existed for a new mass workers' party in Scotland over the last decade, is an extremely important development.

It also completely confirms Socialist Party Scotland's perspective put forward in 2014 - alone on the left - that the SNP's pro-capitalist policies would prove to be their undoing.

The election of Humza Yousaf as first minister has done nothing to stop the rot. It is not even certain that Yousaf will lead the party into the general election.

It's not ruled out that Kate Forbes or some other alternative could replace Yousaf in the run-up to the election or immediately afterwards.

Current polling shows Labour poised to emerge as the biggest party in Scotland after the general election. If this was to be the case, it would most likely result in another leadership contest and another crisis.

The undermining of the electoral base of the SNP was underlined in an analysis by John Curtice, in January 2024, that found: "Whereas at the end of 2022, 80% of current 'yes' supporters were saying that they would vote SNP in a UK general election,

now that figure has fallen to a new low of just 63%."

Yousaf's attempt to frame the general election as a contest between the SNP and the Tories in Scotland is a desperate attempt to hold onto seats in the traditional areas of support for the nationalists - the rural and more middle-class parts of Scotland.

They are likely to lose a large number of seats to Labour in the west of Scotland in particular. From being one of the most successful capitalist governments in Europe - in power at Holyrood for 17 years now - the chickens have come home to roost for the SNP. Even defeat at the 2026 Scottish parliament election is now possible.

The one factor that can limit the decline is the use of the national question to try and put a floor under the exodus of working-class support from the nationalists.

Support for independence has remained unaffected by the SNP crisis at around 50%. With Yousaf promising that "line one of the manifesto" will be vote SNP to deliver an independent Scotland, the hope is that he can persuade enough pro-independence supporters to stick with the party at the general election.

The SNP MP Tommy Sheppard summed up this strategy and appeal to pro-indy supporters when he wrote: "We need to be very clear with the electorate, this year's vote is about whether the journey continues, whether we can create circumstances to move towards our independence....If the SNP lose the election in Scotland, the debate on independence stops."

With the Westminster election likely to be seen as a chance to be rid of the Tories, Scottish Labour under its neo-Blairite leadership is hoping to pick up the support of at least one-fifth of the pro-independence voters.

If it succeeds, Scottish Labour could defeat the SNP.

However, in no way would this signify a ringing endorsement of Starmer or Anas Sarwar, leader of the Scottish Labour Party. On the contrary, there is little to no enthusiasm or expectation that Labour will deliver for the working class. That's why record levels of abstentionism, especially among independence-supporting voters, is very likely to be a major feature of the election. Alongside a certain uptick in support for the Scottish Greens and Alba - pro-independence split from the SNP - this will be limited if it happens at all.

The mood of utter disregard for all the main parties was expressed in the Sunday Times poll at the end of January 2024 which found an overwhelming lack of trust for all the main party leaders.

The collapse in authority towards the SNP leadership was stark. Nicola Sturgeon's trust levels stood at minus 19%, with Humza Yousaf on minus 25%. Keir Starmer was minus 24% and Anas Sarwar on minus 17%.

The lack of a mass working-class political alternative is one of the main issues that can only be overcome through the building of a mass workers' party with a socialist programme.

National question

The collapsing support for the SNP, which currently stands at just over 30%, is also linked to its utter failure to offer a viable fighting strategy on independence.

We have dealt with this question in detail over the years; in summary, the pro-capitalist SNP leadership has never had any intention of seeking to mobilise a mass movement to try to overcome the entrenched opposition of the capitalist class to the break-up of the UK.

Humza Yousaf
PHOTO: SCOTTISH
GOVERNMENT/CC

This has led them into a quagmire following a series of retreats that followed the UK Supreme Court ruling that the Scottish Parliament in Holyrood did not have the competence to organise a referendum on independence.

Currently, the SNP leadership says if it emerges as the biggest party in Scotland in terms of MPs, this will give it a mandate to negotiate with a Starmer government over the transfer of powers to Edinburgh to allow the Scottish government to organise 'indyref2' in the future.

Starmer has already made clear this will not happen under a Labour government. While support for independence has remained consistent, the movement on the streets has shrunk significantly. This fact reflects the complete lack of trust in the SNP leadership on the one hand, and the fact that no viable force has arisen to offer a fighting leadership on the other.

In that sense, today, there exists largely passive support for independence. The emergence of the class struggle over the past period and the focus on the fight against the cost-of-living crisis has dominated working-class consciousness.

The fact that many of these strikes have pitted the workers' movement against SNP politicians has only added to the sense that the nationalist leadership 'does not fight for us'.

What are the likely perspectives for the national question under a Starmer government? As commented already, Starmer will lead a government laser-focused on delivering for the capitalist class. With little-to-no honeymoon period, working-class opposition to Labour will grow quickly, given the crisis-ridden economic backdrop.

While that opposition will be reflected in strikes, the growth of opposition forces in the trade unions and increasing support for the idea of a new workers' party, the re-emergence of the national question in a sharper form can also be posed.

Struggle can break out on a range of issues. In Scotland, it is inevitable that the rule of the neo-Blairites will ignite further eruptions in demands for Scottish independence. "The days of independence being umbilically linked to the SNP are over. The child has left the parent. We're in the moment of decoupling. That's a historic shift politically, leaving power wide open." Neil MacKay - Herald columnist 1 February 2024.

The character of the independence movement will not simply be a repeat of the events that marked the 2012-20 period. During that time, the SNP was accepted as the de-facto leadership, reinforced by the experience of the first indyref in 2014 when the SNP emerged enormously strengthened.

Even then, and especially in the run-up to September 2014 and immediately after, there was a big layer of the pro-independence working class that stood to the left of the SNP and were attracted to socialist ideas.

Under a Starmer government it is likely that a more combative mass movement could emerge around the national question. It would be essential that socialists, Marxists and the workers' movement generally offer a fighting leadership on the national question linked to a socialist way forward.

The building of a mass working-class force based on Scotland's 500,000-strong trade union movement is therefore a vital task.

Turkey: Crushing defeat for Erdogan in local elections

NAZIM AND BERKAY
COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL

On 31 March 2024, voters in Turkey punished Erdogan's right-wing pro-capitalist Justice and Development Party (AKP), which has been in power for more than two decades. Following its electoral victory in major cities in 2019, the self-claimed social democratic Kemalist Republican People's Party (CHP) managed to retain control of the big cities.

In Istanbul, Ekrem Imamoglu from the CHP won the election with 51% of the vote against the AKP's Murat Kurum with 40%. In the capital city Ankara, CHP candidate Mansur Yavas won with 60%, twice the votes of the AKP candidate. In both, the CHP significantly increased its vote share since 2019.

National stakes

Erdogan won the May 2023 presidential elections, albeit in a close race against the CHP candidate Kemal Kilicdaroglu. This was achieved despite the devastating earthquake of February 2023 – which tragically led to the death of over 50,000 people and caused colossal damage – and the intensifying economic crisis.

In the run-up to the 2024 local elections, Erdogan's goal was to retake the country's major cities: Istanbul, Ankara, Antalya and Adana.

More than anywhere else, the defeat in Istanbul was a heavy blow for the AKP because, in the words of Erdogan, "Whoever wins Istanbul, wins Turkey". Istanbul is the flagship city where Erdogan began his political career as the mayor from 1994 to 1998. With an estimated population

of over 16 million people, Istanbul accounts for more than 30% of Turkey's economic output.

Opposition parties have won the elections under totally undemocratic conditions, with Erdogan desperately trying to take advantage of his strong grip over the Turkish state apparatus and the media.

But despite this, Erdogan suffered a crushing defeat across the country. For the first time in twenty years, his AKP failed to be the top party nationally. The CHP won 37.5% of the votes compared with 35.6% for the AKP. The AKP has lost more than 4.7 million votes nationwide and the CHP gained 3.3 million.

Economic crisis and Gaza

Although some claim that the CHP's victory is due to the leadership change in November 2023, this is not true. Even though the CHP focused much more on welfare policies in this election, there was no genuine enthusiasm for the CHP. Voters punished Erdogan and the local AKP politicians by voting for the candidate who was most likely to beat them.

Turkey is in the grip of a major economic crisis, with inflation at 123% at the start of 2024. To curb inflation, Erdogan has abandoned his unorthodox economic policy that lower interest rates will reduce inflation. The central bank has now increased interest rates to 47% last month from 15% in June 2023. But inflation is still going up with a pending massive debt crisis on the horizon.

Prior to the 2023 presidential elections, Erdogan pumped an enormous amount of money into the economy which went into the pockets of poor people. For example, he increased

the national minimum wage significantly and made gas free for all households for a month.

But, after the elections, under the leadership of the new finance minister Mehmet Simsek, the government has implemented austerity policies and raised interest rates significantly. Unemployment has begun to go up and is likely to rise sharply in the coming period. Austerity policies mean that the cost-of-of living crisis is becoming even more unbearable for the majority.

Voters wanted to punish Erdogan and there was a search for a left-wing alternative. The CHP has benefited from this anger, but it remains wedded to the capitalist system which is rigged against the poor. While pledging policies to alleviate poverty, it does not defend the interests of the working class and the poor. The CHP-led councils will face even more challenges in the coming period as the AKP rolls out more cuts to public services. It is likely to be forced to slash jobs and services.

And beyond the economic crisis, Israel's war on Gaza was a factor in Erdogan's defeat. While Erdogan publicly condemned the Israeli state brutality and even said Hamas is not a terrorist organisation to shore up his social base, the reality was different.

It has been revealed that not only do Turkish businesses continue trading with Israel, including arms sales, but state-owned businesses and AKP politicians have been directly or indirectly involved in trading with Israel. This exposure had an effect, in particular, amongst Islamic-conservative voters.

This was illustrated by the unexpected rise of the New Welfare



Turkey president Recep Erdogan MIKHAIL KLIMENTYEV/CC



Party (YRP), an Islamic party formed in 2018 which comes from the same political tradition as the AKP. It became the third-largest party with 6.2% and almost 3 million votes, nearly double what it won in last year's parliamentary election. Alongside its stance on Gaza, its talk of 'fair order' was also appealing to the core base of the AKP.

Democratic attacks

The pro-Kurdish People's Equality and Democracy Party, DEM Party (formerly the HDP), won 5.7% of the vote, or 2.6 million votes, compared with 1.9 million in 2019, despite systematic repression of its leaders, members and activists.

In fact, in several provinces, to prevent the DEM Party from winning, the Turkish state moved thousands of soldiers into these areas to cast their votes. However, the DEM Party scored very well in ten provinces, and held on to all its strongholds in the east and south-east. In the big cities such as Istanbul and Ankara, Kurdish people voted for the CHP to get rid of the hated AKP, even though the DEM Party fielded its own candidates in these cities.

In Van, the DEM Party's candidate won the election with more than 55% of the votes but the Turkish election authority handed the victory to the AKP candidate, citing a previous conviction as the reason. After mass protests in Van, and with wider support across Turkey, the government was forced into a U-turn and handed the victory back to the DEM Party. This was an important victory highlighting the vulnerability of Erdogan's regime in the face of mass protests.

It also shows that there could be mass struggles in the coming period for democratic and national rights. The left must be prepared to champion these rights and link it to the struggle for socialism.

The left

The Workers' Party of Turkey (TIP), won two councils, including Samandag, a district in Hatay, a city that was severely

affected by the earthquake. A Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) candidate came very close to winning in Defne, another district in Hatay. Moreover, the Left Party won two district councils. In Gebze, an industrial town near Istanbul with relatively strong trade union presence, the TIP general secretary did well, gaining 20% of the votes. It was significant that there was a left-wing challenge in an area where there is a very high concentration of industrial workers.

Compared to the 2023 parliamentary elections, the vote count for the TIP was significantly lower. It was squeezed by the lesser evilism mood, as people desperately wanted to punish Erdogan. The TIP chose not to field candidates in Kurdish strongholds in favour of the DEM Party, and in some areas they decided not to stand against the CHP.

But unfortunately the left was not organised. Rather than forming a united front with workers' and socialist organisations, left-wing parties stood against each other in areas where the left could get decent results. In Defne, a socialist could have been elected if there was only one candidate from the left.

As the election results indicate, there is growing anger directed towards the AKP regime and a search for an alternative. The left could have built a united campaign to address

the cost-of-living crisis and offer a socialist way out.

Erdogan has made it clear that austerity will continue. Despite raising interest rates, inflation is continuing to grow. These policies would have far-reaching consequences as more and more people plunge into deeper poverty.

It is urgent for the Kurdish and Turkish working class to fight together for a mass political voice that fights the cost-of-living crisis and defends the interests of the working class.

A united front of workers' and socialist parties, on a socialist programme, is vital in this period. How this could develop is another question. But one thing that this election has shown is there is a search for a pro-working class alternative that addresses the cost-of-living crisis.

The left needs to raise clear class demands, such as the renationalisation of key utilities, an inflation-proof pay rise for all workers, cancellation of debt, and fully funded services, and link this to the need for the socialist transformation of society.

There will be many opportunities in the coming period with the potential for mass struggles to develop which would raise the need to break with capitalism. But the building of mass democratic organisations of the working-class will be vital in preparation for the gigantic battles that lie ahead.

Read online

The struggle for a revolutionary party today

socialistworld.net



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

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

- Reduce the state retirement and pension age to 55. For decent living pensions.
- Replace universal credit and the punitive benefit system with living benefits for all who need them.

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

dental and eye care – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out the private companies! Nationalise the pharmaceutical industry under democratic workers' control and management.

- Renationalise privatised utilities – including rail, mail, water, telecoms and power – under democratic workers' control and management.
- Free, publicly funded and democratically run, good-quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees and write off student debt, end marketisation, and introduce a living grant. No to academisation. For all schools to be under the genuine democratic control of local education authorities, school staff, parents and student organisations.
- The right to a safe secure home for all. For the mass building of genuinely affordable, high-quality, carbon-neutral council housing. For rent controls that cap the level of rent. Fair rent decisions should be made by elected bodies of tenants, housing workers and representatives of trade unions. For cheap low-interest mortgages for home buyers. Nationalise

the privately owned large building companies, land banks and estates.

ENVIRONMENT

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

workers' control to ensure that standards are set by consumers, small farmers, and 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.
- Repeat 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!



Mass working-class action to END ISRAELI STATE TERROR



OSCAR PARRY
SOUTH WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The killing of seven aid workers including three British citizens, by the Israeli armed forces, has caused global outrage. Western capitalist governments are under massive working-class pressure to temper their support for Israel's relentless siege of Gaza - which has left over 33,000 Palestinians dead, and thousands more missing in the rubble of the strip.

A man-made famine is being unleashed as Israel blocks aid into Gaza. Israel has been forced to reopen a key land crossing into Gaza, after a warning that future US support would depend on taking concrete action to protect civilians. There has been no threat from the US to stop exporting deadly arms to Israel.

Meanwhile, Benjamin Netanyahu says he has set a date for a military offensive on Rafah, where 1.5 million Palestinians are sheltering.

Already the Israeli state's brutality has provoked mass protests, and further instability in the region. Such an escalation would further fuel both.

The British government continues to approve arms exports destined for use by the Israeli state on the Palestinians too. The demand 'stop arming Israel' is being raised by protesters. But there can be no trust in the Tories or Keir Starmer's Labour to act to defend Palestinians.

Instead, the workers' movement should take the lead. Civil servants threatening legal action, with support of their unions PCS and FDA, if they

are asked to approve exports to be used 'illegally' in Gaza, is a positive development. But workers' action, organised democratically by trade unions should be central.

The Socialist Party has been calling for the trade union movement to take the lead in the anti-war movement, mobilising its over 7 million members to attend the mass demonstrations, and encouraging discussions between trade union representatives in industries supplying the Israeli war effort about what action can be taken.

The working-class and poor masses, when organised, is the power that can stop the Israeli war machine. For the Palestinians, the way forward is through democratically organising a mass struggle - a socialist intifada - based on the interests of workers and the poor, independent of the rich elites. In Israel, last weekend saw the biggest protests since the war began - over 100,000 protesters demanding "elections now" and calling for Netanyahu's resignation.

In Britain, we fight for a political channel for the huge anti-war sentiment, the building of a new mass workers' party, based on the trade unions, that can give a political voice to the working class, the most powerful force in society.

Internationally, the Socialist Party and the Committee for a Workers' International fight to build the working-class organisations capable of overthrowing this rotten capitalist system, to end the horror of war and national oppression for good.

• Read what we think: page 2-3