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the Socialist

Issue 1272

25 April - 2 May 2024

formerly **Militant**

NADIA DITTA
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY AND TUSC
CANDIDATE IN BEVOIS WARD (PICTURED BELOW)

The cost-of-living crisis, and the continuous cuts to services and facilities. Council tax rises, gas and electric going up. Every attack hits the working class hard. People face hardships, forced to make difficult financial decisions. Meanwhile the rich get richer.

It's events that trigger us, that make us say 'enough is enough' and to fight for our rights. For me, it was the Israeli state's war on Gaza - supported by both Tories and Labour.

Every day in my community people are fighting their own wars - wars to keep a roof over their heads and to keep food on the table.

We know that the wealth is there to fully fund our NHS, schools, public transport and much more, but it's in the hands of the super-rich. We need councillors prepared to fight the cuts, and political representatives opposed to war and national oppression.

The Tories and the Labour council in Southampton have bashed the working class so hard over the years. Lots of people have given up voting.

We have been fighting hard in Bevois ward, Southampton, listening and talking to people, getting the message out: 'Vote for candidates who have what it takes to fight.' 280 of us are standing for TUSC nationwide.

We demand change. Help us send the message out on 2 May that 'enough is enough!'

Vote for TUSC where you can and join the Socialist Party to fight for socialist change.



No cuts, No council tax rises

VOTE SOCIALIST

Vote

**TUSC
AGAINST
CUTS**

**Trade Unionist and
Socialist Coalition**



2 May

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OF THE CWI >>> p14-15**

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

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

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

Bradford: We only know poverty



TOM GIBSON
BRADFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

My interest in socialism came about because of my own experience being surrounded by poverty. My parents worked in schools in working-class areas that were severely underfunded.

The older I got, the more Bradford has suffered.

Despite the vile and racist right-wing media claim, Bradford's issues are not the fault of people living here, but the useless local Labour council and national Tory government.

Bradford council's 2024-25 budget involves the closure of an outdoor children's centre, cuts to libraries

● Tom Gibson is the TUSC candidate in Bolton & Undercliffe ward

Oxford: We can't afford ludicrous rents



SAM BENNETT
OXFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

I work as a teacher, a traditionally middle-class profession, but I'm unable to afford the ludicrous rents close to work. I currently live in my school's accommodation, two to a bedroom, doing a second job as a residence assistant so I don't pay rent.

Oxford has the highest rents outside of London, but lacks reliable public transport. This is a result of the low-traffic neighbourhood scheme (LTN), which limits traffic flow between the main artery roads, which are constantly congested during peak hours.

● Sam Bennett is the TUSC candidate in the Blackbird Leys ward. TUSC is standing ten candidates across Oxford

To fight for our NHS – Vote TUSC!

AGNIESZKA KOWALSKA
OXFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

I've worked on a dementia ward with only six staff for 20 patients - three nurses and three health care assistants (HCAs). If a patient had a fall, it would need a minimum of two of us to get them back to their feet. Sometimes we would need four or five, leaving the rest of the patients alone.

It was the responsibility of us HCAs to deal with call bells. Many would repeatedly use them, not understanding that they had already called someone. This would happen permanently throughout the 11.5 hour shift with only 1 hour break.

We were forced to do any training in our own time. On so many occasions I have had to fight for the right to take my annual leave, under pressure from managers unable to cover shifts. Managers don't listen to workers on the lower bands about health and safety issues.

HCAs are angry. Many of us - as well as porters, cleaners and other auxiliary staff - feel like the trade union in our workplace is more concerned with workers in higher bands.

The Tory government has ruined the health system, and not put enough money in to stop it collapsing. We need a properly funded NHS and to kick out all the private

● Agnieszka is a TUSC candidate for Blackbird Leys. TUSC is standing ten candidates across Oxford

Why I joined the Socialist Party The working class makes change

ROBYN MAKINGS
SOUTH YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

I joined the Socialist Party because I don't feel that any big parties currently offer a genuine voice for the working class, at a time when that is needed more than ever. If change is going to come, it will fall on the shoulders of the working class to bring it about ourselves. So I wanted to get active in whatever small ways I could, by getting involved with others locally and nationally.

I have a particular interest in how artists can involve themselves in politics. And how they can use their skills to influence and educate people, and help bring about positive change.

I really enjoy reading the Socialist paper and Socialism Today magazine. The content covered is always interesting and informative, both nationally and internationally.

It's both interesting and inspiring to read about how socialists are fighting for positive change elsewhere in the world, as often our mainstream media doesn't cover these stories. It really affirms that the struggle is a global one.

Join the fightback
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PHOTO: TOMMY LIVERPOOL

Why you should vote for a socialist councillor

Interview with Dave Nellist

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is standing 280 candidates in the 2 May council elections – the sixth-biggest stand nationally. **Dave Nellist (below centre)**, is a Socialist Party National Committee member, Chair of TUSC, and a former Labour MP. He explains why the Socialist Party is taking part in the TUSC stand, and how socialist councillors could use their platform to fight for working-class interests.



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSOON

CAN YOU EXPLAIN WHY THE SOCIALIST PARTY, PART OF TUSC, IS STANDING CANDIDATES IN THIS MAY'S COUNCIL ELECTIONS?

Fourteen years of Tory austerity have drained local councils. Several, including Birmingham and Nottingham, have declared a form of 'bankruptcy'. By not fighting back, local councils have cut over half a million jobs, closed vital services such as a third of all libraries and nearly 800 youth centres, and shredded the safety net of social services. The well-meaning charity workers in food banks can't keep up. In every town and city, desperate people are sleeping in shop doorways.

Most people think none of the major parties will make a difference. Barely 3 in 10 people will vote on 2 May. It's unsurprising that working people switch off when the main parties refuse to discuss the real problems they see affecting their communities.

In Coventry, for instance, the Labour council, backed by the Green Party, has this year endorsed £20 million in cuts, switching off street lighting at night, raising care home fees in council-run PFI homes, raising fees for school buses for 16 to 18-year-olds with disabilities, axing crèches for adult education classes, cutting grants for local charities, and reducing council tax benefit. The council tax is rising by 5%; people are paying more and more for less. However, the Labour local election leaflets do not mention one of those issues. The Socialist Party ones do!

To a greater or lesser extent, that could be repeated in every town and city where elections occur. A general election should be the chance to reverse that and fund local authorities sufficiently to provide decent services. But Labour, which seems to be on course to win the general election, isn't promising to do that. The Socialist Party is campaigning for representatives who will be shop stewards for our communities and will fight

against austerity and the cuts from this government - and the next.

BUT COUNCILS HAVE BEEN STARVED OF FUNDING DUE TO TORY CUTS. SURELY THERE'S NOTHING THEY CAN DO?

Government funding for local councils has fallen in real terms by over 50% since 2010. However, local councils are not impotent; collectively, they are still a significant economic power. Local authorities in England and Wales have substantial reserves and borrowing powers that they could use to offset the need for cuts while working with local trade unions and communities to campaign for central government to increase local funding.

The Tory government is weak and divided and can be forced into giving concessions. The government has access to financial measures that could quickly aid local councils. For example, in April 2020, at the start of the pandemic, the government wrote off £13.4 billion of NHS debt to allow hospitals to focus resources on responding to the pandemic (it was not enough). A similar amount of extra funding for local authorities could make a substantial difference, not only in beginning to restore essential local services but also in developing a serious programme of improvements, for example, council house building.

What bigger pressure on an incoming Labour government than a cohort of councils winning popular support by funding services and presenting Keir Starmer with the bill?

JUST ONE, OR ONLY A HANDFUL OF COUNCILLORS, WOULD BE A MINORITY AND UNABLE TO DICTATE POLICY - HOW COULD THE POSITION BE USED?

Even a single councillor or small group can have an impact. For example, between 1998 and 2012, the Socialist Party had three members of Coventry City Council. In 2003, we held the casting votes between the larger Labour and Tory parties.

All local authorities allow people

to submit petitions. Some can lead to council debates. (Coventry Labour councillors set the benchmark at 15,000 signatures to stop local people having such influence). Some allow the lead petitioner to address the council. A socialist councillor can, as I said earlier, act as a shop steward in individual cases with council managers and action is taken. The main task is linking any council procedures to campaigns in communities outside the council chamber.

No dispute or issue affecting working-class communities in Coventry, whilst we had Socialist Party councillors, was not reflected somehow through the council - through motions for debate, through petitions to cabinet members, through hosting meetings, organising lobbies outside the council house - and through those actions gaining publicity for the campaigns in the local media.

Even one councillor can use the council platform to reach a wider audience, gain publicity, and give confidence to working-class campaigns. One of the main political events this year was George Galloway's election as MP for Rochdale. While his interventions in Parliament have rightly attacked the main parties, the most significant aspect of his victory has probably not been inside Parliament but outside, where it has given confidence to people that establishment politicians can be challenged at the ballot box.

Socialists elected to public office can certainly have an impact. However, that impact will only last if it helps bring about a new party nationwide, rooted in the organisations and communities of the working class.

Fundamental change in society will come about when millions of people support a socialist programme that calls for transforming today's capitalist society into a socialist one. Making such a call from the platform afforded to an elected councillor can undoubtedly reach more people.

We say:

- Councils must refuse to pass on Tory cuts, instead set no-cuts budgets, based on the needs of the 99% not the 1% – no to increases in council tax and local charges
- End low pay. Support striking workers! End the cost-of-living squeeze!
- Renationalise energy companies and the other privatised utilities
- Restore youth services, jobs, reopen libraries, and reverse social care cuts

- We need a future for young people – free education and training, well-paid jobs for all
- A mass council house building programme to solve the crisis – reject rent and service charge increases

- Fully fund the NHS – stop and reverse privatisation
- Combat climate change, which should include a free-to-use, expanded, renationalised public transport system. Don't make workers pay for the bosses' climate crisis

- Fight for united, working-class struggle against racism, sexism, and all forms of oppression
- Take the wealth off the 1%. We need socialist change!

▶▶ CONTINUED ON PAGES 4-6 - READ MORE ABOUT THE TUSC CHALLENGE



Care crisis and councils – a socialist programme for workers and service users

DAN SMART
SOCIAL WORKER AND UNISON SOUTH
GLOUCESTERSHIRE, BRANCH SECRETARY
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Social care provision is in the midst of a perfect storm and faces massive challenges ahead. At the end of last year, 2.4 million people in the UK over the age of 50 were in need of care services but were getting none. This is an indictment of a system that was fought for, as part of the welfare state, to ensure that those who most need support in society receive it.

During the Covid pandemic, people stood on their doorsteps to clap social care workers who had up until then felt ignored. On the back of this wave of support, many promises were made to resolve the crisis and to not go back to the way things were. Today however, little to nothing has changed and problems are getting worse.

Demand is rising

As people are living longer and are therefore likely to experience more age-related health issues, demand for social care is rising. Dementia is now the leading cause of death in the UK. While demand is rising, austerity has meant that funding has been slashed. The Health Foundation reported that to tackle the levels of unmet need and meet future pressures, "adult social care in England would require additional funding of £7.6 billion in 2022-23 rising to £9.0 billion in 2024-25". In fact, funding has fallen far short of this, with an increase of just £2.9 billion being made in 2022.

Adult social care is the responsibility of local councils to deliver, and a major proportion of their budgets go into organising and funding care. It is absolutely urgent that councils are funded adequately, to be able to provide the care needed. However, huge sums of money are being paid out to private, for-profit care providers. Investment firms now own one in eight care home beds in England, according to the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The social care model has moved dramatically towards reliance on the private sector, with local authorities now running a mere 7% of care services in-house.

The fundamental goal of these organisations is to extract profit from the provision of care, which inevitably involves extensive cost-cutting



Dan Smart helped organise the local strike of underpaid social workers last year. ROBERT THOMAS

and exploitation of the workforce. Carers face some of the worst conditions in society, with the vast majority on minimum wage or, in reality, less. A large proportion are on zero-hours contracts and are not paid for time between visits. The times for care calls are often the bare minimum to provide for people's most basic needs. Carers work in the sector because they have compassion and want to help, but this is being taken advantage of. The race to the bottom in care ties in conveniently with the Tories' ideology, with top-down pressure on council budgets, enforcing privatisation and ruthless cost-cutting.

The crisis in care is nevertheless acknowledged across the political spectrum as a problem. In 2019, Boris Johnson said he would "fix the

crisis in social care once and for all". Following that announcement, various policies were put forward to reduce the amount people would have to pay for care costs, provide greater integration with the NHS, and increase the amount local authorities pay to care providers. However, without addressing the underlying crises of privatisation and underfunding, these promises have proven impossible to implement.

Eye-watering costs

Many people are currently forced to pay eye-watering costs for care, frequently having to sell their houses. The government's proposal to reduce the number of people paying privately however, would require a major increase in social worker capacity to complete Care Act 2014 assessments

Leeds – Why won't Labour stop Tory cuts?

Our community has suffered with austerity implemented by Leeds Labour council. We cannot afford any more.

It isn't enough to say there's a crisis in local government finances, we

and implement care packages. With the majority of social workers, according to a survey by the Social Workers Union, saying their mental health has got worse due to workload and stress, and one in ten saying it has 'collapsed', this is obviously unfeasible. The only major change that has resulted from Johnson's reforms has been CQC inspections which have put more scrutiny and pressure on staff trying their best to cope with insufficient resources.

Vicious cycle

Adult social care is in a vicious cycle, where needs escalate into more severe problems. But councillors do have a route to fight back.

They must fight for the funding needed to meet rising demand, and pay and treat staff fairly, which

would improve the quality of care. By setting budgets based on objective, social need, then using reserves and borrowing powers to implement this, huge support could be harnessed to build a campaign for the funding required from central government. They must also make the argument for care to be brought back in-house, which is more efficient, removing the profit siphoned off, and provides better standards.

These are the urgent priorities to start to address the crisis in social care, but the problem has much deeper roots. Under the guise of buzzwords and social care theories such as 'care in the community', 'personalisation', and 'strengths-based approaches', emphasis has been shifted onto individuals, rather than wider society, to take responsibility for care.

Dangerous precedent

On the surface, this is about greater community involvement (as opposed to the big, impersonal institutions of the pre-1980s) and supporting each other as part of the 'big society'. In reality, a dangerous precedent is being set of reliance on families and volunteers for meeting care needs, undermining the post-war gains of the welfare state. People with support needs are falling through the cracks of uneven and inadequate services which tend to be better in more middle-class areas. These policies cynically manipulate people's instincts to care for one another, while placing huge strains on families and communities (disproportionately women), to fill the gaps created by lack of funding and privatisation.

In a socialist system, based on the nationalisation of the key industries, the vast wealth that exists in society could be harnessed to fund quality services, reduce the working week and fund decent living conditions. In such circumstances, workers may choose to spend more time caring for friends, relatives and those in the community. This would reduce the epidemic of loneliness faced by those with disabilities, mental health issues, and older people in particular.

As part of such a programme, there would need to be an extensive democratisation of care, with committees of social care workers, service users, families and communities. This would enable a sharing of professional expertise and personal experience, key to effective care.

People living longer should be cause for celebration, however under the profit-driven capitalist system it becomes an unending crisis. It is more than possible to deal with the issue of demographic change, ensuring people thrive and have dignity throughout their whole lives, but only on the basis of a fairer, socialist society.

● Dan is standing for TUSC in Hillfields Ward in Bristol's council elections

the closure of Little Owls nurseries, which threaten to leave parents without adequate childcare.

LOUIE FULTON
LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

● Louie Fulton is the TUSC candidate in Beeston & Holbeck, and Anthony Bracuti is standing in Little London & Woodhouse. TUSC has seven candidates across Leeds.

Leeds – I've only known cutting Tories and cutting politicians

The Tories have been in power for over half my life. In that time, the Tory, Labour, Lib Dem, and Green councils that I have experienced

have brutally enforced central government cuts.

Our schools, our nurseries, our youth centres, our hospitals, our high streets, our swimming pools, our communities – all sacrificed. And carried out by politicians who are unaffected by the suffering produced those cuts.

ANTHONY BRACUTI
LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

Back candidates that will actually fight for council housing

ELLEN KENYON PEERS
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

There are 63,000 Londoners in temporary accommodation. Labour Mayor of London Sadiq Khan's housing strategy has started building 20,000 homes by 2024, far less than the 100,000 needed to keep up with demand. Council housing stock has been depleted by right to buy, poor maintenance, chronic underfunding by central government and councils pushing the redevelopment of council homes into a mixture of private and 'social rent' properties - neither of which are affordable for the majority of residents.

Unaffordable

Nancy Taaffe, selected by Waltham Forest Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) to stand in Walthamstow in the upcoming general election, and chair of the Save Our Square E17 campaign, wrote to local Labour MP Stella Creasy. Nancy asked for support in stopping the unsafe, unaffordable 'monster blocks' being built in Walthamstow town centre. Creasy, who previously campaigned against Jeremy Corbyn while he was Labour leader, absolved herself of any responsibility by claiming she had no jurisdiction over planning regulations, despite the blocks being approved by a Labour council.

The blocks, 34 and 26 storeys high respectively, dwarf the surrounding architecture and do not comply with post-Grenfell safety regulations to have two staircases in buildings over 30 metres high. To add insult to injury, despite being built on public land, the 495 new flats will be for private rent, leading to more money in greedy developers' pockets instead of the public purse where it could be reinvested in local infrastructure.

The shady deals don't stop there; despite promises of a new entrance to Walthamstow Central tube station to ease congestion at peak times, it seems developer Long Harbour will



PAUL MATTHEWSON

no longer be footing the estimated £5 million bill, instead passing this cost onto us, the taxpayers.

Although Creasy wasn't prepared to stick up for local residents when it concerned their safety, she has recently had a change of heart on housing campaigns - perhaps in light of the approaching general election - and is now advocating for a leasehold ban. No one should have to pay unfair, escalating fees on leasehold homes. With an estimated 10,000 people on the waiting list for council housing in Waltham Forest alone, we need political representatives that will fight for affordable homes for all. That should include rent caps and compulsory purchase orders of the flats and houses lying empty in our densely populated borough.

But it's not just building new homes that a socialist in City Hall would fight for. Nancy Taaffe is standing for the Greater London Authority in the North East constituency on 2 May. She has a long history of campaigning for local residents and their housing needs. During the 'Butterfields Won't Budge!' campaign she, alongside the Socialist Party branch, supported 63 residents resisting eviction which ultimately resulted in 49 homes being purchased by a housing association.

Poor housing = poor health

We also need better maintenance of existing housing stock. In January, the Royal College of Physicians called on Michael Gove, Tory housing minister, to crackdown on landlords who fail to fix Britain's mouldy homes. We know that Tory and Labour MPs and councillors are in the pockets of landlords - a lot of them are landlords themselves! Gove has since caved in to lobbying and the Renters Reform Bill has been massively watered down.

So, in May, instead of voting for candidates who might make concessions for ordinary working-class people, why not vote ordinary, working-class candidates into power who will fight for us?

Southampton housing situation is a disgrace

KAREN ROGERS
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

The housing situation in Southampton is terrible. I am aware of council housing in the city that is empty, hence these properties fall into disrepair. With the housing shortage so pressing, this is disgraceful.

People also live in council and private rental properties that are damp and mouldy, and have other issues. Private tenants fear reporting these issues, because of Section 21 'no-fault' evictions.

The Tory government had pledged to abolish 'no-fault' evictions in their manifesto. But many MPs are themselves landlords, who serve their own interests. Yet another manifesto pledge broken, and it is the working class who suffer.

It is time to build more social housing, that must stay as social housing, and build more affordable homes.

What sort of society lets children go hungry, and closes care homes? People cannot get a doctor's appointment, mental health and wellbeing is in short supply from an overstretched and poorly managed NHS.

Time to stop the fat cats getting fatter, and empower ourselves for a positive impact.

● Karen Rogers is the TUSC candidate in Banister & Polygon. TUSC is standing 17 candidates, across every single ward in Southampton.

● If you have elections on 2 May, see if there is a TUSC candidate standing in your area at tusc.org.uk

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

Bristol – Labour and Greens vote for Tory cuts

ANNABEL GRIFFITHS
BRISTOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

For eight years in Bristol, a Labour mayor has sat back and allowed the cuts demanded by the Tories.

Support for the Greens has risen recently here. But voting for a party that refuses to vote against cuts, like the Greens, is not going to transform our lives.

When the Greens ran Brighton Council, the cuts to public services under their noses meant that the bin workers had to go on strike against them – a slap in the faces for those people who thought they were voting for a party that fought for a better future.

Our youth have been failed, knife crime and gang activity have risen. We say restore youth services and

jobs, reopen libraries, fight for free education, affordable houses, and well-paid jobs for all.

We say, don't make us workers pay for the climate change being caused by the big bosses' decisions, and insatiable greed for money and power. Climate change could be combated, for example, by introducing a free-to-use, expanded and renationalised public transport system.

From our campaign stalls and canvassing, we know so many people are disillusioned, fed up, and feel forgotten about and left behind, like they have no political representation.

● Annabel Griffiths is one of two TUSC candidates in Eastville. TUSC is standing 17 candidates across Bristol.



Annabel Griffiths (left) campaigning with the Socialist Party during the elections this year. ROBERT THOMAS



Expensive, unreliable, unsafe

PAUL MATTSOON

Councils have power to transform public transport

CHRIS NEWBY
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

The high cost of fares, infrequent buses and trains, unreliable services, a lack of open ticket offices – all these problems and more make journeys something to be dreaded, rather than a comfortable, affordable, safe and reliable way to travel.

The private companies that run the buses and trains continue to make big profits, whilst still getting billions in public handouts. Expensive infrastructure projects, with little benefit for the local communities they run through, are introduced without any genuine consultation. It doesn't have to be like this.

Councils across Britain have different levels of responsibility for transport in the areas they cover. Some subsidise routes and travel passes. Others run the whole service, as the Greater London Authority does.

Public services, including local authorities, have faced massive cuts to their budgets from successive Tory governments. And a new Starmer-led Labour government is set to continue these cuts.

The Local Government Association says that to maintain subsidies for under-16s, over-60s, and disabled people, councils will have to cut bus routes. Instead of mobilising the local community, including the trade

unions, to demand extra funding from central government, Labour councils are cutting services.

Councils should immediately demand the extra funding necessary, to not only maintain services, but to improve and also reduce fares. And private operators should cover the extra costs.

Why should public money continue to be used to subsidise these profit-hungry companies running our buses and trains? No more handouts.

For example, instead of London Labour mayor Sadiq Khan meekly accepting government cuts to the transport budget, and cutting bus routes, he should be running a mass campaign, alongside unions and transport users. Funding should be used to pay the workforce a decent wage, reduce fares, and reinstate previously cut routes.

Public campaigning can work.



Why should public money continue to be used to subsidise these profit-hungry companies running our buses and trains?

Look at the success of the campaign involving the unions RMT, Aslef, and the wider public, in fighting the closure of ticket offices. A campaign led by bus workers and the local communities in 2022 led to a partial climbdown in cuts to funding of bus routes in London.

We campaign for the renationalisation of all our public services, including rail and bus companies, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need with nothing for the fat cat operators.

These services, like all others, will constantly face attack under capitalism, as they seek to maintain their profits, at the expense of what's provided. A socialist society would use the enormous wealth that exists to provide a free public transport system – where workers, trade unions, communities, have democratic control over how it's run.

This would see guards returned to trains, conductors on buses, and fully staffed stations the whole time they are open, to ensure the safety of all transport users and workers. This would be a genuinely integrated transport system, that links together all the different branches of public transport.

Such a system would radically cut pollution from congestion, with the added health benefits for the whole community, and the environment.

Lancashire and Cumbria TUSC stand 'Cuts to communities, but plenty of money for war'

MARTIN POWELL-DAVIES
LANCASHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Aamir Khansaheb, one of four Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates standing in Chorley, explains on our leaflet: "I'm standing to fight for a future for young people. To voice the concerns of my community, where there's cuts to amenities, but always plenty of money for war".

And, in Preston, those were the exact sentiments expressed by so many that we spoke to – angry at everything from the state of the NHS to the massive potholes in the city's roads! One corner shop in Deepdale took a bundle of TUSC leaflets, immediately put one on display at the door, and gave the rest out to locals as they came into their shop.

The TUSC council election campaign has already got off to a great

start in Preston, Chorley, and Grange & Cartmel. In just the first weekend after nominations closed, our supporters already distributed leaflets in the seven seats that we are standing in.

In Grange & Cartmel, there's only three candidates nominated. So it's a straight fight between TUSC and the ConDems – Tories and Lib Dems.

In all the conversations we've had, in all these three areas, the vacuum that TUSC can fill is clear. Working-class people have had enough of the Tories. But they've also had enough of Keir Starmer's Labour and the other establishment parties acting just like Tories too.

• **Martin Powell-Davies is the TUSC candidate in the Grange & Cartmel by-election for Westmoreland & Furness council**



Protest outside United Utilities against sewage pollution supported by Martin Powell-Davies and TUSC. MARTIN POWELL-DAVIES

Fund the socialist general election stand

The Socialist Party is fighting to raise £50,000 for our stand in the upcoming general election. Achieving our goal will give us the resources to stand 30-40 Socialist Party candidates, paying £500 for each deposit, and a minimum of £700 for an election mailing in each constituency we contest.

What can you donate? Pledges to be made by the end of June, and paid in by the end of July.

- Email isai@socialistparty.org.uk with your pledge
- Donate now, visit socialistparty.org.uk and click 'Election Appeal'

• **Dean Young is the TUSC candidate in Derby ward**

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Counter establishment, far right, and Sefton's decline

DEAN YOUNG
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

I'm standing for the second year in a row, and I'm not the only socialist standing in Sefton. Two other Socialist Party members are standing for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) – one for the first time!

All of us are students who grew up in Sefton, and know firsthand the ineptitude of the Labour council. Bootle docks, for example, are a shell

of their former self. Once upon a time they employed vast numbers, and I include many of my family members in that number!

We have planned a public meeting to mobilise the election campaigns around. And we stand in the tradition of another socialist from Bootle – Terry Fields. Terry was a workers' MP, who only accepted a worker's wage, a member of Militant (Socialist Party's predecessor).

We can be an antidote to far-right

activists, who have been postering in the area, trying to sow divisions between working-class people. For every poster they put up, I put up five!

• **Dean Young is the TUSC candidate in Derby ward**

WORKING CLASS CAN TRANSFORM VOLATILE MIDDLE EAST



Reasons to be fearful have increased as tensions in the Middle East have been ratcheted up. The regimes in Israel and Iran have traded blows. There has been an explosion in Iraq at the Kalsu military base. Settler attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank continue. An Israeli airstrike in Rafah killed at least nine people, six of them children. Famine stalks Gaza. There the death toll has risen to over 34,000. Revealed again by this bleak situation is that 'they' – the ruling classes internationally, representing capitalist interests – have no plan of how to protect 'our' future. This makes the situation highly unpredictable. Even when no one wants it, in the absence of clear, organised intervention to prevent it, the clash of interests can have a logic of their own.

But even if a major escalation is not the most likely scenario at this stage, it is urgent that the working class organises its intervention – fighting for a socialist alternative. That means building mass workers' struggle and organisation to fight back against the warmongers and exploiters and take power to begin democratically planning society free from war, exploitation and poverty.

Arab Spring legacy

There are many unknowns in the current situation, making it difficult to see how things can develop. This includes the question of when the anger among the masses, both in the region and in the West, will find an expression. But that is the central factor in the dilemmas facing all the governments involved. Memories of the 2011 Arab Spring mass uprisings that removed dictators haunt them.

The conditions that led to those mass movements – poverty, unemployment, inequality and repression – have been maintained and deepened since. War is intensifying the anger and distrust of the powers that be. The lesson from those historic mass movements is the need for the working classes to have their own parties, representing their own interests, with which to replace the governments they fell.

Iranian regime

The Iranian retaliatory assault was probably met among the masses in the region with a mix of some relief, that at last someone was striking back against the Israeli warmonger regime – but also with fear of steps towards a wider war. However, there is no basis for hope that the Iranian regime, itself capitalist and containing divisions, can offer any way forward for the masses.

Living standards in Iran are being driven down – with the prices of goods, especially food items, reportedly increasing by at least 200% since the election of the government last year. It is also reported that repressive so-called 'modesty' policies which triggered the 'women, life, freedom' movement are being reintroduced.

The brutal repression by the Iranian regime of the mass movements there has shown the Iranian working class that it can place no hope in it – in terms of the rights of the Palestinians or of improved living standards. The working class must get organised and lead the struggle.

The exchange between Iran and Israel is an expression of the new era of world relations in which the US, while still the biggest military power, faces challenges to its ability to call the shots internationally. In the Middle East, Iran, and the US and its allies, are vying for power and influence in a region which remains key for the world economy in terms of oil production and trade.

The Arab elites in the region recognise the threat of Iran seeking to expand its regional role. In Arab News, Abdulaziz Sager, the chairman of the Gulf Research Center, railed that the Iranian leadership's actions represent a "hijacking of the Palestinian cause" to "support Iran's expansionist and interventionist regional policy". Jordan, for example, also relies heavily on US subsidies.

Israeli instability

In the immediate aftermath of the Iranian attack, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's poll ratings have risen – albeit from a very low level. But there is little basis for that to remain the case. The international support required to intercept the Iranian bombardment is shattering the myth of the Israeli military's impregnability.

The inability of this divided government to satisfy the need for security and safety, alongside the failure to resolve the hostage crisis, poses the need for an alternative. The main capitalist opposition though, will also seek to make the working class pay for the economic problems being stored up by the impact of the war and wider global economic crisis.

Building workers' organisations that can unite Jewish, Palestinian and workers of other backgrounds can be seen as particularly difficult at present, but the fight for security and to defend living standards will demand a response in the workplaces and trade unions, where strike action has brought solidarity and unity between workers in the past – and can again.

West's dilemma

As Simon Tisdall put it in the Observer: "The West's dilemma appears even starker than before. David Cameron, Britain's foreign secretary, typifies its one-sided, two-faced approach... Cameron admitted last



PAUL MATTSOON

The lesson from those historic mass movements [of the Arab Spring] is the need for the working classes to have their own parties, representing their own interests, with which to replace the governments they fell

week that, if a UK consulate were similarly attacked, Britain would make a 'strong response'. But he just could not bring himself to say Israel was in the wrong. This pro-Israel default position characterises the attitude of many Western governments."

In the US, April polling found just 4% of voters under 45 strongly approve of Biden's handling of foreign policy. This is causing concern among sections of the US capitalist class who fear a Trump victory if Biden is not seen as capable of acting decisively to bring stability to the situation. They consider Trump a greater threat to their system.

Starmer serves bosses

Sunak follows Biden's lead. But no challenge comes from Starmer's Labour. Instead, he commits a Labour government to increase defence spending. This includes maintaining Trident nuclear weapons, of which he says: "The only way to have a safer world is to have an effective deterrent."

But nuclear weapons have not prevented a situation where it's estimated that one in seven of the world's population lived within five kilometres of violent conflict in 2023, and suffer the associated hunger and poverty.

The real reason for maintaining the nukes is the power and prestige of the ruling class and the political elite. Starmer is determined that British imperialism, now a second- or third-rate power, should remain part of the nuclear, great-power club. Everything he does is to prove a government led by him will be committed to serving the interests of capitalism.

However, a glimpse was given of how workers could have a voice in

1 in 7 of the world's population lived within five kilometres of violent conflict in 2023

the next parliament. George Galloway, Jeremy Corbyn and Claudia Webb sat together during the debate on Iran, literally behind Starmer's left shoulder. George Galloway pointed out the hypocrisy of the Tories and Starmer in their failure to criticise Israel. Especially if the trade unions got involved, there is no reason why a substantial group of MPs couldn't be elected who would represent working-class interests.

They could represent the anti-war movement, the youth, the trade unions. For example, calling for no exports of arms to Israel and for Trident to be scrapped, with the workers now employed in nuclear and other weapons systems industries, together with scientists and engineers, to be redeployed, with no loss of earnings or terms and conditions, so their skills could be used on projects of real benefit to society. The billions of pounds planned for maintaining nuclear weapons should be spent on the needs of the majority, not the prestige of the ruling elite.

Getting such a group of workers' MPs, forcing Starmer to look over his left shoulder on every issue, starts with discussion in the trade unions, and among trade unions, student organisers, anti-war campaigners and others in the local areas. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, in which the Socialist Party participates, is fighting for such discussion and debate to take place as the next serious step to prepare for the battles to come.

Do you agree?
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CWU conference: Members vote to retain lay democracy



CWU on strike and marching to Buckingham Palace 2022. PAULA MITCHELL

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER IN CWU

The first day of the Communication Workers Union (CWU) annual conference opened with a tribute to former president Jane Loftus and other members who sadly passed away last year.

This year's CWU conference is the first since the major industrial disputes that the union faced in the three main companies in which it organises: Royal Mail, BT and the Post Office. These disputes were an intense battle that saw around 400 Royal Mail reps sacked or suspended – most are now reinstated.

In response to the union's declining membership, the leadership put forward two phases of changes. The first phase focused on immediate spending reductions and the second phase a deeper transformation with the stated aim to make the union more effective so that it can grow.

To decide on this, the normal general conference has been scheduled for later in the year, and instead the first two days of this conference dealt with restructuring of the union, including rules revision.

Members accepted the need for some cost-cutting measures but were determined to make sure that lay member democracy was not weakened.

The NEC's proposal to move from an annual general conference to one every two years was conclusively defeated, as branch delegates argued how vital a regular 'workers' parliament' is. Socialist Party member Deji Olayinka, from the UTAW tech branch, highlighted that one reason people join and stay in the union is that, through

conference, they know they can push the union to act on the social and political issues they care about.

Preserving the annual conference was an important victory, alongside ensuring that the number of regions isn't reduced in a way that harms their ability to function.

Even though the majority of the National Executive Committee (NEC) policy proposals were accepted by conference, it wasn't a sweeping endorsement by any measure, and there certainly wasn't complete alignment between the NEC and branches.

The NEC opposed all 15 of the branch motions at the restructuring conference, but four were passed, with another being narrowly defeated on a card vote. Throughout, there was strong opposition against any steps to weaken lay democracy.

This shows both the potential and the need to build a fighting left within the CWU. Socialist Party members want to build that with other left activists. This grouping could better organise around demands raised by the rank and file.

At the official Palestine fringe meeting organised by the union, an organiser in the more autonomous UTAW branch explained how they were recruiting because the tech branch was organising workers to prevent their companies from supporting genocidal acts in Gaza. Postal members asked why their strength in the distribution system wasn't being organised in the same way.

As we go to press, the industrial conferences have begun. This is an opportunity for members to review the industrial battles that have taken place and decide on the strategy needed to win the next fight.

Royal Mail - Nationalise!

Royal Mail management's threat of possible administration undoubtedly was a major factor in the deal being agreed that settled the dispute.

In opening the postal industrial conference, new deputy general secretary (postal), Martin Walsh, said that no Tory or Labour government is going to nationalise Royal Mail. But this is the wrong lesson to draw from the dispute, especially with the talk of possible takeover by the 'Czech sphinx' Daniel Kretinsky.

It was a mistake of the CWU leadership, when administration was threatened during the dispute, not to demand of Keir Starmer that he committed to the nationalisation policy that was passed at Labour Party conference in 2022. That would have given the entire membership the confidence to fight for more.

Socialist Party members had warned that privatisation would leave Royal Mail open to takeover bids, and could put in danger the members' pension funds. The CWU must demand that Starmer pledges now to bring Royal Mail back into public hands with compensation only to those with proven needs. This would kill talk of any takeover, and shows how vital it is for the union to push for a political voice alongside its industrial strategy.

With the right decisions, the CWU could stabilise and grow, but it needs to increase density in its recognised workplaces like BT and Royal Mail, while expanding into other companies in its sectors. This can be achieved through a militant industrial and political strategy that shows the benefits and power of the union.

Unison SGE elections: We need a campaigning, socialist leadership prepared to lead in action!

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN UNISON

The elections to Unison's Service Group Executives (SGEs) are an opportunity to vote for a fighting lay leadership in big parts of the public sector, including the NHS, councils, schools and community.

Unison has a vital role in these areas and should be providing a lead to its members and all workers in these sectors. There's never been so important a time for this, as our members have struggled against the relentless Tory cost-of-living squeeze that has devastated workers' living standards, at the same time as vicious Tory cuts have escalated, slashing jobs and services.

But the last two years have shown that workers are prepared to fight. The strike wave has seen the highest level of action for over 30 years. And Unison members have shown their determination to struggle for the pay rises that we need when they have been given the opportunity. Our members in parts of the NHS, such as the

ambulance service, and in individual councils, have taken action. But the Unison leadership at national level hasn't been up to the task.

There wasn't a serious national campaign to win industrial action ballots on pay in both the NHS and local government, so that our members could join other public sector workers on the picket lines. But Unison members are no different to those of other unions. We need a leadership which can match the determination of our reps and members.

And this also means having a political strategy that supports Unison members and the whole of the working class. A general election is looming and we all want to see the back of the Tories, who have wrecked our NHS, local government, schools and the rest of public services.

But Starmer's New Labour is not the real political alternative that we need. He has refused to support our strikes, his election manifesto is full of retreats and U-turns, he's backed up Sunak over Gaza, and his Labour

councils have passed on brutal Tory cuts.

Socialist Party members have long fought for Unison and the rest of the unions to build a political vehicle for workers on a socialist programme that ends privatisation and instead transforms our public services, and the living standards of workers. Standing candidates in elections is a step towards that; there is nothing that stops our members, in an individual capacity, standing and supporting anti-austerity, anti-war candidates.

The Socialist Party is part of the fight to transform Unison into a fighting left union. In the 2021 NEC elections, the right wing was pushed back after decades of dominating the union. But to strengthen the position of the left and thereby give the leadership needed by members, a fighting programme is needed and a real strategy for action.

Keeping Socialist Party members on the Health, Local Government and Community SGEs is essential for this.



Striking health workers reading the Socialist on the picket line. JOHN GILLMAN

The following Socialist Party members are standing for election in the Unison service group elections:

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

PCS elections: Vote for change!

Vote Marion Lloyd for president and for a fighting leadership on the NEC and groups

Members of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) are voting in national and group elections.

Socialist Party member Marion Lloyd and supporters of the PCS Broad Left Network (BLN), in which the Socialist Party participates, are standing alongside a range of activists from across the union, campaigning to change PCS into a fighting, democratic union.

Members will already have received ballot papers for the national PCS president and National Executive Committee (NEC) elections. These need to be posted by 7 May at the latest, to ensure they are counted by the closing date of 9 May.

Vote for Marion Lloyd for national president, and a full list of candidates standing for change on the NEC.

See socialistparty.org.uk/PCScandidates2024 and read 'PCS elections: Choose a fighting democratic union' at socialistparty.org.uk for more about the national elections.

Group Executive Committee elections open on 25 April via email. The BLN supports full slates of candidates in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Revenue and Customs (HMRC) Groups.

DWP: Low pay and staff shortages

PCS MEMBER IN DWP

DWP staff are on the frontline after 14 years of austerity. Our wages are worth around two-thirds of what they were 13 years ago, our lowest grades are on minimum wage, and an increasing number of staff have to claim the benefits they administer in order to pay their rent.

We are 30,000 people understaffed, meaning every staff member needs to do the work of 1.25 people. Jobcentre staff regularly see 100 claimants each per week. Telephony workers take call after call and admin staff are drowning in backlogs, meaning we bear the brunt of anger and despair of claimants at a benefits system which seldom gives enough to even scrape by on.

In this horrific climate, our union needs a strong, determined, serious leadership at both national and group level. The current leadership is not up to the task. We need to elect the candidates supported by the Broad Left Network for a fighting, democratic union.

Last year, in the pay battle, on receipt of a one-off non-consolidated £1,500 from the Tories, the Left Unity-led national leadership cancelled

strikes, cancelled reballots, and cancelled the union's strike levy which funded targeted strike action. They did nothing to move forward the national campaign from September to February, while members suffered inflation and overwork. They did all this after telling members to "vote yes to continue the campaign".

Staffing

On staffing, they waited nearly two years after agreement at PCS conference to launch a campaign, which consisted of a dossier about the effects of understaffing, and a members' meeting where they put forward no proposals. BLN supporters put forward a motion to the DWP Group Executive Committee (GEC) with a plan to take the first steps of a serious campaign, but the Left Unity leadership of the GEC refused to hear it.

When the GMB union balloted security guards in DWP offices, BLN members put forward a motion to extend solidarity to these workers and to place demands on DWP to keep our members safe in the event of guard strikes. Again, it was not heard at the GEC.

This DWP and national leadership have let us down. We need change!

Please vote for these BLN-supported candidates in the DWP election

Group Vice Presidents: Heemskerck, Rachel; Menezes-Jackson, Vijay; Williams, Katrina
Group Assistant Secretaries: Brown, Ian; Fearn, Jill; Lawton, Reece; Marks, Chris; Power, Declan; Thompson, George; Tweedale Sorsa-Amatheia
Group Treasurer: Scott, Emma
Group Organiser: Greb, Michele
Group Journal Editor: Thomas, Sarah
GEC Members: Brown, Ian; Fearn, Jill; Hamer, Peter; Heemskerck, Rachel; Ilesanmi, Yemisi; Jouanny, Steve; Lawton, Reece; Loy, Alan; Marks, Chris; Menezes-Jackson, Vijay; Pollard, Jenny; Power, Declan; Thompson, George; Toomer, Catherine; Williams, Katrina

DWP election - Presidential candidate kept off ballot paper

STATEMENT BY THE BROAD LEFT NETWORK

Bev Laidlaw, standing for DWP president, has been excluded from the Group Executive Committee ballot paper.

Supported by both the BLN and Independent Left, and part of the slate of candidates standing to transform PCS into a fighting union, she has challenged this decision.

But in the absence of any proper procedure, and true to the undemocratic nature of the current leadership, her appeal has been denied. The current leadership remain determined to ensure that their candidate is elected unopposed.

It is now crucial that everyone of us who wants change in our union, who is serious about winning on pay and wants democratic, accountable leaders, redoubles our efforts to vote for and campaign for the 'change' candidates in both our Group elections and the national elections.



Marion Lloyd, centre, on the picket line. SOCIALIST PARTY

HMRC: Poor pay, annualised hours and attacks on flexible working

PCS MEMBER IN HMRC

HMRC knows our pay is poor. Prices have risen but civil service pay has stagnated. The 2023-24 'offer' for HMRC members was a pro-rata payment of £1,500 and a pay rise for some of just 4.26% - often not even consolidated. Even the lower CPI measure of inflation for June 2023 was still running at 6.4%, from a peak in October 2022 of 11.1%.

Every AA and AO grade worker making up more than a quarter of HMRC staff - is on minimum wage. The AO grade is now a revolving door as people look to other employment, such as supermarkets, for better pay. Many HMRC members now choose retirement at 60 because pensions are going up faster than pay. The situation is unsustainable: no wonder HMRC's performance is falling.

Yet the HMRC management response to this crisis has been risible. They have introduced annualised hours, with a pittance for giving up hard-won terms. They have invited staff to sell their annual leave to balance household budgets. They are

forcing staff into workplaces more frequently, with the associated commuting costs.

We can't afford HMRC's 'offers'. The current PCS union leadership has failed to deliver for HMRC members. When the Tory government conceded to the one-off payment of £1,500, the current PCS leadership blinked and cancelled all action. Members in HMRC still had a live ballot mandate. A small win was the time to press for more. We've lost months of momentum due to their approach.

With so much at stake, HMRC members need a PCS leadership that has confidence in members to fight, a strategy to win, and the commitment to lead the fightback. It's time for change.

Socialist Party members in the Broad Left Network are standing with other socialists to provide the leadership that PCS HMRC Group members need. Please vote for Marion Lloyd for PCS national president and BLN-supported candidates for the NEC, and for the BLN-supported candidates standing for HMRC Group Executive Committee.

Please vote for these BLN-supported candidates in the HMRC election

Group President: Wesley, Hector
Deputy President: Dever, Tracy
Treasurer: O'Donnell, Andy
Deputy Group Secretary: Davidson, John
Assistant Group Secretaries: Benton, Linda; Criddle, Gemma; Dever, Tracy; Smith, Adam; Smith, John; Virtue, John; Young, Bobby
GEC members: Benton, Linda; McCleary, Fiona; Crompton, Tim; Davies, Jaime; Doyle, Nick; Hansford, Dave; Ismail, Amjad; Lynch, John; Mellis, Martyn; Mort, Cerys; Paul, Robin; Poole, Heather; Price, Darren; Rosser, Jon-Paul; Stratful, Jane; Watts, Gill; Virtue, John; Young, Bobby

Heathrow Border Force strike

More than 300 PCS members working for Border Force at Heathrow airport will be taking four days of strike action from 29 April to 2 May.

The action is against plans to introduce new rosters that would see 250 forced out of their jobs at passport control.

Marion Lloyd and Broad Left

Network supporters stand in solidarity with these workers.

See 'PCS Border Force workers ready to strike' at socialistparty.org.uk for more.

Sparks safety victory in Runcorn

ALEX SMITH
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

In mid-April, around 50 electricians working on the Vynova construction site in Runcorn, on the banks of the River Mersey, walked out after concerns they raised around safety and work practices were repeatedly ignored by their bosses. Within 24 hours of the walkout, the employer had backed down, and the electricians' safety and work practice demands were met. This represents a massive victory in protecting the public from potentially dangerous practices, and in forcing the bosses back in their fight to deskill the electrical trade.

Electricians involved said their walkout was a response to F.B. Taylor, a cable contractor operating at the site, using non-electricians to do cabling work - a practice that could pose health and safety risks. Electricians said they raised these concerns five times with management, but were ignored or not taken seriously. "Consequently, we felt we were left with no choice other than to withdraw our labour."

The electricians walked off the site after a joint meeting of Unite and GMB union members. After the walkout, a number of mechanical staff employed by another contractor, BGEN, also "cabined up" (stopped work, but stayed on-site) in solidarity with the electricians' action.

"The pressure of the whole workforce forced the issue", another electrician commented, adding that, as a result of the walkout, "the work practices around cabling we were concerned about have now ceased."

Electricians pay large sums of money in order to get the training and skills

needed to maintain safety at such sites. One electrician told The Socialist that the presence of potentially explosive substances, such as ethylene, on the site also concentrated the minds of those who walked out.

There is a suspicion that Vynova 'Project Summer', a project being carried out at the site, might be behind schedule, and BGEN could be subject to a significant financial penalty for late completion of the project. "The whole thing feels like provocation, almost as if the employers are looking to force us into industrial action in order to give themselves an excuse for not competing the wider project on time."

Deskilling

This victory should provide a boost to the 'No to ESO' campaign to force back deskilling plans to train new 'electrical support operatives' (ESO) at Hinkley Point nuclear power plant.

Electricians also said that the Labour mayor of the Liverpool City Region, Steve Rotheram, should publicly back the successful action they took, and oppose any moves employers might now take to punish them for their defiance - such as punitively reducing the weekend work available to sparks who walked out.

If Rotheram refuses to do this, then it again brings into question why Unite and the GMB should support Labour candidates whose elected representatives refuse to defend Unite and GMB members in struggle.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is standing in the current round of local elections precisely because Labour representatives refuse to provide the political representation that the trade unions desperately need.

Usdaw conference meets as strike action in retail sector looms



Usdaw members on strike at B&Q in Swindon. SWINDON SP

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN USDAW

Retail and distribution union Usdaw's 77th annual delegate meeting (ADM) takes place against the background of the first strike action in UK retail stores in decades.

GMB members working for Asda are striking at two stores in the South East, and a further store has voted for action. Unite has moved to ballot its workers in two Morrisons warehouses over attacks on pensions.

Over the last 18 months, a strike wave has swept many unions and workplaces, taking action over the cost of living. It was notable that there wasn't any strike action by Usdaw members, even though our members struggle on low pay and are just as angry as other workers.

This isn't to say that big pay rises weren't won in some Usdaw workplaces, both with and without the threat of possible strike action. But it is clear that many retail and distribution workers have been left behind. With a bold, fighting national leadership, our members could have been out on the picket lines with hundreds of thousands of other workers and won much more.

Morrisons pensions

Like workers in Unite and GMB over previous years, Usdaw members have now taken strike action over pay this year at the GXO distribution centre in Swindon, which supplies B&Q stores. There have been preparations made for a potential strike ballot of Usdaw Morrisons workers over the pensions issue.

Strike action by Morrisons workers would potentially be on a much wider basis than anything in the retail and distribution sector in recent times, and it will be necessary to mobilise the whole of Usdaw's membership and the wider trade union movement in support.

Should both Usdaw and Unite in Morrisons be successful in balloting for strike action, then urgent meetings should take place between lay representatives of both unions to discuss coordinating action and any other campaigning on this issue.

Also looming over this year's

conference is the fact that there will be a general election before the next conference. This is reflected in the conference agenda, with a number of propositions from branches placing demands on the likely incoming Labour government.

These demands include a number of issues on which Keir Starmer has retreated - including investment in green technology and free school meals for primary school children.

Usdaw members may be hopeful that some of the demands the union have raised will be carried out by a Starmer-led government - including repeal of the Tories' minimum service levels legislation, and measures to tackle attacks and abuse of retail workers.

But in recent years, Usdaw ADMs have passed a series of policies which Keir Starmer's Labour have dropped. These include renationalising energy, water, railways and Royal Mail, scrapping university tuition fees and more. Some members may be hoping against hope that, once elected, a Labour government might deliver, but given Starmer and Rachel Reeves' constant talk of "maintaining fiscal discipline" members would be right to be sceptical.

This is reflected in the fact that strike action is taking place in the retail sector. Workers rightly lack confidence that a Labour government

will intervene to bring the ruthless profiteering of the bosses, especially in private equity-owned Asda and Morrisons, to heel. Instead, they are correctly seeking to use their own industrial might to challenge them. We have to put pressure on Usdaw leaders to build that fightback, otherwise the Starmer-supporting leadership of our union will try to hold members back so as to not 'rock the boat' for a Labour government.

A working-class alternative

But imagine what would be possible if we had political representatives who were prepared to stand up to the Asda and Morrisons bosses, and others? If we had candidates that were prepared to campaign to bring dominant retail companies into public ownership to save jobs, rather than allowing private equity to smash and grab profits and leave workers on the scrapheap?

We have to be prepared to fight no matter who is in government, and that fight would be greatly strengthened if our union backed general election candidates that back our members, instead of sacrificing our members' interests in craven support of the pro-business Labour leadership. Usdaw members could stand as candidates themselves, alongside other trade unionists and socialists, to help in that fight.

nationalshop stewardsnetwork

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Sexist police and austerity exposed by Bradford stabbing

CAS MIDDLEMAS
LEEDS AND WEST YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

On 6 April, Kulsuma Akter was attacked and killed while walking down the street in Bradford with her baby. Her husband has since been charged with murder. In November 2023, he was charged and arrested with assault and threatening to kill Kulsuma, but released on conditional bail despite objections, and told not to contact her. Again, ten days before she was killed, Kulsuma received death threats, which she reported to West Yorkshire Police.

Nine other women in West Yorkshire have been killed by someone the police knew to be a threat to them since 2019. Victims' families have criticised the police force for failings in these cases.

These tragedies are a product of the inability of the police to keep women safe - but also of wider issues, including how women can escape danger, and the sexist reality of capitalism.

Council failings

In Bradford, between 2010 and 2017, the council cut 55% of its spending on domestic violence refuges. During one year in that period, 287 people were turned away from domestic violence shelters in Bradford due to overcrowding.

The past 14 years of Tory austerity have hit local councils hard, and Labour-led councils have not fought for the resources needed to maintain life-saving services. It is of no surprise that non-statutory services like domestic violence services have been cut.

Bradford Labour council, instead of fighting, is set to cut 100 council workers' jobs, meanwhile the Chief Executive earns £190,000 a year.

Domestic violence services must be fully publicly funded and brought under democratic workers' control, and the cuts over the last decade reversed.

Police part of sexist society

Spending on the police has also been cut, but there is a wider problem of institutional incompetence and disregard for women's safety that cannot just be blamed on austerity. The failings of the Met Police over a number of years, including the murder of Sarah Everard by a police officer, show that it's not just a few bad apples or forces - the police system as a whole is institutionally sexist.

Pro-capitalist politicians and police tops ultimately reflect and defend not our interests but the capitalist profit system, a system which is based on exploitation and inequalities of power, wealth, gender and race. A key demand is therefore for democratic working-class community control of the police. But also needed is the building of mass working-class organisations and movements with a programme for the socialist transformation of society.

We need local councils that are funded based on the real needs of that area and we need local councillors who are unafraid to challenge cuts, to stand up for the rights and safety of women, and to fight for the resources we all need. This is why the Socialist Party is standing candidates under the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) umbrella at the upcoming local government elections. Our current system is incompatible with the safety and liberation of women, which is why we must fight for socialist change.



PHOTO: SP WALES

Carer's Allowance scandal shows we need an end to Tory benefits cruelty

KAREN SEYMOUR
MANSFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

A Guardian investigation has found that scores of carers are being forced to repay huge sums because they unwittingly fell foul of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)'s draconian benefit rules.

Carers' Allowance is £81.90 a week and is awarded for providing 35 hours or more of care for one person. This could include things like taking someone to a hospital appointment, managing finances or doing housework. You can earn £151 per week working after tax and expenses, but 50p or more over and the whole of the week's allowance for the entire period breached must be repaid.

As a result, some carers have amassed huge debts, and, in some cases, been given criminal records or forced to sell their homes. This is

despite the DWP having real-time technology for years which could have picked up minor infringements.

Unpaid carers, who save the government £160 billion a year, are being treated as thieves for honest mistakes.

A parliamentary investigation looked at this issue as early as 2019. Three former Conservative work and pensions secretaries, including Iain Duncan-Smith - the architect of hated Universal Credit - have appealed to the government to suspend probes of unpaid carers. With breathtaking hypocrisy, they have called the government's approach a "scandalous miscarriage of justice!"

There have been calls for Carers' Allowance to be raised to the level of the minimum wage, currently at £11.44 an hour, for 35 hours a week. Labour has promised a review of the benefit. However, as it is obsessed

with economic prudence, this is likely to be tinkering at the edges, with only minor simplifications instead of implementing a shift to a fair benefits system.

The Socialist Party says: End the persecution of unpaid carers! We need a welfare state that is a proper safety net alongside a fully funded social care system and NHS, and a minimum wage of at least £15 an hour without exemptions, as a first step to pay we can live on. A mass new workers' party, rooted in the trade unions, with a bold socialist programme, would fight for working-class people on these issues and more.

If you agree, join us!

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

socialistparty.org.uk/join

Socialist Party placard from the strikes of Sparks in 2021 against deskilling

Goldsmiths University announces redundancies Support union action and fight for free education

BERKAY KARTAV
LONDON SOCIALIST STUDENTS ORGANISER

Goldsmiths University has announced mass redundancies which could see more than 130 staff lose their jobs. These cuts will hit departments including English and creative writing, Music, Sociology and arts, which could lead to a staffing reduction of 25% or more.

This attack on Goldsmiths staff follows the 37 days of industrial action taken by Goldsmiths University and College Union (UCU) in 2021-22 to save 46 jobs and stop cuts to courses threatened at that time.

University management says that the reason for the redundancies and cuts is a deficit in the budget as a result of lower student intake this year. But why should staff and students pay the price for the lack of university funding?

Goldsmiths University should open its books to campus trade

unions and student inspection to see where the money is going. If the university cannot 'afford' to save jobs then it should demand the money from the Tory government, with trade union oversight of how the money is spent.

Earlier this year, hundreds of students took part in the occupation of the Stuart Hall building for five weeks in solidarity with Palestinians, an action which was supported by Goldsmiths UCU. Student and staff solidarity is crucial to fight the redundancies and further cuts to education.

Students are being treated as cash cows by university management, and now we are expected to pay for the shortfall with fewer modules to choose from and worse teaching as a result of understaffing.

In response to the announcement of mass redundancies, Goldsmiths UCU has balloted its members - 87% voted yes to industrial action and 92% voted for action short of strike.

Staff have commenced a marking and assessment boycott, and there are plans to take further strike action in the summer term. Coordinated strike action with other campus trade unions, together with mass campaigns supported by students, would be vital to stop redundancies and save courses.

The latest crisis facing Goldsmiths University shows that marketised higher education is a broken system. There is enormous wealth and resources in society, but it is only a tiny minority - the capitalist class - that benefit. That's why we say make the super-rich pay for a fully funded, high-quality, free, higher education and fight for a socialist society to democratically plan society to meet the needs of all.

Join the student fightback

JOIN socialist students

socialiststudents.org.uk/join



Socialist Students campaigning outside Goldsmiths. PHOTO: LONDON SP

Gateshead Council delivers a kick in the Heed

Extracts of the Gateshead Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) statement regarding the exclusion of Gateshead FC from the National League play-offs for promotion to EFL League Two

When does a dream season, Gateshead FC finishing 6th in the league and qualifying for the play-offs and reaching the FA Trophy final at Wembley, turn into a nightmare? Answer: when Gateshead Council is your landlord.

On 23 April, Gateshead should have been playing Solihull Moors to progress in the play-offs. But, due to the decisions of Gateshead Council, the football club's progress has been effectively scuppered without a ball being kicked.

EFL rules for a club applying for promotion are that they must have "security of tenure to play matches at its stadium for a minimum of ten seasons".

Ten-year lease

Gateshead Council alone, as the owner of the Gateshead International Stadium (GIS), is responsible for this disaster. Only the council has the power to grant a ten-year lease to the club. They have deliberately chosen not to do so.

Nobody would argue that the GIS is a perfect venue for football. It has faults that require attention. But it has been the club's home since 1977 and, unless there are as yet unrevealed new plans to build an alternative stadium, it will remain the only feasible option in the short to medium term.

The council will no doubt attempt to blame the EFL for not being flexible, despite the council having known about this rule for two years and choosing to ignore it.

However, this debacle is not accidental, it is the result of Gateshead

Council Labour majority's long-standing policy of avoiding a fight with successive governments, over their disastrous austerity programmes.

The cuts in local authority finance imposed by 13 years of Tory rule have been devastating. But the Labour council, rather than organising a fightback, has simply passed these cuts on.

Sold out with sell-offs

Gateshead Council's refusal to grant a ten-year lease is tied up with its policy to cease the public ownership and/or operation of leisure facilities in the borough. Last year saw the closure of the leisure centres in Saltwell and Birtley. The others, including the GIS, were spared, for now.

TUSC, since its inception in 2010, has consistently opposed cuts in public services and the privatisation of communal assets and/or their management.

TUSC has repeatedly pointed out that austerity and cuts are not a necessity but a political choice.

TUSC Gateshead wishes good luck to the team playing on 11 May in the FA Trophy final, ironically against Solihull Moors, the team they should have been playing in the first round of the play-offs.

Up the Heed!

● **The following TUSC candidates are standing in Gateshead on 2 May: Tom Allen in Blaydon, Norman Hall in Deckham, Elaine Brunskill in High Fell, Sam Morden in Low Fell and Ros Cooper in Ryton, Crookhill and Stella**

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

Nigerian students face deportation from UK

But Surrey students win reprieve



Protesting in Surrey

ADAM POWELL-DAVIES
SOCIALIST STUDENTS NATIONAL ORGANISER

Nigerian international students are in a desperate situation.

As a result of the severe economic crisis in Nigeria, and drastic devaluation of the Nigerian currency, the naira, many students are unable to cover the eye-watering costs of living and studying in the UK.

This crisis was set in motion by the disastrous policies of the Nigerian president Bola Tinubu, whose government last year decided to 'float' the naira – essentially allowing the currency's value to be determined by market forces for the first time in years. This policy instantly led to the biggest-ever collapse in the value of the naira.

300% increase

The naira has lost two-thirds of its value against the pound in less than a year. For Nigerian students in the UK, this means a 300% increase in the cost of tuition fees, rent, and other living costs.

Disgracefully, universities across the UK are moving to exclude Nigerian students who can no longer pay their tuition fees. This would effectively mean deportation, as students would no longer have a sponsoring institution for their visas.

In response to this threat, Socialist Students members at the University

of Surrey approached the university's Nigerian Society, and helped launch a campaign to stop the expulsions.

The campaign began with a joint meeting, which agreed a set of demands aimed at university management:

- Ensure no exclusions for Nigerian students who are unable to pay their tuition fees
- Extend the payment period for Nigerian students struggling to pay their tuition fees
- Allow students to pay their tuition fees at the pre-floatation naira rate of N584.20

As a way to galvanise support for these demands, and put pressure on management, the meeting also agreed an emergency protest for the following week. We decided to march through campus on 22 April, and deliver a joint letter to the vice-chancellor's office, to put forward our demands, and request an in-person meeting between the vice-chancellor and representatives of the campaign.

Protesting works

Our campaign has shown that protesting wins! The university management has now said that it will allow Nigerian students to stay on at the university, if they pay 50% of their originally agreed fee instalment for this term. This is a welcome concession, and importantly gives us time to regroup, and plan the next steps for the campaign.

However, for any student who cannot afford 50% of their instalment, we must continue to demand no exclusions, while also continuing to raise the demand for students to pay fees at the old rate of naira. If necessary, we will organise future protests to back up these demands.

Spread to other unis

Another crucial way to strengthen our campaign at the University of Surrey is to spread these demands to other campuses. This crisis is affecting Nigerian students at universities around the UK. That's why Socialist Students groups will be reaching out to Nigerian societies around the country to initiate similar campaigns on their campus.

As part of our campaign, Socialist Students members in Surrey have also contacted campus trade unions which, like students, are in battle against management – in their case, over the threat of up to 140 job cuts.

Vice-chancellors cut jobs for the same reason that they charge international students ridiculously high tuition fees – to make up for a broken higher education funding model. That's why Socialist Students calls for a united movement of students and staff nationally to win fully funded, free education for all.

● **Read more about the situation in Nigeria – 'Fighting the Nigeria cost-of-living crisis' at socialistparty.org.uk**

Leeds nursery campaign steps up fight



SAVE LITTLE OWLS NURSERIES CAMPAIGN

'ISABEL GRANT'
LITTLE OWLS NURSERY PARENT

"Leeds City Council hear us say, Little Owls nurseries here to stay", rang the chants as 25 parents lobbied the council's executive. Then, just three days later, 50 parents and activists marched from Gipton North Little Owls to the local park, getting toots of support from passing cars.

There was particular anger that Gipton North was up for closure, despite the waiting list being over a year long. For some working parents, this has meant extending maternity leave, or being forced to leave employment due to lack of provision in the area.

Parents were shocked when they received letters saying that three council-run nurseries were going to close in May 2024, and a further 12 could be privatised. Facing parents' anger, the Labour council was almost immediately forced to backtrack. It delayed closures until August, and promised a consultation.

Consultation letters have now started going to parents, but only cover existing parents. They don't include prospective parents – some have told us that the council has told them that their children's places won't be available.

Online consultation meetings have been called, with only a week's notice in some cases. They will be when many parents are getting children ready for bed, meaning most single parents and main caregivers won't have the opportunity to take part, with only one session per nursery.

We want our say

But, despite these obstacles being placed in parents' way, we want to arm parents with questions to ask, so the clear conclusion of the consultation reflects the massive opposition that exists.

Given that the childcare crisis is national, we are linking up with other nursery campaigns. We were invited to speak at a meeting putting the case for publicly owned nurseries,

alongside nursery campaigners and striking National Education Union (NEU) members in London.

With a general election later in the year, why can't the Labour-run council keep these nurseries open, and call on an incoming Keir Starmer-led government to properly fund childcare? Many parents are rightly sceptical that Labour will even take such much-needed measures like that.

One Little Owls nursery parent, Socialist Party member Iain Dalton, is standing in the council election as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in Gipton and Harehills ward. Seven TUSC candidates are standing across Leeds.

We need political representatives who will refuse to vote for cuts, and instead put their energy into organising and supporting campaigns like ours.

● **Read what we've said before – 'Leeds Labour making up nursery cuts as they go along' at socialistparty.org.uk**

Support for socialist ideas at Leicester Palestine demo

SAADA MOHAMED
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

There was a huge turnout from within Leicester and the wider Leicestershire area to the Palestine march from Victoria Park to Leicester city centre on 21 April.

Socialist Party members distributed leaflets explaining the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) election stand, voicing our opposition to both the Tories and Labour, which was met with support. We were also able to advertise our upcoming public meeting. We had many conversations with people voicing their disappointment with politicians and the establishment and were able to give our working-class perspective on this issue. One person donated a

£20 note after hearing what we had to say.

After the march, there were talks held about Palestine with many different speakers, including MP for Leicester East Claudia Webbe speaking on the injustice we have witnessed in the past six months. The estimates for the march put around 1,500 people in attendance which shows how important this issue is to people. The streets of Leicester being completely stopped further showed how this issue cannot and will not be ignored.

Socialist Party members set up an hour before the protest, with two campaign stalls on both sides of the entrance to the park. This meant we were in a good position to speak to as many people as possible!



Socialist Party at the protest HEATHER RAWLING

Gateshead International Stadium NICAN45/C0



Nottingham Labour cuts will wreck community

JON DALE AND GARY FREEMAN
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE TRADES UNION COUNCIL, AND
NOTTINGHAM SAVE OUR SERVICES

It was standing room only at Nottingham Save Our Services' (SOS) first public meeting outside the city centre, in a local community.

Since the Labour-controlled city council announced massive cuts to services, and over 500 full-time equivalent jobs threatened, the SOS campaign has held successful city centre meetings, a march, and protests outside the council.

Meadows

Now the campaign is developing into the estates. The Meadows area was leafleted door-to-door, with campaign stalls too.

100 attended the meeting, and



CHRIS TREBENZA

heard passionate speakers from the local Meadows Action Group, Friends of Meadows Library (FOML),

the local bowling club, and the community centre. They could all be closed by the impact of the cuts.

150 children had attended the Christmas party in the library, put on by FOML. A woman said her son only learnt to read at the library, and was now at university.

45 different groups use the community centre, where staff have to run around with buckets, because the roof leaks in heavy rain. The bowling club is run by volunteers.

But all this voluntary effort by local people needs the council to provide buildings and back-up services. These cuts will wreck much that holds the community together.

Anti-cuts councillor

Councillor Shugufatuh Quddoos – the only councillor to vote against the council budget – got a great reception when she spoke.

After the cuts were announced, she attended the first meetings to oppose them. Shugufatuh has been inspired to hear of the Poplar Labour councillors. 100 years ago, they went to prison to defeat unjust attacks on

their community, with the slogan: "Better to break the law than break the poor". And they won a victory.

Shugufatuh said she would do that too if needed. She said how disappointed she had been that no other councillors joined her in voting against the cuts budget. She was immediately suspended from the Labour group.

Some argued in the meeting that there was no alternative but to vote Labour in the coming general election, to make sure the Tories are defeated. But it was clear many in the meeting were not convinced by that, and want to vote for a candidate that will defend their community.

Nottingham Save Our Services will be organising more meetings in local areas, aiming to work with already established groups, and with new groups too, set up to fight the cuts.

● **Read what we've said before – 'Nottingham marches to oppose cuts' at socialistparty.org.uk**



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.

- 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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

- For united working-class struggle to end discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice and oppression.
- Repeal the anti-trade union laws and all others that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest and to strike! End police harassment. For the police to be accountable to local committees, made up of democratically elected representatives of trade unions, local community organisations and local authorities.
- For the right to choose when and whether to have children – for the right to access abortion, contraception and fertility treatment for all who need it.
- For the right to asylum – with democratic community control and oversight of emergency funding resources. No to racist immigration laws.
- Expand democracy. For the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. For all MPs to be subject to the right of recall by their constituents at any time, and to only receive a worker's wage.
- For proportional representation and the right to vote at 16.
- For the right of nations to self-determination. For an independent socialist Scotland and for a socialist Wales, both part of a voluntary socialist confederation of Wales, England, Scotland and Ireland.
- Oppose the dictatorship of the billionaire owners of the media. For the nationalisation of newspaper printing facilities, radio, TV and social media platforms. Access to these facilities should be under democratic control, with political parties' coverage being allocated in proportion to the popular vote at elections.
- For a new mass workers' party, based on the trade unions, and drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplaces, and community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, socialist political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

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.



Archives A Socialist World is Possible - the History of the CWI (2004)

A Socialist World is Possible – the History of the CWI, by Peter Taaffe, was originally published in 2004 on the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the Committee for a Workers' International, to celebrate the ideas, programme and achievements of the international up to that point.

The book was an update of Peter's 1998 pamphlet, History of the CWI, which summarised the origins of the CWI and how it built sections on every continent. The introduction written for the 2004 update examines the ideas, methods and programme of the CWI in contrast to other left groups and currents claiming to stand in the tradition of Trotskyism.

Finally, a postscript completes the history of the CWI's first 30 years by summarising the main areas of work and campaigning by the CWI from 1998 to 2004. This includes the important campaigning work of CWI sections during the anti-war movement against the US-British invasion of Afghanistan and the anti-globalisation and anti-capitalist protests of the era, as well as CWI members' work in trade unions and among youth, women, and immigrants, campaigns in working-class communities and in elections.

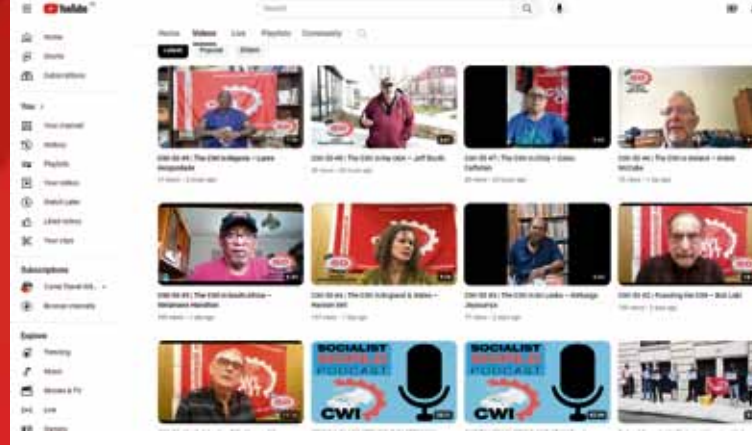
Now, on the fiftieth anniversary of the CWI, the full text is made available online for the first time at socialistworld.net



Watch CWI video series marking 50 years

To celebrate the CWI's fiftieth anniversary, a series of videos have been commissioned. Veterans and pioneers of the CWI, both internationally and in their respective countries, share their experiences.

- Watch all ten videos at youtube.com/CWIMedia



Interview

Clare Doyle - eyewitness to history

HOW DID THE BUILDING OF MILITANT LEAD TO THE FOUNDATION OF THE CWI?

There was a decade between the founding of Militant and the founding conference of the Committee for a Workers' International was held, but that did not mean we were idle. On the contrary! In Britain we were constantly analysing world events and looking for ways to build our forces internationally.

We followed up various links with people we knew who called themselves Trotskyists in Scotland and in Ireland - North and South. We recruited youth like Peter Taaffe, declared that the leaders of

University (after my time) and Davy Dick in Scotland - a member of the Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS). All through the late 1960s and early 1970s we built up the LPYS from a small organisation, when we first won a majority, to one which would later have no fewer than 2,000 young people at its annual national conferences.

Unfortunately, we did not have the possibility to intervene in the revolutionary events of May 1968 in France. But just weeks before they exploded, in public debate in London, our secretary, Peter Taaffe, declared that the leaders of

Celebrating 50 years of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI)



TONY SAUNOIS CWI SECRETARY

Over the weekend of 20-21 April 1974, a small but crucial international meeting took place in a room at the Old Mother Redcap pub (now the World's End) in Camden, London. This meeting decided to launch a new revolutionary Trotskyist international organisation, the Committee for a Workers' International - the CWI. The new international was to be wedded to the ideas and methods of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

Present at the meeting were supporters of the Militant newspaper in Britain and very small groups which had been established in Ireland, Germany and Sweden, together with individuals from Sri Lanka, Jamaica and some other countries. Although tiny in number at that stage, the CWI was to take important strides forward in the second half of the 1970s and in the 1980s and have a significant impact internationally. For 50 years, the CWI has been involved in a political struggle for a revolutionary socialist programme for the working class, participating, and in some situations playing a leading

role, in the struggles of the working class and oppressed.

Upturn in class struggle

Today, the CWI has successfully intervened in the upturn in the class struggle which has been apparent with the rise in strikes in Britain, Germany, the US and some other countries. In the horrific situation in most of Asia, Africa and Latin America we have maintained the revolutionary core in crucial countries like Nigeria, South Africa, Chile, Sri Lanka, India and elsewhere, our forces actively participating in the struggles taking place there.

The deepening crisis of dystopian global capitalism with wars, polarisation, and class conflict and struggle, poses the urgent necessity for the working class to rebuild support for the independent political alternative of socialism.

The CWI is part of that process and is rebuilding the revolutionary Trotskyist movement and building revolutionary socialist parties that can eventually become large or mass parties. In the struggle to build such parties, new forces and parties will emerge that will also be a part of that process. To build revolutionary socialist parties, two components

are essential. One is that it is essential they are based on a solid Marxist theoretical base, perspective and programme. At the same time, they must be rooted in action, intervention and participation in the class struggle and lives of the oppressed. The CWI is confident and optimistic that it can play a crucial role with others in building the revolutionary socialist parties and international that will be essential to defeat capitalism and build a socialist future.

• Read Tony's full article on the history of the CWI at socialistworld.net



Youth Against Racism in Europe which was launched by the CWI marching in Brussels in 1992

CWI members in Nigeria protesting against the cost-of-living crisis in 2024

the Fourth International were facing the wrong way. They were ruling out significant workers' struggles even in France and saw the struggle of a peasant army in Vietnam as the equivalent of the Bolshevik revolution!

In Spain in the early 1970s, the challenge from below to Franco's dictatorship was also gathering momentum. We conducted a massive Spanish Young Socialists Defence Campaign, arranging speaking tours around Britain, organising visits to illegal Spanish Young Socialist conferences (in southern France) and sending printing equipment into the country in the backs of cars or on ships!

In 1970, we produced a 'Programme of the International'. It summarised our international experience since the end of World War Two. We held a conference in London on how to proceed, and decided not to attempt to rejoin the existing 'Fourth International'. We would work to build support internationally through discussing with other revolutionary and left-moving

forces. We would use our position in the LPYS to go to new layers in the youth sections of the social democratic and other parties wherever we could.

The LPYS chairperson at the time, Peter Doyle, and other comrades visited various conferences abroad. One was that of the Swedish Social Democratic Youth where part of an already growing left opposition was won to our ideas. In Germany, a number of Jusos (Young Socialist) members joined us when they saw the LPYS's campaigning work. Already in the year that the CWI was set up - 1974 - the paper 'Voran' was launched. It got a very positive response, growing significantly in the mid-1980s.

Sri Lanka is the home of the first mass party of Trotskyism - the LSSP. We already had contact with members of that party who opposed its increasingly reformist policies. Ted Grant and Peter Taaffe met young revolutionaries on visits to Sri Lanka and India, including Siritunga Jayasuriya and later, Jagadish Chandra. They have for decades

now been leading the Indian and Sri Lankan sections of the CWI and assisted each other in the building of our forces in Asia.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE CENTRAL TENETS OF THE CWI'S APPROACH AND ANALYSIS?

Wars and revolutions are the biggest tests of revolutionary forces - not just in terms of maintaining their organisational cohesion but in standing the test of analysis and programme. We are convinced that we have passed these tests politically, even if our forces are still weak from a global perspective. But we have to struggle with the consequences of the mistakes of the reformist and Stalinist mass organisations of the past, which have not made it easy for us to convince workers and young people to join our ranks.

However, our emphasis on the vital importance of working-class

struggle and the building of parties that fight on socialist programmes is a sine qua non, without which revolutionary leaderships cannot be built.

The CWI in all its 50 years of existence has adhered to Trotsky's dearly held tenet that a real workers' international can only gather sufficient forces to carry through the transformation of society by developing a programme of 'transitional' demands. By that he meant in each country showing how the most reasonable of demands - on wages, jobs, education, health, housing etc - can be achieved and consolidated only by making the transition from capitalism to socialism.

It is not impossible, where the weight of numbers is overwhelmingly on the side of the working class, that a socialist transformation can be carried through peacefully. Sections of the state's own forces can be won over to the side

of the working class, especially with a class appeal to their ranks. But as we have seen so many times in history, the ruling class will not give way without a fight if they have the forces to resist.

A party trusted by workers, with clear-sighted leaders who are subject to election and immediate recall, and receive no more than the wage of a skilled worker, like the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky, is the only force that can lead to the ending of capitalism on a national and international scale.

In today's conditions, an appeal by workers coming to power in one country would spark a prairie fire of successful revolution across borders. The forces of our international can grow rapidly - into a substantial fighting organisation that plays a decisive role in uniting workers' struggles worldwide to transform the future of mankind on the basis of socialism and communism.

• Clare's full interview of her experiences can be read at socialistworld.net

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MASS DEMOCRATIC WORKERS' STRUGGLE TO END WAR AND OPPRESSION

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18 children and four others were killed in an Israeli airstrike in Rafah on 20 April. Nine people were killed the night before in the city into which over a million Gazans have been driven, fleeing for their safety. The death toll now exceeds 34,000.

The spectre of a full-scale offensive on Rafah looms; threats have been repeatedly made by Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The US House of Representatives has just approved \$26 billion of aid to Israel, part of a bill that bans US funding for the

UNRWA, the UN aid agency providing relief in Gaza.

And yet US President Joe Biden and other Western politicians, like British foreign secretary David Cameron, call for 'restraint'. They fear the conflict spilling over into a regional war, not because of any concern for the peoples of the Middle East, but because of the threat to their profit interests.

Above all, they fear the threat of popular mass uprisings in the region. The ruling classes in the region and internationally are haunted by the spectre of the 2011-12 Arab Spring, which swept the region and deposed several dictatorial rulers.

The road to Palestinian national self-determination is through

mass democratic struggle – a socialist intifada. With that, the development of mass workers' organisations and parties, independent of capitalist interests – and links between them across the region, including in Israel, and internationally.

Britain has seen mass protests against Israeli state terror and in support of the Palestinians' right to national self-determination. Socialist Party members have fought to increase the scale and organisation of the movement, including by fighting for the trade union movement, with its over 6 million members, to play a central role.

Part of that is by helping to organise protests – like those taking place on the workplace

day of action on 1 May. So too, organising sections of the working class that are pivotal to Britain's defence industry – those in weapons manufacturing and distribution that have huge potential power.

And politically, the trade unions could play a central role in taking steps towards building a new mass working-class party – taking on Sunak and Starmer who back war and cuts, and instead fighting on the side of the working class internationally – including defending the rights of Palestinians and others to national self-determination.

● **Read more: Working class can transform volatile Middle East, page 7**

The Socialist Party is fighting for:

- End the siege – for the permanent withdrawal of the Israeli military from the occupied territories
- For a mass struggle of the Palestinians, under their own democratic control, to fight for liberation
- For the building of independent workers' parties in Palestine and Israel and links between them
- For an independent, socialist Palestinian state, alongside a socialist Israel, with guaranteed rights for all minorities, as part of the struggle for a socialist Middle East
- No trust in the capitalist politicians, internationally or in Britain. Fight to build a workers' party in Britain that fights for socialism and internationalism

PHOTO: DIEGO ULTRA

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



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