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# the Socialist

Issue 1277

30 May - 5 June 2024

formerly **Militant**

## Our chance to get the

# TORIES OUT!

## STARMER'S LABOUR DOESN'T STAND FOR US



## Support a socialist general election challenge

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**READ WHAT WE THINK ON PAGE 3**

the Socialist

formerly Militant

Issue 1277

30 May - 5 June 2024

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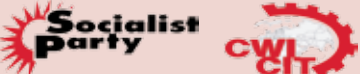
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."  
**Karl Marx**

Young people: 'We deserve better, fight for a party of workers and youth'



PHOTO: ALEX SMITH

**CONOR SCHIEFERSTEIN**  
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

We deserve better than any of the main parties on offer in this general election.

Young people have been consistently mocked and taken for granted by this government, protests and encampments we've taken part in have been met with hostility and calls for harsher policing. The recent announcement of Tories' plans for national service highlight just how out of touch they are with the anti-war mood of the younger generation. (see page 5).

Our future feels uncertain. Decent housing is unachievable for many of us and Tory rule hasn't done anything to stop landlords exploiting us.

We deserve better pay, better conditions and a party that will fight for us. We are the future, and yet we, along with the rest of the working class, continue to suffer from the government's policies. But it is becoming apparent that Starmer's Labour is not a voice for workers either. They spit out policies that 'shadow' the Tories after getting rid of many of Corbyn's policies that mobilised

thousands of young people, enthused by an alternative.

As well as going back on many of his leadership pledges, Starmer's comments justifying the brutal and inhumane efforts of the Israeli state have demonstrated to us where his true intentions lie. Anyone who criticises Israel or is on the left of the party has been quickly suspended and expelled. Look at what's happened to Jeremy Corbyn or Diane Abbott while right-wing Tory MPs were welcomed!

There is a strong mood for change, particularly from young working-class people. We deserve better, and the good part is we are the many and they are the few. We need a new workers' party, set up by workers and for workers.

We deserve to know where our money and labour is going, whether that's funding war crimes or lining the pockets of the fat cats and their friends. Capitalism is a broken system and we can trust none of the major parties to break the chain. Trust yourself and help build a party which actually represents the working class, that can build a safer, cleaner and fairer socialist society for our generation and generations to come.

The Socialist paper – a voice for workers this general election

**IAN PATTISON**  
THE SOCIALIST CAMPAIGN ORGANISER

Who speaks for workers? This general election, it's our chance to see the back of the Tories. But, during the campaign, where will you hear working-class voices?

The right-wing capitalist media is owned by a tiny number of rich billionaires. They've backed 14 years of Tory austerity, and poured venom on those fighting back.

Even nominally 'neutral' media outlets, like the BBC, are just mouthpieces of the capitalist establishment. We can't rely on them. That's where the Socialist newspaper comes in. Millions will hold their noses and vote for Keir Starmer's Labour on 4 July, seeing it as a way to get the Tories out. Others can't even bring themselves to do that, horrified by Starmer's position on the war on Gaza, as well as copying Tory austerity policies and kicking out Corbyn and other left wingers.

The Socialist Party has campaigned for the biggest-possible list

of workers' candidates in the general election. A bloc of workers' MPs in parliament could act as working-class pressure against a new Starmer Labour government doing the bidding of the capitalist class. It would be a step towards a new party for the working class.

We've used our paper, the Socialist, to campaign for that. And we'll be doing the same this general election. In the Socialist, workers fighting back have the chance to raise their voice.

Wherever working-class and young people are fighting back – on picket lines, protests, community campaigns, student encampments – you will find the Socialist newspaper.

We also fight for a socialist alternative to the chaos of the capitalist parties. We say nationalise the banks and big businesses that dominate the economy, and put them under the democratic control of the working class. Fighting for that would open up the possibility of socialist policies that would transform workers' lives.

And you can help us promote that message, join us out campaigning.

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PHOTO: JOHN GILLMAN

Donate to the Socialist Party general election appeal



Every penny you donate will help fund the Socialist Party general election campaign – deposits, leaflets, posters and more.

We are fighting for policies that can transform working-class people's lives, and explaining the need

for socialist change which takes power and wealth out of the hands of the bosses and into the hands of the working class. Part of that will be standing 30+ Socialist Party candidates, along with others, as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

Help us smash through our £50,000 target to raise the loudest possible socialist voice on 4 July.

- Pledge now: email [isai@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:isai@socialistparty.org.uk)
- Donate: [socialistparty.org.uk/donate](https://socialistparty.org.uk/donate)
- Pledges to be made by the end of June and paid by the end of July

ELECTION: TORIES OUT – BUT STARMER'S LABOUR DOESN'T STAND FOR US

Build a socialist election challenge



Fourteen years of Tory government look set to come to an end on 4 July, 2024. Fourteen years of the super-rich raking in billions, while the rest of us suffer falling living standards and crumbling public services. No wonder millions will be rejoicing to see the back of Sunak and his cronies. Unfortunately, however, a Starmer 'New Labour' government is not going to act in the interests of the working-class majority.

Sunak has cut and run now because his right-wing, pro-capitalist government had no way of improving their abysmal poll ratings. The sorry state of the UK economy has led them to conclude that a desperate attempt at an autumn pre-election bribe was not possible without risking another Truss-style crisis on the markets. So, rather than risk further looming rebellions from the parliamentary Tory party, and probably in order to try and limit the ability of Reform UK to cut further into their collapsing electoral base, Sunak obviously decided just to 'walk into the guns' and get the defeat over with.

Starmer-led government

As a result, we are on course for a Starmer-led government in six weeks' time. Millions will grit their teeth and vote Labour, not out of enthusiasm for his policies, but in order to make absolutely sure the Tories are binned. Others will abstain or vote for smaller parties. The most enthusiasm for Starmer's New Labour comes from the capitalist elite.

The party's 'business conference' was sponsored by HSBC, and was packed with bankers and city executives. No surprise that Rachel Reeves has even scrapped the pledge to re-introduce the very limited cap on bankers' bonuses.

Meanwhile, shadow cabinet ministers are getting endless free 'help and advice' from financial corporations. Price Waterhouse Cooper alone has donated more than £96,000 worth of staff time to the party. All of these details reflect a broader picture: the majority of the capitalist class want a Starmer-led government, because they are confident it will act in their interests.

But what will that mean for the working-class majority? Starmer's lead pledge is 'deliver economic stability with tough spending rules'. No one wants economic 'instability', but



PHOTO: UK PARLIAMENT/CC

that is what Starmer will preside over. He defends capitalism, and capitalism is a crisis-ridden unstable system. Remember that New Labour's previous incarnation, under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, claimed to have 'abolished boom and bust', only to be engulfed by the Great Recession, which British capitalism has never recovered from. Average wages today are £10,700 a year lower than they would have been if they had continued on the pre-2008 trend.

The real meaning of Starmer's pledge is that his government will defend the profits of the few at the top, while imposing continued Tory austerity on the rest of us. Change is desperately needed: we need repeal of all the anti-union laws, an end to pay restraint, a minimum wage of at least £15 an hour, a huge increase in NHS funding, a reversal of the 40% cut to council grants from central government, mass council house building, and much more.

But Starmer has made clear he will deliver none of this. He has also made clear that his foreign policy, including on the nightmare being suffered by Palestinians in Gaza, will be the same, in essence, as the Tories.

None of this means that the working class is powerless to improve our lives under the next government. But, just like under the Tories, doing so will require the trade union movement being prepared to fight to defend workers' interests. The need for this will be posed sharply from day one on a host of issues. Take Tata Steel in South Wales. It is facing the

closure of two blast furnaces with 2,000 job losses. Heroically the workers have voted for strike action. With a Labour government just six weeks away, the demand needs to be raised now that Labour pledges to nationalise when it comes to power. After all, it is widely known that Labour may have to nationalise Thames Water to try and prevent the collapse of the company – caused by its owners, gambling profiteering – creating a new financial crisis. But if they can nationalise to defend the finance system, why not to save jobs and allow a workers-led transition to green steel production?

Fighting trade union movement

A fighting trade union movement is going to be essential under the next government. So is building the anti-war movement. But it is also vital that the working class starts to create its own political voice. The potential for such a party has existed for some time.

That was demonstrated by the enthusiasm for Enough is Enough, launched at the height of the strike wave by two key trade union leaders, Mick Lynch, general secretary of the RMT, and Dave Ward, general secretary of the Communication Workers Union. Half a million people joined, but unfortunately its leaders didn't see it as a step towards new party, and so it has now disappeared.

The opportunities that were there have not been taken to launch a mass workers' party in time for this general election. As a result, the Greens are

likely to pick up anti-austerity anti-war votes. But in reality, the Green Party is not a workers' party. Trade unions have no democratic rights within the Greens and as a party it accepts the constraints of the capitalist system. Where Greens have been in power at local level, they have implemented austerity. In the 2019 general election, the Greens had an electoral arrangement with the Liberal Democrats – who were part of the vicious austerity coalition government from 2010-2015 – standing down for them in 40 seats; yet they stood against Jeremy Corbyn and other left Labour candidates. This time they appear to be refusing to stand down in Islington North, where Jeremy Corbyn has declared he is standing as an independent.

Nonetheless, this election does represent an opportunity to take steps towards the kind of party we will need under a Starmer government. It is positive that Jeremy Corbyn has declared he will stand as an independent. The potential exists for a bloc of workers' MPs being elected, who could, from 5 July, articulate the demands of the working class in parliament. If Jeremy Corbyn and others are elected, it will immediately pose the need for the trade union movement to start discussing how to build a party that fights in workers' interests. The Socialist Party is fighting for every possible step towards this.

We participate in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), an electoral coalition which aims to enable trade unionists, community campaigners and socialists who are fighting for a new mass workers' party to stand candidates against pro-austerity establishment politicians under a clear banner. We have been campaigning to bring as many different workers' candidates as possible together in a common challenge in this general election.

However, it is now clear that not all anti-austerity and anti-war candidates will be standing under a common banner. Some, including Socialist Party members, will stand as TUSC but others, as in May's local elections, will stand as independents, or under the Workers' Party and other banners. Had the general election been in the autumn there would have been more time to organise discussions in local trade union movements to democratically decide the strongest workers' candidate in a particular area.

Nonetheless, we will fight for the maximum achievable possible cooperation, in order to have the strongest-possible socialist challenge at the ballot box, in preparation for the battles ahead under a Starmer government.

If you want to be part of that fight, during the election and beyond, then get involved

Come and discuss: [socialistparty.org.uk/events](https://socialistparty.org.uk/events)

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RICHARD COOKE/CC

## Tesco - every profit helps

MADDIE ROONEY

SHEFFIELD NORTH WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

Ken Murphy, the CEO of Tesco, was given £9.9 million in 'pay and perks'. This is yet another increase on his £4.5 million package last year. Where has this money come from? Increased food prices and exploitation of labour throughout the food manufacturing process. Despite what Tesco bosses might say, since May 2022 their price hikes have continuously been above overall inflation (CPI), by as much as 9.1% in April 2023, according to The Food Foundation.

Last month, Tesco announced £2.3 billion profits, up by £882 million on last year. News outlets have reported that food inflation has eased in recent months. Although it is not at 19% anymore, they failed to mention that it is still higher than CPI.

It is easy to see these announcements and feel frustrated, especially when seeing the price of your shopping basket increasing month on month. This seemingly never-ending thirst for profit that capitalism causes directly impacts workers, as

our wages consistently fail to match inflation and this continual cost-of-living crisis impacts every element of our lives from shopping for food, paying energy bills, and being able to afford transport. This ongoing battle over profit and for our wages is what lies behind class struggle – the fight over the distribution of wealth that is produced by workers' labour.

# £2.3 billion

**Tesco profits, while we're told the 'money isn't there'**

But what can be done? We must continue to organise within unions in workplaces to fight for inflation-breaking pay rises. And fight in our communities to build support for socialism – for a society democratically planned by workers ourselves. To produce things that we actually want and need, not what makes massive profits for those, like Ken Murphy, at the top of society.

## Report attacks right to protest

### Reject this big-business attempt to push back workers' struggle

SAM HEY

MANCHESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Just before the election was called, ex-Labour anti-Corbyn MP John Woodcock released his Counter-Extremism Report: 'Protecting Our Democracy From Coercion'. The report attacks the right to protest and contains a list of recommendations for the government in order to "protect democracy" by undermining protests.

The report contains a new labelling of "Extreme left wing and anarchist" for, "extremism threats from traditional revolutionary far-left ideologies". His report recommends extending the use of covert surveillance and taking steps to "strengthen the legislative framework for responding to political protest, political violence and disruption." In practice, Woodcock is recommending the government makes more use of the Police, Crime, Sentencing, and Courts Act 2022, and go further by expanding the grounds for which a march cannot go ahead, as well as legalising individuals and businesses claiming damages against protest organisations. Woodcock's recommendations

also demand protest organisers pay towards policing costs, essentially fining organisations just for protesting.

#### Lobbying works?

After resigning from Labour facing an allegation of sexual harassment, Woodcock was granted a life peerage from Boris Johnson after calling for a vote for him and the Tories in the 2019 general election. As has been reported in the Guardian, while serving as an 'independent' government advisor, Woodcock is also: a paid advisor to Rud Pederson, lobbyists who have worked with fossil fuel giant Glencore; a paid advisor to the Purpose Business Coalition, of which BP is a member; and chair of the Purpose Defence Coalition, which includes Leonardo, one of the largest arms manufacturers with links to the Israeli government. Woodcock's ties to the arms industry and fossil fuel companies would be a useful addition to the report, as they contextualise his attempt to scaremonger movements such as environmentalism, Palestinian solidarity, and anti-racism, stating: "If extreme movements go unchallenged then they might eventually overturn democracy."

Woodcock uses democracy as a euphemism for capitalist interests, and while the report specifically mentions groups like Extinction Rebellion and Just Stop Oil, his recommendations represent an erosion of the fundamental right to protest. These rights have consistently been fought for by the working-class and trade-union movement. His proposed restrictions on protests build on the legislation opposed by the 'Kill The Bill' campaign in 2022 and, if any of the report is legislated upon, it must be fought against by the workers' movement.

The Socialist Party demands that these anti-democratic, anti-protest recommendations get thrown in the bin on the first day of the next government. And laws attacking the right to protest be repealed, alongside all the anti-trade union laws. Socialists fight for real democracy, in which the interests of working people are acted on, not the lobbying of the super-rich.

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## High vet prices another aspect to the cost-of-living crisis

TOM PORTER-BROWN

BIRMINGHAM CENTRAL SOCIALIST PARTY

Since 2015, the cost of veterinary services has increased by 50%! The veterinary market is worth at least £2 billion, over £5 billion if you include other pet-related services. And while a few make a profit, pet owners are facing the consequences of higher prices.

This profit-first approach has caused pets and animals across the UK to go without the medical help they need. So much so that even the government's own tame Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) is investigating whether pet owners are being overcharged for medicines, and may even recommend the

government institutes a maximum prescription charge.

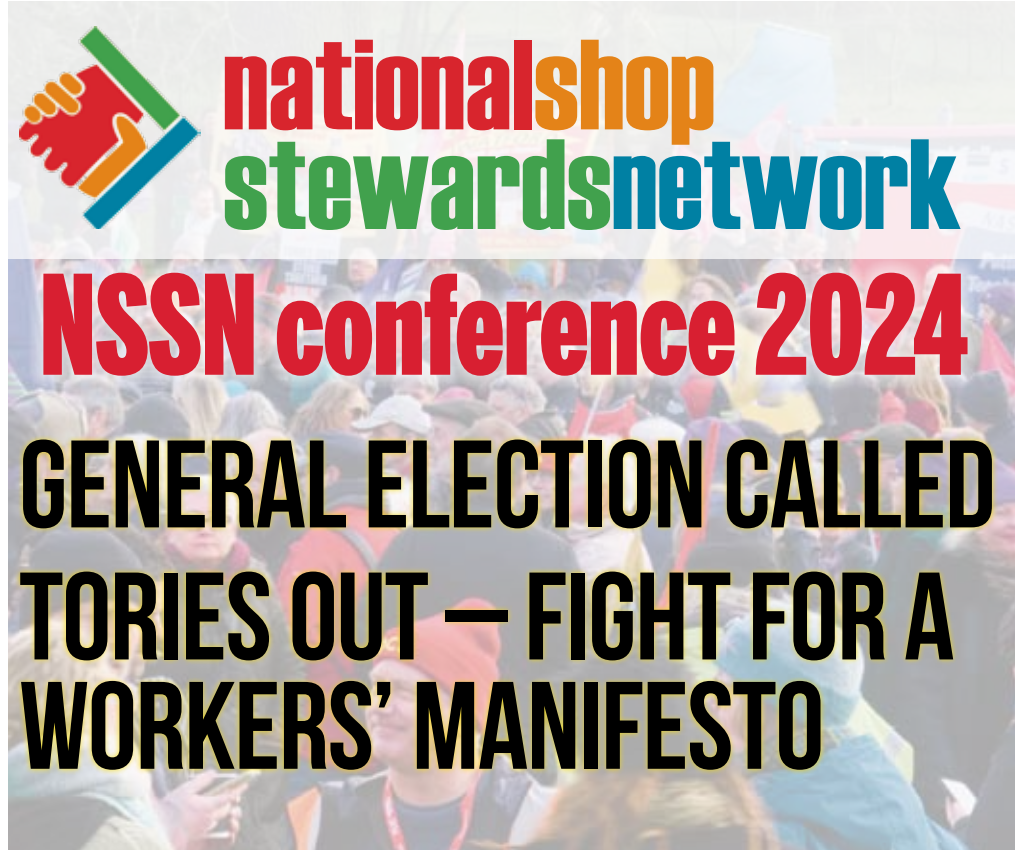
But with an estimated 16 million households owning at least one pet, an alternative that is high-quality and affordable cannot exist without nationalising the corporations dominating the market. Six firms dominate the veterinary market, hiding behind different names of the practices they have bought up.

It is cruel that pets be left to suffer because their owners cannot afford to treat them to adequate healthcare. The situation cannot permanently improve without changing how these multi-billion-pound companies are run. These firms need to be brought into public ownership where the

wealth generated can be invested back into veterinary services.

We also need to nationalise the pet food companies, the large shop chains and the pharmaceutical industry, under democratic workers' control and management. This could be used to make medicines affordable and to pay vets better. The resources required to run a socialist veterinary system should be controlled by people who understand what it's like to both work and depend on such a system.

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



## GENERAL ELECTION CALLED

### TORIES OUT – FIGHT FOR A WORKERS' MANIFESTO

## National service? How about a secure job and free education?

FRANKIE COULTAS

SOUTHAMPTON WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

In a move that can be described as cynical to the point of self-parody, the Conservative Party has announced its election pledge to bring back national service. For his reasoning behind the move, Rishi Sunak argued that it would improve job and study opportunities for young people. He did not, however, expand upon just how military service would fix any of the problems that young people in the UK are facing at the moment. He even admitted that he has not yet written the actual policy.

Employment and education access are key issues for young people in the UK. The rate of unemployment for 16- to 24-year olds has risen to 13% in 2024. This, combined with the skyrocketing cost of living, has made it increasingly prohibitive for young people to access higher education and find a decent place to live.

Contrary to what the Tories and Sunak believe, what young people desperately need is not a 'shared sense of purpose' but in fact the resources to live and thrive. Resources that exist in abundance in the UK but are hoarded by big business and the bosses.

#### Young people showing solidarity

It also demonstrates just how out of touch the government is with young people if they believe that there is a lack of a 'shared sense of purpose'. Thousands of young people and students have demonstrated against the war on Gaza in solidarity with Palestinians.

If the government genuinely wanted to improve the lives and community spirit of young people they would cease their reactionary divide and conquer 'culture wars' that vilify minorities, and make sure we have decent jobs wages we can live on and affordable good quality housing.



MARY FINCH

#### NATIONAL SHOP STEWARDS NETWORK ANNOUNCEMENT

Finally, Sunak has called the general election for 4 July. Workers are desperate to get rid of the Tories.

Our annual conference is on Saturday 22 June. As usual, we will be giving a platform to leaders and rank and file reps from unions involved in industrial disputes, to build support and solidarity for their action.

However, as this year's NSSN conference takes place during the general election, the additional theme of our event will be: 'Tories out – Fight for a workers' manifesto'.

This session will be concerned with how the union movement fights for the policies that workers desperately need. We have invited representatives from a number of parties and organisations to take part in the discussion.

#### We have set out a list of demands:

- To repeal Sunak's Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act along with Cameron's Trade Union Act 2016, and all the rest of the Tory anti-union laws, going back to Thatcher and Major
- To re-nationalise Royal Mail, BT, buses, the energy and utility companies, and

steel. Immediate renationalisation of the railways, rather than waiting for franchises to expire

- To end privatisation in the NHS and our public services
- For a real inflation-proof pay rise for workers, that protects our living standards
- For a £15-an-hour minimum wage with no age exemptions
- Repeal of 'fire and rehire' and zero-hour contracts
- Workers' rights from day one of employment

The conference will be a chance for workers to organise for their voice to be heard in the election – and even more importantly prepare for the battles that will follow 4 July! Come to NSSN Conference – support the strikes and join the debate.

Saturday 22 June  
11am-4.30pm  
Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square,  
Holborn, London WC1R  
Attendance fee – £8.  
Email us for more info –  
info@shopstewards.net

## Horizon Post Office scandal: A crime of Labour and Tory privatisation

What have we learned so far from the Post Office inquiry?

That there was a group of people at the top of an institution, more than a dozen, being paid more than £100,000 per year (Paula Vennels, former Post Office CEO, was paid £5 million during her time there - £4 million in bonuses). They were incompetent. They didn't read their emails properly although they had very little else to do. They couldn't take decisions without advice from others in the group, and they followed advice blindly without questioning it. They couldn't put two and two together. They had contempt for the people in the organisation who bring in the money that pays their profits and salaries. Because they judged everyone by how much they earn, they looked down on those who earn less than they do. Because they got where they are by being greedy and dishonest, they assume everybody else is too.

But anyone who has worked in a large institution or business in 21st century Britain knew all that already. That's how every institution, public and private, works. People earning £25 - £30k are expected to make decisions and are held accountable if things go wrong. They have no subordinates to consult and can't consult their manager because they know very little too.

What haven't we learned? Why do both main parties still support privatisation? The flawed computer system, Horizon, was brought in by the Blair government. And the Tories continued to hand out lucrative contracts to Fujitsu even after the scandal broke. The inquiry has not yet questioned anyone as to why Fujitsu was not contacted and held to account by the Post Office from an early stage.



ANDREW BOWDEN/CC

#### Crimes of profit

The infected blood scandal was caused by bringing in infected blood from the American private sector, where blood is paid for and usually given by the desperate, including drug addicts. The Grenfell fire was caused by the council contracting work to numerous private companies at the lowest-possible price, while each one took their cut of profits. Our rivers and seas are polluted because privatised water companies have given profits (and money they have borrowed) to shareholders rather than building reservoirs, fixing leaks and upgrading the systems for treating sewage.

All these private companies have devised ways of getting their hands on public money. They don't provide value for money, the prices they charge include profits for shareholders, and large numbers of executives and managers are paid hundreds of thousands and often millions of pounds, while those who do the actual work are paid the lowest wages.

We need to undo the privatisation disaster, renationalise and bring in democratic workers' control and management.

KEVIN PATTISON (RETIRED CWU MEMBER) AND ROS CAMPBELL (UNITE MEMBER)



NENAD STOJKOVIC/CC

# TUC Cymru/Wales TUC

## Young workers ready to fight under the next government



Socialist Party members participate in the debates at TUC Cymru/Wales TUC SOCIALIST PARTY WALES

### SOCIALIST PARTY DELEGATES

With a rebranding of its name, on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Wales Trades Union Congress (TUC), the 2024 biennial congress of 'TUC Cymru' in Llandudno was a refreshing and largely combative event, which took up the key issues facing the trade union movement in Wales.

A big factor in this changed mood, compared to the political and organisational shambles of the congress two years ago, was the presence of a whole new generation of younger delegates who have been through the experience of trade union struggle against the Tory government at Westminster and the Labour-led government in Wales.

A large majority of rostrum speakers, probably around 80%, introduced themselves as first-time delegates and first-time speakers. Their contributions reflected the impact of the crisis of capitalism on their members across both the public and private sectors, and their determination to improve their pay and living conditions under a soon-to-be Keir Starmer-led government in Westminster.

The interventions, programme and demands from Socialist Party members, who were delegates from trades councils, were enthusiastically applauded and were also reflected in the informal discussions, with 29 papers sold to delegates.

Tata Steel's mass redundancy

plans for its Port Talbot plant, and the crisis in the devolved public sector areas, dominated proceedings at congress.

As expected, there was total support and solidarity with the steelworker unions, whose members have voted to take industrial action to save jobs and retain primary steelmaking in Port Talbot.

### Tata Steel

There was, however, some disagreement over the continuing strategy of the Unite, Community and GMB union leaderships, of attempting to get Tata's intransigent bosses to 'come back to the table with a better alternative' for the future of Port Talbot steelworks.

Swansea Trades Council highlighted that Tata, like all big corporations, always put the profits of their shareholders before the livelihoods of their workforce, families and communities!

Instead of spreading illusions and putting trust in Tata bosses, who have consistently rejected all the steel unions' alternative proposals, unions should be campaigning to demand that a Starmer government immediately nationalises Tata Steel, as the only guarantee of saving all the jobs and investing in a green transition that will keep the furnaces firing.

Unfortunately, the option of nationalisation was deemed too premature by the steel unions whilst negotiations with Tata were still deemed feasible. Swansea Trades Council's motion was heavily defeated, apart from the support of a

handful of the more militant trade unions and a number of the trades councils.

However, congress committed to giving full support to any industrial action that is necessary. The Wales TUC must now prepare its affiliates to deliver solidarity action in the most important industrial dispute in Wales since the 1984-85 miners' strike.

Socialist Party members intervened strongly, with over 20 contributions from the rostrum, putting forward a clear class and socialist alternative to debates, ranging from our total opposition to the class collaboration policy of 'social partnership', to defending the public sector and fighting the Welsh government for passing on Tory cuts in health, education and local government.

Alongside the RMT rail union, our delegates also demanded that the Welsh government refuse, in action, to implement the anti-trade union minimum service levels legislation in our devolved sectors.

The announcement of a general election during congress was met with relief at the prospect of getting rid the Tories. But apart from the guest speaker - Welsh Labour's controversial Blairite first minister, Vaughan Gething - there was a large degree of scepticism that this business-friendly expected new Labour government will deliver what is needed for workers in Wales.

Undoubtedly, at this congress, the ground has been laid by a new, younger generation for a militant fightback!

## NEU and the general election

### Exec met in May, but now needs to up its plans!

**SHEILA CAFFREY**

NEU EXEC MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The National Education Union's (NEU) National Executive met in May to discuss its plans in the run-up to what was expected to be an autumn general election. This included balloting at the end of September if the Tory government didn't make an acceptable pay offer, and ensure it was fully funded so that schools, colleges and nurseries didn't have to decide whether to pay their staff or make cuts.

The announcement four days later of a general election means we need a fuller discussion on how best to put pressure on the new Starmer-led government that's likely to be in power from the start of July.

The Labour Party has promised another 6,500 teachers, which would certainly assist with cutting class sizes, and could help reduce the crippling workload that education workers face. But where are these teachers going to come from? With below-inflation pay offers for well over a decade, with thousands of spaces left unfilled each year on teacher-training courses, as well as 60% of teachers leaving in the first few years after qualifying, teaching is certainly not seen as an attractive career!

Support staff have also just been offered a derisory pay rise of £1,290. The Tory government tries to claim that this means the lowest paid have been offered just under 30% in pay rises since 2021. Yet education support staff are paid term-time only and many are on minimum wage. An increase of 30% of poverty pay, still leaves you on poverty pay. Added to that, many are encouraged to work far above their pay grades, with some actually planning and teaching full classes due to the teacher retention crisis.

There are not many jobs in education that offer those who are

dedicated to education, and to trying to improve the lives of our children and young people, the incentive to stay.

### Make our demands

The early election gives the NEU a chance to fight now! We need to revisit our balloting timeline and think how best to put the pressure on Starmer and Labour. Will they reverse the cuts to funding, to local authority nurseries, and to support for children with special educational needs? Will they pay education workers in line with or above inflation?

Well, the answers are no - unless education workers stand up and apply the pressure. We should make our demands now: a pay rise above inflation for teachers and support staff, with central funding to cover it; and the need for a national contract to tackle workload, that protects education workers from attacks on pay and conditions that have been encouraged since academisation and the fragmentation of the education system seen since Tony Blair. If the NEU prepares to ballot our members as soon as the teachers' pay award is offered in July, this would show a Labour-led government we mean business and we're not going to let them off the hook.

Local NEU branches will be holding 'Question Time' hustings. Members will be asking candidates where they stand on a myriad of issues facing education and education workers. So how best to back this up but with pressure nationally, not just of press releases and a roadshow calling for free school meals for all, but with balloting for national action that will be taken in the first 100 days of a Starmer-led government if he doesn't fulfil the NEU's demands?

The NEU can win for its members, but it means the members need to push the leadership to stand up and fight for what is needed.



NEU members on a strike demo in Manchester, 2023 MARTIN POWELL-DAVIES

# After PCS conference, the new left executive must get to work!

**DAVE SEMPLE**

PCS NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Union reps and members gathered from 21 to 23 May for the Annual Delegate Conference (ADC) of the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union.

Conference was always likely to be a stormy affair. Just days before, the ruling faction of the union, 'Left Unity', was defeated in elections to the union's National Executive Committee (NEC) for the first time in over twenty years. Major debates beckoned on the way forward for the union!

In June 2023, Fran Heathcote (president until February 2024, now general secretary) and Martin Cavanagh (then deputy president, now national president), both part of the Left Unity group, took the decision to collapse the union's national campaign on pay, pensions and jobs after a derisory offer of a one-off, non-consolidated, pro-rata £1,500.

They cancelled the strikes, the ballots that had only days earlier been ordered by the 2023 conference, and the strike levy. Ten months of total inactivity followed, which they justified by saying they were talking to the Cabinet Office. They took no steps to prepare the union for the ballot that would be necessary when talks led nowhere.

Conference also convened after the results of the hastily launched national strike ballot. Heroic efforts were unleashed by reps across the union to turn out the vote, including by Socialist Party members in PCS and our allies in the PCS Broad Left Network (BLN).

But of 171 areas balloted, just 64 areas, representing 19,160 members,



PHOTO: PAUL MATTISSON

got over the 50% Tory turnout threshold. The remaining areas, including the biggest groups, representing 127,800 members, did not get over the threshold. Conference's palpable anger was driven by how unprepared the turn to a ballot had been. When the ballot launched, leaflets had not even arrived in branches.

### Conference overturns general secretary's campaign plan

Reps' loss of confidence in the leadership resulted in staggering defeats for them at conference.

The most important motion debated was on the national campaign. The general secretary moved motion A134 from the outgoing NEC that did not lay out a campaigning approach.

In a stormy debate, during which the general secretary claimed that motion A315, supported by the BLN and moved by Socialist Party

member Craig Worswick, would be disastrous, reps' desire for a fighting strategy was plain.

Motion A315 passed decisively on a show of hands. It lays the basis for a massive campaign covering the many major issues facing civil servants and those workers in privatised or associated bodies: a 10% pay rise with a £15-per-hour minimum (and more in London), pensions justice, restoration of redundancy protections, 100,000 new civil service jobs, recovery of our union rights, halting the office closure juggernaut.

With a general election called just days after the conference, Keir Starmer must be in no doubt that the newly elected NEC intends to robustly fight for our members on all battlefields.

Any campaign must be predicated upon a serious strategy that considers how we can force the government

to retreat using all of the means at our disposal, including political pressure.

### Political strategy

It was significant, therefore, that the national president allowed Left Unity's political strategy motion - which essentially abolished the union's strategy - to be 'talked out', in order to avoid a further crushing defeat on the floor of conference.

The result is that the newly elected NEC retains the option to support candidates in the general election who have a proven track record of supporting our members, such as Jeremy Corbyn.

In the 'block vote' elections, which usually take place at conference but have been transferred to online voting, Left Unity supporters again lost out on spaces on the Trades Union Congress (TUC) delegation,

Women's TUC, Scottish TUC, Youth TUC and the union's Editorial Board.

### More defeats for outgoing NEC

Conference delegates also rejected the 'Organising Strategy' prepared by Heathcote and Cavanagh on a card vote. Discontent over the Organising Strategy has been building for years; the union has been losing reps and members.

Conference once again reaffirmed its commitment to equality and particularly to trans rights, with delegates giving the outgoing Left Unity-led NEC a grilling over their weak stances for the fifth year running. Conference also censured the ousted NEC majority for attempting to disband the Scottish Government group in the union without consultation with reps and members.

Conference closed with a new majority leadership on the NEC taking up post, composed of supporters of the PCS Broad Left Network (including Socialist Party members), Independent Left and left independents from the Revenue and Customs group.

This coalition stood on a platform of building a serious national campaign, and of reopening the union, so that it is responsive to the needs of reps and members in a way not seen for years.

As we prepare to fight for our members under a Starmer-led government, we face challenges, not least of which will be that the posts of general secretary and president are still in the hands of the Left Unity grouping.

We urge all activists prepared to campaign for a fighting, democratic PCS, armed with socialist policies, to join the PCS Broad Left Network, so we can campaign to transform our union at all levels.

# Aslef conference debates the national dispute and general election

**KRISTIAN O'SULLIVAN**

ASLEF CONFERENCE DELEGATE

From 19-24 May, delegates from all across the country met for the train drivers' union Aslef 2024 rules conference, taking place during the longest-running national dispute our union has ever been involved in.

Train drivers representing all groups of the membership were in attendance from passenger (Train Operating Companies - TOCs), freight (Freight Operating Companies - FOCs), devolved nations' government-managed rail, privatised franchises and many others.

Among many important proposals regarding policy and rule changes, a motion presented by Socialist Party members on the Tory minimum service levels law was passed unanimously, calling on Aslef to co-ordinate with other unions against any employer, private or public, that looks to use the law, including potentially a 24-hour general strike.

Unsurprisingly the two biggest topics that demanded the most attention from delegates were regarding Labour affiliation and the upcoming



PHOTO: PAUL MATTISSON

general election, and where the national dispute was heading.

In our national dispute, many delegates were happy at the provisional indication that talks had resumed - saying that this had probably come about due to the Tories' massive electoral blow in the local elections.

### General election

Despite Labour affiliation being maintained, the majority of delegates who spoke in favour of keeping the Labour link started off with stating how it was not done out of enthusiasm for either Keir Starmer or the Labour Party. Many argued that it was a matter of getting the Tories out by any means necessary now, and then revisiting Labour affiliation in two years' time at the 2026 rules conference - to send a message to a Starmer-led government that Aslef could cut the link if industrial and political betrayals continue.

Many members expressed no trust in Starmer or 'New Labour 2.0'. But that doesn't mean we can't apply pressure, especially in our national dispute. Socialist Party members argue that we should demand of

Starmer that he steps in to resolve it straight away - by guaranteeing a decent pay rise and no attacks on jobs and conditions, and by promising to nationalise the rail industry fully immediately, rather than wait for the franchises to run out - and we should make it clear we are ready to strike again to fight for those demands.

Starmer that he steps in to resolve it straight away - by guaranteeing a decent pay rise and no attacks on jobs and conditions, and by promising to nationalise the rail industry fully immediately, rather than wait for the franchises to run out - and we should make it clear we are ready to strike again to fight for those demands.

### Jeremy Corbyn

On the last day of conference, Jeremy Corbyn announced his stand as an independent. Two Aslef branches moved an emergency motion, to make a statement and financial contribution of support to his campaign. If Aslef were to support Corbyn it would greatly increase the pressure on Starmer. But this was prevented from discussion on procedural grounds.

But the need for the trade unions to support candidates that fight for our demands, including Jeremy Corbyn, and take steps to a new workers' party, put across by members of the Socialist Party outside and inside the conference, struck a chord with a layer of Aslef activists - more so than just the idea of disaffiliating.

## 1 NHS

7.5 million people are waiting for routine care on the NHS. People wait months in pain and discomfort and with the possibility of further complications developing increasing. Every year for the last 11, the length of time patients wait for treatment after cancer is suspected has increased.

'Cut NHS waiting times' is one of 'Labour's first steps for change'. To achieve that there are plans for more evening and weekend appointments, with money available to pay staff overtime. But there are already 120,000 staff vacancies in the NHS - long, unsociable hours as well as low pay are big reasons for this.

The Tories have wrecked our NHS through chronic underfunding and privatisation. They took it over pre-loaded with billions of pounds of PFI debt from the last Labour government. And Labour says it plans for more private involvement.



PHOTO: MTAYLOR848/CC

## 2 Local councils



After over a decade of Tory austerity, local authorities' budgets have been slashed. Communities have seen the shutting or privatisation of libraries, community centres, playgrounds, leisure centres and more. In almost every council there have been battles against cuts and closures of council-run services.

Socialist Party members have called on councillors to refuse to implement central government cuts, to use reserves and borrowing powers as a stopgap and build a mass campaign to demand the funding needed. Standing in local elections as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, Socialist Party members and others put forward this as an alternative.

Very few Labour councillors have followed this road, and those that have and voted against cuts budgets have been expelled from their

groups. This lack of a fightback has led to the sorry state of affairs we see today.

While councils, such as Birmingham, Nottingham and others, have declared section 114 notices, meaning they will only provide services they are legally forced to, others have cut services so deeply you wouldn't be able to tell the difference. Most councils have increased council tax by the maximum amount they can, and what are we seeing for it but a managed decline?

How will the next government deal with more councils going into financial difficulty? With more debt being taken on by central government? More cuts, closures and fire sales of assets? Or by funding the services we need?

- Reverse the decade of cuts to local services. No council tax rises
- Kick out the profiteers - bring outsourced staff and services back in-house
- Build high-equality, environmentally friendly council homes
- For democratic planning of local service provision
- Councils must set budgets to meet need, demand the money from government

### We say:

- Fully fund our NHS, including free prescriptions and dental care
- End staff shortages - for mass recruitment of health staff with decent pay and working conditions
- Scrap university tuition fees and provide free training and development for NHS staff with living grants and bursaries
- Kick private profit out of our health service, cancel PFI debt
- Nationalise private health facilities, social care and the pharmaceutical industry with compensation only on the basis of need
- For working-class democratic control of our NHS by health workers and service users

# CRISIS-RIDDEN ELECTION BRITAIN FIGHTING FOR SOCIALIST CHANGE

It is highly likely that a Keir Starmer-led Labour government will form after the general election. But what will it inherit? An ailing economy with stagnant growth and productivity well below its peers.

For working-class people, there has been the longest sustained fall in living standards in 70 years and 11 million people face food insecurity. Neither or these issues make it onto Labour's internal 'shitlist', drawn up before the election was called.

Preparing for what faces Labour in power, Keir Starmer's chief of staff Sue Gray has drawn up a list of six major challenges: Thames Water collapse, public sector pay, prison overcrowding, universities going under, NHS funding and local councils.

Add to that; rocketing rents and mortgages, crumbling schools, childcare services at breaking point, climate change, thousands of redundancies looming at Tata Steel in Port Talbot, and much more.

What is needed to address the 'shitlist'? And what kind of policies are needed to deal with the 101 other problems facing working-class people in Britain? The Socialist will be publishing articles throughout the general election campaign, putting forward what is needed. This issue takes up the six shitlist items.



## 3 Universities

The whole university system is in a state of financial crisis. After over a decade of cuts to funding by Tory-led governments, they are reliant on the inflated fees that can be levied on international students. Many universities' budget sheets are on a cliff edge - 40% are expected to run budget deficits this year.

And, without a change to the broken fees model - something the Tories have been unable to even attempt to tackle due to their deep splits - students and staff will pay the price. Already, universities such as Goldsmiths have announced redundancies and course closures. The next government could see a wave of institutions going bust or ending the courses of thousands.

Keir Starmer has ruled out abolishing tuition fees, saying it's a choice between that and the NHS. But the model is broken and something

must be done to prevent collapse. The trebling of tuition fees under the Tory-Lib Dem coalition government sparked a mass student movement, the first mass movement against austerity nationally. Making young people pay the price again could be the spark to set off another student revolt.

### We need:

- Free, high-quality education accessible to all. This means scrapping fees, replacing loans with maintenance grants students can actually live on, and cancelling student debt
- Investing in education infrastructure, from schools to colleges and universities, pay rises for staff to offset the damage done by inflation, and reducing workloads
- The money for this is there, not in the bank accounts of students, but in the balance sheets of the super-rich bosses. A nationalised, democratically planned economy could fund the education we need



PHOTO: LIVERPOOL SP

## 4 Public sector pay

An experienced NHS nurse faced a 25% real-terms pay cut between 2010 and 2023-24, for experienced teachers it's something like 20%, cuts of a similar scale for civil servants and local government workers too. Many are paid the minimum wage - school support staff, nearly a quarter of DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) workers, and more. No wonder public sector workers were among the hundreds of thousands taking strike action during the strike wave.

The next government will form

with no pay offer having been made to teachers, NHS and civil service workers for 2024-25. Local government workers have been offered a low pay offer, currently being considered by the trade unions and their members.

Within weeks, the next government will have to reckon with nearly six million public sector workers fed up with pay cuts and a cost-of-living crisis.

As recruitment crises wrack the public sector, along with paid training and improved work-life balance, pay restoration is needed.

- For fully funded, inflation-proof pay rises
- Organise now for strike action to demand a real pay rise
- Bring outsourced workers back in house, on trade union-agreed pay, terms and conditions
- Fight for pay restoration to address over a decade of real-terms pay cuts



PHOTO: PAUL MATTHEWSON

## Build a new workers' party fight for socialist change

In an effort to lower expectations, Labour's shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves talks endlessly about 'iron-clad fiscal rules'. Translated into

English that means 'no money to spend'. But what of the £795 billion combined wealth of the 350 members of the recently published Sunday Times Rich List?

Addressing Labour's business conference in February, Starmer told bosses: "We've taken decisions together as equal partners in the venture of national renewal. Your fingerprints - on every one of our five missions". He sees Labour as representing the bosses not the workers.

The working class needs its own political voice - a new mass workers' party. For this election, Socialist Party members have fought for a trade union backed workers' list of candidates to stand, and to bring together working-class opposition to the Tories and Labour under the same banner. The Socialist Party will stand a number of

## 5 Thames Water crisis

The failure of Thatcher's privatisations to encourage investment and a decent service for us is undeniable. Water companies pump gallons and gallons of sewage into our rivers, lakes and beaches every year. All while our bills go up across the board.

Privatisation has been very successful for a few however, the vulture capitalists and speculators that, while refusing to invest what is needed, have sucked out profits from our infrastructure. £78 billion has been removed in the form of dividends paid to water company shareholders since privatisation.

But now, in Thames Water, this process has seemingly gone too far. Massively in debt and missing payments, the spectre of renationalisation to save it from collapse is looming.

A Starmer government renationalising Thames Water could open the floodgates to other questions. Why leave the rest of the water system in private hands? Energy production or any of the other privatised industries? As Royal Mail is sold to a billionaire and there are attempts to scrap the six-days universal service, why not take it into public hands and run it without profit? And as Tata Steel tries to run down the Port Talbot steelworks, leading to thousands of job losses with the devastating effects this will have, why not take that into democratic public ownership with the workers themselves controlling and managing a green transition?

- No bailouts for the fat cat bosses - nationalise water, transport, mail, steel, energy, with compensation only paid to those with proven need
- An environmentally friendly plan of production can be drawn up that reduces pollution, reduces emissions and doesn't make the working class pay
- Nationalise the banks and big businesses under democratic workers' control and management. Plan the economy for need not for greed

## 6 Prisons

The crumbling of services across the board has been laid bare under Tory rule, with even relatively hidden crises coming to the fore, such as the prison system. Ministers were recently forced to trigger a plan which allows the criminal justice system to delay court cases of some suspects because of overcrowding in prisons.

The overcrowding is dangerous for workers and inmates alike. Violence against prison officers is rife and Parc prison in Bridgend has seen nine prisoner deaths in just two months earlier this year. Some prisons report inmates even "using buckets and then throwing the waste out of the window" when using the toilet.

This is the situation a Starmer Labour government will inherit, but one prison reform group has described Labour's prisons policy as "a blank page". But while it was the Tories who created Europe's first private prison in Yorkshire in 1992, New Labour ran with the policy so much so that when the coalition government announced nine new private prisons in 2011, it seemed the norm.

### To fill that 'blank page' we call for:

- More funding and safe staffing levels in prisons
- Kick profit out - nationalise prisons and the justice system
- A socialist justice system based on protection and rehabilitation, not private profit

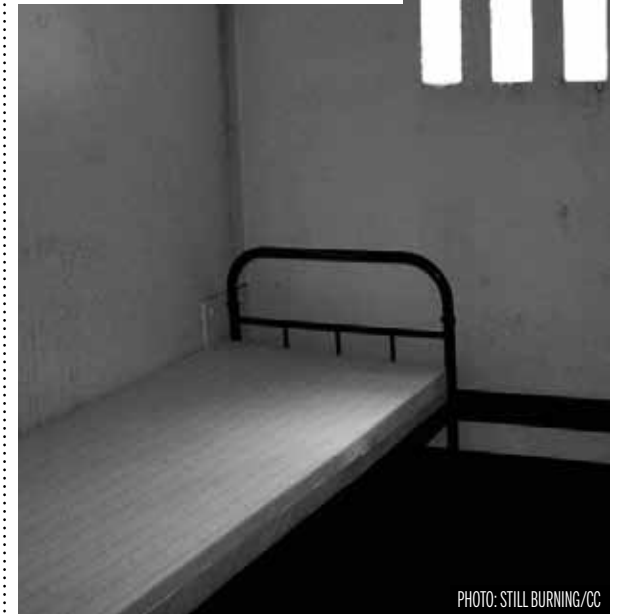


PHOTO: STILL BURNING/CC

### Join the fightback

## JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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

### Read What We Stand For on page 12



# Leicester victory against SEND transport cuts



STEVE SCORE  
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Parents of young people with special educational needs, the SEND 16+ campaign, have won a victory in their battle over the Leicester Labour council's plan to end school transport and travel support to the 16-plus age group.

It is a battle won, but the war isn't over! We have forced the council to re-run its flawed consultation, which means that this cut, due to take place at the end of the school term, will be delayed by at least a year.

All the campaigning (see previous issues of the Socialist), and particularly the two separate notice of legal action letters sent to the council threatening judicial reviews, have had their effect.

It was the parents organising together, drawing in support from outside their group, and discussing and planning their strategy that has achieved this.

It meant the attempts to demoralise campaigners failed. We were told there was no choice, as the council was imminently going to run out of money and that we had to be practical. We were also told by council officials that there was no point trying to take legal action as the decision was made over two years ago and therefore out of time. That of course ignored the fact that we did not get informed about the decision at the time, nor the 'consultation' that preceded it!

The next stage will be to maximise the response to the new consultation, and to keep up the public pressure on the council.

We don't know if we will win a complete scrapping of the plans in the long run, but this has proved once again that if you fight you can win!

Certainly, we will raise in the coming election that an incoming government - likely to be Labour - could put the money into local councils to keep all the vital services running. If it refuses, then the battle for proper funding for councils will continue.

The Socialist Party intends to stand in this general election in Leicester West, as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition to advocate the need for a new mass working-class party which will fund services not big business profits.

# Huddersfield uni strikers and students protest cuts

## YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

Well over a hundred students, alongside trade unionists representing university staff, joined a morning protest against proposed job and course cuts at University of Huddersfield on 23 May.

90% of Unison members at the university voted in favour of strike action in a recent survey. At the protest, we spoke to university workers whose visa is tied to their job and who are at risk of redundancy.

University management plans cuts to 12% of jobs across its workforce, which would see the closure of a number of predominantly arts courses. At least 12 courses face closure, including undergraduate mathematics, geography and sociology.

At the same time, university financial reports last year suggested it had £85 million in cash or cash

equivalents. Vice-chancellor Bob Cryan's total compensation reached £425,000 in 2022-23, a 67% increase over the last seven years, while the average university staff members pay decreased in real terms by 2.8%.

While there was clear anger at university management for their proposals, there was also an understanding of this being part of a wider problem of funding of higher education. Ellie Croot, a student who'd initiated a petition against the cuts and spoke at the demo, pointed out "the problem is the system".

Universities have become more financially dependent on tuition fees, especially those of international students whose numbers have dropped 44%. This system is unsustainable, tuition fees should be scrapped and higher education funded through taking the wealth off the super-rich instead.

# Vote TUSC in 20 June Coventry and Merseyside by-elections

# Tory policies by Sefton Labour have meant decline

CONOR O'NEILL  
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Given the consistent attacks on the working class by this vile Tory government, it is important socialists offer a real anti-cuts, anti-war alternative at the ballot box. The Labour Party has controlled Sefton Council, and has continued to vote through cuts to jobs and services.

This has left community hubs, such as the Marian Square, and the council-owned New Strand shopping centre in the adjacent Derby ward to complete decline. The closure of youth centres and libraries has allowed crime and other anti-social behaviour to increase, leaving many residents feeling unsafe after dark.

The Labour council continues to increase council tax, creating an unnecessary burden on working families. Meanwhile, the council sits on millions of pounds in unused reserves.

Nationally, Keir Starmer's Labour Party offers no alternative, hiding behind excuses of a Conservative government in order to pass the cuts. Labour is more interested in shilling for big-business interests, and providing cover for imperialist wars, than they are providing basic necessities for working-class people.

Given the vacuum left by Labour's shift to the right, left-wing candidates challenging Tories and Labour have found an echo. George Galloway's victory in the Rochdale by-election, on an anti-austerity, anti-war platform, was a blow to the establishment.

TUSC has stood before in St

Oswald ward in Sefton. In the 2024 local election, we came in second place behind Labour, with 8% of the vote.

We beat the pro-austerity Conservative and Green candidates. The other parties couldn't even put up a candidate.

I was the St Oswald TUSC candidate in May's local elections, and I'm standing there again in the 20 June by-election.

TUSC has repeatedly advocated for electoral cooperation between organisations standing anti-cuts, anti-war candidates at the ballot box. The Socialist Party supported Galloway's campaign in Rochdale in February, and I personally went down to campaign for a vote for the Workers' Party in the by-election.

Given this, it is unfortunate that the Workers' Party has decided to stand against TUSC in the upcoming by-election, despite being aware of our previous success in the ward. Unfortunately, good faith attempts by TUSC to negotiate with the Workers' Party proved unsuccessful.

Anyone who wishes to help the campaign should contact us to get involved.

● **Conor O'Neill is the TUSC candidate in the St Oswald by-election in Coventry on 20 June**



Campaigning on Merseyside including Conor (far left)  
PHOTO: MERSEYSIDE TUSC

# Cuts are abhorrent, Coventry can't take anymore

MILA MATHARU  
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

On top of everything, this year will see another reduction in public spending - £8.4 million, supported by both Tory and Labour councillors.

In Radford, the impact of council cuts has been abhorrent. Our libraries have reduced hours, community centres struggle to stay open, and the maintenance of public spaces has declined. Labour councillors' support for such cuts shows very clearly where their intentions lie - not with the very people they claim to represent!

Crisis after crisis, it's the working class that foots the bill. Our bills skyrocket, yet public services dwindle.

The Tory government slashes budgets. And what do Labour councils do? They fail to defend us, opting to slash services even more, piling on more fees and council tax rises. A stark warning to the council looms - a £30 million budget gap.

Britain is the sixth-richest country in the world, but the money is in the wrong hands. A socialist alternative is needed that prioritises the needs of the many.

The Socialist Party stands as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). We offer concrete opposition to these austerity measures that have left our public services and communities bled dry. I am standing to fight back against these detrimental local council cuts.

● **Mila Matharu is the TUSC candidate in the Radford by-election in Coventry on 20 June**



Mila campaigning in Coventry  
PHOTO: COVENTRY SOCIALISTS

# Morrisons workers strike over pensions

IAIN DALTON  
SOCIALIST PARTY YORKSHIRE

On their first three days of strike action from 23 May, Unite members in Morrisons took to the picket line outside the J41 site in Wakefield, Yorkshire, and at Gadbrook in Cheshire. Their dispute is over attacks on pensions and other conditions.

Pension contributions were unilaterally changed earlier this year, from a 5% company / 3% employee split, to 4% each with plans to go further, alongside scrapping

long-service payments.

Due to pressure, the company has now reintroduced a limited long-service scheme and says it will leave the pension changes at 4%, but that is still worse than the position workers were in just months ago.

Workers on the Wakefield picket line explained to us that there had been a deterioration in the company for years, particularly accelerated since Morrisons was taken over by a private equity firm and loaded up with debt to do so. There has been grievance after grievance in recent months. One worker told us that they are given just four minutes to go to



PHOTO: IAIN DALTON

# Asda workers in Brighton strike

## A GMB REP SPOKE TO THE SOCIALIST

Since the takeover of Asda by the billionaire Issa brothers and private equity firm TDR Capital, from previous owners US giant Walmart, Asda 'colleagues' - ie workers - have experienced repeated cuts to in-work benefits, incentives, and investment from the owners.

This, coupled with a reduction in the number of staff and disappointing pay increases, has led to widespread dissatisfaction among the workforce, both locally and nationally. GMB shop stewards asked our members what they wanted to do about these issues, up to and including the idea of strike action. The response from members was that something needs to be done, and that industrial action would force the brothers and TDR Capital to listen to

our frustrations.

Industrial action has been exceedingly rare in the retail and distribution sectors. I believe that this has often stemmed from the belief among retail workers that we are replaceable, and if we went out on strike it'd be pointless as we'd just be replaced. However, the experience of working through the pandemic and being considered heroes, coupled with the abject refusal of Asda to replace staff after they've left, has led to a belief that we can and should fight for what we need and deserve.

The key issues for members at my store are understaffing and low pay.

My message to colleagues in other Asda stores is that we can fight, and we can win. To non-GMB members, I'd say join the union as soon as possible, as we are getting results and

the toilet, and are pounced on by a manager if they take five.

Usdaw, the majority union across Morrisons, has also been preparing for a strike ballot over these attacks, and pay negotiations are apparently ongoing. Usdaw's recognition agreement with Morrisons locks it into binding arbitration if pay can't be settled through negotiation, but that's not the case for pensions. Any action should be coordinated by the two unions.

Morrisons has been telling workers that it's struggling, but then it also tells shareholders that it's moving in the right direction. The company still made £76 million in profit in 2022-23.

But this shows why the big retail companies like Morrisons should be taken out of the hands of the profiteers and brought into public ownership under democratic workers' control, so their resources can be used to guarantee decent pay and conditions for workers and high-quality, affordable food for everyone.

# Outsourced NHS workers strike back in Nottinghamshire



PHOTO: JON DALE

JON DALE  
MANSFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

More low-paid privatised hospital workers are striking back! Nearly 300 GMB members at Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Trust in Nottinghamshire have held one 24-hour strike, followed by a 48-hour strike from 30 May.

Cleaners, porters, security, reception and catering workers employed by Medirest have had enough of being treated as cheap labour.

"They don't get weekend enhancements, they don't get fair parental rights or sick pay and they are still waiting for the Covid recovery bonus paid to NHS staff", said GMB organiser Cameron Mitchell. "On a Sunday, Medirest workers are paid almost £10 an hour less than colleagues doing the same work on the NHS payroll."

Pickets told Mansfield Socialist Party members that workload was a huge issue too. Sometimes one worker is expected to do the work of two or three. There's health and safety issues too, for example where heavy lifting tasks are involved.

Medirest is a subsidiary company of Compass. Compass profits in 2023 were over £2 billion - up 30% on 2022. Dividends to shareholders were up 37%. It can easily afford to pay the full claim!

Our call for the workers to be brought back into NHS employment and Medirest - along with all other profit-seeking private companies - to be thrown out, was well-received.

Mansfield's Labour candidate, endorsed by the GMB, also spoke at the picket. The union should insist a Labour government ensures these workers' demands are immediately met.

# Socialist campaigns kick off general election

## Northampton Cost-of-living despair

Like so many places, Northampton is feeling the full force of the cost-of-living crisis. Anger and despair is palpable. But so is appetite for change.

We're a regular fixture in the town centre. Most locals agree with us that the mainstream political establishment has nothing to offer the working class.

People seem particularly impressed by the Socialist Party's commitment to stand workers' candidates on a workers' wage.

This will be the first time that a TUSC candidate has stood at a parliamentary election in Northampton. Socialist Party member Katie Simpson is standing in Northampton South.

**BEN EDGE**  
NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

## Sheffield Persuasive ideas

Sheffield Socialist Party launched headfirst into our general election campaigning. We have been experimenting with multiple stalls across the city, and trialling different locations, times, and petitions.

We held four campaign stalls on 25 May. In Walkley, we met several people who had voted for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) previously, had plenty of good discussions, catching up with people who'd met us on stalls before.

Our ideas are persuasive. One person changed their position on the NHS in the time it took them to do their shopping! Returning back to the stall, asking to sign up to hear more, and donating to the fighting fund.

**IZZY FRANCE**  
SHEFFIELD NORTH WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

# Uni Gaza encampments – defend and build the movement

ADAM POWELL-DAVIES  
SOCIALIST STUDENTS NATIONAL ORGANISER

For a while, it looked as if university managements in the UK were taking a more conciliatory approach to the student encampment movement. However, the arrest of 17 students, and the forceful removal of protesters at Oxford University, have since shattered any illusion that vice-chancellors here would not recourse to the same heavy-handed measures seen in other countries.

It is possible that other universities will follow suit – not least because the summer is a key time for most universities to generate some much-needed income, by renting out rooms and facilities for conferences and other events.

The Cambridge pro-vice-chancellor, Bhaskar Vira, has made clear that management “retain[s] the right to intervene” in the encampments. Other university bosses have made similar veiled threats.

### Showdown

In other words, university managements are prepared for a showdown. It cannot be ruled out that the police, or private security forces, will be used in an attempt to physically disperse protesters, like what happened in Oxford.

Students who have participated in the encampments to this point will be determined to continue their action, including into the summer. Protesters have been clear of their intention to occupy for as long as their demands are not met.

In order to continue this movement, and maintain pressure on the universities and the government, students will want to take measures to defend their encampments. This points to the need for democratically organised stewarding by elected bodies of students in the encampments.

Democratic stewarding could include a night rota system, given that there have been small groups of

counter-protesters in several places who have waited until dark to make cowardly attacks on peaceful student protesters.

An appeal could also be made to the campus trade union branches, or local trades union councils, which could assist the organisation of stewarding by drawing on the rich experience of the workers’ movement in defending protests.

### Reaching out

However, the surest way to keep this movement going is to build it. There is strength in numbers. That means reaching out to students who have not yet taken part in the encampments, and convincing them that they should get involved.

According to a recent National Union of Students (NUS) survey of over 5,000 students, the number one issue facing students is the cost of living. The average maintenance loan now does not even cover the rent, let alone other basic living costs.

The student cost-of-living crisis has been allowed to fester by this rotten Tory government, as they have cut higher education funding over many years. It is this same lack of funding that gives universities an excuse to make income from companies profiting from war.

By boldly raising the need for free, fully funded, democratic higher education, the student encampment movement could target the root cause of university complicity in Israeli state terror, while simultaneously appealing to the mass of students, who equally have an interest in fighting for an end to the current marketised higher education model.

With a general election less than five weeks away, we also need candidates who will back this fight – standing against war and occupation, and supporting free education.

That’s why Socialist Students is part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). We are supporting efforts for the widest-possible



working-class, socialist challenge at the election.

Over the coming weeks, we will be bringing this campaign down to the encampments, including organising

### Leicester walkout and march

Socialist Students members in Leicester explain how they build their protests against the war on Gaza and in solidarity with the student encampment.

### Preparing

We had a lot of preparation to undergo for a student walkout and march from De Montfort University to the University of Leicester. We also had to spread the word about the demonstration to students and the public – we focused on campaign stalls and meetings. Students and lecturers were enthusiastic and supportive.

As the protest started, we had organised an open mic rally. Members of the University and College Union (UCU) had attended our meetings, expressing their support and desire to speak on the open mic. But then the university management did not allow them to speak. Despite all this, we had a good turnout of 30 people – students, lecturers, and the public.

SAADA MOHAMED

### De Montfort march

The early afternoon of 24 May began just as any other campaign stall would, albeit with more campus security! We handed out leaflets about our demands, informing people about the event.

Someone who came to the stall mentioned how many people would be at Friday prayers, and that it might be a good idea to leaflet outside. So, some of us went down to the prayer room to try and spread awareness of the event.

It took an hour or two to gather momentum, and a crowd was beginning to gather. When we started the speeches, it caused more people to gather around.

We used the megaphone to voice our concerns, and the crowd followed suit, with some people

teach-outs and open meetings to discuss what students should do at the general election. If you want to get involved in our election campaign, get in touch.

shouting “shame”. It served as a good confidence booster for everyone.

There were some very passionate speeches. By the time we departed for the march, the crowd was in good spirits, with banners and chants following the march all the way.

CONOR SCHIEFERSTEIN

### Building a movement

Unfortunately, we received hostility from some people in the University of Leicester encampment. There were several occasions in which members of this group have kicked us off our own campus as we set up a campaign stall on the grounds that we were “political”.

Despite this, we organised a successful protest that united the communities of our city’s universities, with many staff, students, and the wider public in attendance.

Our critics’ main issue with us were that we sell our newspaper, the Socialist, which promotes the movement against the war, amplifies workers’ voices, and offers a strategy for the movement. They also objected to us asking anyone who agrees with our ideas, if they would like to leave their details to get involved with the socialists on campus.

We think it’s important to build organisations around socialist ideas to end war and oppression. It begs the question why raising awareness, challenging student unions, and engaging in fully open discussions are deemed inappropriate methods.

AYOMIDE AKINSINMIDE

### Newham union solidarity with Queen Mary encampment

The following was passed unanimously by Newham Trades Union Council. It was drafted and moved by Socialist Party member James Ivens, a delegate from London North Equity union. And seconded by Socialist Party member Angharad Hillier, from Newham National Education Union (NEU). It was sent to Queen Mary student occupation in support, and Colin Bailey, principal of Queen Mary, in protest.



Newham Trade Union Council expresses its full solidarity with the protest encampment against the war on Gaza at Queen Mary University of London (QMUL). We stand shoulder to shoulder with those students and staff fighting the institution’s connections to war and occupation, and all those fighting oppression around the world.

We are disturbed by reports that university management has laughed off violent provocations by counter-protesters attacking the camp. We note the same administration ordered a disgraceful break-in and attack on the campus facility of the UCU, an independent campus trade union.

We demand that QMUL management:

- Apologise for these incidents, and respect the independence and safety of students, staff and their organisations henceforward
- Guarantee that students and staff taking part in peaceful protest will not face any punitive or discriminatory measures

- Open QMUL accounts to democratic inspection by the student body and campus trade unions, with the power to terminate all contracts and research tied to war and occupation, while guaranteeing jobs and funding
- We invite the protest encampment to link up with the trade unions in Newham, by sending a speaker to a future meeting, and by calling a solidarity rally which we will be pleased to support and publicise

### Solidarity with Oxford students arrested for protesting

#### SOCIALIST STUDENTS STATEMENT

Socialist Students sends solidarity to the 16 students who have been arrested in Oxford for protesting against Israeli state terror. The students were arrested whilst occupying

a university management building to demand divestment from Israeli companies by Oxford University. This follows on from the student encampment that started in Oxford on 6 May to demand that the university disclose its finances to democratic inspection by staff and students.

Oxford University management are clearly more concerned with maintaining their image than with engaging with students and their demands. No doubt they have been emboldened to send in the police following on from recent attempts by the Tory government to increase police powers, and clamp down on our right to protest – including at the recent anti-war demonstrations in London.

This is the first case of the police being used to try and break up a protest of this kind since the beginning of the student encampments in the UK, and resulted in some students being dragged and pushed out of the building, with at least one being carried out on a stretcher.

The student and workers’

movement must respond definitively to show the management at Oxford University – and at any other university – that we will not tolerate any attack on students or on our democratic right to protest.

- We demand:
- No police charges for those protesting against Israeli state terror
- Oxford University must not victimise or expel any students for engaging in protest
- The students’ union must support the student protesters, and publicly oppose the actions taken by university management
- Defend our democratic right to protest! Oppose increased police presence at peaceful student demonstrations
- See [instagram.com/oxfordsocstu](https://www.instagram.com/oxfordsocstu) for the full statement

Join the student fightback  
**JOIN** socialist students  
[socialiststudents.org.uk/join](https://socialiststudents.org.uk/join)



## WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

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



#### WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

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

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

#### PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

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

#### ENVIRONMENT

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

workers’ control to ensure that standards are set by consumers, small farmers, and all workers involved in the production, processing, distribution and retail of food.

#### DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

- For united working-class struggle to end discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice and oppression.
- Repeat the anti-trade union laws and all others that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest and to strike! End police harassment. For the police to be accountable to local committees, made up of democratically elected representatives of trade unions, local community organisations and local authorities.
- For the right to choose when and whether to have children – for the right to access abortion, contraception and fertility treatment for all who need it.
- For the right to asylum – with democratic community control and oversight of emergency funding resources. No to racist immigration laws.
- Expand democracy. For the abolition

of the monarchy and the House of Lords. For all MPs to be subject to the right of recall by their constituents at any time, and to only receive a worker’s wage. For proportional representation and the right to vote at 16.

- For the right of nations to self-determination. For an independent socialist Scotland and for a socialist Wales, both part of a voluntary socialist confederation of Wales, England, Scotland and Ireland.
- Oppose the dictatorship of the billionaire owners of the media. For the nationalisation of newspaper printing facilities, radio, TV and social media platforms. Access to these facilities should be under democratic control, with political parties’ coverage being allocated in proportion to the popular vote at elections.
- For a new mass workers’ party, based on the trade unions, and drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplaces, and community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, socialist political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

#### SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations!
- Take the wealth off the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need, not to the fat cats.
- A democratic socialist plan of

#### Do you agree? Join the fightback!

### JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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



# South Africa: The struggle for independent working-class organisation

South Africa heads to the polls on 29 May. The ruling African National Congress (ANC) could be set to lose its majority for the first time since the end of apartheid. We publish excerpts of an interview with **Sheri Hamilton**, of the Marxist Workers Party executive committee (CWI South Africa).

So why is [the ANC likely to lose its majority in parliament]? And do you think that after the elections, a new period is going to open up? What do you think of the general perspectives there?

Since 1994, in the first decade of the new democracy, there were some improvements in the lives of ordinary people. There were big programmes of housebuilding, for example. They were significant improvements in the lives of ordinary black people. Most important was the fact that people no longer had to suffer under the discriminatory laws of apartheid.

It was a real achievement and a real gain. People felt that the burden of the repressive regime was off their shoulders. But in the last two decades, especially in the last decade, many of these gains have been undone: all the socioeconomic conditions have deteriorated, very drastically. In fact, some even say the conditions are now worse than under apartheid.

If you just look at some of the statistics, we have 32% unemployment, 42% if you take the broad definition that includes people who have given up looking for work in the last two weeks. Health and education services are in dire straits. There is overcrowding in schools because of the austerity measures introduced since 1996. The quality of schooling has considerably decreased. There are huge classes of 50, 60, 70 students. The whole education system is in crisis. I speak very passionately about that because that's where I work. Health services are in a similar condition.

There is huge corruption in all the state institutions, right across the board. And that is why we have seen huge protest movements. South Africa is known for two things statistically: that it is the protest capital of the world, and that it is the most unequal country on the planet!

### ICJ - Gaza

There's wide predictions in the polls that the ANC will not make 50%-plus-one to rule, that it will be forced into a coalition. Many predict that it will be between 40 and 45%. I think the upper estimate of 45% has largely to do with the role the ANC is playing in relation to the Palestine question.



South Africa is known as two things: the protest capital of the world, and that it is the most unequal country on the planet!



There's a lot of support for this, especially amongst the Muslim community and among left-wing activists in general. Some who would not have voted for the ANC probably will because of the stance in taking Israel to the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

I was listening yesterday to a video where the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Naledi Pandor, was at pains to say how South Africa's stance on Israel, and its position of solidarity with Palestine have been there since the days before apartheid was dismantled, because of the solidarity that was shown by the Palestinians.

However, we are very much aware of the fact that they've not done much as far as disinvestment is concerned, in relation to Israeli companies that continue to operate in South Africa, for example. There's a lot of hypocrisy.

But nevertheless, the position taken has brought attention to what is happening in Gaza. Acts of solidarity to raise awareness and do something about the cause of the Palestinian masses is something that should be supported.

### Elections

104 new parties have registered for this election and there are 16 independent candidates. Of the 104, 36 failed to meet new requirements for new political parties to register.

The one political party that we would have given critical support to [had its registration not been blocked] is the Labor Party, recently formed by the Mining and Construction Workers Union (AMCU).

AMCU is a union that emerged before the Marikana massacre (2012), but it came into the public domain at that time. Many of the workers that

Marxist Workers Party (CWI South Africa) protesting in 2020 CWI

had formerly belonged to the NUM (National Union of Mineworkers) went into AMCU. During that strike, our party (then DSM) played a role facilitating the process of developing the independent strike committees in different mine shafts, and helping to coordinate their actions across the mines.

The most likely scenario if the ANC doesn't get '50+1' is that it will go into a coalition with either the DA (Democratic Alliance) or the EFF (Economic Freedom Fighters). The situation is very, very fluid at the moment because the DA and EFF are not gaining support, and because of all of the new parties. The ANC is very concerned about the new MK party, led by the former president Jacob Zuma. They are certainly worried about what will happen in KwaZulu-Natal (the province where Zuma has a base of support).



Miners on strike at Lonmin mines in 2012 CWI

It's really hard to call what will happen. Obviously the capitalists would prefer an ANC-DA alliance together with parties like Action-SA and Rise Mzansi - die-hard capitalist parties.

Those are the kinds of parties, to the right of the ANC, that the capitalists would rather see them form a coalition with. They are fearful that the [populist] EFF would want to do all that it threatens, but have never really shown any interest in implementing. It has made demands about nationalisation of land and banks. It is seen as the party that flip-flops the most. At one point it was supporting xenophobia, visiting shops to demand from the employers to see if there were illegal workers. But now it calls for the opening of the borders.

It is a hard-to-call election, and that's why it's seen as the most important since 1994. People are going to vote to punish the ANC.

### What about the working-class struggle? What about its independent organisation?

There were 2,500 protests in the first six months of 2023. Protest levels are increasing even when it comes to strikes, although there has been a decline in the number of strikes over a number of years. And that has to do with the fact that the economy is simply not growing.

Growth has been at 1% for a decade. And they predicted that it would be very good if they can make 1% over the next five years. The decline in the number of strikes doesn't have to do with the fact that the workers don't fight, it's simply that there are no jobs. And those workers who are in jobs, are fearful of losing them.

However, it is important to point out it's also got to do with the role of the trade union leaderships who are signing non-strike agreements for salary increases.

For public sector workers themselves, the government has not even offered wage increases that they had signed into the bargaining council agreements signed with the trade unions. There's been no fight by the public sector unions, many of whom are in an alliance with the ruling ANC through Cosatu (Congress of South African Trade Unions). The nurses, the teachers, police services and so on are all affected by these kinds of agreements. And their leaders, the most loyal supporters of the alliance, do everything in their power to keep it that way. That includes going against resolutions passed at the last Cosatu congress where workers wanted to disaffiliate from the alliance with the ANC. And the leadership just went ahead and declared that the federation would support the ANC once more in this election.

So it's not that there is no struggle. There are lots of wildcat strikes - not supported by the union - where workers take huge risks. It shows the level of exploitation, that workers are prepared to take the risks.

As soon as the registration process starts at the universities, there will be student protests. And that has been consistent since 1996. We were involved in the early days of those protests when we established the Socialist Students Movement, and then later the Socialist Youth Movement.

The student struggles continue every year, despite so-called free education in the form of a bursary scheme - your parents have to earn less than a certain amount in order to



It's of huge importance for the working class to regain its political independence, and also in the trade union movement. That would have a huge impact on the situation

qualify for that. Universities are underfunded and overcrowded.

### Working Class Summit

We tried everything in our power to get the Working Class Summit to call a meeting and to invite the new Labor Party to address it.

The Working Class Summit was established by the South African Federation of Trade Unions (Saftu). We have been fighting for a workers' party in the Working Class Summit structure since 2018, when delegates representing over 1,000 community organisations, trade unions and so on, adopted a resolution also to call for the formation of a workers' party.

The structure was set up to help bring that about. So there were attempts to work towards that end. But it got stalled because, unfortunately, sections of the leadership in Saftu and on the steering committee of the Working Class Summit played quite a negative role.

But throughout the years, we have fought for the summit to be reconvened, so that the processes can be started up again. It's about clarifying the class position, because of the huge crisis of working-class political organisation and its independent class organisation. It's actually of huge importance for the working class to regain its political independence, and also in the trade union movement. That would have a huge impact on the situation.

### So what do we stand for? What do we think this party should have as policies? And what other slogans do we put forward for this situation?

Of all the parties that are registered, none represent or have been brought into existence by the working class, or by any kind of organised formation of the working class. The Labor Party does, and that has now been excluded from participating in this election. It would have represented workers' interests, despite what it says in its manifesto.

The workers who have brought it into existence have expectations and would be in a position to fight for their resolution to be implemented - calling for socialism.

Our work now is to continue to call for support for the Labor Party. The election is just but one moment in politics, and we will continue to call for support for that. But we will do so on the basis of a platform that we think will unite the working class. And that platform has to do with

calling for free education, free health, the right of recall for elected representatives, for workers' representatives on a worker's wage. We'll put the question of climate to the forefront, the question of women too.

Those would be some of the minimum demands that we would make, and explain that none of those things can be achieved on the basis of capitalism.

The question of climate change won't be solved without real intervention from the working class, by actually taking over the means of production and making sure that the economy is planned in a way that the needs of the environment are met. It is a problem that the capitalist system has created, and that the working class in particular is being made to pay for.

There was a huge movement of women in South Africa a few years ago, about the high levels of violence against women. And, although it's come down slightly, South Africa's femicide levels are still the highest, six-times higher than the average rate in the world.

Those kinds of questions can only be addressed really through a socialist transformation of society, because the situation that can free women from the abusive relationships that they're in, the crime that drives it, all of those kinds of things that lead to these conditions, can only be addressed through a socialist transformation of society. Nothing short of that is going to bring that about.

We are trying to set up a meeting with the leadership of AMCU; they only lost the court case [challenging exclusion from the election] last week. We certainly would want to put pressure on them to build the party and to use it as a basis to unite in the different spheres of the struggle: uniting the communities, the students and youth together with the workers. The possibilities exist for that.

There's a tradition in South Africa of what we call "locals", where communities and trade unions come together to talk about how to take forward various struggles. There is that tradition and we would like to see the attempts at rebuilding such locals, through AMCU and other trade unions that are beginning to realize that they have to rebuild the movement from the ground up. We would certainly participate in that work and put forward the ideas for socialism and the socialist transformation of society.

● Watch the video in full visit: socialistworld.net

Sheri Hamilton (left) being interviewed VIDEO AVAILABLE AT SOCIALISTWORLD.NET



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socialistparty.org.uk



# the Socialist

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formerly **Militant**

# END GAZA SLAUGHTER



IAN PATTISSON

## For mass workers' struggle against war and capitalism

HEATHER RAWLING  
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

**T**he latest cruel and barbaric attacks on Rafah, where 1.2 million have been sheltering, indicate that the Israeli government will stop at nothing to achieve its unrealistic aim of 'wiping out Hamas'. Many suspect that what it really means is wiping out the Palestinian people.

Many around the world feel helpless in the face of such military might that unashamedly and, with impunity, breaks international law. Israel has received international condemnation for prosecuting genocidal acts, either through direct slaughter or slow, painful death through starvation and disease.

The International Court of Justice, part of the United Nations, ordered Israel 'to immediately halt its military offensive in Rafah' on 24 May. And yet the IDF continues with attacks on a

largely defenceless population. US imperialism, and to a lesser extent Britain, Germany and others too, continue to supply the Israeli state with arms.

### Capitalist hypocrisy

Capitalist leaders' condemnations of the most outrageous acts of Israeli state aggression are driven by their fear of the international working class and masses mobilising against the atrocities: the encampments in the US and elsewhere; protests around the world; and above all, they fear the possibility of war escalating in the Middle East radicalising a whole region.

A mass movement of the Palestinians would be echoed across the region – threatening the capitalists' rule, in the Arab states and in Israel too.

In Britain, Socialist Party members have campaigned for the trade union movement to mobilise its seven million members in the

anti-war movement, and for the trade unions representing workers in arms and logistics industries to discuss and decide actions that can be taken to help stop exports destined for the murderous Israeli war machine.

We need a political voice too. The massive protests in London brought down the right-wing populist Tory home secretary Suella Braverman. But one down is not enough. We need all the Tories out. But Labour's Keir Starmer has blood on his hands too.

Let's use the general election to build a working-class, socialist alternative to the war-mongering politicians on both sides of the House of Commons.

The Socialist Party will be out campaigning for candidates that represent the interests of the working class nationally and internationally, including standing candidates as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, arguing for the building of a new democratic mass party of the working class.

### The Socialist Party is fighting for:

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

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



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