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the Socialist

Issue 1280

20-26 June 2024

formerly **Militant**

Tories out

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because Starmer's Labour doesn't stand for us

MAGGIE FRICKER
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY AND HEALTH WORKER

It won't surprise anyone to hear that NHS waiting lists have gone up yet again - despite the Tories repeatedly claiming the opposite - to a staggering 7.57 million. That's 40,000 more people living with the fear and pain these long waits impose.

The NHS has been at breaking point for so long now it's become routine. The Tories have devastated services across the board, creating chaos and misery. People struggle to see their GP, wait for hours in overcrowded A&E departments, get stuck in hospital because there is no available care in the community, or wait months for operations they desperately need.

Health workers want to give the very best care possible, it's part of our training to put our patients first. But the reality is so different. The failings to meet cancer treatment targets, A&E waiting targets and performance targets belong with this ruthless Tory government. After years of austerity, is it any wonder that people are becoming sicker, with record attendance figures at A&E departments?

NHS staff 'productivity' is up but we see no reward for our hard work and people are leaving the service in droves. We are desperate to be rid of the Tories but none of us are happy with the alternative. Most staff will tell you Labour's Shadow Health Secretary Wes Streeting is talking nonsense if he thinks partnership with the private sector and asking staff to do more overtime will bring waiting lists down.

We need an alternative to the vague promises of the establishment politicians. We fully support the junior doctors taking strike action 27 June - 2 July, demanding the pay restoration we all need. Socialist Party members are standing in the general election, demanding the massive increase in funding the NHS needs and to kick out the private profiteers. We also need to remove the crushing burden of tuition fees for doctors, nurses and other health professionals. As the Royal College of Nursing, whose members took historic nationwide strike action for the first time during the strike wave, have put it: "There will be no place to hide for the next government". We will be fighting for our NHS from day one.

● Maggie is the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidate for Southampton Test, and a trade union rep for the Society of Radiographers (personal capacity)



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TUSC AGAINST CUTS



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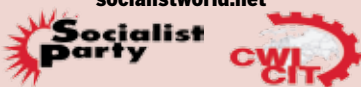
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."
Karl Marx



The Socialist Party meets in branches across England and Wales, where we discuss the ideas contained within this paper and plan how we can put those ideas into action - through working-class struggle. If you read this paper and are interested in coming to a meeting to prepare the working-class fightback visit:

www.socialistparty.org.uk/events



Palestine Solidarity Campaign have asked candidates standing in the general election to give a 150-word statement saying how they would use the MP position to help stop the war in Gaza. Here Dave Nellist, Trade Unionist and Socialist Party candidate in Coventry East and former Militant-supporting MP, replies:

I would use the position of MP and the platform it gives to support the campaign for the end of Israel's war on Palestine and its occupation of Gaza and the West Bank.

I believe trade unions in Britain need to step up their involvement in the movement to end the war by mobilising more members to attend mass demos and calling for workers' sanctions to block the flow of arms and supplies from Britain to the Israeli military.

Major firms in the defence industry should be publicly owned and democratically planned to develop alternative, socially useful production to replace production for war.

Keir Starmer and Rishi Sunak both back imperialism in the Middle East and the bosses here in Britain. I believe in workers' unity between ordinary Palestinians and ordinary Israelis and socialism to secure a permanent end to national conflict and oppression with guaranteed rights for all.



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Kamala Harris
PHOTO: WHITE HOUSE/CC

US Ukraine aid: 'not out of charity' but 'in their strategic interests'

Kamala Harris, the US vice president attended a "Ukraine Peace Summit" of 90 plus countries (Russia was not invited, China did not attend) in Switzerland on 15 June. In announcing a further \$1.5 Billion of so-called "humanitarian and energy aid" she remarked that:

"President Biden and my support for the people of Ukraine is unwavering. We support Ukraine **not out of charity** but because the people of Ukraine and their future is **in our strategic interests**. It is in our interest to uphold international rules and norms, such as sovereignty and territorial integrity and the international system we helped create following

World War Two, which bolsters America's security and prosperity."

So, there you have it, from the Veep's very own mouth. Forget the "humanitarian" spin - it's all about strategic interests [read "the financial interests of US Capitalism"]; it always is as "The Socialist" (and "Militant", its forerunner) has pointed out many times. I won't hold my breath waiting for a similar, unequivocal admission regarding the USA's military and financial support for the Israeli state and for many other despotic regimes around the world.

JONATHAN GOLDING

CARDIFF EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

Out of touch Sunak no idea of real hardship Vote for a workers' MP on a worker's wage

MELANIE DENT

READING SOCIALIST PARTY

Rishi Sunak was asked for an example of something he went without as a child. He said Sky TV, something his parents didn't have so they could send him to private school!

Sunak is one of the wealthiest prime ministers in recent history. I am five years older than Sunak and, as I'm someone that has faced the brunt of 14 years of Tory rule, I still don't have it.

Because of the Tories, many people are being forced to make uncomfortable choices between heating their homes or having a hot meal.

Sunak the ex-banker

It is highly unlikely that Sunak has even the slightest implication of what true hardship actually is; before he was an MP he was a stockbroker, gambling on the financial markets, and his wife is worth hundreds of millions of pounds. The 'having to do without' that the rest of us are struggling with is not our fault - it's the capitalist system that Sunak defends which sees wealth hoarded by a few and rampant cronyism.

The Tory government which, among other things, implemented Universal Credit and ramped up benefit sanctions has the blood of thousands on their hands as a result.

Put simply, Sunak and his cronies are out of touch with working-class reality. And Starmer's Labour defends the same system as the Tories. That's why 40 people are standing under the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition banner on 4 July. They are standing to be workers' MPs and taking a worker's wage, which means that they have the

concept of real life in the real world for the workers they would represent. I will be fortunate enough to be able to vote for a TUSC candidate here in Reading Central and encourage others to do the same if you can.

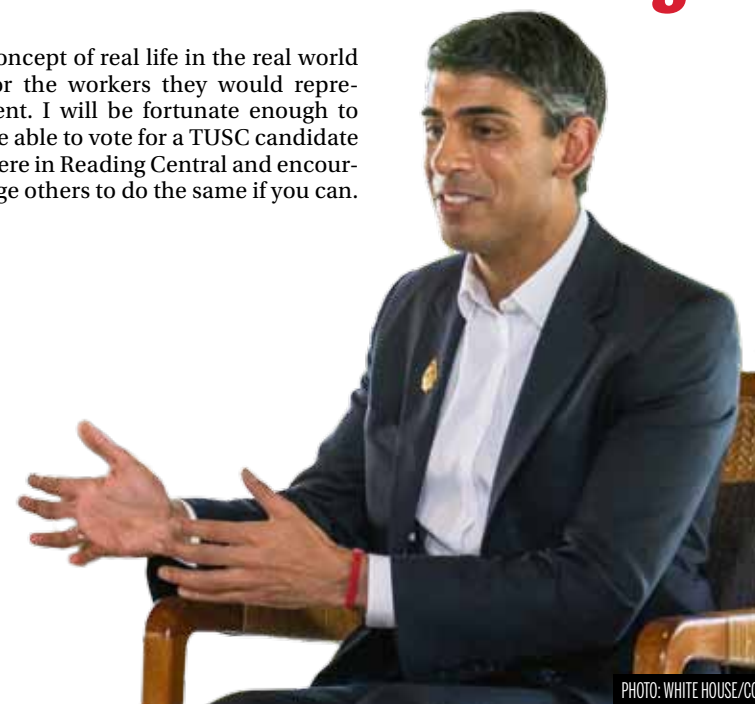


PHOTO: WHITE HOUSE/CC

SOCIALISM

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2024



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MEET THE SOCIALIST CANDIDATES!

WHO IS STANDING FOR TUSC ON 4 JULY

**TUSC
AGAINST
CUTS**



Dave Nellist (left) standing in Coventry East is a veteran socialist ex-Labour MP, pictured here with another, Terry Fields, who headed the 'parliamentary wing' of the mass anti-poll tax campaign



Adam Gillman standing in Reading Central is probably the youngest candidate on the ballot anywhere on 4 July



Chris Sermanni, standing in Glasgow North East, on a Glasgow Unison picket line. Glasgow is Scotland's biggest Unison branch and Chris is secretary

There will be 40 candidates standing on behalf of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) on 4 July.

TUSC is a coalition of trade unionists, anti-war protesters, community activists, environmental campaigners - and socialists from different organisations or none - who unite to contest elections around pro-working class, anti-austerity policies.

Our goal in standing is to contribute to the process of rebuilding mass political representation for the working class that could seriously challenge for government in the future - not presenting ourselves as the finished product. But by not leaving the establishment politicians unchallenged, we hope to help develop the self-confidence of the working class that it is an alternative power to the capitalist rulers of society - and that it has the capacity to create and build its own democratic mass workers' party to realise that power politically.

From an ex-MP to the youngest candidate

The candidates standing for our coalition on 4 July are an impressive display of working-class fighters that have come together under the TUSC banner to take forward this task.

They range, on the one hand, from the veteran socialist ex-Labour MP Dave Nellist (1983-1992) - standing this time in Coventry East - who headed the 'parliamentary wing' of the mass campaign of non-payment of the poll tax that brought down Margaret Thatcher in the 1990s; to probably the youngest candidate on the ballot anywhere in July, the 18-year-old college student Adam Gillman, contesting Reading Central, who is a member of Socialist Students, one of the different organisations that are part of TUSC.

Then there are the trade unionists on the list, already experienced in representing thousands of workers through the important national and local positions they hold in the union movement. These include the elected Black Female representative on the public services union Unison's National Executive Council (NEC) April Ashley, standing (in a personal capacity) in Croydon West; the secretary of Scotland's biggest Unison branch, Chris Sermanni (in Glasgow North East); the South Gloucestershire local government Unison branch secretary, Dan Smart

(for Bristol North East); the PCS civil service union London and South East regional secretary, Lois Austin, (standing, in a personal capacity, in West Ham and Beckton); the Plymouth National Education Union district secretary Alex Moore (in Plymouth Sutton and Devonport); an RMT branch political officer, Gary Harbord, in Uxbridge and South Ruislip; a Unison Health branch chair, Sally Griffiths, in Worsley and Eccles; and trades council officers Dave Murray (Basildon and Billericay), Declan Clune (Southampton Itchen), Maggie Fricker (Southampton Test), Mike Whale (Hull North and Cottingham), and Gareth Bromhall (Swansea West), a trades council rep on the Wales TUC general council.

Another strand of candidates are the serious community campaigners appearing on the ballot paper as TUSC with an established local standing, such as Nancy Taaffe (Walthamstow) - well-known as a local campaigner on housing, libraries, education and anti-war protests - the chair of Save Our NHS Leicestershire, Steve Score (Leicester West), and the former Redbridge Labour councillor and hospital campaigner Andy Walker (Ilford South). Meanwhile, in Folkstone and Hythe, the TUSC banner is being carried by the anti-war campaigner and Folkestone Stands With Palestine group member Momtaz Khanom.

And lastly, TUSC is standing a candidate against the speaker of the House of Commons, Lindsay Hoyle, in his Chorley constituency. The mainstream establishment triopoly of parties have stood down in Lindsay Hoyle's favour - so he really can be said to be a joint candidate of Labour, the Conservatives, and the Liberal Democrats! But TUSC is standing a former member of the National Union of Teachers' NEC, Martin Powell-Davies, so that workers have a chance to have their interests represented.

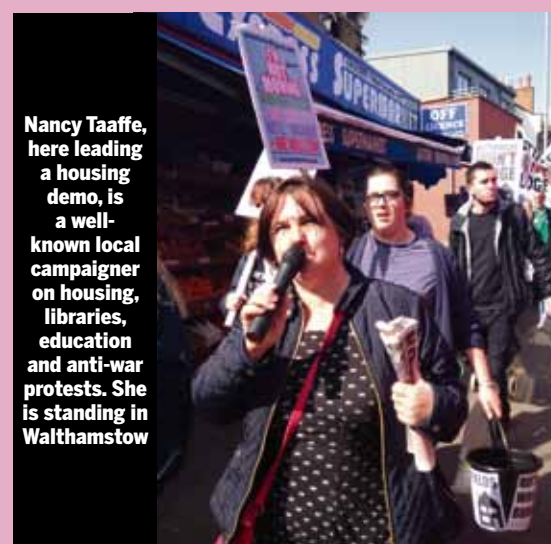
It is true that the challenge to the mainstream capitalist establishment parties is not as widespread and coordinated as it could have been if the official leaders of the left-wing trade unions in particular had given a lead. Nevertheless there will still be a significant challenge made on 4 July, headed by Jeremy Corbyn in Islington North, and which TUSC is part of. So where it is possible, please help our campaigns in any way you can!



Maggie Fricker (left) is a health worker and trade unionist standing in Southampton Test



Dan Smart (third left) on a Unison care workers picket line in South Gloucestershire, a strike he helped organise. Dan is the area's Unison branch secretary and is standing in Bristol North East



Nancy Taaffe, here leading a housing demo, is a well-known local campaigner on housing, libraries, education and anti-war protests. She is standing in Walthamstow



Momtaz Khanom (second right) is an anti-war campaigner standing in Folkestone and Hythe where she is a member of Folkestone Stands With Palestine

The full list of candidates

England

Eastern

- Basildon and Billericay - Dave Murray

East Midlands

- Leicester West - Steve Score
- Mansfield - Karen Seymour
- Northampton South - Katie Simpson

London

- Croydon West - April Ashley
- Ilford South - Andy Walker

- Islington South and Finsbury - Ethan Saunders

- Southgate and Wood Green - Karl Vidol

- Uxbridge and South Ruislip - Gary Harbord

- Walthamstow - Nancy Taaffe
- West Ham and Beckton - Lois Austin

Northern

- Gateshead Central and Whickham - Norman Hall

North West

- Chorley - Martin Powell-Davies

- Liverpool Riverside - Roger Bannister

- Worsley and Eccles South - Sally Griffiths

Southern

- Crawley - Robin Burnham
- Folkestone and Hythe - Momtaz Khanom

- Reading Central - Adam Gillman

- Southampton Itchen - Declan Clune

- Southampton Test - Maggie Fricker

- South West

- Bristol North East - Dan Smart

- North Swindon - Scott Hunter
- Plymouth Sutton and Devonport - Alex Moore

- South West Devon - Ben Davey

West Midlands

- Birmingham Erdington - Corinthia Ward

- Coventry East - Dave Nellist

- Smethwick - Ravaldeep Singh Bath

- Worcester - Mark Davies

Yorkshire

- Doncaster North - Andy Hiles
- Great Grimsby and Cleethorpes - Mark Gee

- Hull North and Cottingham - Mike Whale

- Leeds Central and Headingley - Louie Fulton

- Sheffield Central - Izzy France

- Sheffield Heeley - Mick Suter

Scotland

- Aberdeen North - Lucas Grant

- Dundee Central - Jim McFarlane

- Glasgow North East - Chris Sermanni

- Glasgow South - Brian Smith

Wales

- Cardiff East - John Williams

- Swansea West - Gareth Bromhall

Royal Mail – what are the unions paying Labour for?

Labour Party policy is to renationalise Royal Mail. At their conference in 2022, as the strike wave was just starting, delegates passed a motion proposed by the Communications Workers Union (CWU) unanimously.

Royal Mail's ownership is being transferred from one set of bosses, eager to strip off any profitable bits and attack postal workers' pay and conditions, to another – the 'Czech sphinx' Daniel Kreťinsky. What a perfect time for a new Labour government to pledge to take back our postal service and run it for need, not for profit, as soon as they get into power.

Let's open Labour's 'change' manifesto to check: "Labour will ensure that any proposed takeover is robustly scrutinised and appropriate guarantees are forthcoming that protect

the interests of the workforce and customers."

Ah...

Unions affiliated to the Labour Party give millions in donations, which means they're able to pass motions like the CWU did in 2022. But if agreed-on policy ends up on the cutting-room floor when the manifesto gets written, what political representation are workers getting out of it?

We need a new mass workers' party – one with the unions at its centre. With workers having a real democratic say on what it fights for. So it can put front and centre: workers' rights, nationalising mail, transport, the banks and more, funding our services and taking the wealth and resources off the bosses and putting them in our hands.

Tories mega rich donors a rogues' gallery



Mohamed Mansour PHOTO: MATTHEW JOSEPH

JON DALE
MANSFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

One of the Tories' biggest-ever donors, Frank Hester and his TPP company, has given them £15 million. Where does he get that sort of money to give away?

His private company, TPP, has profited from £135 million of contracts with the Department of Health and Social Care in under four years.

TPP's SystmOne computer system is used by 2,700 GP practices and other parts of the NHS for record keeping and communication. Hester was paid £515,000 in 2021-22 and receives £10 million of dividends on top. No wonder he's happy with the

NHS under the Tories!

Hester made the news after former employees exposed his repeated racist and sexist comments, including a vile attack on Diane Abbott. Despite the outrage, the Tories received thousands more from him after they were brought to light.

The Tories' second-biggest donor, billionaire Mohamed Mansour, was a minister in President Hosni Mubarak's government in Egypt between 2006 and 2009. That regime arrested and tortured thousands of opponents for demanding democratic and workers' rights.

When Mansour was transport minister, 1,000 people died after a ferry capsized in the Red Sea – a preventable disaster. He resigned after

the fourth fatal rail crash during his period of office.

Mansour has given the Tories £5 million, with a further £600,000 from one of his companies.

It's no surprise the Tories are bankrolled by the rich who've prospered while the rest of us have endured falling living standards and crumbling public services.

However, there are reports that Tory donations are drying up, as big-business backers doubt they'll see a return bankrolling a losing horse.

Labour is also now receiving big donations from the ultra-rich, who see Starmer and Reeves as safe guardians of their system. And they will be expecting payback from the policies of a Starmer-led government.



PHOTO: PANTHRO

Junior doctors strike puts the pressure on Starmer

Junior doctors in the BMA are set to strike for five days from 27 June, in the run-up to the general election.

A junior doctor in Liverpool told the Socialist:

"The NHS is experiencing its most intense pressure in its 75-year history. The health service has been undermined by an unprecedented decade of underfunding.

"Through recent years, junior doctors have made both an enormous contribution and a significant sacrifice. None of this is recognised by the Tory government, who were happy to clap NHS staff through the coronavirus pandemic but cannot bring themselves to appropriately pay us.

"Now we have to ask Keir Starmer – what will your government do?"

"Despite increasing workload and waiting lists at record highs, junior doctors' pay has been cut by more than a quarter since 2008-09.

"The doctors' union the BMA is calling to reverse the steep decline in pay faced since 2008-09. We need pay increases that will safeguard the recruitment and retention of junior doctors."



PHOTO: PAUL MATTESSON

Support the steelworkers' action Demand nationalisation



PHOTO: UNITE

GARETH BROMHALL
SWANSEA SOCIALIST PARTY AND TRADES COUNCIL

Steelworkers at Tata Steel in South Wales have started industrial action.

For the first time in over 40 years, in a battle for their jobs and their community, action short of strike by members of Unite began on 18 June.

A rally was held at the gates to the Port Talbot works on the eve of the first day, which saw over 100 steel

workers, trade unionists – including four trades councils – environment activists and local people come out to support.

Steelworkers Ian Williams and Jason Wyatt, along with Unite national lead officer Onay Kasab, spoke about the need to fight and the shocking bullying and intimidation of members by the employers.

The message of solidarity from Greenpeace was well received,

when they said that a transition that didn't include climate justice and workers' justice was not a 'just transition'.

The Socialist Party's demands for nationalisation, investment and a transition to green steel that sees skilled jobs and the community protected, went down well. Jason Wyatt will be speaking at the National Shop Stewards Network conference on 22 June.

Unions must prepare now for struggle under a Starmer-led government



WHAT WE THINK

This year's National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) conference, which brings together rank-and-file trade unionists from across the movement, comes just 12 days before an election which is highly likely to see the defeat of the Tories and the coming to power of a Starmer-led Labour government.

Millions of workers will be desperate to see the back of a Tory government which has brought public services to the brink of collapse, ruled over a falling of living standards and wages, and tightened the most restrictive anti-trade union laws in Europe.

Workers' action has no doubt helped to speed up the demise of the Tories. The strike wave, which saw the development of the biggest level of sustained strikes in three decades, as workers across the country fought for inflation-proof pay rises, helped to accelerate the political splits and crisis at the top of the Tory government.

But while many will be desperately hoping that booting out the Tories will mean a break from relentless attacks on working-class people's lives over the last 14 years, workers and young people will also be thinking about how the struggle for workers' rights can be advanced under a Starmer-led government.

The NSSN conference also comes a week before the junior doctors take five days of strike action for an above-inflation pay rise – with Labour Shadow Health Secretary Wes Streeting begging them not to take action, calling their demands unaffordable!

The Nuffield Trust think tank has warned that Labour pledges would leave the NHS with a lower annual funding increase than during the era of Tory austerity – of just 1.1%!

Labour and big business

It couldn't be clearer that the incoming Labour government will be in the pocket of big business. Labour's recently released election manifesto mentions the trade unions 12 times, "nationalisation" zero times, while "business" is mentioned 60 times. Rachel Reeves told business leaders that the manifesto "has their fingerprints all over it" – and echo of when Starmer told 200 business leaders in October last year: "If we do come into government, you will be coming into government with us."

But it would be wrong, however, to draw the conclusion that workers can't make any gains under Labour. On the basis of mass working-class action, a pro-big business Labour government can be forced to make concessions to the working class – just like how the Tories were forced to



PHOTO: PAUL MATTESSON

deliver improved pay offers for workers as a result of the strike wave.

This year's NSSN conference, like every year, will provide a platform for rank-and-file reps and activists leading trade union action from across the movement to help try and build the maximum possible coordination between our disputes. As we head into a Starmer-led government against the backdrop of a historic crisis of British capitalism, the 'strike weapon' will be much more quickly picked up by workers looking to fight back against a Labour government's attacks carried through on behalf of the bosses.

But more than that, NSSN conference will also be a chance to discuss and debate what policies the trade union movement ought to fight for – a workers' manifesto – during the first 100 days of an incoming Labour government, and beyond.

Labour's cut-down 'plan to make work pay' is featured in the manifesto. It says measures introduced to parliament in the first 100 days would include "banning exploitative zero hours contracts; ending fire and rehire; and introducing basic rights from day one to parental leave, sick pay, and protection from unfair dismissal" as well as "making sure the minimum wage is a genuine living wage."

But the fuller 'Labour plan to make work pay' released in May calls for an end to fire and rehire, but with the qualifier that "it is important that

businesses can restructure to remain viable, preserve their workforce and the company when there is genuinely no alternative". So giving the go ahead to businesses to use it if they say they really need to!

But the working class can't trust the bosses to act in our best interests, under any circumstances. That's why the workers' manifesto the NSSN conference will be discussing calls for the complete scrapping of fire and rehire and zero-hour contracts, as well as real inflation-proof pay rises for workers, that protect our living standards.

Unite the Union has refused to endorse the Labour Party manifesto. But this raises the need for Unite and the trade union movement more widely to discuss steps towards building a party in which

the trade union movement and the working class has control and oversight of its policies and programme – a political wing of the trade union movement itself.

Britain has some of the most draconian anti-trade union legislation in the world. Starmer has previously said he'll repeal the Tories' Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act and the 2016 Trade Union Act if elected. But what about the rest of the anti-trade union legislation dating back to Thatcher's era, left in place by the last Labour government, which Jeremy Corbyn spoke about repealing during his time as Labour leader?

Starmer has spoken about taking the railways back into public ownership, just as Blair did pre-1997 before he ditched that pledge in government. But Starmer's pledge is for only after rail franchises expire – why can't he renationalise rail in the first 100 days of the next government, alongside other key industries like Royal Mail, BT, buses, the energy and utility companies, steel.

The NSSN has written to various different political parties to invite them to address the NSSN conference and to talk about what they would fight for in the first 100 days of government. This includes the Labour Party, the Greens, Jeremy Corbyn's campaign in Islington North, the Workers' Party, and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (of which the Socialist Party is part).

Just as trade unionists don't accept the crumbs that big business says it can afford for pay rises, why should we accept only the crumbs of what a Labour government is prepared to offer? And if any political party claiming to be an alternative to the Tories wants our backing as trade unionists and workers, then they can come and speak to a conference of reps and shop stewards about the policies and programme they're prepared to fight for politically in Parliament.

Strategy for struggle

But a strategy to keep this struggle up after the general election is crucial as well. The NSSN will be organising a lobby of the TUC in Brighton on Sunday 8 September – two thirds of the way through the first 100 days of the next government, and around the time of Labour's planned first fiscal event – to raise the fighting strategy which will be needed by the trade union movement's leadership to win a genuine workers' manifesto.

But more than that, Socialist Party members will be continuing the campaign after the election is over for a new mass working-class party, accountable to the trade union movement, including pushing for a trade union-organised conference to discuss how a working class political alternative to a pro-capitalist Starmer-led government can be built.



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

FBU conference discusses how to prepare for new government

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) conference in May brought together hundreds of delegates just as the general election was called – an election likely to finally see the back of the Tories and the entry of a Labour government into Westminster.

The appetite for struggle by FBU members was reflected in one of the first conference debates, on the call for the union to set up a strike fund. Although opposed by the Executive Council (EC) at this conference and historically, the motion was passed.

In addition to vital debates on the policies and strategy to fight attacks to firefighters' conditions, conference discussed key political issues facing the working class more generally.

Palestine

An EC statement on Palestine, introduced by general secretary Matt Wrack, sent solidarity to fire and rescue workers in Gaza and the West Bank, as well as the millions protesting internationally to end the slaughter, including student protesters in Britain.

The union leadership also raised the need for working-class action to halt arms sales to the Israeli state, as well as pointing towards the movement developing within Israel against Netanyahu's government.

A motion moved by Devon and Somerset branch instructed the EC to "withdraw support from any prospective parliamentary candidate who has not supported the call for a ceasefire in Gaza", and was passed.



FBU members lobbying parliament in 2022. LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The discussion on Gaza was followed by an EC policy statement on the general election, prepared in advance but taken for discussion after the election was called on the first day of conference. The introduction reflected the desperation of firefighters to ditch the Tory government, which has cut 12,000 jobs, hundreds of fire engines and a whole number of fire stations since 2010.

Starker's Labour

This was combined with anger against and mistrust of Starker's Labour in speeches by delegates from the floor. Many delegates spoke about the need for the union to remain prepared to fight industrially, should Labour attack FBU members' jobs, wages and conditions.

Under the blows of Tony Blair's New Labour, members voted to disaffiliate the FBU from the Labour Party. It was when Jeremy Corbyn was Labour leader that the FBU leadership won the argument among members to reaffiliate. Some delegates remarked that next year's FBU conference will be an opportunity to review the union's relationship with the Labour Party.

The EC laid out the need to maintain a struggle under a Labour government, and place demands on the Labour leadership to enact policies in the interests of FBU members, including ending the fragmentation of the fire service, improving pay and conditions, strengthening workers' rights, and repealing anti-union laws.

But beyond calls to 'hold Labour's feet to the fire', there was unfortunately limited comment on what concrete steps industrially and

politically the union should take if Labour does not deliver.

Political voice needed

The EC policy statement read: "Our movement cannot merely rely on developments at Westminster and the devolved governments". That of course is true – but that should not mean abandoning the potentially powerful weapon of supporting candidates that support trade union and socialist policies, to add to the pressure on Starker.

Why stop at only withdrawing support for candidates who don't support the union's policies on Gaza – what about other issues that are union policy, such as cuts to the fire service?

Labour MP Ian Lavery's address to conference wouldn't have done much to alleviate the concerns of delegates about what a Labour government will mean for workers. He ended his speech referring to the first 100 days of the next government, telling delegates that Labour MPs would barely have the keys to their offices within the first 100 days, especially considering that 'the money has run out'!

Socialists don't accept that the money doesn't exist to provide working-class and young people with a decent standard of living – rather that the resources and wealth which do exist are in the wrong hands. Placing those resources and wealth in public ownership under democratic workers' control and management – to lay the basis for a socialist society – requires building a mass movement. And that movement will also need a political voice, a new mass working-class political party.

Basildon tractor plant workers fight over pay



PHOTO: JACK HUGGINS

Production workers at CNH tractor plant in Basildon have suspended industrial action pending the result of a ballot on an improved pay offer.

After ten hours of wrangling on Monday 10 June, the company has offered 5.5% - short of the 7.5% indicated by the three-year deal previously agreed, but an advance on the original offer. Action gets results.

However, the company effectively used blackmail to get the stewards

to put the offer to ballot, threatening to withdraw the deal and refusing to put the offer to a workplace vote.

Probably they recognise the strength of feeling in a workforce which has mounted a solid three weeks of industrial action, among which many are arguing strongly for escalation.

In addition are issues such as respect and dignity at work, and rewriting an outdated grading structure.

The company is swimming in money, making 60,000 euro profit per employee on average, paying its CEO a multimillion bonus, and indulging its owners with a billion euro share buy-back.

Unite members need to keep this in mind, reject the offer, and press on with industrial action.

DAVE MURRAY BASILDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Health Care Assistants on strike in Plymouth

'People feel empowered for the first time in years'



THE SOCIALIST SPOKE TO UNISON REP MAX KING

Our members are striking today because for years they have worked outside their scope, and have been forced to work outside their banding without the correct pay to reflect this.

Staff are filled with frustration, upset, and feeling completely disrespected and undervalued. We didn't

want it to go to strike, we wanted the Trust to take up our offers of meeting us and discussing and resolving the issue.

The mood on the picket has been vibrant and passionate. There are over 150 staff on the picket line.

People feel listened to and empowered for the first time in years with this strike. People have come together and supported each other and shown excellent solidarity during these uncertain times.

We've been left with no option but to strike. Members are having to work overtime just to make ends meet. Not resolving this is not an option for our members.

Get all the latest union news...



Unison local government conference

Real debate shakes leadership

UNISON LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE DELEGATES

On the eve of the expected election of a new Labour government, after 14 years of savage Tory cuts to services, jobs and pay, delegates met for the local government conference of Unison, the biggest public sector trade union.

At first it looked like it could be the 'usual' conference with little or no debate, carefully crafted by the leadership through standing orders. Socialist Party members intervened from the very start of conference.

Motions calling on the union to develop an anti-cuts strategy – to call on councils to implement no-cuts needs-based budgets and for national strike action to win a £4 billion emergency government funding package, as well as funding lost through austerity – were ruled off the agenda by the right wing and not even printed. Conference overwhelmingly backed our calls to have the right to debate them, but the right wing-dominated Standing Orders Committee continued to rule that they should not be debated due to the spurious alleged risk of 'legal jeopardy'.

A lunchtime official Unison fringe meeting organised by the Local Government Service Group Executive (SGE – led by the 'Time for Real Change' group, TFRC) explained the horrors facing local communities, but only proposed a limited strategy to fight for funding for our councils. Many speakers from the floor made the point that our conference was not being allowed to discuss a full strategy. They wanted to know 'Where is our union' in fighting against the most brutal cuts under S114 notices, especially under a Starker government. We cannot just accept that the devastation of local government continues.



Unison members fighting cuts. LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Packed fringe meeting

On the biggest issue facing local government members, there was a clear mood to fight. This was reflected in the fringe meeting on Monday lunchtime, organised by Nottingham City, Surrey County, Carmarthenshire County and Southwark branches, and sponsored by Hounslow, Knowsley, Hackney and Dundee.

The speakers raised the strategy that couldn't be heard on the conference floor to 80 delegates and visitors from a wide range of branches. Delegates signed up to campaign over the next year to challenge the official position and fight for jobs and services now.

Socialist Party members identified two motions that required immediate challenge. The first came in the

SGE motion on including the Foundation Living Wage as part of a pay strategy. If agreed by conference, it would have meant adopting a policy that accepted that the lowest-paid council workers would be on not just less than the current Unison claim, but even on less than the current pay offer, which Unison members are being asked to reject in the national consultation!

Delegates from Knowsley opened up the opposition debate and shifted the conference. The motion was defeated by an overwhelming majority.

Fight all cuts

The other motion we opposed was proposed by the national Black Members' Committee. It was moved with good intentions: to protect Black workers who have faced a disproportionate impact of austerity.

However, the lack of leadership, often blocking real attempts to fight the massive scale of cuts, can lead to a section of the most oppressed members sometimes look to equalising the harm. Unfortunately, while exposing the genuine problems faced by Black members, the motion text accepted the need for cuts. It could also potentially lead to workplace division, placing priority for one section of the workforce over another when impacted by cuts.

Surrey and Hackney delegates raised these points from the rostrum, calling for a united front against all cuts, to warm reception from a layer of conference delegates. The TFRC-led executive was left searching for speakers in favour, and at the end of the first day of conference a point of order was placed to end the debate.

The motion was narrowly passed but once again showed the limitations of the TFRC leadership. As Socialist Party members have consistently warned, if the left-leaning leadership does not put up a fight, it risks losing its majority to the old right wing of the union, as members will not see a real difference.

Jobcentre security guards coordinate strikes

PCS MEMBER IN DWP

From 17 June, G4S security guards in Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) offices, such as Jobcentres, went on strike for seven days. Over 1,000 guards in the GMB union have already been on strike, with around 70 Jobcentres being either shut or significantly impacted to the point of not being able to deliver the usual services, many to the point of closure. Now, GMB guards are joined by over 200 guards in PCS union.

Despite G4S having received over £211 million in direct payments from DWP, the majority of staff are either on, or just pennies above, the minimum wage, having received no pay rise in the last three years. The mood to fight can be seen by the number of guards taking action, as well as the recent PCS ballot which achieved a 95% vote for strike action on a 55% turnout.

JORDAN STRATTON REPORTS FROM CHARLES STREET JOBCENTRE IN LEICESTER

About 30 pickets demonstrated outside. The Jobcentre had a sign outside saying 'Closed due to unforeseen circumstances'! Strikers described to us how their low pay meant they struggle to survive. Steve Score, the TUSC candidate for Leicester West, is the only election candidate who had supported this picket line.

What impressed them the most was the demand for a £15-an-hour minimum wage, which is well above even what their pay claim aims to achieve.



PHOTO: HACKNEY SOCIALIST PARTY

UNIVERSITIES IN CRISIS

Students – fight for free fully funded education!

ADAM POWELL-DAVIES
SOCIALIST PARTY YOUTH ORGANISER

At the last two general elections there was a buzz of enthusiasm on and around university campuses. The Labour Party, led by Jeremy Corbyn, had a manifesto promising free university education.

A few years later and Labour, now led by Keir Starmer, is set to win. But this time with a party 'permanently changed' and with the 'slate wiped clean' of Corbyn's popular policies. The 2024 manifesto has business 'fingerprints all over it'.

On campuses now, students' maintenance loans fall further and further behind the cost of living. The often trivialised cliché of cash-strapped students surviving off toast and tins of beans has in recent years given way to a more serious picture of student poverty, which has hit working-class students the hardest.

One survey has found 20% of students using food banks. Most are forced to work long hours in part-time jobs on top of their studies, just to cover the cost of being a student. There has been a spike in the numbers of students suffering mental health problems.

At the same time, thousands of students' courses are threatened with closure, as university bosses make cuts at over 50 universities. The crisis in university funding, caused by the failed tuition fees model, meant that the risk of universities going under made it to Starmer's 'shitlist' of immediate problems that will be met by an incoming Labour government.

The Labour Party general election manifesto pays lip service to maintaining university provision for young people. It talks of creating "a secure future for higher education and the opportunities it creates across the UK". But there is nothing spelling out how a Labour government would plug the gaping hole in universities' finances, let alone announce any measures to stop the student cost-of-living crisis.

One thing is for sure: Labour won't want to increase public spending for universities! Where the manifesto is instructive is on its plans for a "youth guarantee of access to training, an apprenticeship, or support to find work for all 18-to-21-year-olds", which would only draw on "existing funding". In other words, a Labour government won't mean any new money for young people's futures – not unless we fight for it.

Rather than making the bosses pay for the needs of universities, the capitalist press and university vice-chancellors have stepped up their calls for a 'modest' tuition fee increase soon after the election to give cash-strapped institutions an emergency injection of funds. They argue that, even if a Labour government provoked the fury of young people by announcing a rise in



PHOTO: LIVERPOOL SP

fees, they would still have five years until the next election to recover.

At the same time, Shadow Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson has refused to rule out a rise in tuition fees to fund universities.

Students should be prepared to respond to any future attacks with mass protests, and to demand free, fully funded education for all who want to access it. Free education would stop young people from accruing tens of thousands of pounds in debt before the age of 21. Full funding would include the need for students to get maintenance grants, not loans, which cover all living costs. The scrapping of tuition fees would stop universities acting like businesses, competing with each other for students to boost revenue while cutting back courses.

It shouldn't be forgotten that the first major resistance to a Tony Blair Labour government came from students protesting against the introduction of tuition fees. And part of the reason that more young people haven't looked to the Liberal Democrats as an alternative to the Tories and Starmer's Labour is down to their betrayal in 2010, when – shortly after a general election, having pledged not to increase fees – they trebled tuition fees as coalition partners with the Tories.

What future?

In 1999, New Labour prime minister Tony Blair announced his aim to send half of young people to university. Twenty years later, that target was met for the first time.

It was Blair who brought in tuition fees and created the need for a loan to cover them. Maintenance grants were finally phased out completely and replaced with loans by the Tories in 2016.

But increased participation in higher education has not meant equal access for working-class students. University application rates tend to be lower in poorer areas. Students who were on free school meals are twice as likely to drop out of university than those who weren't.

On average, students with part-time jobs are working 48-hour weeks when you add together university study and paid work. How is a working-class student working the equivalent of a six-day week expected to do as well as their peers who don't have to take on a part-time job?

Despite the obstacles to completing a degree, university drop-out rates remain low – around 1%. The proportion of students who have considered quitting university has fallen steadily since the pandemic. And even among the one-quarter of students reported to have considered dropping out in the past year, clearly the overwhelming majority think it's worth soldiering on to graduation. Many will be put off from dropping out, knowing that they've taken on the 'sunk cost' of student loans which they will have to repay anyway.

The fact that university drop-out rates aren't higher says more about

the paucity of alternatives for young people than it does the quality of university education. The jobs typically on offer to working-class school- and college-leavers are the lowest paid. Almost half of young people on apprenticeship schemes last year dropped out before completing their course, with the majority citing concerns about lack of quality or training.

In contrast, a university education is still seen by many as a route to something better, a guarantee of an independent life away from home, at least for a few years, followed by the chance of better job prospects and pay – even when you factor in losing a bit of your future pay packet each month to student loan repayments.

However, hundreds of thousands of students are now graduating from university, only to find that the jobs aren't there for them. Since the pandemic, there has been a drastic fall in job vacancies aimed at university graduates. More than a third of graduates now end up in jobs that don't actually require a degree, becoming so-called 'overqualified' workers.

For students who do find the jobs they've studied for, there is still the issue of pay. Average pay for graduate jobs is at its lowest point in real terms for a decade. Last year the average graduate salary increased by just 3% – the lowest rate in years, and far behind the soaring cost of living. For comparison, average rents increased by a record 9% over the same period.

In the run-up to the general election, the Tories have cynically used the number of graduates not finding jobs to attack so-called 'low-value degrees', as part of a wider attempt to curb student numbers.

In reality, it is the blind and planless character of capitalism – a system defended by the Tories and all the main parties, not least Starmer's Labour Party – that pushes working-class young people to rack up huge debts and work themselves into the ground for a qualification that doesn't even guarantee a decent job at the end.

And why should the failure of capitalism to plan for our futures mean that only a certain number of young people go to university?

Everyone deserves the right to a university education – the freedom of time to think about the world, and to specialise in whatever interests them, secure in the knowledge that there will be a well-paid and worthwhile job available to them after they finish. That means fighting to take control of society out of the hands of the capitalist class, and taking the wealth and resources off them to provide fully funded, free university places for everyone who wants it.



Everyone deserves the right to a university education – the freedom of time to think about the world, and to specialise in whatever interests them, secure in the knowledge that there will be a well-paid and worthwhile job available after they finish

A few friends and I took part in leafleting for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition outside of Leeds College's Quarry Hill campus. Quite a few people took leaflets and some people came up to the stall to learn more. A highlight was definitely when a car went past and a teenager in the car was shouting words of encouragement through the window. All in all it was very successful!

CAMERON MCCANN
LEEDS ARTS UNI STUDENT

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PHOTO: PAUL MATTESSON

SCOTT HUNTER
SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY AND TUSC CANDIDATE IN SWINDON NORTH

For young people today, the words 'public services' almost sound like a sick joke. 14 years of Tory austerity have left most services in Britain on life support.

And we have more needs than ever. 1 in 6 young people experience a mental health need, and those from the lowest income bracket are 4.5 times more likely to experience severe needs than those in the highest. More than a quarter of a million young people are on the NHS waiting list for mental health support.

And without support, it snowballs and has impacts for our whole lives. Health problems (physical or mental) can get worse. This then impacts people's ability to study and work, which in turn will impact quality of life and even what money gets put into our pensions, if we ever get one! The NHS was meant to provide care 'from cradle to grave' but now poverty stalks working-class people through our whole lives.

The NHS is just one thing, but the list goes on. Education budgets have been cut, as well as youth services. Councils are cutting back spending and services to legal minimums. The future looks grim.

It is truly shocking just how quickly the state of things has degraded. What happened?

The running-down of our public services has been no accident. It's been a deliberate political choice from successive New Labour, ConDem and Tory governments to make the working class pay for the bosses' crisis of 2007-08. The politicians, representatives of the capitalist class, bailed out the banks and have sought to pass the cost on to workers and

young people through spending cuts and wage freezes.

We all want to get the Tories out and put to bed the 14 years of austerity. But Keir Starmer's New Labour Mark II has no answers for young people crying out for an alternative. Starmer has already committed himself to 'iron-clad fiscal responsibility' and made clear that there will be no major increases in public spending under a Labour government. Millions will vote Labour on 4 July, hoping against hope for some relief from the misery of the past 14 years. Working-class and young people are going to have to fight hard to get any improvements to our lives.

The strike wave of the past few years has shown the way. Many young people, who didn't even know what a trade union was, have been awakened to what can be achieved through fighting, working-class struggle. Young workers have flooded into some of the trade unions and will be learning lessons of the past few years. First among them: striking works! If you fight together, you can win, or at least improve what was on offer at the start.

We have seen multiple generations lose out to austerity; we can't afford to throw more lives away! There must be no reprieve for Starmer – we must fight in the trade unions to make sure they enter this new period ready to fight.

Young people and workers also need a political voice. Jeremy Corbyn's 2019 manifesto met with huge enthusiasm from young people, and it would be significant if he and other expelled Labour lefts were elected as independents. But we need more than just scattered independents. We need trade unions, socialists, community and anti-war campaigners to get organised into a new mass party of workers and youth to fight in parliament and the council chambers.



The Socialist Party says

- Scrap fees - free fully funded university education for all who want it, make the super-rich pay
- No course cuts and closures – defend uni jobs, pay, terms and conditions
- Introduce student living maintenance grants that rise with the real cost of living
- Build fighting, democratic, student unions
- Build a new mass workers' party to fight in our interests against the bosses
- Fight for socialist change in Britain and worldwide

End knife crime 'epidemic'

Fight for decent services and a socialist future

HELEN PATTISSON

SOCIALIST PARTY LONDON REGIONAL SECRETARY

“Teenager fighting for life after double stabbing”, “knife crime is out of control” these are just some recent headlines. In London alone, 21 teenagers were killed in 2022. In Bristol in February 2024, three boys were killed with knives in three weeks. It’s no wonder that a recent survey found that 46% of 13 to 18-year-olds are worried about knife crime in their local area. The knife crime ‘epidemic’ we face is not just having a horrible impact on the families and friends of victims, but across society.

One piece of research, conducted by interviewing young people, highlighted how knife crime can become a vicious cycle if young people believe others are carrying knives, and then beginning to do the same in the hopes of protecting themselves. It can lead to people of all ages being scared to leave the house and unsafe in their local area.

The outgoing Tory government has put an extra £4 million into tackling knife crime. In relation to the scale of the problem, this is small change. Look at the details and you will see that it will go on just four high-tech police vans, and the rest into researching technology to detect if people are carrying knives.

Sadly, this will not make the huge numbers of people understandably fearful of knife crime safer.

There is a large body of research linking rising knife crime to the huge cuts to youth services, including research by an all-party parliamentary committee in 2019. Knife crime has been on the rise since 2012, according to the government’s own statistics. It dipped at the beginning of the pandemic but has since increased year on year. 244 people were killed in attacks involving a knife or sharp implement in 2022-23. Each of those deaths represents a family and local community rocked by the impact.

But the situation today isn’t just a product of 14 years of attacks on



youth services. The impact of austerity and the crisis of capitalism goes much deeper. The Tories are clearly not interested in addressing the deeper social problems underlying the reasons more young people are carrying knives.

With a Starmer government on the cards, will his new Labour government have a programme which can turn the issue of knife crime around?

Starmer has brought back Blair’s slogan of “tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime”. Under the heading of “take back our streets”, it is mainly a programme of being “tough on crime”. They too blame the last 14 years of Tory government for the current situation, but link this only to issues around cuts to police including a call for “visible neighbourhood policing”. Specifically on knife crime, they highlight “rapid intervention and tough consequences”.

Tougher consequences have already been introduced, but incidents of knife crime continue to rise. The proportion of custodial sentence vs cautions for possession of a knife have risen since before the Tories took office in 2010, according to the government’s own analysis. There has also been a steady increase in the length of custodial sentences for people convicted for knife crime. The share of sentences over one year has also increased. It has meant overcrowded prisons and deteriorating conditions. But none of this has curbed the problem of knife crime.

The Casey report has also brought to the fore that the London Metropolitan police is institutionally racist, sexist and homophobic, and the number of people with confidence in the police is falling. If “tougher on crime” policies just mean that sections of the working class are

‘over-policed’ then it won’t result in safer neighbourhoods.

That’s why the Socialist Party calls for democratic working-class control of policing – with all aspects of decision making decided by bodies of elected representatives locally, the majority of those elected from the trade union movement. This would allow local communities to be involved in discussing the services they really need to ensure safety while also ending the fear of police harassment and overpolicing.

Labour’s plan?

The Labour Party manifesto also calls for “youth futures hubs”. But this isn’t listed or costed in its ‘fiscal plan’, meaning presumably they are expected to be paid out of existing council budgets which have also been decimated. Almost £1 billion was cut from local authority youth budgets from 2010 to 2019, according to the YMCA. Areas with the biggest cuts to these services have seen some of the sharpest increases in knife crime. Rebuilding these important services is not listed in Labour’s fiscal plan either. Instead, Labour lists putting youth workers in A&E, custody centres, and pupil referral units at a cost of £20 million - a fraction of what has been lost.

It’s clear that over a decade of economic crisis and austerity, young people’s futures have been ripped away. Communities have been thrown into increasing poverty and a generation is growing up worse off than their parents.

To really tackle knife crime it will take reversing all these trends, ensuring kids grow up with access to education, support and a decent future. This isn’t the future that Keir Starmer’s Labour is offering. When Rachel Reeves talks of “fiscal responsibility” she means that Starmer’s government will act in the interests of British capitalism, not in the interests of local communities struggling under the weight of austerity and all its impacts.

Fighting to end knife crime means fighting for socialist change, and a system based on providing a decent future for all rather than the profits of a few. Part of that is fighting to help the working class establish its own political voice – a new mass workers’ party – a demand Socialist Party members are putting central in our general election campaigns, preparing for struggles of workers and young people under a Starmer-led government.

Fighting for a future free from oppression

SAADA MOHAMMED

LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

End discrimination

Racism, sexism, LGBTQ+phobia - capitalism is a system that rules by divide and conquer. The bosses to all they can to divide working-class people on things such as race, age, gender, nationality and sexuality - to try to stop us uniting and pointing our fingers at them, the super-rich exploiters. By uniting as workers and getting organised together fighting for socialist change, we can end all discrimination and oppression.

Scrap anti-democratic laws

Without workers, nothing happens - the pandemic lockdowns and strikes proved it. Organised together we have huge potential strength. That’s why worldwide the capitalists are attacking rights we have won previously through reform and protests. In Britain this can be seen with the anti-strike laws brought in by the Tories, a continuation of what Thatcher started in the 1980s. Keir Starmer has said he will scrap the recent Tory anti-union laws. We need to fight to make sure he actually does so immediately, and scraps Thatcher’s too. The Socialist Party calls for the

scrapping of anti-trade union and anti-democratic legislation.

End police harassment

In addition, we call for the ending of police harassment. That means fighting for democratic control of policing, so that young people can have a say on police priorities and policies, as part of democratic bodies of elected working-class representatives, including from the trade unions and local communities.

Votes at 16

The capitalist establishment knows the power that is held by young

people, and the Tory party is very aware of the fact that very few of us would ever vote for them! They promise nothing to actually improve the lives of young people, just stupid soundbites such as ‘national service’.

In Scotland, 16-year-olds can vote in elections to the Scottish Parliament and local councils. The Socialist Party calls for votes at 16 in England and Wales, and in all elections too. But we need something to vote for! That’s why we campaign for a new mass workers’ party, one which brings together working-class people to fight for our common interests and for a socialist future.



PHOTO: MARY FINCH

Organise to force Starmer's Labour to reverse council cuts



SUE ATKINS
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

The Tories, who have inflicted 14 years of cutbacks, are on their way out. A Labour-led government after 4 July would have the power to reimburse local councils the millions stolen by the Tories and fund local government so that services could be rebuilt. The money is there, in the hands of the super-rich, who have seen their wealth rise over the same period, while the rest of us struggle to pay our bills or put food on the table.

Starmer's answer to fix local government funding? Not to provide the necessary funding by taking from the super-rich, as Jeremy Corbyn proposed in 2019, but to give "councils multi-year funding settlements and end[ing] wasteful competitive bidding".

Local government accounts for 20% of all public funding – ending councils' financial decline would materially improve the lives of working-class people in our communities. However, all the signals from Labour's emphasis on "tough choices" and "fiscal responsibility" indicate that the squeeze will continue.

Council services throughout Britain hang in the balance. The local government funding crisis means 1 in 5 councils may have to issue section 114 notices in the next 18 months – meaning councils will only fund services they are legally



We cannot go on with services like 'a tower of Jenga held together with Sellotape'.

obligated to. Commissioners are appointed to oversee a fire sale of assets and further slashing of services.

The real impact of the cuts

My local council, Southampton, has seen £500 million slashed from its funding over the last decade. And the impact of these cuts will be the same in councils up and down the country. With Labour in charge over this period we have seen the closure of all council youth services, the closure of the remaining residential care homes. 1,000 jobs have been lost as many services have been cut and closed. Children's services are described as "a tower of Jenga held together by Sellotape".

And all that has achieved is bringing the council to the brink of issuing a section 114 notice. To prevent this, a massive sale of assets is being prepared in complete secrecy due to "commercial sensitivity". We cannot even see what in our city is being prepared for sale.

Councils can fight back

That is why we have argued and campaigned for the council to use its reserves and borrowing powers to avoid making cuts in the short term, while mounting a campaign among the trade unions and communities for support to demand the necessary funding from the government.

We did this under the Tories and, under an incoming Labour-led government, we will keep campaigning and demanding that councils refuse to make the cuts and fight for the services we need.

It was local campaigning that saw St. Mary's Leisure Centre reopened, - the Venny adventure playground, Kentish Road Respite Centre and Oaklands Swimming Pool were saved from closure.

When local people and their trade unions got involved, they used their collective power to push back and change decisions, and if our council had harnessed this potential power and taken the fight to the government we could have been in a different situation to the sorry state of affairs today.

Housing is one of the main crises facing us, and local government could be instrumental in providing some of the answers. With over 7,000 families on the waiting list here in Southampton we urgently need more council homes at truly affordable rents. The council borrowed up to £200 million to invest in risky commercial properties, now making a loss, when this could instead have been used to build council homes. There are also 2,000 empty properties in Southampton, some of which could be brought into the council housing stock.

Social care and residential care homes are all privatised, enormously expensive and in short supply and is a major reason why so many people are occupying beds in hospital when they could be discharged into the

community. In the 1970s, most were run by the council until outsourced by Thatcher's 'compulsory competitive tendering' policy. So bring them back in-house with decent training, pay and permanent contracts for the staff. We would then have control over staffing and costs instead of serving the profits of private business.

Southampton, like so many cities, is choked with traffic and the pollution it causes. Buses could be an important way to reduce the cars in town, but the once-city-owned bus service is privatised. So the buses are not run as a service, but to maximise profit. A council-run bus service with decent pay and conditions for the staff would serve the community not make profits for private vampires.

These are but a few of the many issues that face local government – everything is broken. Socialist Party members have organised meetings to draw up a people's budget, working out what people need. Councils should spend what is needed and present Starmer the bill.

We cannot go on. Millions will expect a real change from Tory rule. We have to organise to demand the new Labour-led government provides the necessary resources to undo a decade of austerity. We must be prepared to organise a fight for those resources through our trade unions and community organisations.

The bosses have three establishment parties that represent them, while the working class has no mass party of its own. I will be voting for the



We have to organise to demand the new Labour-led government provides the necessary resources to undo a decade of austerity

Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in Southampton, which is the only party standing on a clear anti-war and anti-cuts programme. And after the election I will be fighting with fellow community members and trade unionists for the local services we need. Through the course of the battles ahead it will be necessary to lay the basis of a new mass political party that represents us – the working class – armed with a socialist programme. that will give us the means to build a society on the basis of our needs and put the horrors of capitalism behind us.

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Councils willing to fight could:

- Take over empty properties to be used to house people on ever-growing council house waiting lists
- Bring social care back in-house, alongside transport, street cleaning and the raft of other services currently being consumed for profit by big business
- Reverse Tory austerity. Set needs-based budgets funding the services that people need, using reserves and borrowing powers, sending the bill to a future Labour-led government, and organise a campaign to demand they pay for it, not ordinary workers

Theatre review: Nye - a brilliant play about the life of Aneurin Bevan and the birth of the NHS

SCOTT JONES

Heading to the Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff to see 'Nye' come home to Wales just days after the general election was called, I thought to myself what better time for a play about Aneurin 'Nye' Bevan, Welsh Labour politician and health minister when the NHS was created. And what a play it would be at any time. Inspiring, emotional and funny in equal measure, Michael Sheen is amazing as Nye, with an excellent cast behind him. In particular, Sharon Small who plays Nye's wife Jennie Lee, a formidable politician in her own right, and Roger Evans as 'Nye's man in the Valley' and friend from childhood Archie Lush who brings the Valleys to the stage by calling Nye 'butt'.

Performing the entire time in pyjamas, Bevan is shown being taken care of by the NHS itself in his dying days, telling the story of his life and the momentous events he took part in, through his dreams and memories. The lighting, music, sets of hospital beds and curtains, and colours bring it all to life brilliantly.

We see him as a boy confronting a bullying teacher with his classmates,

overcoming his stammer to become a great orator, learning of the miners' library in Tredegar and using it to learn about Marxism, getting elected to the town council and parliament, the war, serving in government, and the harrowing death of his father from 'black lung', a miners' disease.

I was also struck by another scene with his father when he takes Nye as a boy down the pit, where Nye himself would work for eight years, teaching Nye about mining and the coalseam which reminded me of similar stories my coalmining grandfather told me. Incidentally, he also used to tell me about twin brothers he had as a child who died before the NHS of something that probably could have been treated, and also seeing Bevan himself speak on the 1959 general election campaign trail.

At the coalface, Nye's father David talks about how "one blow" can bring down the whole seam if hit correctly, which is a great parallel of how one blow could bring down a government or change society like the creation of the NHS. Something miners understood from their lives, conditions, community and tradition of working-class struggle.

Nye took this into parliament with him when elected as MP and then



PHOTO: NATIONAL THEATRE

into government in 1945. He explicitly said he wanted to "Tredegarise" the country, basing the NHS on the miners' mutual aid society in Tredegar which provided free, quality healthcare to all, funded by contributions from miners' pay. The NHS, like Nye's life, was overwhelmingly influenced by working-class struggle and, while this is shown in shaping Nye, my one criticism would be it's not shown enough in the creation of the NHS. Well, that and having Neil Kinnock write a short bio of Nye in the programme!

Nye was flawed personally and politically. Jennie Lee's character hints at the former and scenes of when he 'filled the doctor's mouths with gold' show the latter. But Nye is a great show about his life and legacy, and ends by listing the enduring achievements of the NHS, which we need to fight for now more than ever and Nye is an inspirational reminder of why.

The show's run at the National Theatre in London and Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff are now over, but it can still be watched at cinemas via National Theatre live throughout June and I'd definitely recommend doing so.

- See nye.ntlive.com to find where its being shown
- For further reading see: 'The NHS at 75: can it survive?' at socialistparty.org.uk



Stop the 'warehousing' of disabled people!

CHARLEY LINCOLN
NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Discrimination practices towards disabled people, on the narrative of 'being less than, for doing less' is beyond antiquated, yet it seems to be a part of the culture in Westminster, going as far as to remove the position of disability minister.

Sunak fails to comprehend that under the Conservatives, life for disabled people has been decimated, while a flourishing blame culture exists as a 'get out of jail card' for government economic failure, constantly pinned on those who already have little and no voice. Given welfare reform changes, there is a very real danger that sick or disabled people should do indentured work in return for benefits. In the sixth-wealthiest country, the most vulnerable are guilt-tripped and bullied because we simply dare to exist and take space.

Earlier this year, the Guardian reported that Bristol council proposed a care policy to force disabled members living in the community into institutional homes if the cost of support was 'too much'. A policy to 'warehouse' disabled people, a nightmare where a bureaucrat deems your life too expensive, and you're forced to spend the rest of your days in an institution.

Disabled people have already felt

pressured to go into care due to the ever-increasing care contribution, a very real tax placed on them. In 2017, the Equality and Human Rights Commission warned that the NHS placed limits on funds for in-home living will see adults "interned" in care homes in a "potential breach of their human rights", insinuating that Bristol's care policy would be even more of a breach.

The funding of local authorities across the country has assaulted any social safety net, having the largest impact on marginalised communities. If not for the local action of the Bristol Reclaiming Independent Living (BRIL) campaign alongside other disability media outlets, who broke the story and managed to get it withdrawn. However this does not mean it is off the table.

We need to change how the system runs and who runs it. Take the NHS; the central government has chosen to use more private companies, but looking at our dental care we know the outcome of further pro-capitalist government solutions. The establishment is unwilling to learn anything from the slow sneaky selling of the NHS over the last ten years and more, serving to limit and restrict care to the working class. The UK establishment self-appointed task in undermining trust and consent demonstrating no respect for any social contracts or public pledges to the people.

Sexism in healthcare also to blame for birth trauma

I thought the (very good) short article responding to the birth trauma report ('Maternity services in crisis - For a fully funded, fully public NHS' in issue 1276) was missing something very important. The repeated maternity scandals and birth trauma report is not just down to the cuts - it's also a result of deeply embedded sexism in healthcare and wider society.

Women are still routinely treated as hysterical, told that basically every medical problem they have is anxiety, etc and are denied pain relief for procedures where pain relief should be considered essential.

This attitude is particularly bad during childbirth, and it is a massive contributor to birth trauma, but it's also something many women experience with regular health problems too. Similarly, racism is to blame for the significantly worse outcomes for black and Asian women in childbirth.

The capitalist parties might cynically use the 'gender health gap' to attack the NHS and justify privatisation, which we absolutely oppose. We also have to be clear that this isn't about attacking NHS workers. Many of them are working incredibly hard in terrible conditions to keep patients safe. But they aren't immune from sexist and racist attitudes

produced by capitalism.

A fully publicly funded NHS, under democratic workers' control, could root out racism and sexism from the NHS under trade union oversight. It could also provide patients with a means to challenge poor treatment.

Currently, women who experience this will have to battle through lengthy and complex complaints procedures, and if they're lucky receive a short written apology. A democratically controlled NHS would mean medical professionals who repeatedly treat patients poorly would be held to account.

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Starmer is no socialist!

Keir Starmer recently called himself a "progressive socialist".

I consider it a cheek for a man like him to deem himself a socialist! What we have seen throughout the last few years, is him and Rishi Sunak, and soon-to-be former prime minister put forward nearly identical policies and views on the issues of housing, shopping, student loans, and a plethora of other difficulties we face, because of the long-awaited removed Conservative Party.

Starmer is no socialist! He has shown us time in and time out that he is practically a Tory himself and a liar as much as Sunak. He is not a progressive socialist, he is in fact a regressive capitalist like the others who have been in power for decades.

If he really was a socialist, he would not have played his part in expelling Jeremy Corbyn other left-wing members from the Labour Party, or allowed the ex-Tory politicians to enter the party that once stood for the workers.

If Keir Starmer doesn't know what socialism is, what does that tell you about the possible lack of knowledge the politicians of Labour and others know either?

We need a mass party for the workers, the real people who run the nation.
JAMES GIRALDI
OXFORD

French snap election: Workers and youth unite against the bosses and the right

GAUCHE RÉVOLUTIONNAIRE
CWI IN FRANCE

The European elections were like a referendum against French president Emmanuel Macron. His party did not reach 15% of the vote, with 48.5% abstaining! The workers and youth who did vote, did so against his policies of continuous attacks on living and working conditions to defend the profits of the capitalists. Layoffs are multiplying, wages are not keeping up with price increases, and public services are being damaged. These policies lead to chaos in society and this is what has been massively rejected.

It is the far-right National Rally (RN) that has won again, coming first by some distance. Some of the anger of workers and youth was captured in the RN vote. This reflects the malaise that exists, and a reflection of the ongoing tensions and division that Macron is fostering. The vote for the far right has been reinforced by racist propaganda from the government and the media. The massive vote for the RN will not call into question the substance of Macron's anti-working class and anti-youth policies. The RN president, Jordan Bardella, and Marine Le Pen, the RN parliamentary leader and key public figure, are harmless to the interests of the ruling class that Macron defends. They are however enemies of workers and youth and are a danger to their rights. In reality, they are in favour of even more attacks, racist divisions and authoritarianism.

On the other hand, a clear vote to say 'No!' to Macron and the RN was expressed in the 2.5 million votes for the Manon Aubry list of left-wing France Insoumise (LFI). This is a million votes more than in 2019. More than 30% of young people voted for this list. The LFI list, with its campaign against budget cuts, against war and racism, came first in Lille, Lyon, Toulouse, Bordeaux, Grenoble and elsewhere. Thanks to the mobilisation in working-class neighbourhoods and large cities, it is hot on the heels of the RN, especially where it is structured and established.

Why did Macron dissolve the Assembly?

Macron is continuing his strategy of confrontation by invoking article 49.3 of the French constitution to bypass parliament. In the wake of the European election results he dissolved the National Assembly, triggering legislative elections on 30 June and 7 July. This is unheard of! Weakened, Macron is looking for a revival of legitimacy to continue his social counter-revolution (the ransacking of public services, destruction of unemployment insurance, the Labour Law 2 and the continuation of colonial domination in New Caledonia/Kanaky).

It is also an expression of the major political crisis impacting all capitalist government parties, confirmed in the fragmentation of the votes for Macron's Renaissance party between

The French Assembly
MINISTÈRE FRANÇAIS DE
L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR
ET DE LA RECHERCHE/CC

the right and the centre. The lists headed by François-Xavier Bellamy (The Republicans - LR) and Raphaël Glucksmann (Socialist Party - PS) both took votes from Macron. This coup de force, of calling snap-elections, allows Macron to shift the divide: it is either with Macron or with the RN. He is encouraging the idea of the 'republican arc', with all the benevolence of the PS in Glucksmann-Hollande. These emergency elections are also a way to try to isolate France Insoumise and more broadly to cut short the building of a combative opposition on the left.

Mobilise against the RN and Macron's policies!

A combative atmosphere has been rising since the announcement of the dissolution of the National Assembly, in the streets, against the RN and against Macron's policies. This atmosphere has its roots earlier, in the protests against the massacre in Gaza. This is essentially what the good result of the Manon Aubry LFI list reflects. A majority of the young people who voted, but also a section of workers, trade unionists, and those

who suffer from racism, mobilised for a clear vote to break with all these anti-social policies in the service of the capitalists, racists and warmongers. A combative opposition to the policies of the capitalists, against Macron and the RN, must emerge from this. The challenge is for the millions of workers and young people who want to stop them and who refuse the rotten society offered by capitalism, to organise and discuss the programme and the struggle necessary to fight Macron and the RN, including what sort of society we want to build in capitalism's place.

The numerous demonstrations since the results and Macron's dissolution of the National Assembly show the combative potential and politicisation that is developing. Since 9 June, thousands of people have joined La France Insoumise spontaneously, clicking via its website to organise by joining an 'action group'. This is very positive and shows the potential for a real mass party of workers and youth, standing

against capitalism and for a socialist society, free of war, exploitation, and all discrimination, especially racism and sexism.

Over the weekend of 15 and 16 June, demonstrations will take place, called by trade unions and left-wing parties, including France Insoumise, to say 'No!' to the RN but also no to Macron and his policies. We call for these protests to be escalated and for organising everywhere.

In the unions, we call for a day of strike action to be launched quickly against RN and Macron, who are the enemies of the workers.

Workers and youth, let's unite for our demands; against the RN, Macron! Against racism and capitalism!

Our camp, that of the workers, the youth, the majority of the population, needs to unite against the attacks of the government, against racism, against war and capitalism.

Just after the announcement of the dissolution, LFI called for several central demands to be organised. A return to retirement at 60; a freeze on the prices of energy and basic necessities; an increase in the minimum wage and indexation of wages to inflation; the rejection of austerity budgets, the cancellation of the unemployment insurance reform and the odious immigration law introduced by the coalition of Macronists, the right and the far-right; fight against racism; rejection of the war in Ukraine and an end to the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

On this basis, it would be possible to build a solid opposition to Macron and the RN and to build the mass protests necessary to defeat Macron and make the RN retreat by unmasking which side they are really on: that of the ultra-rich, such as the Macronists, the right and Hollande's PS.

We defend the unity of all those young people and workers who refuse the RN and Macron. To be strong, let's rally around workers' demands such as an increase in the minimum wage, the total nationalisation of energy in order to stop the rise in prices. These are the first steps that a government in the service of workers and youth should take. But an electoral victory on these bases will not be enough to guarantee these demands.

Hence the need to protest and organise. Such a common front on a clear basis would strengthen our camp.

Unity, the popular front, the union of the left - all these debates that are on the table must serve to strengthen our camp by allowing the widest-possible political action and organisation of workers and youth on a combative basis. An alliance on the left which would result in a revival of a liberal policy à la Hollande would, on the contrary, serve the interests of the capitalists.

In the legislative elections of 30 June and 7 July, in the protests, in the coming weeks, we propose to you to discuss and act with us. To put an end to the threat of the RN and pro-capitalist policies, it is against their system that we must fight. Gauche Révolutionnaire fights for a socialist society - the only one capable of ending exploitation, racism and wars.

• This article was written on 11 June. For further analysis of the European elections and its fallout see socialistworld.net



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Capitalism means war and climate catastrophe

FIGHT BACK WITH THE SOCIALISTS

ADAM GILLMAN

READING SOCIALIST PARTY AND TUSC CANDIDATE FOR READING CENTRAL

Over the last 8 months young people have been shocked at the brutality of the Israeli state being unleashed on the people of Gaza. Tens of thousands killed and many more injured, now facing famine and constant bombardment – many of them children.

It feels like all that's on offer in the future is endless war and instability. Young people, like myself, are frightened for our future because of the threat of climate catastrophe. Big oil companies are polluting more than ever. And neither Tory nor Labour politicians will take control and invest what is necessary to avert a crisis. All they do is blame working-class people for climate change rather than the bosses' profit-making polluting schemes.

And on top of that, we're facing the brunt of the cuts and the cost-of-living crisis, with sky-high fees, low pay and rip-off rents.

At the root of all of these issues facing young people is the capitalist system. To truly solve them we need socialist change to end war and climate change. Under capitalism the need to compete over profits mean oil companies will continue to pollute the planet. And as capitalism is increasingly fractured and crisis-ridden, we'll see more wars over who controls resources and gets to keep exploiting nature and the working class.

That is why socialism is the solution, a system where working-class people democratically control the huge wealth in society. If we nationalised the huge polluters like the oil companies, currently making record billions in profits, under democratic workers' control we could transition away from fossil fuels without workers losing their livelihoods. There would be an incentive to sustain the environment, not destroy it.

I'm 18 years old, possibly the youngest candidate in the general election. I'm standing as one of 40 candidates for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, because, like so many other young people, I want to fight for my future.

Join us in fighting back against not only war and climate change, but also against the cost-of-living and the housing crisis. We're fighting for a future for young people without debt, low pay, horrible conditions, and war.

Read inside: Young socialists fighting for public services (page 9), for free education (page 9) and against knife crime and oppression (page 10)



PHOTOS: MARY FINCH, HUGO PIERRE

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

