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the Socialist

Issue 1274

9-15 May 2024

formerly **Militant**

MESSAGE TO THE TORIES: 'GET OUT!'



PHOTO: PAUL MATSSON

Build a new mass workers' party Fight for socialist change

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

People want the Tories gone. That was the extremely clear message from the 2 May local elections. They lost 474 councillors and control of ten councils.

Many will celebrate the Tories' devastating losses, and will be eagerly anticipating what is set to be an utter defeat for them in the general election. People want this government out because things have got to change!

Support for workers during the strike wave marked an increase in anger at low pay and the cost-of-living crisis. Polls show huge public support for nationalisation of water, energy and rail, at the very least. The participation of hundreds of thousands of people in the Gaza protests show mass disgust at the British government's complicity in the

actions of the Israeli military - over 33,000 dead.

There will be huge expectations that a Labour government will improve things. After all, the Labour leadership has promised a 'new deal for working people'.

But on international workers' day - May Day itself - Labour announced its plans to water down its pledges. Another policy U-turn in favour of the bosses looms.

Currently the working class, the majority of us who produce all wealth in society and have the power to change it, has no organised mass political voice.

Even with tremendous wins from industrial action and the Gaza protests alarming the establishment, the horrors of profit-driven capitalism carry on unchallenged.

The Socialist Party is campaigning for a workers' list of candidates for the general election, backed by the trade unions, which could act as

a step towards building a new mass working-class party. Such a party, armed with a socialist programme, could translate the huge desire for change and organise it into a force to bring an end to capitalism and begin building a fairer socialist society.

If you want to fight for socialist change, join us today!

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to find out more about joining us today!



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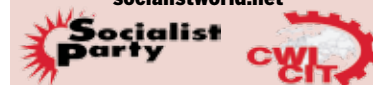
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."
Karl Marx

Soaring cost of holidays another crime of profit-hungry bosses

MIHAELA IVANOVA
TOWER HAMLETS SOCIALIST PARTY

Working-class people have been hit the hardest by the cost-of-living crisis, with many struggling to meet their most basic necessities, living paycheque to paycheque.

Families that had previously been able to afford to go on holiday might not be able to so today and in the uncertain future. As the growing cost of transport, accommodation, sightseeing and food expenses rise, the idea of a cheaper 'staycation' also seems to be in steady decline.

Seaside towns have become over-run with more than 300,000 short-term let properties available across holiday let sites such as AirBnb. For working-class people in these towns, this has worsened a crippling housing crisis.

The British transport network is made up of a messy patchwork of companies competing to make the most profits possible. Rail companies continually cut funding for transport infrastructure, shut down ticket stations across the country, and attack rail workers' working conditions and pay. But its not just them. P&O Ferries fired and rehired workers on worse terms and conditions in 2022. Airport staff at Heathrow, members

of Unite the Union, have won strike ballots over outsourcing plans. And British Airways cabin crew have taken strike action over poverty pay.

This is all happening while bosses continue to give themselves a pat on the back and bonuses, like that of Ryanair's CEO Michael O'Leary and his £86 million bonus paycheque. All while cancellations continue and flight prices are set to increase by 10% this summer due to malfunctions and a shortage of planes.

Publicly owned transport network

We are in the 'perfect storm' of privatisation as fares and ticket prices are higher than they have ever been, yet delays and cancellations are also at a record high!

That is why the Socialist Party campaigns for a fully nationalised, democratically planned, public transport system, with compensation only on the basis of proven need.

The necessity for an integrated public transport system is clear. With the cost-of-living crisis affecting every aspect of life, we must take trade-union backed action to fight against the cuts to our public services, and call for the nationalisation of all vital parts of the economy, to be able to democratically plan and



JONATHAN PALOMBO/CC

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manage our resources. This would include the once-nationalised holiday industry - including airports, airlines and hotel chains - to give access to leisure to all. We could democratically plan the economy on the basis of need instead of profit to deliver a decent standard of living for all, including the need to have an affordable, environmentally sustainable holiday.

Disenfranchised by voter-ID

Former Tory prime minister Boris Johnson has got himself back in the news by turning up to his local polling station on election day without the required voter ID - foiled by a law his own government brought in. He resorted to trying to use a magazine as ID!

Eye-rolling aside, it helps highlight how obstructive this law is to voting. More serious examples include a soldier of 27 years being turned away trying to use a veterans ID card, which have come into being after the acceptable forms of ID were published. And he is not alone. A 2023 Newcastle University study found that 70% of poll workers turned away at least one voter because they did not have an acceptable form of identification in last year's local elections. Women in particular were hit, because they got married and changed their names, meaning their ID and register names were different. And the availability of identification is lower among those with a severely limiting disability, the unemployed and those without educational qualifications.

The voter ID laws are yet another barrier to voting and help explain low turnouts. The main issue is of course finding something worth voting for! And that's why Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates stood to offer that socialist alternative on 2 May.



LEE HAYWOOD/CC

Capitalist competition condemns climate

Oil giant BP is set to scale back its climate targets, again. In 2023 it pledged to decrease its oil and gas production by 25% on 2019 levels by the end of the decade. It had been 40% back in 2020.

BP shareholders, motivated by short-term profit and dividends, have been restless as BP lags behind its rivals such as Chevron, Shell, Exxon Mobil and TotalEnergies - all have even less ambitious or non-existent climate targets.

One investor told the Financial Times: "We'd all love them to build more in renewables but from a shareholder point of view, returns are not there".

And in a nutshell, that's why capitalism can't solve the climate crisis.

For a transition to green energy to be planned and implemented, the energy industry needs to be nationalised under democratic workers' control and management, with no compensation for the fat-cat owners.

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Community action can stop Tories' desperate deportations

Fight for jobs, homes and services for all

DEJI OLAVINKA
CROYDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The Tories' racist Rwanda policy has led to a surge in deportation raids and innocent asylum seekers being detained when 'checking in' to mandated appointments with the Home Office. In response, brave activists have put their bodies on the line to stop deportation vehicles from taking them away, similar to sit-down actions taken to stop police vans taking anti-war protesters to jail.

While some instances have succeeded, others have not, mainly because of insufficient numbers to prevent the police overwhelming and often arresting protesters.

Community mobilisation

It's important that organisations of working-class communities, like local trades councils and union branches, take the initiative in mobilising to support these interventions. Union members could use their experience from stewarding protests and picket lines to support organising the resistance. But most importantly, these organisations could enable quicker and larger mobilisations to get the numbers needed for success.

In 2021 I received a message in my union branch group chat that attracted me and other trade unionists

to a successful anti-deportation raid action involving around 200 people in Peckham. Similarly in Glasgow in 2021, hundreds of protesters prevented police detaining two people prior to deportation. (See 'Peckham mass resistance stops immigration raid' and 'Glasgow mass action defeats Home Office deportation attempt' at socialistparty.org.uk)

When working-class communities mobilise and take action collectively, we can stop the state taking action against one of our own. The mass non-payment of the poll tax and bailiff-busting campaign is another example.

Additionally, mass mobilisations are a show of strength and help widen support for the cause. They play an important role showing that it's not just a minority of people that are against racist deportations. Instead, it will act as proof that entire communities, including those not directly affected, are against racism, as was shown in the huge Black Lives Matter protests across the country in 2020.

Mass actions and protests put pressure on the Labour leadership to reverse the Tories' racist Rwanda law when they get into power later this year. But to end all racist migration laws we need a socialist programme, and people to fight for it. The Socialist Party's Black Workers' Charter (see www.socialistparty.org.uk/BWC2023) includes demands such as:

- End the hostile environment - end all racist immigration laws. For community and trade union oversight of border controls. No deportations
- Grant all refugees and asylum seekers the right to work
- Close all detention centres - these are run by profit-driven companies that further exploit detainees and use them for cheap labour
- The right to asylum - including the right of families to be reunited
- Fight for jobs, homes and services for all
- Take the wealth off the 1%. We can't control what we don't own. A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people
- A socialist foreign policy based on genuine democratic workers' cooperation, international solidarity, and peace. No to capitalism, imperialism, colonialism and war
- No trust in capitalist politicians. Join the fight to build a mass democratic workers' party to represent our interests and fight for these demands

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



Glasgow anti-deportation action in 2021 SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND

Dentist crisis: Make it free, make it public!

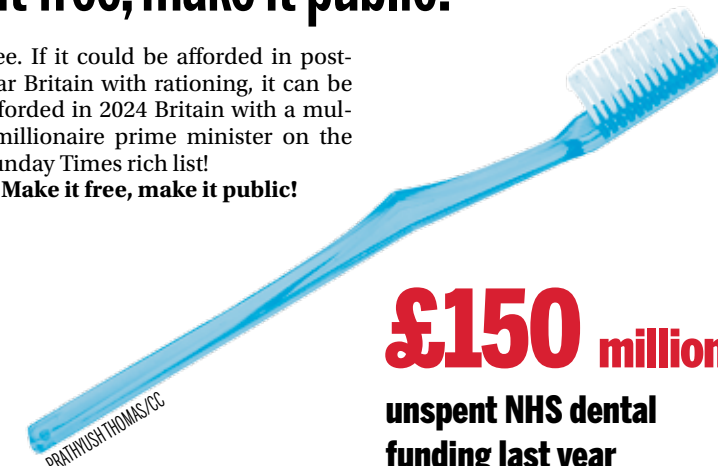
Struggling to find an NHS dentist? You're not alone. In some parts of Britain as few as one in ten adults had an NHS dentist appointment in the last 12 months.

When new NHS places become available, people queue around the block. And yet £150 million of NHS dental funding was unspent last year! Not enough dentists opted to take on the flawed NHS contract and decided to operate entirely privately instead.

Even if you are 'lucky' enough to have NHS treatment, you can end up being charged up to £319.10. When the NHS was created in 1948, it was

free. If it could be afforded in post-war Britain with rationing, it can be afforded in 2024 Britain with a multimillionaire prime minister on the Sunday Times rich list!

Make it free, make it public!



£150 million
unspent NHS dental funding last year



PAULA MITCHELL

Starmer threatens ditching workers' rights

Donate to Socialist Party general election stand

Starmer's Labour is threatening to water down its 'New Deal' package of workers' rights. These attempts are to make sure that, as one business leader told the Financial Times, big business is "pretty relaxed" at the prospect of a Starmer-led government later this year.

Mick Lynch, general secretary of the Rail Maritime and Transport union, said that attempts to dial down Labour's support for workers would be met with a "robust response from the entire trade union movement".

Many workers are desperate to get the Tories out, and want to fight against anti-worker laws, low pay and zero-hour contracts. One way to robustly respond would be to back workers' candidates in the general election. A workers' list of candidates, backed by the trade unions and fighting for their policies, would hold Starmer's feet to the fire and make sure he delivers on improvements to workers' rights.

New mass workers' party

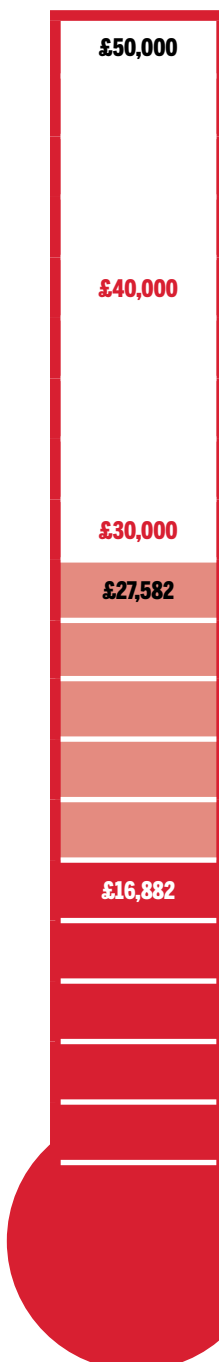
The Socialist Party is playing our part in fighting for such a list. We are campaigning across the trade unions to have the necessary debates and discussions about how the workers' movement can best fight for its interests in the general election and take steps towards building a mass party that represents the working class.

As part of that fight, Socialist Party members plan to stand, under the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition banner, in 30-40 seats in the general election. We will be fighting for a socialist programme, which includes repealing all the anti-trade union laws, and taking decisions out of the hands of the bosses, putting workers in charge of democratically running workplaces and society as a whole.

General Election campaign fund

Can you help fund the Socialist Party general election campaign? We have a target of raising £50,000 to pay for the £500 deposits and minimum £750 for an election mailing in each seat we stand in.

How much can you contribute?
Pledges to be made by the end of June, and paid by the end of July



- Email isai@socialistparty.org.uk with your pledge
- Donate: www.socialistparty.org.uk/donate

Usdaw ADM prepares for a Labour government



Keir Starmer speaking at Usdaw ADM

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN USDAW

The annual delegate meeting (ADM) of Usdaw, the shop and distribution workers' union, took place in Blackpool's Winter Gardens in the run-up to both the local elections and Blackpool South parliamentary by-election.

The union leadership was unequivocal in its backing of a future Keir Starmer-led government, with a number of debates and national executive statements geared towards our union promoting Labour as "the only way" of seeing the end of Tory rule.

While, overall, Usdaw delegates supported this position on, desperate to get rid of the Tories, it was also clear that it alienated a section who hold no faith in Starmer to deliver. An increase in Usdaw Broad Left membership is one expression of this. What is also apparent are the future battle lines that will be drawn up.

Starmer, Usdaw ADM's guest speaker, was well received when talking on aspects of Usdaw's policies which he would back, such as introducing new legislation to clamp down on abuse of shop workers. However, he also made other remarks which make clear whose side he is really on. Starmer made mention of the Winter Gardens being the



Usdaw's role shouldn't be to be a 'good friend' to Labour 'through thick and thin', but to fight our union's policies, whoever is in government

place where Tony Blair gave his first speech as Labour leader, adding it was "his Clause IV moment" and declaring that "Labour will hold out a hand to business".

Starmer declared to general secretary Paddy Lillis at the beginning of his address: "Paddy, you have been a good friend to me through thick and thin and I intend to be a good friend to you through thick and thin." Yet, we also got a taste of Starmer's integrity or lack thereof, with him promising, when questioned by an Usdaw delegate, that he would not water down terms of Labour's New Deal for Workers, which he promptly went back on, the next day, on May Day to add further insult to injury.

Even if Usdaw's leadership is cozy with the right-wing Labour leadership, a whole swathe of propositions brought to this year's ADM call for action on precisely the kinds of policies which Labour has already scrapped or watered down. These include: reaffirming the UK's commitment to net zero, scrapping the two-child benefit cap, protecting the pensions triple lock, and providing free school meals, to name but a few.

Such policies will quickly become a sticking point for workers and Usdaw members in the likely scenario that Starmer forms the next government. In order to demonstrate that he can be a safe pair of hands for capitalism, he has already made it abundantly clear that he intends to stick to Tory government spending plans and is prepared to ditch pro-worker policies.

Usdaw's role shouldn't be as a 'good friend' to Labour 'through thick and thin', but to fight for our union's policies, whoever is in government. Our union should back those who are politically prepared to put forward policies which will benefit the union membership. With Starmer showing a propensity to break pledges and U-turn in the interests of big business before he's even in government, Usdaw members should be prepared to back candidates who will better represent their interests or stand themselves, even if that means doing so independently of Labour.

Shoplifting

On the eve of Usdaw ADM, it was reported that shoplifting offences recorded by the police have hit record highs since modern records began in 2002.

Shoplifting is a crime that rises and falls with people's living standards, with thefts from shops spiking in the Thatcher era, as well as after the recent austerity and cost-of-living crises.

But as Usdaw members know, this isn't a victimless crime. Alongside shoplifting, assault on retail workers has been creeping up. The British Retail Consortium's annual crime survey released in February last year showed there were 1,300 incidents of abuse and violence against retail workers, 50% up on the previous year.

Usdaw's campaigning on this issue has focused on dealing with the aftermath of these incidents - calling for a specific offence of assaulting a retail worker to be reduced, removing the arbitrary £200 threshold for prosecuting shoplifting and increasing police numbers.

But prevention would be far better - no workers should be assaulted simply for doing their job. Usdaw's Freedom From Fear campaign often focuses on measures under the control of national government, and can

seem to let the employer off the hook. Measures we should be demanding of employers could include ending single-person staffing of small shops, or ending the outsourcing of security guards in retail stores. Disappointingly, a motion calling for the latter at the ADM was withdrawn before it could be debated.

This needs to be linked to measures to alleviate the poverty levels that a decade of austerity and the cost-of-living crisis have sent skyrocketing - this could include measures such as increasing the minimum wage to Usdaw's demand of £15 an hour, and providing benefits people can live off, including scrapping the two-child cap, as voted for at this year's ADM. This would undercut the desperate position some individuals find themselves in, as well as the market for some of the criminal gangs that have begun to steal from shops to sell goods on.

Ultimately, we cannot rely on the supermarket bosses and their political representatives to protect retail workers - their driving motive is increasing their profits. Measures for retail workers' safety should be put under the democratic control of elected workers' representatives, linked to bringing the big supermarkets and distribution companies into democratic public ownership so their huge resources can be put towards meeting the needs of all workers.



PHOTO: JOHN PERIVOLARIS/CC



**May Day greetings
from Plymouth RMT**



**nationalshop
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Tories Out – fight for a workers' manifesto!

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BUILD THE STUDENT PROTESTS AGAINST WAR

SEAMUS SMYTH
SOCIALIST PARTY EAST MIDLANDS ORGANISER

University students across the United States have set up encampments to protest against the brutal onslaught on the Palestinian people by the Israeli state after the US Government agreed an extra \$15 billion for the Israeli military. Students are calling on universities to cut ties with companies making huge profits aiding the Israeli military and its occupation in Gaza.

There has been vicious police suppression against the protesters, showing how cruel the university managements are by encouraging these attacks on students and staff. In Columbia University, for example, students were faced with hundreds of riot police who barbarically attacked protesters and arrested students and staff en masse.

It is not only university management; the pro-capitalist Democratic and Republican parties support and encourage these cruel responses by police and university security.

UK protests

Students here have seen the events in the US and have taken action

onto their campuses with solidarity protests and encampments. Students fighting against the war do not have a mass party that represents them either.

In order for students to defend the right to protest in solidarity with the Palestinian people, students need to have their own democratic organisations. They could link up with the workers' movement and the trade unions. Socialist Party members are fighting in trade unions to bring together workers in the arms and logistics industries to discuss and debate what action they can take against the war - workers in the same companies students are protesting against.

Students, linked to the workers' movement, could help take the necessary steps for genuine workers' political representation, to fight against the barbaric war on Gaza and the right to protest on campuses and in the workplaces, but also to fight against the housing crisis, never-ending cuts and exploitation here in Britain.

The fight against war means fighting for socialism. It's the working-class and students internationally who have the power to bring that change about.

Oxford

Appearing overnight, the newly formed 'Oxford Action for Palestine' added Oxford to the long list of Palestinian solidarity encampments spanning the world. So, with leaflets, Socialist newspapers, and six boxes of cereal in tow, we headed down to lend our support and put forward a socialist programme.

The group's appointed media liaison explained the group is comprised of a mix of students and professors standing in solidarity with their Palestinian counterparts. She said that they don't intend to leave until their demands are met, which are:

1. Disclose all finances and open the University's books
2. Divest from Israeli genocide, apartheid, and occupation
3. Overhaul university investment policy
4. Boycott Israeli genocide, apartheid, and occupation
5. Stop banking with Barclays
6. Support Palestinian-led rebuilding of education in Gaza

Plenty of positive aspects to their demands, such as opening the University's books, are mirrored by their collaboration with students at other universities and with university trade unions. The group has been working alongside the University and College Union (UCU) branch which sent out a statement supporting the camp. Further collaboration was seen with the camp swelling to around 500 as part of a healthcare workers' vigil.

When asked what message the group would like to send to socialists, the response was very direct. She called on socialists to get involved in

their local camps, or build new ones if not already established.

I agree, socialists should get involved, but also use all the levers available to workers in addition to occupations. Only with workers and students acting side by side will their full demands be met.

RACHEL COX
OXFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

**Join the student
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students**

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- or call **020 8988 8761**
- or text your name and school, college or uni to **07749 379 010**

Socialist Students says:

- **Stop the Gaza slaughter – for the permanent withdrawal of the Israeli military from the occupied territories**
- **Solidarity with students occupying universities across the US. Stop arming Israeli state terror!**
- **Defend the right to protest on campus. Student unions must lead campaigns to defend any students victimised for protesting against war and oppression**
- **Kick out the Tories! But Starmer's Labour is no alternative. Help us build a new workers' party with socialist policies to end war, austerity and capitalism**
- **For a socialist Middle East and world!**



UCL protest across the gates JAMES IVENS

UCL

Students at University College London have gone into occupation demanding an end to the institution's support for the Israeli state onslaught on Palestine.

The tent encampment follows an earlier room occupation. UCL management has responded by having security close the campus to the public.

A solidarity protest on Friday 3 May attracted around a hundred across both sides of the gates at short notice. Supporters outside were open to discussing socialist ideas to end the war, with one telling me he had voted for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in the London elections the day before.

To defend and extend protest actions like the UCL occupation, students need their own democratic campaign organisations that can draw together the various strands of student struggle and link up with campus trade unions. Join Socialist Students to help us build that!

JAMES IVENS



TOMMY BOYCE

Warwick

Students and supporters gathered to hear speakers at the Warwick protest from the anti-war and trade union movement. The speaker from the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) mentioned the potential role of workers in stopping arms supplies to an illegal war.

As we tried to hand out TUSC election leaflets, a self-admitted prospective local Labour Party candidate in a mask and hood tried to take our leaflets, claiming this wasn't a political protest!

Manchester

On the 1 May, students at the University of Manchester (UoM), including Manchester Leftist Action, Youth Front for Palestine, Youth Demand, and Manchester Palestine Action, occupied Brunswick Park as an escalation of a series of short occupations resisting Israel's assault on Palestine and the university's ties with arms companies.

When I visited the occupation in Manchester for an interview, they had just renamed it Dr Adnan Al-Bursh Park, after a Palestinian doctor and professor who died in an Israeli prison on 19 April.

Among the groups' demands is no disciplinary action against students involved. Already a student is facing suspension for their journalistic work exposing UoM's vice chancellor saying she was comfortable with arms industries being on campus.

So far, other than the threat of suspension, the university has put up no resistance to the occupation. A spokesperson for the group said: "If the university wants to put a possession order through, they're welcome to, and we will decide collectively what we want to do about that."

I asked what the group want people to do: "Show your support, be loud, keep shouting about Palestine because the second we don't, we lose the rich legacy of the Palestinian people."

Socialist Students calls for students to organise democratically, and link up with the broader workers' movement, to resist war, occupation and university marketisation. Universities having strong ties with the arms industry is a product of the broader issue of treating education as a market rather than a public service. Governmental funding has been slashed, and so management turn to wealthy companies, exploitative student rents and high international fees to fill the deficit. A socialist transformation of society is the only permanent solution, and if you want to help get us there get in touch with Socialist Students or the Socialist Party and build a mass movement of students and workers to resist war and capitalism.

SAM HEY
MANCHESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Leeds

Socialist Party members visited the encampment opposite Leeds University Union. While we visited, university staff members also came down to offer support. We explained that we stood in the elections opposing the war on Gaza as part of TUSC, and our election leaflets were added to those being handed to supporters of the occupation.

Student occupiers joined the Leeds TUC May Day march for peace at the weekend which swelled to over 500 strong.

LOCAL ELECTIONS: SUNAK DAMNED, STARMER SET FOR NUMBER 10

Prepare a workers' general election stand

Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

If anything, the beating the Tories took in the 2 May elections was even greater than predicted, as voters vented their fury at the government. In the Blackpool South by-election there was a 26% swing against Sunak's party. They lost 474 council seats, almost half of those they were contesting. The only bright spot for Sunak was the victory of Ben Houchen, the Tory Mayor of Tees Valley facing allegations of 'industrial-scale corruption'. But Houchen only won by disassociating himself from his own party; even so, his vote fell by 19%.

Post-election, Sunak's sacked ultra-right wing home secretary, Suella Braverman, has led the attack on him. She declared that she regretted supporting him for leader, but she also said, "We must not change our leader. Changing leader now won't work: the time to do so came and went. The hole to dig us out is the PM's, and it is time for him to start shovelling."

Braverman, and probably the others with leadership ambitions, would rather Sunak 'walks into the guns' and leads the party to defeat, while they get on with preparing for the inter-Tory civil war that is coming afterwards. Given this, right now it doesn't appear likely that Sunak will be forced into a general election before the summer, although nothing is certain given the government's fragile state.

Tory collapse

Regardless of when the general election takes place, 2 May was a further confirmation of what the outcome will be. Starmer's New Labour was the main beneficiary of the Tories' electoral collapse, as it will be in the general election. Sunak's statement that Britain is heading towards a hung parliament with Labour as the largest party is not a serious attempt at prediction, but it is an admission of the obvious: that his party cannot avoid humiliating defeat.

Nonetheless, as Peter Kellner, ex-president of YouGov, explained, this is not a repetition of the run-up to 1997, when Tony Blair's New Labour Mark One won a landslide. As he explains: "The BBC estimates that Labour's support in this week's local elections was equivalent to 34% across Britain. In 1996, the last local elections before Labour returned to government, the party won 43%." However, he concludes, Labour doesn't need to be doing as well as in 1997 "to win a comfortable victory" because the Tory vote is set to fall much further.



Disillusionment

Growing hatred of the Tories does not, however, equal enthusiasm for Starmer's 'Tory-lite' New Labour. In Blackpool South, Labour's candidate got almost 2,000 votes less than Labour did in 2019, to record its lowest result in the constituency since 1983. In the local elections, Labour's support actually fell by one point from 2023.

Nor did the other mainstream 'establishment' party, the Liberal Democrats, make significant progress overall. They increased their tally of councillors by 104, but their vote share remains around 10%, and a number of 'traditional Tory' areas - like Rushmore in Hampshire - went Labour rather than Liberal Democrat.

Most importantly, the election was another demonstration of the depth of disillusionment with all the mainstream capitalist parties. Many voters stayed at home. Others, however, expressed their anger by voting for parties which they saw as anti-establishment. On the right, Reform UK scored an average of 12%, up from 7% in 2023, in the tenth of seats where

they stood, but only got two new councillors elected.

Green gains

However, the biggest anti-establishment votes were to the left. The increased vote for the Green Party, which won a substantial 181 councillors, mainly represents a search by voters for an anti-austerity, anti-war alternative to Starmer's Labour. But in reality the Greens are no such thing. Some socialists have joined the Greens, but as a party it accepts the constraints of the capitalist system. Where Greens have been in power at local level, they have implemented austerity.

In the 2019 general election, the Greens had an electoral arrangement with the Liberal Democrats - who were part of the vicious austerity coalition government from 2010-2015 - standing down for them in 40 seats; yet they stood against Jeremy Corbyn and other left Labour candidates. This time they are refusing to stand down in Islington North where Jeremy Corbyn is expected to run as a left independent, just as they stood against

of the independents are standing as individuals, rather than the representatives of collective working-class interests which we are going to desperately need in the council chambers and parliament under the next government.

Whatever the exact outcome of the general election, we are heading towards a Starmer-led government. Millions will vote Labour because they see it as the best means to get rid of the Tories, and there will be huge relief when they are finally booted out. But it is already clear that Starmer's Labour will not stand in the interests of the working-class majority.

Starmer workers' rights pledge

Correctly, Sharon Graham, Unite the union general secretary; Mick Lynch, Rail Maritime and Transport union general secretary; and Matt Wrack, Fire Brigades Union general secretary and President of the TUC, have publicly warned Starmer against rolling back the very limited 'workers' rights' that have been promised. They should go further, and pile the pressure on Starmer to commit to other measures that would improve workers' rights, including increasing the minimum wage to the TUC demand of £15 an hour, repealing all the anti-trade union laws - not just the 2016 Trade Union Act pledge - and nationalising Tata Steel and Royal Mail.

Starmer's Labour, like any pro-capitalist government, could be forced to give concessions under mass pressure from the working class. However, to achieve that, the trade union movement will need to be prepared to take industrial action against Starmer's Labour, as it has done against the Tories. And it will also need its own independent political voice.

Last week the ex-Tory health minister, Dan Poulter, crossed over to the Labour benches confident that, "thanks to Keir Starmer Labour has changed fundamentally. The Labour Party of 2019", as he accurately declared, "has been consigned to history." The growth in support for Greens and anti-war, anti-austerity independents is a sign of the search for a party that, as a minimum, stands for the kind of programme - including mass council house building, rent controls, scrapping tuition fees, and nationalisation of Royal Mail, the energy supply companies and more - that has been 'consigned to history' by Starmer.

Workers' general election stand

As anger grows with a Starmer government's defence of the capitalists' interests, demands for the affiliated trade unions to stop funding Labour and begin to build a new party will also grow. What is needed is a mass democratic workers' party, based on the organised working class, with socialist policies.

That is not likely to be achieved

before the general election, but further steps to prepare the ground can be taken now. It is entirely possible that a bloc of workers' MPs, including Jeremy Corbyn and others, could be elected and from day one force Starmer to at least look over his left shoulder.

TUSC

In these elections, the Socialist Party stood as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). TUSC is an electoral coalition which was co-founded by the late Bob Crow, then general secretary of the RMT transport workers' union. Its primary goal is to enable trade unionists, community campaigners and socialists who are fighting for a new mass workers' party to stand candidates against pro-austerity establishment politicians under a clear banner. In the 10% of council seats where TUSC stood, voters had the opportunity to support a clear anti-austerity, anti-war candidate.

It is no coincidence that these were the best results for TUSC since it was relaunched in 2020 after Corbyn's defeat inside Labour. In total, TUSC was able to achieve over 40,000 votes on 2 May. In the local elections it had a post-relaunch record 46 candidates who got 5% or more, with ten getting over 10% and two - Socialist Party member Nadia Ditta in Southampton Bevois and Hasan Tunay in Deepdale, Preston - scoring over 30%. In the London Greater London Authority North East seat, candidate Nancy Taaffe increased her vote from 3,236 to 5,595. The TUSC candidate for the Salford Mayor, Sally Griffiths, won 2,681 votes, 5.4%. (For full report on TUSC votes see www.tusc.org.uk)

While TUSC's results were still modest, they point towards the growing search for a socialist alternative to Starmer's New Labour, even before the advent of a Starmer-led government. They are also a positive demonstration of the benefits of democratic collaboration between different forces, around a minimum anti-austerity programme, with trade unionists playing a central role.

Not all left forces that stood in these elections did so under the TUSC umbrella. Of those who stood outside it, the most significant was the Workers' Party who sit as observers on the TUSC steering committee, but stand outside its umbrella. They got a total of 27,000 votes and four councillors elected. The Workers' Party has begun announcing prospective candidates for the general election. However, maximising the strength of the independent workers' voice in the general election will not be achieved by unilateral declarations by any organisation. Instead, discussions among trade union and socialist organisations locally will need to take place to coordinate the general election challenge. TUSC's 'umbrella' approach is designed to facilitate this method.

On 2 May modest but important steps forward were taken in the fight for working-class political representation. Now the battle is on to build on that for the general election to help prepare the working class for the storms ahead under Starmer.



Socialist Nadia storms to second in Southampton

FRANKIE COULTAS
SOUTHAMPTON EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

'We're all going to have to learn how to pronounce 'Bevois', someone posted on X (Twitter), a few hours after the results had come in, putting TUSC candidate and Socialist Party member Nadia Ditta a healthy second in the Bevois ward, Southampton.

After just four months of campaigning, Nadia and the team managed to secure 32% (848 votes), in an area of Southampton that has been Labour for four decades.

From the start of the campaign in November 2023 to the final 100-strong election rally on the 30 April 2024, the community in Bevois, Newtown and Northam has shown inspiring enthusiasm, optimism and solidarity. This was a vital part of growing and retaining support for Nadia and a socialist alternative.

Working-class power

Months before election day, this energy won back the Venny playground from the clutches of the Labour cuts, and demonstrated the power a united working class can wield.

A win would've been ideal, but it is clear that this is just the beginning. We've built a solid base of support for a socialist alternative and are helping to organise the community at the ballot box and in the streets. We've shown Labour locally that they need to watch their backs, and everyone should watch this space!

TUSC shocks Labour with great result in Preston

MARTIN POWELL-DAVIES
LANCASHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

For an area like Deepdale, a majority Muslim area of Preston, the Labour leadership's stance over Palestine has already driven home the reality of Starmer's Labour in advance of the general election. Over the months of well-attended local demos against the war on Gaza, Socialist Party members have consistently raised that anti-war campaigners should stand their own candidates.

A call had been made in the community for 'no ceasefire, no vote', and to register a protest by spoiling council election ballot papers. We thought local voters needed to be given the opportunity to not just protest but actively vote for candidates opposed to war and cuts.

Two Socialist Party members stood as part of TUSC. Joel Patton, a student, received 137 votes (10%) in the Plunginton ward. Hasan

Tunay, a local restaurant worker, stood in Deepdale itself.

We distributed leaflets across the wards and discussed with as many people as we could meet on stalls, street corners and doorsteps. Right at the start of the campaign in Deepdale, one corner shop took a bundle of our leaflets and proudly gave them out to its customers for the rest of the day. We also organised a public meeting.

At the count, it was immediately clear that Hasan was going to get a good vote. Labour looked worried. While Labour eventually secured 849 votes to hold the seat, Hasan's 522 votes (31.3%) was well ahead of the Tories and Lib Dems.

If the many spoilt votes amongst the nearly 200 rejected votes had instead also been cast largely for TUSC, then the final totals would have been even closer.

The size of the vote in Preston provides a real platform that can be built on in the general election and by a wider community and trade union-backed electoral challenge in future council elections.

Top TUSC results

Local authority	Ward	Vote
1 Southampton	Bevois	848 (32.2%)
2 Preston	Deepdale	522 (31.3%)
3 Knowsley	Northwood	224 (16.3%)
4 Nuneaton & Bedworth	Chilvers Coton	205 (14.6%)
5 Rotherham	Rawmarsh West	184 (11.7%)
6 Nuneaton & Bedworth	Camp Hill	117 (11.3%)
7 Basildon	Lee Chapel North	227 (10.6%)
8 Gateshead	High Fell	164 (10.4%)
9 Epping Forest	Waltham Abbey North	152 (10.3%)
10 Preston	Plunginton	137 (10.1%)
11 Oxford	Churchill	111 (10.0%)
12 Chorley	Chorley East	145 (9.8%)
13 Coventry	St Michaels	346 (9.7%)
14 Basildon	Fryerns	218 (9.7%)
15 Nuneaton & Bedworth	Stockingford West	120 (9.1%)
16 North Tyneside	Longbenton & Benton	256 (9.0%)
17 North Tyneside	Chirton & Percy Main	209 (8.5%)
18 North East Lincolnshire	Sidney Sussex	117 (8.8%)
19 Rotherham	Rother Vale	146 (8.1%)
20 Wakefield	Hemsworth	168 (8.0%)

PHOTOS: PAUL MATTISSON,
CROWN COPYRIGHT, WORLD
ECONOMIC FORUM

Jamie Driscoll, the left independent who stood for the North East Mayor.

Independents' stand

Independents also made gains in these local elections, with an extra 93 councillors in that category. The label 'independent', of course, says nothing about the candidate's politics or record. While some were ex-Tory right-wing populists, others, notably Jamie Driscoll who got 126,652 votes, 28%, for North East Mayor, were part of the left forced out of Labour under Starmer.

Others again were good activists, often from a Muslim background, standing in opposition to the onslaught on Gaza. Still others, in areas with large populations from Muslim backgrounds, were previously Labour career politicians who, under pressure from their electorates, broke with Labour and stood as independents. That is welcome, but only if they also break with Labour's implementation of Tory cuts and start to stand up for the working-class communities they represent. However, even the best

Barts hospital workers launch Spring strike campaign over pay



Whipps Cross
PHOTO: KEVIN PARSLAW

KEVIN PARSLAW
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

"I'm fed up hearing excuses from trust management about why they can't pay us the lump sum pay increase," said Len Hockey, secretary of Unite Barts branch, as he launched what he called their 'Spring campaign' of action at Whipps Cross Hospital in east London. Having successfully rebalotted for strikes and received increased and massive majorities, workers were buoyed by the news that workers in Dudley, East

Kent and the South West had won the award. But they were frustrated at why the trust will not recognise them as eligible for the pay rise when they no longer work for privatiser Serco. Members employed by Synergy in laundry services are also out.

Unite members first came out last summer and are determined to win. Workers at Royal London and Barts hospitals are also striking.

As well as pickets, a series of rallies and protests will be taking place to put pressure on management and the Department of Health to pay up.

Over 15k votes for TUSC in London

BERKAY KARTAV
LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

A third of Londoners had the opportunity to vote for candidates who oppose Tory attacks and cuts passed on by London's incumbent Labour mayor, Sadiq Khan.

Socialist Party members Nancy Taaffe, Lois Austin and April Ashley, as well as local campaigner Andy Walker, stood as part of TUSC. Collectively, our fighting socialist programme won over 15,000 votes.

Speaking about our campaign in Waltham Forest, Nancy said: "When the election was called it felt like there was a kind of 'plague on all your houses' mood on the streets. However, when we pointed out the disparity between rich and poor in London, and what elected representatives at local level could do, the mood warmed."

"It felt like during this election a layer of disillusioned workers felt able to vote TUSC and send a message to the ruling Labour groups in

London: 'We're boiling mad with the lot of ya, and we're voting socialist to send a message that we've had enough!'"

The newly formed Croydon and Sutton Socialist Party branch also campaigned. April, a local government worker and a member of Unison national executive committee, was our candidate.

It was clear that many people were fed up with pro-establishment politicians who only cared about their career and lining up their pockets. Our campaign material argued the need to build a mass campaign to oppose cuts and council tax rises. Such a mass campaign could fight for the money and resources our communities need.

Khan is elected once again. But with Starmer heading to Number 10, what will Khan do to fix the broken funding model of Transport for London or to solve the housing crisis in London? With nowhere to hide, he will be increasingly exposed for his pro-capitalist policies.

DWP outsourced security workers strike for better pay

IAIN DALTON
LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

"Don't settle for what you get, fight for what you deserve," read the placard of a student nurse who had come to support GMB security guards in DWP, employed by G4S.

This was particularly apt as G4S is now paying these workers only minimum wage, and its current offer

would only be 2p above that. The pay offer is only from April when the anniversary date was last December.

Strikers told us of how G4S had been taken over a few years ago, and that their 30p differential above the minimum wage had been taken away, as well as other attacks on things like holiday entitlement.

Workers in the past would be sent on training courses, but are now

expected to complete online training courses in their own time.

As one picket outside Quarry House, Leeds, aptly put it: "They demand that we provide a professional service, but won't give us the professional pay to go with that."

The strike was having an impact. There were reports of some DWP offices around the country facing full or partial closure.



Leeds PHOTO: IAIN DALTON

Swansea May Day rally in support of steelworkers

GARETH BROMHALL
SWANSEA AND WEST WALES SOCIALIST PARTY AND
SWANSEA TRADES COUNCIL SECRETARY

Around 50 trade unionists and supporters gathered to celebrate international workers' day at Swansea Trades Council's annual May Day rally.

The rally was called in support of steelworkers at Tata Steel at Port Talbot and Llanwern in Newport, and was headed by main speaker Jason Wyatt, a Unite rep in the steelworks and spokesperson for the campaign.

Other speakers included Amarjite Singh of Wales TUC, Libby Nolan, president of Unison, Mark Williams, regional secretary of the CWU, and Ian Isaac, the NUM secretary at St John's Lodge during the 1984-85 miners' strike - who also signed copies of his book 'When We Were Miners', which chronicles his work and that of his Militant comrades.

Delegates Helen Johns of NAS-UWT and Dai Jenkins of CWU also spoke before I, a Socialist Party member and Swansea Trades Council secretary, concluded proceedings by restating the trades council's position on nationalisation of the steel industry.

As an ambulance service worker and rep, I highlighted the current state of the NHS and the threat posed by an incoming Labour government and the need for a new workers' party to counteract these attacks. I also announced my candidacy for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition in the Swansea West constituency in the upcoming general election.



Swansea

Workers' unity the theme of Plymouth May Day demonstration

DUNCAN MOORE
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

"The workers united will never be defeated!" rang through the streets of Plymouth on 4 May, as trade unionists joined with Palestine solidarity protesters for a May Day demonstration.

Workers' unity was the issue at hand in the discussion following the rally, addressed by acclaimed film director Ken Loach.

The need for a new workers' party was widely acknowledged and discussed. Loach emphasised the need for left unity and a grassroots approach to building a working-class fightback at the general election, based on collaboration between local trade union branches, political parties and community groups.

Socialist Party member and National Education Union (NEU) Plymouth secretary Alex Moore spoke about how TUSC provides such a structure for the left to work together, and we collected 20 signatures for a meeting to agree a common strategy for contesting the general election.

Bakers' union president Ian Hodson also spoke at the rally about the terrible onslaught on Gaza, calling for Israeli and Palestinian food industry workers to unite against war, to ensure food supplies get into Gaza to stop the famine.



Plymouth



PHOTO: MARIAM KAMISH

Nigeria Solidarity UK: Uni of South Wales students demand no expulsions!

MARIAM KAMISH
RHONDDA CYNON TAFF SOCIALIST PARTY

'No exclusions for students who can't pay'; 'Extend payment to the end of courses'; 'Allow students to pay at the old naira rate of N584'.

Those were demands on our placards, as our delegation of students and supporters made its way through the campus of the University of South Wales (USW) on 3 May.

We were carrying with us the good wishes of a number of others who - due to course commitments, work or nerves - could not be there. With the Nigerian currency worth a third of what it was a year ago, many students are finding it impossible to pay their fees on time.

We were heading to Ty Crawshay - the admin building at USW - named for the old mine and ironworks-owning family which working-class people rebelled against in the Merthyr Rising of 1831.

Student staff on reception looked

a little scared when we said we were there to see the vice chancellor (VC).

We marched to the top of the building and found the VC wasn't in. So, we handed in our letter, took photos, recorded a speech - and put the lot on social media.

Now, we need to mobilise pressure to get results. Students at Surrey University have won a partial victory. We can, too. (see 'Nigerian students face deportation but Surrey students win reprieve' at socialistparty.org.uk)

Please send messages of support to our Socialist Party organised campaign.

If you're a trade unionist, please say so in your message - and please ask your branch to support the campaign. Messages from those in UCU and Unison would be particularly useful. All will be forwarded to the vice chancellor at USW.

If you're a Nigerian student or know someone who is, and this is an issue at your local uni, get in touch: nigeriasolidarityuk@gmail.com

Yorkshire and North West socialists discuss Trotsky

LAURA FRETWELL
BRADFORD

The Life and Ideas of Leon Trotsky day school, bringing together Socialist Party members from branches in Leeds, West Yorkshire and Liverpool, was a very informative and enjoyable event.

The first session involved a discussion on who Trotsky was and what he stood for. After lunch, there were two workshops available to attend, one on the Transitional Programme, and the other on the theory of Permanent Revolution.

In the Permanent Revolution workshop, we had various discussions on Stalinism, the Cold War, capitalism, and revolutions during the 20th Century. It was a very engaging workshop where everyone contributed various questions and points of view.

After a quick break, we had the option to discuss either "Stalinism - was it inevitable?" or "What is fascism and how to fight it?"

I attended the workshop on fascism and we discussed how fascism developed in Germany and Italy, and the difference between fascism, right-wing populism and Bonapartism.

Everyone was very engaged during discussions, and, having never been to an event like this before, it was inspiring to be in a room with so many like-minded and passionate people.

Read more about Trotsky's ideas at socialistparty.org.uk. Search:

- 'Trotsky's transitional method: How to win workers and youth for socialism?'
- 'The striking relevance of Leon Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution'
- 'Leon Trotsky's struggle against Stalinism'



PHOTO: IAIN DALTON

Stop Hackney children's centres closures

Labour has faced protests, now it could face strikes



Unison trade union members have also reaffirmed their willingness to take strike action against closure and privatisation, leading to a ballot in the coming weeks

Protesters outside Hackney Town Hall (left) JAMES IVENS

BRIAN DEBUS
HACKNEY UNISON CHAIR AND SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

Parents and supporters spoke at a lobby of Hackney Council to expose Labour's short-sighted plan to close, privatise, and threaten jobs at several children's centres. 120 childcare places could be cut, and up to 50 staff made redundant.

Natalie Aguilera, one the leaders of the campaign, stated these proposals will cut a vital community resource, and affect the most vulnerable. Hackney has the third-highest poverty rate in London.

Holding a placard with a photograph of Labour mayor Caroline Woodley campaigning for affordable childcare, Natalie asked: "What's happened Caroline? What's happened to your principles?"

Diane Abbott, suspended Labour MP for Hackney North, stated: "I hope the council will think again, and stop the children's centres closures."

I spoke to say that it's about time this Labour council grew a backbone, and stopped implementing Tory cuts. The council could lead a mass campaign of resistance, linking up similar campaigns, community groups, trade unions, and all those

willing to fight to return the £150 million stolen from Hackney by this Tory government. In the interim, the council could use its reserves, and not cut or close services.

The campaign will now await the outcome of a consultation that has generated widescale opposition. Unison trade union members have also reaffirmed their willingness to take strike action against closure and privatisation, leading to a ballot in the coming weeks.

- *Read what we've said before - 'Hackney council's children's centre cuts consultation shredded' at socialistparty.org.uk*

Leeds nurseries: Protests press councillors to keep anti-privatisation pledges

IAIN DALTON
LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY AND SAVE LITTLE OWLS NURSERY STEERING COMMITTEE

Around 25 parents and children marched between Hunslet Rylestone and Hunslet St Mary's Little Owls nurseries, both under threat of privatisation by Leeds Labour council, on 4 May.

Parents on the demo expressed their worries about the disruption of changing who runs the nurseries could have on their families. Most private providers charge higher fees or extra charges. Other providers, including academy school chains, may not provide the wrap-around provision that Little Owls does currently.

'Save our nurseries!'

Chanting "Listen to the families, save our nurseries" as we marched, we had toots of support from passing cars. One woman took a sheet of the campaign's petition and returned it filled in. ITV came down to film and interview us, as did a reporter from local newspaper South Leeds Life.

The Riverside and Hunslet ward is one where the now-elected Labour council candidate pledged to support the campaign's demands. Parents on the demonstration told us they weren't going to be voting Labour but decided to because of that



PHOTO: LOUIE FULTON

pledge. That may have made the difference in Labour's narrow victory over the Greens.

Both Labour and Green candidates sent apologies for the march, but local Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidate and Socialist Party member Louie Fulton did attend and spoke at the rally. The campaign will be pressing those Labour and Green

elected councillors across the city who pledged to back the campaign to deliver. After all, it is a Labour council.

We have further demonstrations planned outside threatened nurseries, culminating in a march outside nurseries in Kirkstall - the ward of the executive board member who has responsibility for the nursery privatisation and closure plans.



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ENVIRONMENT

- Prioritising major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels and nuclear power with renewable energy, and ending the problems of early obsolescence – where products are designed to 'wear out' and be replaced – and unrecycled waste.

- Nationalisation of the energy companies, under democratic workers' control and management, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need, in order to carry out a major switch to clean, green energy, without any loss of jobs, pay or conditions.

- A democratically planned, massively expanded, free to use, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

- For a major, publicly funded, insulation and energy transition plan for existing housing stock.

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

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.

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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.

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- 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.

- 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.

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Lancs: Miners' strike stalwarts mark epic struggle 40 years on



GREG CHALLIS
LANCASHIRE

Veterans from the epic 1984-85 miners' strike marked its 40th anniversary at an exhibition and rally, with speakers from the former coalfield and National Women Against Pit Closures in Coppull, Lancashire. Organised by Chorley TUC, they shared experiences with activists locally about their role in sustaining the year-long struggle.

Miners from the area had refused to cross picket lines in the St Helens area, set up by striking miners from Yorkshire. They were resisting the threatened closure of pits, and consequent devastation of local communities.

Arthur Lowe, who was a shunter on the pit top at Parkside Colliery, told the meeting: "I was born into a mining family, my Dad was a miner, and he taught me the golden rule: never cross a picket line. So on day one, when pickets were on the gate, I turned back.

"Parkside was solid at first, but hardship started to kick in the longer we stayed out. So that was how we started, collecting money and food, going to meetings to speak to other union members."

As the strike entered its third month nationally, trade unionists and Labour Party women in Chorley initiated a support group, which raised funds and helped sustain strikers' families with weekly food parcels.

Dave Beale on behalf of Chorley TUC recalled how, in the face of increasing hardship, the support group raised £26,000 to help stave off hunger. A weekly food parcel was delivered to the 90 striking miners and their families and enabled them to picket and bolster the strike locally.

At a closing discussion on the importance of the 1984-85 miners' strike for today, many spoke of enduring pride at their part in fighting for future generations to have jobs with decent pay and trade union rights.

There was general agreement about the need for the labour movement to get back to the principles of working-class solidarity, which the miners' strike embodied.

Arthur Lowe said: "We've got Rishi Sunak, a multimillionaire, who has never done a day's work in his life, telling us we can't go to the doctor's for a sick note. We need shot of the Tories."

Socialist Party member Dave Beale said it was clear that the trade union movement needed a political voice, but "the answer won't come from Labour under Starmer", so there was a pressing need for socialist representation.

Ginny Jones, NHS trade unionist and a long-time campaigner for Chorley Hospital, said: "It was a privilege to be a part of it all, and I would not change anything. We just didn't get enough support from the Labour Party and trade unions nationally. For us the fight goes on."

DR CONGO WAR AND CONFLICT LEADS TO MASS DISPLACEMENT

JOE FATHALLAH
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

The Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Central Africa, is the stage of an ongoing armed conflict between state forces and the March 23 Movement (M23) guerrilla army, backed by the neighbouring state of Rwanda. The war has created the world's second-largest current population-displacement crisis, after the war in Sudan, with around ten million people forced from their homes. More than half a million are currently living in refugee camps around the city of Goma in North Kivu province, the main stronghold of the paramilitaries.

DR Congo is already among the poorest countries in the world, with one of the lowest GDPs per capita on the planet, and the World Bank says that just under 75% of the population scrape out an existence on less than \$2.15 a day. Malnutrition, disease, and gender-based violence are widespread. A huge humanitarian crisis looms.

In 1885, King Leopold II of Belgium declared Congo his own private land and founded the 'Congo Free State'. This regime enslaved the native population into rubber production and carried out horrific human rights abuses such as limb amputations and even executions for failure to meet production quotas.

Outrage at the King's personal role led to the Congo officially becoming a Belgian colony in 1908 and it achieved independence in 1960 under the leadership of Patrice Lumumba, who attempted to use the country's huge natural resources to increase the living standards of the mass of the population. He was assassinated in 1961, a murder organised by Belgian police and military officers with strong evidence of CIA involvement in his death. Since then, a series of oppressive and corrupt regimes has ruled the country, under various names.

Rwanda was also a Belgian colony from 1916 after Belgium defeated the previous German colonists. Belgian imperialism leant on the Tutsi ethnic group to maintain its rule, discriminating against the Hutus who comprise around 85% of the country's population.

In 1959, a mass revolt of the Hutus broke out, with Rwanda winning independence from Belgium in 1962 under a pro-Hutu regime. In 1990, Tutsi militias linked to the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) declared war on the government, and this conflict resulted in the genocide of 1994, with at least 500,000 and possibly as many as one million killed, predominantly on the Tutsi side. However,



The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the international socialist organisation which the Socialist Party is affiliated to. The CWI is organised in many countries. We work to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against capitalism, and to fight for a socialist world.
socialistworld.net

the RPF was able to eventually declare victory and has since then ruled Rwanda as an authoritarian Tutsi-minority government.

Rwanda borders DR Congo to the east, and the eastern parts of DR Congo are the home to the Tutsi communities on which the M23 forces are based. The recent 2023 US State Department review of human rights reports that M23 operates "in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo with (Rwandan) government support and committed numerous human rights abuses including widespread civilian deaths or harm, enforced disappearances or abductions, forcible transfers of civilian populations, torture, physical rule under which its natural wealth was stolen, the modern country fares little better economically. It is still classed as a 'least developed country' by the United Nations, colonialist extraction replaced today with imperialist and corporate extraction. After the largest city Kinshasa, the second and third largest settlements,

DR Congo is extremely rich in terms of natural resources, especially raw minerals. But, having suffered from a long period of colonial rule under which its natural wealth was stolen, the modern country fares little better economically. It is still classed as a 'least developed country' by the United Nations, colonialist extraction replaced today with imperialist and corporate extraction. After the largest city Kinshasa, the second and third largest settlements,

Lubumbashi and Mbuji-Mayi, are both mining towns, and China received over half of DR Congo's mineral exports in 2019. The end of formal colonialism in Africa has not meant that it has become possible to develop countries' economies and increase living standards. On the contrary, the legacy of imperialism, in the form of ethnic tensions, political instability, corruption, and inadequate infrastructure, contributes to nightmarish living conditions.

Tradition of struggle

Despite this, the working class in DR Congo has a tradition of struggle. The mining industry saw the number of wage workers in the country grow to almost a million by the time of World War Two. The period after the war saw the first attempts at strike action.

The mass movement for independence at the start of the 1960s coalesced around the radical nationalist leader Lumumba, and frightened the imperialist powers into taking action to assassinate him. Che Guevara, the Cuban revolutionary leader, also visited DR Congo in 1965.

The ruling elite, like its counterparts across the neocolonial world, is deeply corrupt, works hand-in-glove with the foreign capitalist exploiters, and has no programme or prospects for ending violent conflict, or lifting the mass of the population out of grinding poverty. This will require the building of mass forces of the working class, overcoming the ethnic and national divisions left in place by the colonial powers, leading to the ousting of the looters and the coming to power of a government based on the working class and oppressed.

Only then will it be possible to develop society and raise the mass of the population out of poverty, in a socialist DR Congo and federation of the wider region, with public ownership and democratic control of the country's massive natural wealth for the benefit of the majority, not a corrupt and privileged elite.

SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

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STOP ISRAELI STATE TERROR

PHOTO: LUC LACEY

Nowhere in Gaza is safe. Rafah, the southern Gaza city into which over one million Palestinians have been driven by Israeli forces, faces fresh assault.

The full scale of the attack on Rafah is not yet known at the time of writing. But the consequences will be horrific. Hundreds of thousands of families - starving, thirsty and without adequate shelter and sanitation - wait to find out what scale of destruction the Israeli state will inflict next.

People around the world watch on with dread.

Young people in universities internationally are setting up encampments and occupations following the brutal police repression of student protests in the US (see page 5). Hundreds of thousands have protested in Britain in the seven months since the onslaught on Gaza began - many of them and more expressed their displeasure with Tory and Labour politicians at the ballot box in the 2 May local elections (see pages 6-7).

Above all, the Palestinian masses and the working class in the Middle East have the power to decisively change things. The Socialist Party and the Committee for a Workers' International have been making the case for a socialist intifada - a democratic mass struggle of the Palestinians - to bring an end to the horror in Gaza, and international working-class action to halt the war.

The development of such a movement would light the touch paper for working-class struggle across the region, threatening the ruling elites. Israel's fragile right-wing coalition government would not be insulated from its effects.

For socialists in Britain, the task is to help strengthen the working-class movement here and build mass support for socialist ideas - the alternative to capitalist crisis driving war and oppression internationally.

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 mass workers' party in Britain that fights for socialism and internationalism

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



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