

MASS WORKERS' STRUGGLE CAN END SLAUGHTER IN GAZA

CALLUM JOYCE
OXFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

Over 35,000 Palestinians in Gaza killed. Over one million displaced from their homes – almost half of the entire population.

It is not just the Israeli state's bombs and missiles that are leading to the huge loss of life. Electricity, food, water, and medicine are now all in short supply. Many are succumbing to starvation and illness. The health-care system in Gaza teeters on the brink of collapse.

Many have been forced to crowd into the city of Rafah in the southern part of Gaza in an attempt to escape from the devastation. There is no real safety to be found there, however.

An Israeli state assault on Rafah will only lead to an even worse humanitarian disaster. The Israeli army has called for hundreds of thousands of civilians to evacuate, but where are they expected to go? Nowhere in Gaza is safe.

Even the Western regimes, which continue to support the Israeli state's onslaught, have been forced to publicly oppose the idea of an attack on Rafah. US President Joe Biden has suspended one shipment of arms to Israel, and threatened that more weapons will be withheld if Israel goes ahead with the assault.

But the sheer hypocrisy of this is not lost on people. The US recently approved a further \$26 billion of aid to Israel, including weapons.

In Britain, Tory foreign secretary David Cameron has publicly opposed an invasion of Rafah, while at the same time ruling out the suspension of arms licences, which Israel uses to buy weapons from British companies.

The massive street protests – some of the biggest in history in the case of Britain – and the growing student encampments, here and in the US, have worried these leaders that a further disaster in Rafah will only add to the anger that exists among working-class and young people, and could threaten their positions.

This provides just a glimpse of the potential power that the working class has to fight against war and oppression across the world. But the political representatives of big business can only be pushed so far.

The anti-war movement needs an organised political expression that does more than just pressure capitalist politicians, but challenges them for power as well. A new mass workers' party, with an internationalist, socialist programme, could fight to harness the massive wealth that exists today to invest in jobs, homes, and services, instead of funding war and oppression.

A socialist plan of production across Britain, the US, Middle East, and the rest of the world would bring an end to the violence, poverty, and exploitation that can only continue on the basis of capitalism. If you agree – join us to fight for it.

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



PHOTO: PAUL MATTHESSON

the Socialist

formerly Militant

Issue 1275
16-22 May 2024

DO YOU HAVE NEWS FOR US?

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.

CONTACT US

editors@socialistparty.org.uk
020 8988 8777 - ask for the editors

DEADLINES

Friday before publication, or Monday morning for urgent news, unless otherwise agreed with the editors.

The Socialist goes to press on a Tuesday night. We publish online on Wednesday and in print on Thursday.

SUBSCRIBE

to the Socialist for weekly working-class news, analysis and fighting strategy

- socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe
- Paper subscription £4.50 a month, or £6.50 including Socialism Today
- E-subscription £2.50 a month, or £4 including Socialism Today

SOCIALISM TODAY

our monthly Marxist magazine

socialismtoday.org

- Paper sub £3 a month, e-sub £2.50

SOCIALISM: THE PODCAST

weekly on all podcast platforms

FOLLOW US

facebook.com/CWISocialistParty
Instagram @SocialistPartyCWI
YouTube - Socialist Party
Twitter @Socialist_Party

SOCIALIST PARTY

The Socialist is the weekly newspaper of the Socialist Party, the England and Wales section of the Committee for a Workers' International

socialistparty.org.uk
socialistworld.net

BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS

Socialist Books: our publishing house

socialistbooks.co.uk

Left Books: Marxist classics bookshop

leftbooks.co.uk

OUR NEWSPAPER TEAM

Editor of the Socialist
Josh Asker
socialistparty.org.uk
Mark Best
Circulation manager
Paula Mitchell
Chris Newby

Editorial staff
Scott Jones
Ian Pattison
Paula Mitchell
Mark Best

ISSN 1366-9621

Published by Socialist Publications,
PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT
Registered as a newspaper
at the Post Office
Printed by trade union labour
at Reach Printing Services

Militant issue 1: October 1964
The Socialist issue 1: 7 February 1997

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

Fury in Dover trade unions as Starmer welcomes Tory Elphicke

ERIC SEGAL
KENT SOCIALIST PARTY

Disbelief, fury, dismay and then despair from sections of the workers' movement in Dover met the news that Natalie Elphicke, the turncoat right-wing Dover MP, had been accepted as a member of the Parliamentary Labour Party. The decision, approved by the Labour leadership nationally and presumably by local party officers, represents all that is odious about the Labour Party apparatus today.

As the recently retired Secretary of South East Kent Trades Union Council, a few hours after the news broke I received an email from a young RMT activist and Labour Party member. He expressed his class anger at the news with these words:

"Hi Eric,
Given the shameful crossing of the floor by Natalie Elphicke today, I wondered if you had a contact for the Dover and Deal CLP?
The Labour Party Rule book clearly states: 'Every Labour MP must be a member of a trade union.' I would be extremely curious as to what trade union Ms Elphicke has joined? Once I find out this information, I will be writing to the union in question asking them to condemn Ms Elphicke's previous voting record, and looking at expulsion options.
I will of course keep you and all at Maritime House in the loop as this progresses.
Regards..."

Meanwhile, working people in Dover are represented by:

- An MP who defended her husband after he had been convicted of three charges of sexual assault, and was then suspended from the House of Commons because she tried to influence the judge in her husband's trial
- An MP who, from the safety of parliament, verbally attacked militant trade unionists, including members of the South East Kent Trades Union Council who called her out at the first demonstration against the illegal sacking of 786 P&O workers for supporting 'fire and rehire'
- An MP who is a rabid opponent of people seeking asylum

I replied to the young RMT member to suggest that the workers' movement in Dover and Deal should be selecting its own candidate to contest the general election, independently of the Labour Party.

I made it clear that the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), set up by then-RMT general secretary Bob Crow in 2010, is an umbrella body set up to bring together trade unionists and socialists to contest elections.

Trade unionists and workers in South East Kent cannot stand by whilst our rights are trampled into the ground. Time to join the fight for a workers' list of candidates in the general election.



RMT protest in Dover against P&O fire and rehire in 2022 Photo: Isai Marjerla

The Socialist Party demands:

- 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
- An end to insecure working, for the right to full-time work for all who want it; ban zero-hour contracts. The right to flexible working, under the control of workers not employers. Share out the work - a maximum 32-hour working week with no loss of pay or worsening of conditions
- 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
- 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 democratic, fighting trade unions and all trade union officials to be regularly elected, subject to recall by their members and paid a worker's wage
- Repeal all the anti-trade union laws
- 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
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment

SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

May issue includes...

- World disorder - war economic crisis, and the workers' fightback
- Middle East cauldron - ratcheting up the instability
- 75 years of Nato - a history of global power relations

socialismtoday.org/subscribe / 020 8988 8777
● Paper subscription £3 a month, e-subscription £2.50



As a general election looms, how can trade unions fight for workers' interests?

- Prepare a union-backed list of workers' candidates
- Union leaders must put Starmer on notice - 100 days to deliver

Socialist Party
WHAT WE THINK

As the Socialist goes to press, trade union leaders meet with leaders of the Labour Party to discuss its 'New Deal for Working People'.

The details of what the new 'New Deal' will include aren't public, but Sharon Graham, general secretary of Unite the Union, said: "This new Labour document on the New Deal, issued to the unions on Monday [6 May], is a row back on a row back. It is totally unrecognisable from the original proposals produced with the unions."

Sharon correctly adds: "All unions must now demand that Labour changes course and puts the original New Deal for Workers back on the table". RMT leader Mick Lynch said: "Any attempt to water down this popular policy will be met with a robust response from the entire trade union movement." Other union leaders have been less combative or silent.

The final word on what makes it to Labour's general election manifesto won't be had until an election is called and the manifesto released.

Almost universally, trade union leaders have been using the new deal proposals as a reason for their backing Labour at a general election. In an interview with the Observer, Sharon acknowledges: "When I went to our union's rules conference last year, the thing I spoke about the most, as to why it was important for us to continue to back Labour, was the new deal for working people."

Socialist Party members had campaigned for a rules amendment at that conference to change the union's rules, opening up the prospect of Unite backing candidates who support the union's policies, including those outside of Labour.

The RMT transport union for example has backed Jeremy Corbyn to stand in the general election, even in the highly likely scenario that he stands independently of Labour.

Elphicke, or Corbyn and Abbott?

The right-wing, pro-capitalist Labour Party machine has banned Jeremy from standing as a Labour candidate at the general election. A prominent supporter of his leadership, Diane Abbott, remains suspended a year on. Many more seen as being left wing or deemed susceptible



Matt Wrack, Mick Lynch and Sharon Graham (left to right) PHOTOS: PAUL MATTSSON

to working-class pressure have been disciplined or deselected.

Meanwhile, Natalie Elphicke, a disaffected Tory right-winger, is welcomed onto the Labour benches. "On Tuesday 12 March this year, she spoke in support of the new anti-union laws by blaming striking firefighters for the deaths of three people during a past national firefighters' strike. This is a disgraceful attack on firefighters, who protect the public and save lives every day, sometimes at great personal cost," Matt Wrack, general secretary of the Fire Brigades Union and President of the Trades Union Congress, said in a letter to Keir Starmer.

"Attacking trade union members in this way to justify support for draconian anti-worker laws ought to be incompatible with membership of the Parliamentary Labour Party."

The Labour Party was formed over 100 years ago out of the process of trade unions identifying the need for their own candidates, independent of capitalist interests. Since, the party has been transformed, and the trade unions no longer have the ability to democratically determine candidates and policy.

Workers' candidates

The Socialist Party is calling for a workers' list of candidates to contest the general election, drawn up by the trade union movement. With the backing of even a few trade unions, its existence would cast a shadow over those penning Labour's manifesto. A counter to the existing big-business pressure.

In the absence of such an initiative

led by the trade unions nationally. Socialist Party members are engaged in discussions within the workers' movement in local areas about a working-class stand independent of Labour - making the case for candidates to come together under the banner of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

Even a small bloc of workers' MPs elected could act as shop stewards in parliament, holding the Labour leadership to account on a daily and weekly basis.

What becomes law under a Labour government, and how quickly, will be determined by the pressure that the workers' movement and trade unions are able to exert.

100 days to deliver

The Labour leadership has given a timetable for its 'new deal' - within 100 days of taking office. Whatever

caveats are added about consultations or legislative timeframes, millions of trade unionists have expectations of the changes being carried through. The role of the trade union leaderships should be to organise members to demand Labour meets those expectations in power - that includes popularising support for the unions' policies now.

For example, by demanding Labour pledges that it will, in the first 100 days of government:

- Raise the minimum wage to the TUC-agreed £15 an hour with no exemptions and for real inflation-proof pay rises for workers
- Renationalise the whole railway industry, Royal Mail, steel, energy and water
- Ban zero-hour contracts, and fire and rehire
- Repeal the Minimum Service Levels legislation, the Trade Union Act 2016 and all other Tory anti-trade union laws

The Starmer-led Labour government will come into office within two years of a strike wave which took industrial action to levels not seen in a generation. New layers of workers have entered the trade unions and become reps and organisers - even more have seen how workers taking strike action has been able to win concessions from a Tory government, let alone a Labour government promising a 'New Deal for Working People'.

The National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) conference in London on 22 June aims to bring together those trade unionists to discuss how to build and strengthen the strikes, and how to fight for a 'workers' manifesto'. In essence, how trade unions can fight for workers' interests before, during and after the general election.



NSSN conference 2024

Saturday 22 June 11am-4.30pm

Tories out – fight for a workers' manifesto!

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

Get all the latest union news...

with the
NSSN bulletin
shopstewards.net

BUILD STUDENT PROTESTS AGAINST ISRAELI STATE TERROR

ADAM POWELL-DAVIES
SOCIALIST STUDENTS NATIONAL ORGANISER

Drawing on the wave of student occupations across universities in the US, students in the UK have launched their own protest camps against the siege of Gaza.

At the time of writing, encampments have been set up at almost 30 universities, making this the most widespread movement of students since the nationwide rent strikes in 2021.

Of course, this wave of encampments hasn't come from thin air. Thousands of students had already been protesting for months in solidarity with the Palestinian people, and not just at universities, but in colleges and schools too. Even before this wave of encampments, student action has included walkouts, rallies, and marches through campus, and occupations of university buildings on several campuses.

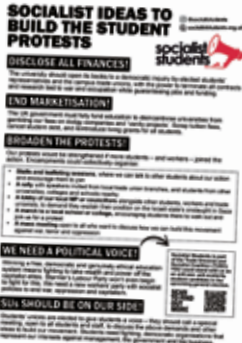
And yet, over that period, the Israeli state has not ended its brutal assault. Nor have UK universities come out as a whole to 'divest' from – i.e. cut ties with – companies that profit from war and occupation, thereby ignoring the headline demand of pro-Palestinian student protesters.

The encampments are seen as a way of escalating the action, to apply more pressure on vice-chancellors and the government.

The movement's demands have escalated too, with many encampments demanding that their universities not only divest, but 'disclose' their finances – in other words, 'open the books'. This is a step forward, as it raises the idea of students and staff having control over their institution's finances, which is the only way to ensure that university resources are not used to prop up war, or any form of oppression.

The task now is to build the protests as widely as possible. Socialist Students is putting forward a fighting, socialist programme to do this. We are participating in the encampments around the country, and have produced a leaflet to help carry these ideas into the movement.

We print the text of the Socialist Students leaflet here. You can order copies at socialiststudents.org.uk.



1. Disclose all finances

Universities should open their books to a democratic inquiry by elected student representatives and campus trade unions, with the power to terminate all contracts and research tied to war and occupation, while guaranteeing jobs and funding.

2. End marketisation

The UK government must fully fund education to disincentivise universities from gambling our fees on dodgy companies and 'vanity projects'. Scrap tuition fees, cancel student debt, and reintroduce living grants for all students.

3. Broaden the protests

Our protests would be strengthened if more students – and workers – joined the action. Encampments could collectively organise:

- Campaign stalls and leafleting sessions, where we can talk to other students about our action and encourage them to join
- A rally, with speakers invited from local trade union branches, and students from other universities, colleges, and schools nearby
- A lobby of the local MP or councillors, alongside other students, workers, and trade unionists, to demand they explain their position on the Israeli state's onslaught in Gaza
- A march to a local school or college, encouraging students there to walk out and join us for a protest
- A mass meeting open to all who want to discuss how we can build this movement against war, terror, and oppression

4. Student unions should be on our side

Student unions are elected to give students a voice. They should call a special meeting, open to all students and staff, to discuss the above demands, and other ideas to build our movement. Students need fighting, democratic organisations that represent our interests against management, the government, and big business.

5. We need a political voice

Winning a free, democratic, and genuinely ethical education system means fighting to take wealth and power off the capitalist elites. Keir Starmer's Labour Party won't even begin to fight for this. We need a new workers' party, with socialist policies to end war, oppression, and capitalism.

● Leicester – creating a movement

We could see the mood at De Montfort University (DMU) in Leicester, with many students stating their anger at the conflict. So, Socialist Students has been trying to create a movement on that campus.

We have set up meetings and protests. Students expressed their gratitude that we were on campus, as they felt like they didn't have a voice, as there has not been much activity on campus, in comparison to the other university in Leicester.

Socialist Students' programme was well received – a Palestinian student expressed her agreement, buying the Socialist, and giving £5 to our Socialist Party fighting fund.

We had a meeting with students and University and College Union (UCU) members. We set up a date for a demonstration that incorporates both universities, and other groups, such as the UCU. We got solidarity from the encampment at the University of Leicester, with them agreeing that something that involves both universities would be great.

Why are we political?

University of Leicester students have set up an encampment protesting against the university's investments with companies that have direct ties to Israeli arms manufacturing. Students also protested for the removal of the honours of a former law professor, Malcolm Shaw, who was directly involved with the Israeli state's defence at the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

I was at the encampment with other Socialist Party members on 11 May, handing out leaflets with our own demands. Our leaflets explained why universities rely on investments from arms manufacturers, due to lack of funding universities receive from the government, because of the broken tuition-fee model.

Unfortunately, we were met with hostility from the organisers of the encampment, with them stating that the encampment was non-political. They also said that they had to comply with the university's demands, as they had meetings with the university beforehand to follow the rules set out for the encampment.

This baffled us, as this issue is inherently political. This also had us questioning how the encampment is going to achieve its demands if the organisers are just going to confirm what the university wants, essentially defeating the entire point of a protest.

We were forced to move our campaign stall multiple times, because the organisers said that they did not want it to seem like we were affiliated with the encampment. This was after we had just spoken with people from Loughborough, whom we have worked with during the protests there.

We did our campaign stall behind the university. We explained what had happened, and people were more willing to hear our demands.

We visited the encampment once again on 13 May, and expressing our solidarity with them, pushing past what had happened before. This time we did activity across the university, giving out leaflets with our demands, allowing students who weren't at the encampment to see our programme.

SAADA MOHAMED



Liverpool ALEX SMITH



Oxford CALLUM JOYCE

● Liverpool – energy as we march

Inspired by the encampments around the globe, and motivated by disgust at university complicity in the war on Gaza, students in Liverpool recently built an encampment. Formerly Abercromby Square, students have renamed it Alareer Square to commemorate Refaat Alareer, a Palestinian poet who was killed by an Israeli airstrike in December.

Coinciding with the Israeli state's assault on Rafah, a demo was called on the steps of Lime Street station

to protest. Many speeches urged the protests to be disruptive. As soon as the speakers finished up, we blocked the road for over an hour.

Police were in abundance, but they could not hinder the overall energy and commitment of the protesters. We then marched to Alareer Square, and continued the demonstration.

Socialist Students held a rally in solidarity with the encampment, which we marched towards. Our wonderful speakers made it clear to the university that its complicity will be challenged, and that peace can only be achieved under international socialism.

The past week in Liverpool has

been turbulent for protest action, with the demos becoming more frequent, the encampment growing quickly, and talk of escalation for ways to disrupt the university and adjacent areas in Liverpool that provide for the Israeli government. Liverpool Socialist Students will do everything we can to broaden this encampment to include more students and workers.

The capitalist class will attempt to clamp down on these protests, but with the collective power of the working class, the occupation of Gaza can be halted. This is only the beginning.

ISIS SMYTH AND NIVEN DAY

● Queen Mary, east London – local support inspiring

The encampment started off very strong, with many students already committed to camping out for as long as it takes, and lots of support from staff and the local community.

The encampment demanded that the university:

- Release a statement condemning the actions of the Israeli state, and calling for a ceasefire
- Divest funds from all companies affiliated with Israeli state terror, and transparency for all future investments by the university
- Release a statement condemning the arrest and expulsion of Queen Mary University professor Nadera Shalhoub-Kervorkian, from Hebrew University – a professor who was punished for speaking critically of the Israeli state's actions

We, Socialist Students, call for democratic control by trade unions and student unions over all investments made by the university. This is not the first time private educational institutions have been on the wrong side of history, and we want to learn from this and make sure it's the last.

From the very first day there were waves of local people asking how they can help, bringing food, supplies, and home-cooked meals. It was so immediately clear how much this movement is supported. Many locals expressed interest in speaking at upcoming rallies and promising to be here every day until our demands are granted.

From many of the speeches during the rallies, it is also clear that there is no faith in a future Keir Starmer-led government, and there's a dire need for an alternative that represents the people.

The encampment is well-organised, and filled with very determined young people. There is a strong chance we can create real change.

NANDI SHALITA

● Oxford attack update

Oxford's 'Liberated Zone' has continued to steadily develop. Pallets and sheets of plywood now form walkways around a growing number of tents, and there are frequent on-site talks and activities. No major action is organised without support from a majority of active members.

The most notable threat to the camp so far has come when six thugs attacked the camp on the evening of 11 May. Morale was still high when I visited, but there are concerns that this might not be the last assault of its kind. And it shows the importance of broadening the encampment to include more students, workers, and other trade unionists, who could help democratically organise stewarding.

ALEX CHAPMAN

● Read what we've said so far – 'Build the student protests against war' at socialistparty.org.uk

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

PCS members give their verdict: historic left victory at critical moment

DAVE SEMPLE

PCS NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT-ELECT
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)

National elections in the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union closed on Thursday 9 May. Published the next day, the results make for stark reading for the outgoing leadership of the union. Previously holding 31 seats on the 35-seat National Executive Committee (NEC), 'PCS Left Unity' (LU) has been reduced to 16 seats.

A clear majority of 19 out of 35 seats, including the post of Deputy President and two of the three Vice President positions, have been won by the alliance of PCS Broad Left Network (BLN) and PCS Independent Left (IL), and other independent activists. Socialist Party members participate, alongside many socialist independents, in the Broad Left Network.

Members will now expect the incoming NEC, with its historic and unprecedented BLN/IL majority, to carry out the programme on which it has been elected - to rebuild PCS as a member-led union.

Left victory arrives at a pivotal moment

The newly elected BLN/IL majority takes up post from 23 May. This shift is happening at a critical juncture, as there is likely to be a general election in 2024 and it is highly likely that Labour will win. This is important to members in the UK civil service and related areas.

First, it is important because the outgoing Tory government seems intent that one of its final acts should be spitting in the face of civil servants by delaying the Treasury Pay Remit. The government must be forced by an industrial campaign to announce significant additional money to sort out years of public sector pay claim problems.

To cancel out pay austerity in the civil service, taking into account everything lost since 2010 as a result of 1% pay rises, pay freezes and the ever-rising cost of living, the average pay rise needed is 39%. Tens of thousands of civil servants earn barely above the minimum wage. Addressing this must be a priority.

This will have to be forced on the government by an industrial campaign.

Second, it is important because, whatever the Tory government does in its remaining time, an incoming Labour government under Keir Starmer is unlikely to make addressing civil service grievances a priority unless we are in a strong position to force it to, by continuing and ramping up an industrial campaign.

Starmer is already caving in to big-business pressure. On workers' rights, pledges to ban fire-and-rehire (relevant to PCS members because



PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY



PHOTO: GARY FREEMAN

it will halt efforts to reduce our contractual rights on sick leave, annual leave etc) and zero-hour contracts have been watered down.

PCS will need a powerful left voice to rally our sister civil service unions, and a determined campaigning strategy to force an incoming New Labour government to start off on the right foot.

The BLN/IL majority on the incoming NEC is better placed to do this. We are unafraid to criticise Starmer or Labour when they attack workers.

The change will also allow for a more consistent and serious approach to the Gaza crisis, including criticising Starmer's tail-ending of the Tories. The union's outgoing leadership has been claiming that it was the first to put out a statement calling for a ceasefire. Meanwhile they have withheld full-throated support from reps seeking to launch workplace campaigns.

The suspension of the civil service's Muslim Network by the government is a serious matter, and is due to be followed by a sweeping attack on "Equality, Diversity and Inclusion" (EDI) in the civil service, to cut the money and staff time invested by departments in making the civil service an inclusive employer.

On matters such as this, LU has been woefully ineffective. In this, as in so many things, it is time for a much more serious approach.

No going back – time for a serious national campaign!

Central to the charges levied by BLN and IL against the outgoing leadership is its failure to build a serious national campaign on pay, jobs, pensions and rights.

The union's leadership and outgoing NEC totally squandered the massive mandate which members gave them in November 2022. Waiting six weeks to call any action and waiting three months before calling national action, President Martin Cavanagh and his ousted NEC allies wasted the best chance we had for pay justice in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis.

While a significant amount of targeted action was taken between late December 2022 and May 2023, paid for out of the union's fighting fund, no analysis was undertaken to find out how well supported this was, how effective it was in exerting industrial pressure on the government, and how it might contribute to an overall settlement.

The outgoing NEC, led by Fran Heathcote and Martin Cavanagh, now General Secretary and President-elect respectively, simply called action and then postured on social media in the hope that this would convince members that they were running a serious campaign. Meanwhile they damaged the campaign by failing to escalate national strike action beyond three days at six-week intervals, supplemented by actions short of strike.

When the Tories actually did blink, in a letter sent to PCS on 2 June 2023, offering a one-off, non-consolidated (i.e. not pensionable) and pro-rata payment of £1,500, instead of redoubling action to force the government to cough up more, the LU leadership cancelled our strikes and ballots.

In essence, they accepted the government's settlement. They then wasted the ten months between June 2023 and March 2024 with justifying that surrender. We will not make the same mistakes.

Strike ballot results

Our current strike ballot, affecting 171 employers including government departments, executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies, closed at noon on 13 May 2024. This ballot was launched by the outgoing leadership from a standing start, after ten months of inactivity, in March 2024.

The strike ballot timetable devised by the union's leadership has meant that the results of the vote will not be available until Wednesday 15 May (after the Socialist goes to press), when the NEC meets. This means that dozens of branch mandating meetings will be missed, meaning opportunities for emergency motions and member involvement in debate are lost. This should have been avoided.

Socialist Party members across PCS, including in the Associate and Retired Members' (ARMs) section of the union, have campaigned ferociously hard for a 'yes' vote in the strike ballot. Even while fighting in the union elections, every leaflet handed out asking people to vote for us also said "Vote Yes" in the strike ballot.

We earnestly hope that the result will be over the 50% threshold imposed by the 2016 anti-Trade Union Act, and that we will have a mandate for strike action across the Westminster-linked parts of the union.

Yet we must also recognise the impact of LU's mishandling of the 2022-23 campaign; of the ten months of inactivity from June 2023 to March 2024; and of the utter disorganisation with which the current ballot was

launched – including not a single leaflet being ready for the first week of the ballot.

Members saw through all of this. A serious strategy is an industrial necessity – but it is also a tool to mobilise members. The blame for the absence of such a strategy lies squarely with the people who had their hands on every lever of power within the union. The General Secretary, the President, and the now-ousted NEC majority.

Annual Delegate Conference: springboard to action

Reps from across PCS will be meeting in Brighton, for the Group Delegate Conferences (20-21 May) and then for Annual Delegate Conference (21-23 May). We are organising to put through emergency motions that cover as many scenarios as feasible, to ensure a campaigning approach is adopted no matter the ballot result.

If we have a mandate for action that exceeds the 50% threshold set by the anti-union laws, there will be immediate mobilisation. If some areas have a mandate, detailed planning and analysis will be required to see if we can launch a serious campaign while rebalancing in other areas. If nowhere is close to the 50% threshold, then we may need a period of preparation for the serious fight ahead.

Delegates to ADC in 2023 were angry with the undemocratic manipulation of the agenda by Fran Heathcote, abetted by Martin Cavanagh, as disclosed through leaked WhatsApp messages. Equally unacceptable was their attempt to attack and undermine a single trans PCS rep and the union's position on trans rights.

Delegates to ADC in 2023

No doubt there will be more such shenanigans – but finally reps across the whole union, including some previously supportive of Left Unity are beginning to realise that a serious strategy is needed.

Those on the newly elected NEC majority were the first to put forward a serious strategy. The confidence of this new leadership, and its success in future elections, will grow in proportion to their transparency, accountability and the seriousness of its approach to the problems facing members. We send our solidarity greetings to them.

We call on all delegates to unite behind socialist policies at PCS conferences in Brighton, to participate avidly in the Broad Left Network and Socialist Party fringe meetings on Tuesday and Wednesday night, and to join the Broad Left Network, to start work now on rebuilding PCS as a member-led, fighting, democratic trade union fully accountable to members and their elected lay reps.

• **Socialist Party fringe meeting Tuesday 21 May and Broad Left Network Wednesday 22 May, both at 5.30pm in the Gresham Suite, Old Ship Hotel, Brighton**



PHOTO: DAVE LUNN

PCS conference - the key debates

JP ROSSER, PCS MEMBER

The PCS National Executive Committee (NEC) election results have seen members reject Left Unity's stranglehold on PCS. But just as important will be the PCS policies set at this year's delegate conference. It is essential that PCS delegates carry motions that deliver the promise of change that the incoming NEC majority campaigned on.

The start of the conference will see delegates debating the national campaign on pay, pensions and jobs. After nearly 12 months of 'pause', the NEC figured they could just flick the activist base back to the 'on' position. It called a statutory strike ballot without preparation time, no materials or learning events in place, and an Easter break in the middle of the ballot period to break momentum. Our successes in this ballot will be in spite of the Left Unity leadership sabotaging our campaign. Conference should reject their tired and failing methods by opposing motion A1 and supporting motion A2.

Political strategy

A recurring theme in conference debates will be political strategy. We know a general election is coming, so a robust strategy is essential. It is even more vital as Keir Starmer shows that he is safe for big business – his tail-ending of the Tories over Gaza, his refusal to support strikes, and now his retreats from his commitments on workers' rights. We need real workers' political representation. Motion A13 should be opposed, it blocks PCS

support for any candidates and is an abdication of leadership. We need political representation and support a reference back of motion X157 to deliver a political strategy that works for members. We also recommend support for an emergency motions where PCS calls for a vote for candidates that support PCS policy.

Technical services has been a heated area of debate in the union due to the failings of PCS Digital and the censorship of member information. We support motions A15 to A18 and a reference back of X170. These motions will help undo the centralisation of control from elected reps to full-time officers. PCS must reclaim its title as a fighting democratic union accountable to its members.

Rules changes

This year there is an entire section on rule changes – proposed mainly by the NEC. Motions A37 to A40 accommodate hybrid conference arrangements. While modernisation of our rules is needed, there has been no consultation with branches and these rules don't provide protections for union democracy. We recommend opposing motions A37 to A40. That sends a clear message that we want meaningful consultation in 2024, leading to rule changes at ADC 2025 that enhance our democracy.

At one time, the organising strategy was passed with a simple nod, but not in recent years. The current PCS organising strategy is 'building, growing, winning'. The figures show falling PCS membership, especially in the biggest groups. Falling

membership density, fewer reps, and PCS isn't 'winning' on the biggest issues facing our members today. Motion A55 calls for PCS to keep doing the same things but somehow expecting that this time it will deliver better results. Clearly a new organising approach is needed. We recommend support for motion A56 which shows much greater ambition and faith in members to deliver.

International motions

One of the most passionate and heartfelt sessions this year is likely to be International motions. The genocide in Gaza has rightly prompted many of our members to protest against the government's complicity in arming the Israeli government to murder civilians. We recommend supporting motions A99 and A100. We also recommend support for an emergency motion calling on PCS in taking the lead in mobilising defence of those workers who take industrial action to halt arms exports to Israel. Solidarity with PCS delegates.

Join the fightback

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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



Senegal Macky Sall's defeat opens opportunities for working-class struggle

GAUCHE RÉVOLUTIONNAIRE (CWI IN FRANCE)

The elections in Senegal on 24 March have transformed the entire situation. With Macky Sall ejected from power despite all his schemes, a breach has opened up. To fulfil the powerful aspirations of the population, massive mobilisations of workers and young people will have to seize this promising breach to assert their own interests, starting now!

Sall's 12 years in office marked the continuation of the brutal plundering of wealth by multinationals (especially French, but not exclusively). It was a hyper-authoritarian regime, where repression was omnipresent. Bassirou Diomaye Faye and Ousmane Sonko (the new president and prime minister) were themselves victims. Promises of a 'break with the past' - including institutional reforms - have understandably raised high hopes. But Sall presented himself as the candidate for change in 2012, just like Abdoulaye Wade before him.

From now on, young people, workers and the communities can organise and mobilise to make the most immediate democratic demands a reality:

- Reopening of all closed land and sea links, freedom of movement
- Formation of militant trade unions in all workplaces to organise workers and wage struggles to win pay rises, new jobs, etc
- The right to assemble, organise and demonstrate freely without fear of repression; an end to administrative closures of schools and universities
- Against corruption: for the revocability of elected representatives and the limitation of their allowances to the average salary of a skilled worker
- Equality for all, against all forms of repression and discrimination

A victory for the mass movement

The old regime, embodied by Sall, has made every desperate attempt possible to prolong its agony. Cancelling, then postponing, then bringing forward the date of the elections; closing universities; isolating the poorest regions (in particular Casamance in the south, with the nine-month interruption of the ferry link between Dakar and Ziguinchor - the town where Sonko is mayor!); releasing Diomaye Faye just one week before the election; imprisoning opposition activists or ordinary people just for publicly supporting Sonko.

The very fact that the elections were held was a victory for the mass protest movement. Mass demonstrations, a 'dead city' day in Dakar and multiple strikes played a key role. Of course, social media networks helped to popularise these actions - which they could in no way replace. Sonko's candidacy had to embody this aspiration for radical change. Because, for the population, the daily situation is simply unbearable.

Unemployment is at an all-time high, with almost 20% out of work.

Corruption has been unbearable for over 60 years. Prices are soaring, particularly for energy and especially food, so much so that even those who have a job earn just enough to do the shopping and pay the bills, and nothing more. Many can't make ends meet, with inflation at almost 16% in just two years. Senegal has the second-highest cost of living in Africa, just behind Côte d'Ivoire. Day labour is commonplace; a precariousness encouraged by the 'Emerging Senegal Plan' implemented since 2014. It is indeed all these policies favouring capitalists that were massively rejected by this mass electoral revolt.

Neo-colonial hypocrisy

And yet, in the international press, journalists' comments rivalled each other in paternalistic cretinism. Never a word about the struggles of the workers and the people who won this victory.

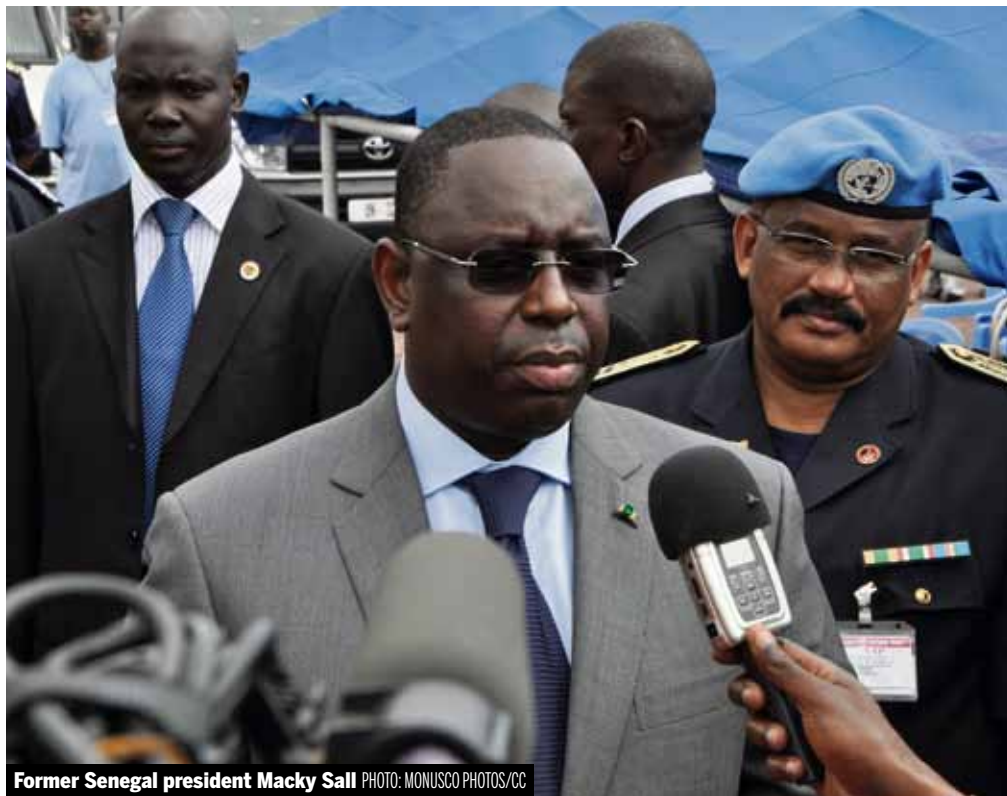
France and other imperialist powers have never said anything about the repression. But that's logical. In Senegal, as in France and elsewhere, repression and authoritarianism are the normal march of 'democracy' under capitalism in crisis. It didn't bother these 'democracy' worshippers that more than 60 people lost their lives in 2021 and 2023 because of the repression of social movements, especially when these were mainly young men from the suburbs of Dakar or the Casamance region. This is further proof of their hypocrisy.

A deep political crisis

In addition to the shenanigans of Sall and his party, the APR-Yaakaar (Alliance for the Republic), the results of the 2024 elections have dramatically demonstrated the depth of the political crisis in Senegal. This reflects a situation found in many other countries around the world. Voter turnout was down to 61.3% (from 66% in 2019). Traditional political parties have collapsed. The historic Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS), having still not been allowed to run a candidate (but without having waged any struggle to do so, apart from a vague legal appeal, as in 2019), ended up rallying to Sonko, hoping perhaps to have a place in the government.

Building a political voice for workers and students

Senegal has a rich history of mass struggles and revolts, including in the very recent past. But there is a desperate need for a party that can organise workers and students on a massive scale. A party to lead campaigns, organise struggles and defend their interests. A party that is independent of the imperialists and Senegal's big bosses, but also of all the schemers and corrupt politicians who serve them and help themselves in the process. A party against the neoliberal policies and capitalist exploitation that are limiting the development of Senegal and the entire African



Former Senegal president Macky Sall PHOTO: MONUSCO PHOTOS/CC



New president Bassirou Diomaye Faye PHOTO: DARIO PIGNATELLI/EU/CC



Protest against Macky Sall in London PHOTO: ALISA DARE HICKSON/CC

continent. This need is also felt in the trade unions, where the majority doctrine is more one of "responsible participation" (and therefore class collaboration) than an uncompromising defence of workers' interests. One of the tasks facing the workers is to build such a party and the fighting trade unions to build and carry their own voice.

Anger expressed through strikes

There have already been many struggles and strikes, because the workers have clearly understood that the situation is favourable for asserting their demands. In Bambe, the day after the elections, students went on strike for two days and organised a boycott of room rents to protest against the

water and electricity cuts on campus, which were so severe that the infirmary was closed. The Ziguinchor regional hospital was on strike for three days, from 15 to 18 April, to demand a pay rise, and better organisation of work and payment of retirement allowances. In Dakar, workers at Groupe Futurs Médias were also recently on strike against wage arrears and the abolition of the "13th month" wage. In Kafrine, Dakar and elsewhere, local authority workers have been on a well-attended strike for an across-the-board pay rise and to obtain civil servant status for the workers. For the past two years, these workers have been regularly called out on 120-hour strikes by the unions. A trade unionist from the commune

of Grand Yoff describes the state of mind: "Local authority workers are tired, they're experiencing real difficulties, and why should they increase the salaries of most state employees while leaving us out? It's abnormal, and we won't stop demanding and showing our anger until our demands are satisfied."

A joint call for a nationwide strike on the same day will be a decisive first step in uniting the deep anger of the Senegalese people in the struggle. The situation is open, now is the time! There is a need for a mobilisation that will make a strong impact on the situation, that will impose on the new government that if it is really on the side of the people, it must give its full support to the workers' demands:

- Jobs for all, with decent wages!
- For equal pay for equal work between men and women (who earn 50% less than men for the same job!)
- Lower the prices and then freeze them, against the high cost of living!
- Public services (energy, hospitals, education, early childhood, culture, transport and infrastructure) with sufficient staff and resources, without subcontracting and the private sector coming in to make profits

Where should the wealth go?

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Senegal is poised for economic growth of more than 8% in 2024. Newly discovered natural gas and oil deposits promise revenues estimated at FCFA 400 billion (West

African franc) over 30 years. The crucial question is: who will benefit from this wealth?

Diomaye-Sonko have launched an audit of the contracts signed with private energy providers. And the new energy minister said that afterwards, the contracts "will be revised if necessary". Is there really any doubt? What's more, we wonder by what miracle multinationals as rapacious as BP (\$13.8 billion in profits in 2023) or the smaller but no less rapacious Kosmos and Woodside, would kindly accept seeing such a "revision" take these profits away from them. It's exactly the same question for capitalists from other countries, who have invested massively in Senegal (rising from 2% to 9% of GDP over the last ten years, and exceeding \$2.6 billion in 2022).

The question of leaving the FCFA is still unresolved. Sonko has already toned down his rhetoric on the issue, moving from a promise of "rupture" to a more nuanced attitude of "seeing the options". The Senegalese government's objective is to find a way to trade more freely with the rest of the world (ECOWAS first and foremost), rather than being tied to a currency largely controlled by France. And once again, exit or not, the question will be: who benefits? Once again, massive and unified action by workers to assert their interests, independently of the capitalists, is absolutely crucial.

10 men = 20% of Senegal's wealth?

For there is the question of the Senegalese capitalists themselves. In the new government, many ministers are really their friends. The Minister for Agriculture is a banker; the Minister for the Economy spent 15 years in the top echelons of the IMF, whose austerity plans have already fuelled anger and mass movements in Senegal in the 1990s and 2000s. Sonko's party, the Pastef's 'project', is very clearly focused on supporting the private sector, which always benefits a rich and privileged minority at the expense of the population (and the environment). They are already salivating. The testimony of the President of the Senegalese Investors Club is edifying: "We can already mention Industries Chimiques du Sénégal [the largest phosphate producer], which we are going to do everything we can to get back - I'm not saying 'nationalise'" (quoted by Jeune Afrique, 23 March 2024). This social class sees things clearly. They want the profits and wealth for themselves, to do business and make profits, not to benefit the population.

Already today, the ten richest men in Senegal, the country's biggest capitalists, together own a fortune of \$5.3 billion. That means that ten people alone hold almost a fifth of the country's wealth!

On the contrary, we say that the main industrial sectors of the economy must be nationalised and managed collectively by the workers themselves, democratically, so that they are the ones who control everything, put a definitive end to fraud and personal enrichment, and ensure that the wealth really benefits the whole population.

Struggle for democratic socialism

For things to really change, the whole profit-driven system - capitalism - needs to be tackled. Entire regions are kept in poverty because they are dominated by foreign capital. The current global situation indicates that the competition for "market share" (i.e. to get hold of wealth) will be even fiercer in the years to come. On the one hand, the imperialist powers are all competing more fiercely than ever (the US, the EU, Canada, but also China, India, Russia, Turkey, etc). On the other hand, the instability in many countries and regions (notably the Sahel) means that countries like Senegal, which are seen as more 'stable', will be highly coveted by capitalists of all stripes, because they see a more favourable business climate. The only constant in all this is that it will all be at the expense of the people, and unless the root of the problem is tackled, no lasting solution can be found.

But this will never happen without the working class and the people resisting and fighting back. Given the economic crisis of capitalism, economic growth and stability are now a thing of the past. The notion of 'Africa rising' or 'emerging countries' has always been a myth, but it is an even greater illusion today. In reality, it was in the 1960s, thanks to revolutionary struggles, that African countries achieved their highest standard of living for their populations.

Only revolutionary workers' and peoples' movements, organised on independent political platforms, which establish workers' governments based on revolutionary and democratic socialism, can lead the continent out of the capitalist quagmire. With public ownership of the core sectors of the economy and resources, under the democratic control and management of the workers and oppressed, the enormous resources and potential of the continent can be harnessed both nationally and continentally, in the interests of workers and poor of Africa. Any success in winning support for a programme of revolutionary socialism in a particular country can serve as an example to show the way forward to the working class and youth of the continent who are hungry for change.

Join the Committee for a Workers' International!

Such revolutionary struggles are the order of the day. As Leon Trotsky said, "Revolutionaries don't create revolutions, they prepare them"! Marxists are not people who wait passively, fatalistically, for "something to happen". The CWI is a world party fighting the class struggle in every country where we are organised. We are inspired by the ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky to intervene actively in the struggle to advance it at all levels and in all sectors, using the transitional method and waving the banner of socialist revolution, on which Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution is inscribed. The overthrow of capitalism and the socialist transformation of society are the future. Join the CWI in this struggle!





Jobcentre security guards strike for pay

JONATHAN OSAGO
BIRMINGHAM NORTH

Jobcentre security guards, organised in the GMB union, are taking five days of strike action in May for a pay rise. Attending picket lines in Birmingham, workers expressed dissatisfaction with the wages they receive doing what they consider a high-risk job with inadequate support and equipment.

Previously employed by the government, security tasks in jobcentres across the country are contracted to private company G4S, which has a net worth of over £2 billion. Meanwhile, security guards are paid the national minimum wage of £11.44 per hour and work six days a week with little to no flexibility in their work schedule. Security guards handle verbal and

sometimes physical abuse caused by the misdirected anger of those in need, facing the consequences of Tory attacks on benefits.

With the increasing cost of living, the union is demanding the company raise salaries to £12 an hour. On 7 May, more than 40 security guards from jobcentres across Birmingham joined the strike, many of them striking for the first time in their life. The lack of security staff caused the jobcentres to shut. Because G4S didn't give workers an improved offer, strikes on 8 and 13 May had even more workers participating. Instead of contracting such tasks to companies like G4S, the only long-term solution is for the government to directly employ the workers as civil servants, and pay them a real living wage.

Plymouth

Alex Moore, Plymouth Socialist Party spoke to Phil and Paul on the picket line:

"G4S is only a brand name - the real owner is a massive North American company called Allied Universal. But we negotiate with G4S who say the DWP won't increase funding. But between G4S and the DWP it would cost less than £3 million to end this dispute. We were offered 23p an hour increase but we rejected this in January in an indicative ballot and then returned a 94% vote for industrial action."

During the conversation, claimants turned up for appointments and asked the pickets what was going on. No one

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



Sanctuary workers continue to strike against real pay cuts

NICK AUVACHE
CAMDEN AND HARINGEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Benefits are up, pensions are up, rents are up, but housing association Sanctuary still refuses to raise wages by anything approaching those basic levels. In April, state benefit levels rose by 6.7% and pensions by 8.5%. This means that even this miserly Tory government offered increases that massively outstrip what Sanctuary management believe their workers deserve.

This year, most of Sanctuary's maintenance workers have seen a 4% pay increase imposed on them. This comes on top of a 4% rise in last year's pay. Sanctuary maintenance workers have suffered a 9.5% decline in their real wages since 2021.

Why are Sanctuary's management so mean? Are they in financial trouble? Do they not have the money to

9.5%
decline in real wages since 2021

pay? Are maintenance workers less productive than last year? 'No' is the answer to all these questions.

Sanctuary recently announced a whopping increase of 79% to pre-tax profits to £101.3m, but the benefits of this bonanza have not been felt by staff. In its latest financial statement, the employer boasts that "Sanctuary is pleased to report a strong performance for the financial year 2022-23. The last 12 months have seen another period of growth and recovery from the pandemic." Yet neither last year nor this year have workers seen

the benefit of this, with two below-inflation pay awards.

There is no good reason why Sanctuary should deprive workers of pay increases which match the rise in the cost of living. Unite the Union believes it is unacceptable for an organisation such as Sanctuary to consistently cut staff's real wages, especially during a period that they themselves describe as one which has seen "strong growth". If workers accept wage cuts during these periods, what on earth can we expect if Sanctuary's fortunes take a turn for the worse?

Pay is one reason why these workers have just announced a further four days strike action, on 21, 23, 28, and 30 May, on top of the 17 days they have taken so far. Strikers were pleased to receive support from suspended Labour MPs Diane Abbott and Jeremy Corbyn at their latest strike rally.



Yodel delivery changes hit workers in their pockets to maximise profits

BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

Self-employed couriers were left with serious cash-flow issues due to a new pay structure at Yodel, the parcel delivery company.

Yodel was acquired by Shift, the 'Uber for removals' after experiencing financial turmoil.

Shift is owned by self-styled entrepreneur, Jacob Corlett, who has brought several delivery companies. He wants the new group to become a "disruptive logistics powerhouse."

Like most gig economy jobs, workers take on most of the risks - the use of their car, business insurance and responsibility for goods, for just about minimum wage. They receive no sick and holiday pay or pension.

Shift's shareholders wrote an email to Yodel couriers that they were "delighted" to announce a new weekly pay structure. Under the new contract, couriers will be paid weekly, four weeks in arrears. Previously, couriers were paid fortnightly, two weeks in arrears.

Taking one month to implement, the revised pay structure has left drivers with serious cash-flow issues. Meanwhile, shareholders hold thousands of pounds in unpaid wages, while their courier 'partners' struggle to pay household bills. And, if Shift were to go into liquidation, couriers would risk losing up to a month's wages.

Couriers at the Oldbury depot in the West Midlands have said that

they have had to borrow money from friends, family and partners. Shift did not offer any short-term loans to couriers, only a fuel card.

A double whammy for couriers is that their piece-rate-per-parcel will be capped at three parcels. This means that any addresses that have more than three parcels for delivery will only be paid for three parcels, instead of the actual number delivered.

This is another example of capitalists holding workers to ransom while they scoop in profits.

The Socialist Party fights for trade union action for a wage workers can live on, with full benefits including sick and holiday pay, and a decent pension.

Wales TUC Congress – prepare union action to save jobs and services

ALEC THRAVES
SOCIALIST PARTY WALES AND DELEGATE FROM SWANSEA TRADES COUNCIL

The 2024 biennial Wales TUC Congress, meeting in Llandudno on its 50th anniversary, will yet again be debating the continuing attacks on the wages, jobs and conditions of trade unionists across Wales, and the devastating impact these are having on working-class families and communities.

The crisis in the public sector will be highlighted, particularly in those areas of government that are devolved from Westminster to the Senedd (Welsh government).

Despite 25 years of collaboration with a Labour-led Welsh government, the Wales TUC public sector unions are understandably angry and frustrated at the deterioration of their members' pay and living standards, imposed by an austerity Tory government in London but implemented by a weak and passive Labour government in Cardiff Bay!

The education unions demand that "schools need more funding" but "expect that the settlement for the next financial year will not address the detriment which has been experienced in real terms since 2010"!

They also add: "In our colleges, significant cuts are having an impact, including to the apprenticeship programme". Their conclusion: "Enough is enough"!

Public sector crisis

And that general sentiment is reflected across the public sector!

Audit Wales has published devastating figures on the crisis in the Welsh NHS. 6,800 vacancies at the end of March 2022, with more staff leaving the NHS than at any other time in the last five years, resulting in overall levels of sickness absence growing to an estimated 1.4 million working days in 2022-23!

The health union members, feeling undervalued and still furious at having a wage settlement imposed on them last year without any consultation, are ready to take up the battle again this year, and will not accept any lack of funding excuses from a Keir Starmer-led government holding the purse strings in Westminster.

Local government services are on the cliff edge across Wales after Labour and Plaid Cymru councils have

dutifully implemented Welsh government budget cuts, passed down from the Tory government.

Local government delegates will be calling for the linking up of the Labour government in Wales, alongside the Wales TUC and community campaigners to organise and fight for a 'no-cuts budget' strategy and to demand that a new Starmer government replenishes council finances to provide the local services so desperately needed after more than a decade of austerity cuts.

Every area of the public sector in Wales has faced devastating cuts!

So much for the alleged benefits of 'social partnership' which, unfortunately, is now legally binding in Wales! Trade unions must rely on their own organisation and strength when confronting employers and governments, whose objectives will always be to undermine militant action and prevent trade union solidarity.

Those Socialist Party members who are delegates at Congress will be to the fore in the debates supporting public sector workers in their fight to protect our services and their jobs.

Save our steel

As will be the case in the dominant trade union struggle taking place in Wales at the moment - the battle to save steel from being butchered by Tata.

The motion by Swansea Trades Council calling for nationalisation of Tata Steel has received growing and widespread support amongst the workforce and local residents over the past several months.

The motion is clear in what is necessary to save the 2,000-plus jobs at the Port Talbot plant, particularly as Tata has now reconfirmed the closure of the two blast furnaces.

The central demand of the motion explains:

"If as trade union leaders and politicians proclaimed, that UK Steel is of 'critical' economic and strategic importance for the Welsh and



Every area of the public sector in Wales has faced devastating cuts!



Unison lobby Carmarthenshire council against cuts to local services WALES SP

UK economy then Tata should be brought back into public ownership, renationalised under democratic workers' control and management, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need."

Unfortunately, the Community steel union is attempting to negatively amend and remove this clear demand for 'nationalisation' with a call to just:

"Condemn the UK government and Tata's bad deal for steel and support the credible and costed multi-union plan..." which has already been firmly rejected by this vicious multinational company.

Delegates will undoubtedly weigh up whether it will be 'condemnation' or 'nationalisation' that will ultimately save all the threatened jobs and secure a real future for Port Talbot and the other Tata plants.

50 years after its formation, the Wales TUC meets at a crucial time, with the Tory government on its last legs and a 'business friendly' Starmer government waiting in the wings.

Trade unionists in Wales, particularly those newer shop stewards and reps who have participated in the recent industrial battles against the privatised employers, the Tories in Westminster and the Labour-led government in Wales, will have learned many lessons from those disputes.

Every victory against an employer or government has to be fought for by determined action and trade union solidarity. Delegates to this Congress must ensure that the Wales TUC and its affiliates are to the fore in leading the inevitable struggles that lie ahead!

Another steel union votes for strike action at Port Talbot

Community, which has more than 3,000 members at Port Talbot steelworks, has announced that 85% of its members have joined Unite members in voting for strike action. See 'Tata Steel: Strike to fight jobs massacre in Port Talbot' on www.socialistparty.org.uk for more

Barts NHS strikers say 'pay up!'

On 13 May, over 100 low-paid striking NHS workers protested outside NHS England offices in south London. It was the first day in a week of pickets and protests, part of the latest phase of strike action in the long-running dispute with Barts NHS Trust and contractor Synergy.

Workers were greeted by security guards who, within moments, were surrounded by women strikers and a cacophony of vuvuzelas. Speaking to the protest, NSSN Chair Rob Williams asked the bosses inside: "Rather than sending down security guards, why don't you just come down and talk to the union

and sort out paying up, sort out this dispute?"

The workers, Unite members, are demanding the £1,600 lump-sum payment that other NHS workers, their colleagues, received during Covid but which they have been denied.

The workers are targeting NHS bosses, protesting outside their workplaces and offices. This includes chair of Barts NHS Trust, and former Labour Home Secretary under Gordon Brown, Jacqui Smith.

Speaking to the protest, Unite lead officer Onay Kasab said: "Your employers are not happy, because

having their faces on placards is 'not in the spirit of things'.

"It's not in the spirit of things to deny £1,600 from low-paid workers. There is no legal reason why you cannot be paid. It comes down to the will, it comes down to a political choice. We are making the choice to fight and we have the will to win. We are deciding we are going to carry on until we win!"

Like what you've read?
SUBSCRIBE TO THE SOCIALIST
socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe





ROY WILLS
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

Thank you for buying this paper. If you paid more than £1 for it, then you deserve a special thank you, because you have contributed to the Socialist Party 'fighting fund'. By this, we mean money used for the continuous expenses in running a political party, like the printing and distribution of papers and leaflets, hiring of premises for meetings, and paying for heating and lighting.

As we know, people rightly do not part with their money for any old reason. That's why, when we're campaigning, we lead with what we stand for, our plan of action, and how we truly believe that socialism is the only hope left – the political case.

Members of the public often respond favourably when they are made aware of the truth about socialism, and not the media myth. That's why it's so important to put the message out there in person.

As the fighting fund coordinator

for the Socialist Party in Waltham Forest in east London, I am responsible for gathering together the disparate financial contributions to the party from supporters in the local area, and channelling them towards a quarterly target. This involves planning, encouraging and enabling.

You may have made a donation at a public meeting, at a campaign stall in town, or through meeting one of us whilst commuting. Our supporters inadvertently sell the Socialist simply through reading it on public transport and arousing interest – you don't see our headlines anywhere else!

Whether or not you are a member of the Socialist Party, you can still make a financial contribution. You can help us reach our fighting fund target this quarter.

Help fund the fightback

DONATE

socialistparty.org.uk/donate

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q2: APRIL-JUNE 2024	DEADLINE: 30 JUNE 2024
South West	1,509	2,100		72%
Southern & SE	1,124	2,400		
Northern	329	800		
London	1,818	5,000	36%	
Wales	822	2,400	34%	
North West	370	1,200	31%	
East Midlands	582	2,050	28%	
Eastern	238	1,300	18%	
Yorkshire	450	2,650	17%	
West Midlands	250	2,700	9%	
Other	247	2,400	10%	
TOTAL	7,740	25,000	31%	

Review: Mullivaikal exhibition highlights 2009 Sri Lankan genocide of Tamils



ADAM POWELL-DAVIES
SOUTH WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

On 11-12 May in South London an exhibition was held to commemorate 15 years since the Mullivaikal genocide and the global protests it unleashed.

In just a few days in May 2009, Sri Lankan government forces killed over 100,000 defenceless Tamil people who had been forced to flee to a small beach in the north of the island.

The exhibition displayed harrowing scenes from these final days of a decades-long war, as well as moving testimonies from those who lived through it.

At the centre of the exhibition was a section separated by a black curtain with a sign reading 'No Fire Zone', which is what the Sri Lankan government had designated the beach at Mullivaikal. Beyond the curtain, this 'official' designation was turned on its head by images and descriptions of the actual atrocities that took place on each day of May 2009.

The exhibition was not only a

remembrance of a massacre, however. It was also a celebration of the global wave of protests that erupted in response to the suffering at Mullivaikal, and a reminder of the need to continue fighting today for the rights of all humans to a safe and fulfilling life free of war, persecution and poverty.

International protests

Surrounding the horrors of war depicted in the centre of the exhibition, pictures of defiant protesters from the Tamil diaspora lined each edge of the room, grouped by country to give a sense of the international breadth of the protests that erupted in 2009.

In some cases, these protests were able to completely shut down parts of cities. In London, thousands upon thousands flocked to Parliament Square, blocking it off completely for ten days straight. A guided tour explained how protesters would rotate in shifts, to ensure that there was always a critical mass of people occupying the square.

The message of the exhibition was: "Remember the dead, fight for the

living." 15 years on, it is hard not to draw parallels between the bombardment of a thin strip of land in Sri Lanka in 2009, and the onslaught being waged on Palestinian people in Gaza right now. In this sense, the exhibition helped to generalise the suffering of all oppressed people under capitalism.

Over 300 people attended the Mullivaikal exhibition over both days. Most came on the Sunday, with many attending, hearing of it by word of mouth. Clearly those who came on the Saturday thought the exhibition was something to tell friends and family about, and understandably so. It was an excellent event, which hammered home the need to fight for a socialist world free from war and oppression.

The organisations hosting the exhibition, Tamil Solidarity and Young Revolutionaries in Solidarity (YRS), decided to make it a free event to ensure as many people as possible learn more about the Tamil genocide. They have asked for donations to help cover the costs of putting on the exhibition, which you can give at: gofund.me/7b128979

Birmingham Labour council used fake figures to 'justify' cuts

CLIVE WALDER
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

A Guardian article has cast doubt on the reliability of the data used by Birmingham Labour council to justify the huge cuts, 21% council tax increase, and asset sales.

The council is blaming a £760 million equal pay liability for the cuts. This figure has not been audited, and some councillors believe that this liability would be impossible to accrue with the number of staff affected. Even the chief commissioner appointed by Tory Michael Gove to run the council said that "that figure will be replaced by a real (and lower) one" in due course.

The council has also spent in excess of £100 million fixing faults with a new IT system, which workers told the council wouldn't work before it was even installed. This has caused the council to have no audited accounts for two years, unable to track income and expenditure. The council basically doesn't know how much money it's got!

Whistleblowers believe that the equal pay bill issue is being used to divert attention from the failures of council officers. This sounds like a Birmingham version of the Post Office Horizon scandal.

Labour councils can fight

That there is such enthusiasm to make record cuts in services against an unclear financial background says a lot about the priorities of Starmerite Labour councillors. So eager are they to prove how 'fiscally responsible' they are, that they don't even wait for the facts to be clarified.

The cuts budget agreed in March should be scrapped, and replaced by a no-cuts, needs-based budget. There should be a trade union inquiry into how this state of affairs occurred, with all officers found to have lied or been incompetent held to account.

- See what we've said before: 'Birmingham council: massive budget cuts proposed' at socialistparty.org.uk



Dockers discuss how to stop Israeli arms

FRANK BOWEN
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

The International Dockworkers Council (IDC) represents over 130,000 workers from 42 countries. Unite the Union general secretary Sharon Graham spoke to 300 delegates from 25 countries at its conference in Liverpool.

I attended a fringe meeting of 60 about the plight of the Palestinian people. The main theme was what concrete steps the IDC has taken and will take to block the shipment of arms to Israel.

Liverpool dockworker leaders Tony Nelson and John Lynch outlined some of the difficulties in identifying these weapons. There are many ways of concealing what's actually in shipments. But they did indicate that they would stop the export of any munitions, or their components, when identified.

The Chilean delegates bought copies of the Socialist, before they had to

leave. The Australian delegates outlined some of the ways that they had been able to stop the export of shipments to Israel.

They were also very concerned about a new treaty with the United States, which involves the USA putting nuclear weapons in their country. They spoke about the need to fight for socialism on an international scale to end the cycle of wars and the climate crisis that is a global threat to humanity.

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

@

editors@socialistparty.org.uk

University now too expensive for many students

JUNE ANGUS
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Studying at university has become even more unaffordable for less well-off students, a recent report published by the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) reveals.

The report calculates that the 'Minimum Income Standard' – the minimum income needed to study at university per year, including costs of living such as rent and groceries but excluding tuition fee costs – has risen to £18,632 for those studying outside of London, and £21,774 for those within London. Maintenance loans are able to cover less of these expenses year on year.

According to the National Union of Students, 69% of students are now employed alongside studying to afford their studies, up from 45% in 2022. Students have reported that balancing working, studying, and other commitments – alongside worrying about money – is having a negative impact on their academic achievement.

Access to higher education is further becoming the privilege of the wealthy few, deepening the economic inequality in the UK as working-class and poorer young people are forced to forego education and take



low-paid jobs with little chance of long-term progression. Meanwhile, universities are being run like businesses: relying on inflated fees while simultaneously axing degree programmes, underpaying staff, and providing little support to students. Staff participating in the UCU strikes in 2022-23 spoke out on many of these deeply ingrained issues.

The long-term impact of the crisis in higher education is dire. Young people will have fewer opportunities, and industries dependent on qualified graduates will continue to face worker shortages.

The solution is obvious: stop treating education as big business and start treating it as an essential public service, free to use with grants, not debt, to enable people to study. It's time for a democratically run and high-quality higher education system that is accessible to all and meets the needs of both students and staff.

Join the student fightback

JOIN socialist students

socialiststudents.org.uk/join

Climate scientists rightly despair, but socialism gives us hope

NOAH EDEN
SHEFFIELD NORTH WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

It is common for people to feel a sense of dread and worry when reading the latest updates on the climate crisis; especially when none of the capitalist politicians seem to care about it, constantly prioritising profit over planet, and continuing to exploit Earth's natural resources.

Only a few months ago, Keir Starmer, leader of the Labour Party, and likely future prime minister thanks to the hatred of the Tories, made a U-turn on his pledge to put £28 billion a year into green investment. This is before he is even in office!

The wealth clearly exists. Starmer is just once again making it clear Labour is a safe pair of hands for

the capitalist bosses as he gears up to govern in their interests, and not ours.

Even top climate scientists are starting to feel a sense of defeat. One of them claims to feel "hopeless and broken", and another saying: "I worry about the future my children are inheriting".

Only 6% of the 380 top climate scientists surveyed think that the 1.5°C limit will be achieved. Capitalist politicians, instead of doing what's needed, are allowing companies to make record profits, as they continue to destroy the planet.

But hope is not lost. I too used to feel this sense of dread and worry, before I joined the Socialist Party.

We need to fight for nationalisation, and an economy that meets the

needs of the people, and uses the planet's resource for the good of the people, and not for profit. We need to organise and fight for an end to this system. We need to fight for socialism, as the only solution to this crisis.

Join the fightback

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

● Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join

● or call **020 8988 8777**

● or text your name and postcode to **07761 818 206**

to find out more today!



Socialist fights West Brentford by-election campaigning to end war and cuts

JASPER CHAPLIN
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The Socialist Party West London branch held a public meeting at the Globe pub in Brentford, as part of our election campaign supporting our member John Viner running in the Brentford West by-election in Hounslow, as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. This election was held to replace former Labour councillor Lara Parizotto, who stepped down earlier in April citing disagreement with Labour's support for attacks on Gaza.

John's speech cited the many failures of the current Labour council to protect residents from cuts affecting public services, including the sad closure of the Watermans Arts Centre. The council has also passed on budget cuts imposed by the Tory government to residents, and agreed to raise council tax by 4.99%, the

maximum without a referendum, in 2024-25, on top of the 9% increase in London Mayor's precept.

Stalls and canvassing during John's short campaign received positive responses from people looking for an alternative to the two biggest parties. Although public opinion for the Tories has diminished, this does not mean that people trust Labour to fight the Tory government's cuts to public services.

Through the campaign we demanded an immediate end to the Israeli state's war on Gaza, and raised the potential power of the working class to disrupt and stop arms destined for Israel to be used on Palestinians. We raised a socialist programme to defend the national rights of the Palestinian people.

Other policies put forward by TUSC council candidates include fighting to bring down rent by introducing rent controls; freezing

council tax; the mass building of eco-friendly, affordable council homes to tackle the housing crisis; opposing the privatisation of council jobs and services; and calling for the council to use their reserves and borrowing power to avoid cuts.

Where possible, TUSC will continue to stand candidates who will oppose war and austerity, and stand up for the working class.

TUSC AGAINST CUTS

Check out the full report of the May TUSC election stand at www.tusc.org.uk

John Viner (right) at TUSC public meeting



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

- A £15-an-hour minimum wage for all, without exemptions. For the minimum wage to automatically increase linked to average earnings or inflation, whichever is higher.
- Share out the work. A maximum 32-hour working week with no loss of pay or worsening of conditions. The right to flexible working, under the control of workers not employers. An end to insecure working, for the right to full-time work for all who want it; ban zero-hour contracts.
- All workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness, parental and holiday rights from day one of employment. End bosses using bogus ‘self-employment’ as a means to avoid giving workers rights.
- No to austerity through inflation. For all wage rates to be automatically increased at least in line with price rises.
- Open the books of all companies cutting jobs or claiming they can’t afford to pay a real living wage. State subsidies, where genuinely needed, for socially-useful small businesses.
- For trade unions independent of the capitalist state, with members having democratic control over their own policies, constitutions and democratic procedures. For all trade union officials to be regularly elected, subject to recall by their members and paid a worker’s wage.
- Reduce the state retirement and pension age to 55. For decent living pensions.
- Replace universal credit and the punitive benefit system with living benefits for all who need them.

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

- For local councillors who are committed to opposing austerity and all cuts to local services, jobs, pay and conditions.
- For a socialist NHS to provide for everyone’s health needs, including dental and eye care – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out the private companies! Nationalise the pharmaceutical industry under democratic workers’ control and management.
- Renationalise privatised utilities – including rail, mail, water, telecoms and power – under democratic workers’ control and management.
- Free, publicly funded and democratically run, good-quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees and write off student debt, end marketisation, and introduce a living grant. No to academisation. For all schools to be under the genuine democratic control of local education authorities, school staff, parents and student organisations.
- The right to a safe secure home for all. For the mass building of genuinely affordable, high-quality, carbon-neutral council housing. For rent controls that cap the level of rent. Fair rent decisions should be made by elected bodies of tenants, housing workers and representatives of trade unions. For cheap low-interest mortgages for home buyers. Nationalise the privately owned large building companies, land banks and estates.

ENVIRONMENT

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

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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

to find out more today!

Help fund the fightback!

DONATE TODAY

socialistparty.org.uk/donate



Football: No to ticket price rises!



Anfield PHOTO: SCOTT JONES

DEAN YOUNG
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY AND
LIVERPOOL SUPPORTER

Liverpool Football Club, with a revenue of over half a billion pounds annually, has announced that for the next season it will increase ticket prices by 2%. This is part of a plan to gradually increase prices by 10.5% across a five-year period. The ownership group, FSG, is attempting to increase pricing to a previously desired target of £77 per ticket by stealth, 2% at a time.

This was correctly met with widespread disapproval, with the supporters’ groups Spirit of Shankly (SOS) and the Spion Kop - which organises flags during the game - opposing all ticket increases. Any talk of price increases is ludicrous, prices are already extortionate and price out working-class supporters in favour of the more-affluent tourists willing to spend £1,500 on a hospitality package (with prawn sandwiches included!).

However, SOS, despite their good intentions in opposing price increases, must self-reflect. It was offered, following the club’s mad decision to support the ‘Super League’ proposals in 2021, a non-voting seat on the board of directors. This was to “represent fans views”.

But the capitalists who own Liverpool used SOS as a controlled opposition and in doing so neutered more radical demands, such as replicating the 50+1 majority fan ownership

model of the German football pyramid.

Now, after a recent meeting between SOS and the club following the decision to not have any flags on the Kop for the Europa League game vs Atalanta, the price rises have been cemented. And that is apparently that, but it shouldn’t be. What football fans need is to reclaim our game. Football represents communities, pricing out the people living in Liverpool or any other city seeks to destroy the remaining working-class links to the sport. No to ticket price rises, yes to ‘twenty is plenty’ as a motto for ticket prices!

RECLAIM
THE
GAME
BY JOHN
REID, £5



LEFT
BOOKS

- The bookshop of the Socialist Party
- Visit leftbooks.co.uk
- or call **020 8988 8789**
- PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT

Film review: Civil War

Brutally realistic war film set in a future United States

TONY SAUNOIS
CWI SECRETARY

Refugee camps, mass graves, summary executions and unpredictable military encounters. This is not Gaza or the Ukraine. It is the United States in a few years’ time in Alex Garland’s latest devastating film, Civil War. A US president forcibly installed for a third term has disbanded the FBI, turned drones and helicopters against protesters and executed journalists. California and Texas have formed the Western Alliance and declared secession from the federal government and a bloody civil war has erupted. Garland denies that the president is a depiction of Donald Trump but it is impossible not to picture him in this role.

The film lacks a clear ideological content to the forces involved, but with a little imagination it is possible to see which side is defending what. Told through the eyes of a group of photojournalists who undertake to journey across the country to Washington DC, they encounter all of the horrors of war. The veteran photojournalist Lee, played by Kirsten Dunst, heads the pack alongside her partner Joel, played by Wagner Moura. They are joined by a young Jessie, initially resented by Lee, and the older veteran journalist Sammy, played by Stephen Henderson, who, drawing on his long experience, tries to keep the group away from the more violent risks.

That the film, with such a title, is released now, says much about the discourse and polarisation in US society at the present time and the possible re-election of Trump. Whilst

the film exaggerates what can unfold, features of what the film depicts are present and will be magnified should Trump win another term.

The political discourse in the film is limited to say the least, yet it is gripping, and shocking in what it depicts. The use of sound techniques is exceedingly dramatic. The intimidating fear of the whirl of helicopter blades and tanks rolling through the streets will be fully recognised by those who have witnessed such scenes. It is hard hitting. The scene of a mass grave of those executed by a racist paramilitary interrogating the main characters is shocking but all too realistic, as are other scenes. The realistic violence and unpredictability of being in war zones and social confrontations is palpable. It depicts US society collapsing in a dystopian nightmare. Some are in denial and just pretend it is not happening. What is absent are the mass of the population and their involvement.

The film uses good techniques. There are no opening scenes or introduction. We go straight to one of only two performances from the President. A speech at the opening and a promise of victory, and a short scene in the White House at the end, are the only appearances the President makes. Joel asks him for a quote. “Don’t let them kill me”, the President replies, to which Joel responds, “That will do”. It is a gripping film. The explicit violence will shock and upset but it is brutally realistic of what war is like. It exaggerates probable upheavals should Trump win, but who knows? Yet it is extremely symptomatic that Civil War has been released at this time.

WHAT’S YOUR VIEW?

- editors@socialistparty.org.uk
- or, if you’re not online, write to the Socialist Inbox, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT

SUBSCRIBE TO THE SOCIALIST

Visit socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe or call **020 8988 8777**

- E-subscription £2.50 a month, or £4 including Socialism Today
- Paper sub £4.50 a month, or £6.50 including Socialism Today

Subscribe by direct debit and choose from a range of free books!



Rich-list Rishi Sunak attacks disabled people

CHARLEY LINCOLN
NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Rishi Sunak announced five welfare reforms on 19 April. He started by misleading the public by claiming that Universal Credit “makes sure work always pays”, ignoring the fact that over half of claimants are in work. He added: “We introduced the National Living Wage - and increased it every year, ending low pay in this country!”

According to Sunak, since the

pandemic, the 850,000 more people have joined the ‘sicknote’ group due to long-term sickness.

Of those who are economically inactive, half have depression or anxiety. “Most worrying of all... is the biggest proportional increase in economic inactivity... came from young people”.

A looming climate crisis, 25% of people worldwide living in an active conflict zone. In Britain, the sixth-richest country in the world, thousands go without food, housing and



PHOTO: A24

Nail-biting war film following photojournalists lacks political voice

SAM WARD
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Civil War, much like its war photographer protagonists, chooses not to take sides.

Depicting a fictional US civil war in the near-future, the atrocities portrayed by various factions are never attributed to one side or the other. An event called the ‘antifa massacre’ is mentioned in passing, but the audience never knows more than this. Was it an atrocity committed by or against anti-fascists?

For me, therein lies the problem with Civil War. The name drop of ‘Portland Maoists’, while amusing, rang alarm bells of post-Capitol attack liberal panic. While technically sound, British director Alex Garland’s film lacked a political voice. It is a universal understanding that ‘war is bad’. The moral hand-wringing of a centrist filmmaker

doesn’t shed any further light on this.

The film goes to great lengths to inspire sympathy towards the journalists on their journey through war-stricken USA. However, I found it hard to sympathise with those that are following the ‘action’. The character played by Cailee Spaeny, a young, up-and-coming war photographer, was a particularly trying figure. Though there is little wrong with the performance, the character is unrealistically naïve, speaking like someone who hasn’t lived in a country that has been at war with itself for a number of years. We live in a world where we see the horrors of war every day on social media. How is it that she has no idea what she is getting into?

That is not to say that the film doesn’t have great sequences, Jesse Plemons stuns for the ten minutes that he is on-screen in a nail-bitingly

tense scene that echoes far better films.

During press for the release of Civil War, Alex Garland mentioned films that he had the cast watch before shooting the film. One of those films was Come and See, a Soviet, anti-war, anti-fascist classic by Elem Klimov. Civil War and Come and See are incomparable. Civil War sits on the sidelines, while Come and See does a far better job in portraying the horrors of war by showing the effect that it has on those caught up in it, particularly the children that it focuses on. It doesn’t sensationalise, it is a true anti-war film, which Civil War isn’t.

While photojournalism is important and a necessity when recording war, I do think that the film overstates their importance. It is those on the ground, the working class caught in the middle of conflict, that suffer and deserve more than a ‘good’ picture on the front of the morning papers.

conditions set by their Work Coach will have their claim closed and their benefits removed entirely. Is that justified? Well, Sunak claims it will ‘stimulate growth’.

Decisions about who gets Personal Independence Payments (PIP) with be more ‘rigorous’. Already, 80% of PIP claims that get taken to tribunal are awarded. People are already being unjustly denied support.

24% of Britain’s population is classified as disabled (not all of working age), an increase of 3.9 million people over the last decade. If your disability is invisible or of a mental health variety, Sunak believes you don’t require cash anymore. Instead you

will get access to treatment like talking therapies or respite care. Mental health charity Mind called PM’s rhetoric “insulting to the 1.9 million people on a waiting list to get mental health support.”

What was behind the announcement? It feels like a desperate prime minister on his way out trying to blame disabled people for over a decade of Tories making the rich richer and misery for the rest of us.

The Socialist Party says replace Universal Credit and the punitive benefit system with living benefits for all who need them, and calls for a massive expansion of public services to meet need.

BAN ZERO-HOUR CONTRACTS

We need a party that will stand up for workers

JOHN WILLIAMS
CARDIFF EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

You'd think that in Britain in 2024, the sixth-richest country on earth, basic workers' rights such as having breaks after six hours of work and knowing your shifts weeks in advance would be a given. But, having worked in hospitality, the stories I hear never fail to amaze me.

Workers have their breaks in the cellar or store cupboard, stood up to eat their food just in case they have to immediately respond to change a barrel or take food out to customers. Not knowing whether to get loose wires fixed just in case the area manager shouts at them for wasting money and jeopardising profit targets.

You can be working a shift short-staffed but bosses sell it as 'one or two people down won't make much of a difference'. It does! The system is rigged to make workers feel that we shouldn't complain or risk getting hours of work. This is the reality for many workers on zero-hour or other precarious contracts.

The simple truth is not enough hospitality workers know their rights or are organised in trade unions that will fight for those rights to be enforced.

The Tories have kicked the can down the road regarding new 'fair tips' legislation meant to come into force in July. Sharon Graham, general secretary of Unite, which organises hospitality workers, has rightly criticised leaks of Labour's draft 'new deal for workers' for going back on promises to scrap zero-hour contracts and other pro-worker policies. (see page 3)

Of course we are in favour of flexible working, but only if controlled by the workers ourselves. I'm fighting to help organise workers into the union in my workplace and industry. But we need political representation too.

Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) supporters and Socialist Party members in Cardiff have backed me as a candidate in the general election this year. We'll be putting forward pro-worker policies including an end to zero-hour contracts, a minimum wage of £15 an hour with no exemptions as a step towards wages we can live on, and scrapping all anti-union laws.

The Socialist Party fights for the working class to run society so we can outlaw all exploitive conditions. Young people, including hospitality workers, can be inspired to fight and vote for something that will actually bring meaningful socialist change.

MARY FINCH

