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the Socialist

Issue 1281

27 June - 4 July 2024

formerly **Militant**

Tories nearly out!

FOR THE WORKERS

NOT THE BOSSES

VOTE SOCIALIST

**Vote Trade Unionist
and Socialist Coalition**

**TUSC
AGAINST
CUTS**



Because Starmer's Labour doesn't fight for us

Put the champagne on ice!
Because by the time you
receive the next copy of
the Socialist, the Tories will
be out of office.

We can be as sure of that as the Tory insiders
placing bets on the date of the general election.

In the last days of Rome, they are rinsing the
country for everything they can - showing the
same disdain for working-class people as they
have for the last 14 years.

The workers' movement has to prepare now
for the new Starmer-led Labour government.
On 22 June, fighting trade union reps met for
the National Shop Stewards Network to dis-
cuss how (see pages 6-7).

By striking between 27 June and 2 July,

junior doctors have put their pay top of Keir
Starmer's very packed agenda. And from 8
July, Tata Steel workers in Port Talbot will
strike to defend hundreds of jobs, demanding
action from the new Labour government - na-
tionalisation is needed, with no compensa-
tion for the fat-cat Tata bosses.

Years of cuts and crisis

At this election, 40 candidates are standing

as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist
Coalition, including many Socialist Party
members campaigning for the socialist poli-
cies needed to transform working-class peo-
ple's lives after years of cutbacks and the
cost-of-living crisis, and a new mass party of
the working class.

Vote socialist on 4 July, celebrate seeing the
back of the Tories and get ready for the work-
ing-class fightback to continue on 5 July.

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Youth fighting for education & housing >>> p4

Workers fighting for our demands on Starmer >>> p6-7

NHS >>> p8-9

Are the Greens an alternative? >>> p13

VOTE SOCIALIST ON 4 JULY – YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Campaigning and canvassing in the general election, fighting for socialist ideas, Socialist Party members engage in thousands of discussions with working-class people. Here are just some of the questions that come up, and our responses.

Aren't all politicians the same?

What unites pro-capitalist politicians is that, while serving their own petty interests, they represent the interests of big business, not the millions who are struggling to get by. They might have tiny policy differences on how to manage cuts and attack the working class. But ultimately all the main parties tell us we need to accept pay cuts, to lose our jobs, pay more for services and so on, so that the rich can get richer. No wonder then that working-class people are losing trust in all the establishment parties. Starmer's Labour is set to win the election not by being popular, but just by not being the hated Tories.

The Socialist Party says all MPs should be subject to the right of recall by their constituents at any time. That way we could really hold them to account, not just every five years. Socialist Party members stand and pledge to only receive a worker's wage, not the inflated MPs salary. That way, like Militant-supporting MPs in the past, they know what its like to struggle with the true cost of living. We need to draw together workers, young people and anti-war and community campaigners to challenge the pro-capitalist parties to offer an anti-austerity and anti-war alternative.

BERKAY KARTAV

Socialist Party members stand and pledge to only receive a worker's wage, not the inflated MPs salary



Socialist Party members are standing in the general election as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, which is standing 40 candidates (see right). Socialist Party members campaign for:

- **Fully publicly fund the NHS and other public services.** Stop and reverse privatisation
- **Mass council house building. Rent control now.** Don't make workers pay for the housing crisis – reject rent and service charge increases.
- **Stop the slaughter in Gaza. No to war!** For mass trade union action to stop arming the Israeli state
- **Renationalise rail, mail, energy, water and steel.** And other privatised utilities, under democratic workers' control
- **For real workers' rights. For inflation-proof pay rises.** For a £15 an hour minimum wage. Repeal the anti-trade union laws. Ban zero-hour contracts and fire and rehire
- **Free education and training. Scrap tuition fees.** Grants not loans - for college and university. Votes at 16
- **Combat climate change.** For a free-to-use, expanded, renationalised public transport system. Don't make workers pay for the bosses' climate crisis
- **Fight for socialist change. Take the wealth of the 1%.** Run society in the interests of the many not the few

To see more of what we fight for read the What We Stand For column on page 15 and visit www.socialistparty.org.uk/WWSF to read in more depth.

You're not going to win, what's the point in voting for you?

For every Socialist Party member standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), the election is not the end in itself. On 5 July there will be a likely Starmer-led government. This government will come to power with massive crises facing working-class people. We have been campaigning in this election to help build campaigns among trade unionists and community members for the battles ahead. We have campaigned to make elections about the direct issues facing working people and built campaigns around them. When Socialist Party member and TUSC council candidate Nadia Ditta stood for the Bevois ward in Southampton earlier this year, the community was able to use the election campaign as a platform to

successfully stop the closure of a local playground (see 'Southampton Venny victory' at socialistparty.org.uk). In many areas of the country, Socialist Party members are standing and building a launchpad for further campaigns around housing, pay, council cuts, and more over the summer. Labour are on course to easily win the election, but they won't get a free ride in government. The working class in Britain needs its own party, armed with socialist policies. Every vote for anti-cuts, anti-war socialist candidates is a message to the next government that we will keep fighting for the change we need. Showing them that they cannot expect to come to power without such a fight will be vital to arm the workers' movement for the battles ahead.

CALLUM JOYCE

Every vote for anti-cuts, anti-war socialist candidates is a message to the next government that we will keep fighting for the change we need



What good would one socialist MP do?

There are a great many members of parliament who push the interests of big business, and make sure that its voice is heard loud and clear. The working class - potentially the most powerful force in society - needs the same. A socialist MP would use parliament as a platform to make sure that the voice of working-class people is there and support for their struggles spread. They could provide a pole of attraction around which different sections of working-class people in struggle - workers on strike, community campaigns, etc - could be drawn together and strengthened.

Militant, the forerunner of the Socialist Party, had three MPs in the 1980s and they played such a role. One of them, Terry Fields, was described even by The Times as "a class warrior to his fingertips". Terry and other Militant-supporting MPs used their positions in parliament as a platform for the mass working-class struggles that took place with Liverpool council between 1983-87, winning millions of pounds of funding back for the city, and during the epic Militant-led anti-poll tax struggle that ultimately brought down Thatcher. Terry went to prison for 60

days in 1991 rather than pay Thatcher's anti-working-class poll tax. And through that campaign and spread the mass non-payment campaign. A socialist MP now could play the same role Militant MPs did - use parliament as a platform to provide a voice for working-class struggles. Speaking up for workers on strike for better pay, students fighting back against tuition fees and campaigners against the cuts. Drawing together these struggles and exposing the rotten capitalist system as the cause of working-class misery.

ALEX SMITH

Join the fightback JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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



A socialist MP would use parliament as a platform to make sure that the voice of working-class people is there and support for their struggles spread.

Dave Nellist (right) was, alongside Terry, one of the Militant MPs in the 1980s who used the platform in parliament to further working-class struggle. He is the chair of TUSC and is standing in Coventry East

DAVE GORTON



A fully funded NHS, free education and a mass council house building programme would be great, but the country can't afford it.

Don't we have to wait for economic growth first?

Working-class people can't afford to wait. And whether the economy is growing or not, the only way to win a bigger share of the wealth in the form of wages or services is to fight the capitalist bosses for it. The British economy has grown slightly these past few months but have your wages gone up with inflation? Capitalism creates fat cats at the top and poverty at the bottom and, globally, the number at the top is ever diminishing whilst there are billions of us at the bottom. Let's have a system for the billions, not the billionaires! A 20% wealth tax on the top 350 people on the Sunday Times Rich List could raise £159 billion. Some people say the rich will just move their money to other countries but we say bring the banks into genuine public ownership before they get a chance!

Let's have some growth that improves our lives, instead of just growing the balance sheets of the super-rich

And what happens when public services are sold off? Do you know how much debt Thames Water had before it was privatised? £0. And now? £14.7 billion. When we run utilities for profit, the shareholders fill their own pockets at our expense. So, we don't just want a wealth tax, we need to renationalise public services too. Let's have some growth that improves our lives, instead of just growing the balance sheets of the super-rich.

ELLEN KENYON PEERS

Person 1: The planet's burning – the most important thing in this election is stopping climate change what would you do?

Person 2: I work in an oil refinery, is 'net zero' going to mean my bills going up, having to buy a new car and losing my job?

The Socialist Party agrees that climate change is one of the biggest challenges facing us all. But with the world's wealth and resources in the hands of a tiny super-rich minority, the bosses will attempt to make us pay. Measures like ULEZ and other regressive taxes hit workers not the bosses. None of our green policies would be paid for by ordinary workers. We say make the super-rich mega-polluters pay! We would implement a democratically planned, expanded, free-to-use, publicly owned transport system. We would retrofit and insulate existing housing stock with the latest carbon-saving technology, as well as launching a mass programme of council-house building to the highest environmental standards. These measures would create millions of new well-paid green jobs, implemented with the democratic oversight of the trade unions. The resources required to shift from fossil fuels

to renewable energy can only come from nationalising the commanding heights of the economy under democratic workers' control. Fat-cat bosses don't deserve a penny, we say compensation only paid on the basis of proven need. As part of a democratic socialist plan, the massive wealth generated by the working class could be invested in a major switch to clean, green energy, without any loss of jobs, pay or conditions. The main driver of climate change is capitalism, a system which values private profit over public good – it produces waste and pollution making profits for the super-rich, while billions live in poverty. We appeal to workers across the world, to join us in fighting for socialist change so the needs of all can be met on an environmentally sustainable basis.

OSCAR PARRY

None of our green policies would be paid for by ordinary workers. We say make the super-rich mega-polluters pay!

- The full list of TUSC 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 Vidal
- 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

Don't we just need the rich to pay a bit more tax?

It's outrageous that while working-class people struggle, with the lowest paid paying even more because of Jeremy Hunt's tax threshold freezes, the super-rich pay barely a morsel from their massive wealth. A tax system placing the burden on the rich not the working-class is something we're in favour of. And working-class struggle can force them to cough up a bit more cash in the short term if they feel threatened enough. But the bosses have at their disposal a biased justice system, countless lawyers and accountants, not to mention politicians that have been showered with lavish donations and services. Any attempt to make them pay for the goods and services working-class

people need would be met with massive opposition and even more shady schemes to move wealth and income to bank accounts all round the world. We can take the wealth and resources that the bosses control at the moment to generate massive profits for a few at the top of society, into the hands of the working-class majority. We could democratically plan society on the basis of what we need – you can't control what you don't own. To be able to use it we would need to take the economic levers out of their hands – to nationalise under democratic workers' control the banks and big businesses – to plan investment and production for need not greed.

MARK BEST

We can take the wealth and resources that the bosses control, into the hands of the working-class majority



I think Nigel Farage has a point - don't we just need to stop immigration to improve services and access to housing?

We are fighting urgently for a mass united struggle – of all working-class people – for fully funded public services, NHS and decent jobs and housing for all.



Our message to the likes of Nigel Farage, a former investment banker: Stop blaming migrants for the crisis in Britain - a crisis of privatisation, low pay and housing shortages, created by the ruthless profit-hungry capitalist system you support. To the big-business capitalist bosses we say: stop seeking ever-cheaper labour, exploiting migrant workers less likely to be organised in trade unions and who you see as easier to bully and intimidate - pushing down all our wages. It is not exploited workers who gain from this 'race to the bottom', it's the bosses! There's no question public services are crumbling after years of underfunding and privatisation. We say: fully fund services, build council homes and pay decent wages to all workers - make the super-rich pay. We are fighting urgently for a mass united struggle – of all working-class people – for fully funded public services, NHS and decent jobs and housing for all. We are fighting for a socialist world where wealth and resources can be harnessed to meet the needs of the majority through democratic workers' control and planning.

LENNY SHAIL

- 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

the Socialist

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DO YOU HAVE NEWS FOR US?

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

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

CONTACT US

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

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

Young Socialists

We need high-quality, genuinely affordable housing

RAE COX

OXFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

Young workers face enormous challenges accessing the basics in life, and nowhere is this more obvious than with housing. In Oxford, where I live, median house prices are over 12 times higher than median annual incomes, that's nearly 50% higher than the average for England and Wales.

So for young workers, renting is our only option, if we can even get this. In an ongoing cost-of-living crisis, many are unable to meet the strenuous reference checks.

Nearly 1 in 2 men, and just under 1 in 3 women aged 25 still live with their parents. Even those renters lucky enough to have a guarantor, spend on average 42% of their income on rent, jumping to 72% in London.

But what do young workers get for jumping through these hurdles and hoops? In many cases, black mould, rats, structural damage, and battles for our deposits.



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

Young Socialists

Fight for free, high-quality education

SAM HEY

MANCHESTER AND SALFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

The marketisation of education is a key issue that we must fight against. From skeletal school budgets, and exploiting apprenticeship schemes, to universities filling funding gaps with lucrative contracts with arms companies. The Tories have left no stone unturned pushing Britain's education system to its limits.

How can we expect teachers to teach under the conditions they're working in? They're overworked and underpaid.

Almost half of teachers report their workload to be unmanageable most or all of the time. One in six teachers plan to quit in the next two years, while half of support staff intend to leave within five years.

With 80% of teachers saying that excessive workload is a barrier to getting the right help for pupils, it is clear that the Tory government is failing. To begin fixing our education system, it is clear that working conditions need to improve.

Strike action has been successful in winning pay rises for staff, but the government refused to fund them, forcing schools that are

already financially stretched thin to cut costs further. And still, workers are paid less than what they need. All this while the dangerous Raac concrete scandal has been a physical manifestation that underfunding is causing our education system to crumble.

What's at the end of a young person's educational journey? A series of dire opportunities. One option is attempting the increasingly competitive scramble for university places, with students who attend state-run schools starting on the back foot compared to private schools, left with a lifetime of student debt.

Another is learning on the job with an apprenticeship, a popular option with large businesses who use it as an opportunity to exploit the lower apprenticeship wage. In their first year, an apprentice can earn as little as £6.40 an hour.

The Socialist Party is fighting for free education and training in this election, by standing candidates as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

We say:

- **Scrap tuition fees, and cancel all student debt**
- **Living grants, not loans, throughout college and university**
- **Well-paid apprenticeships and training schemes, with a decent job guaranteed at the end, for all who want it**
- **Access and opportunity for all - open new leisure centres, libraries, youth clubs, sports facilities, and careers services for school and college leavers, free at the point of use**
- **For a fully funded, democratically run education system - kick big business out**

Reading - people want to hear what socialists say on housing, services, and council tax



Adam Gillman (centre) PHOTO: READING SP

SPHERE SYSTEM

READING SOCIALIST PARTY

Adam Gillman is the second youngest candidate anywhere in the country. He's standing for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in Reading Central. Supporters from Oxford, Guildford, and Aldershot met up with Reading campaigners for a day of action on 23 June.

A large number of people we spoke to focused on housing as a key concern. Between predatory landlords and a lack of council housing, this comes as little surprise.

Another concern was over council services, especially waste collection, which is not sufficient. Given the recent rise in council tax, and further budget cuts, this is likely to get worse

In 2023, the chair of the Association of Chief Environmental Health Officers said: "There are some living conditions today that are as poor as we would have found in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s. It's shameful to feel that there are still people living in terrible conditions in 2023."

So how do we escape the crisis? Some will be hoping that the incoming Labour party will offer solutions.

But Keir Starmer has keenly shown, by scrapping many of the Jeremy Corbyn-era's rental and housing reforms, that Labour is firmly a capitalist party. We need a new voice, for the working class and the trade unions, to fight for rent controls and widescale council house building, we need a new mass workers' party.

But even this will only get us so far. In a capitalist society, where housing is seen as a source of profit first, and somewhere to live second, workers will always eventually be squeezed for higher rents and lower maintenance.

The fight for a socialist society, where the giant construction house building companies are nationalised, under the democratic control of the working class, is the alternative to this fundamental flaw - where housing is not a source of profit, but a place to live.

We demand:

- **Rent control now - take on dodgy landlords and slum HMOs**
- **A mass council house building programme to end homelessness, and provide genuinely affordable homes for all**

without change.

On the issue of housing, we raised the building of high-quality council housing, and introducing rent control. We also raised that Labour's economic policies match the current Tory line.

And Labour councils have been setting cuts budgets, including in Reading, giving an idea of what we can expect from a Labour government.

On the day, we met four new people interested in joining the Socialist Party, while other people took an interest in our leaflets, and our public meeting, coming just before the election.

● *Adam Gillman is the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate in Reading Central*

Ready to fight for workers and youth beyond 4 July?

Take your place in the Socialist Party

SARAH SACHS-ELDRIDGE

SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

When you join the Socialist Party you join the fight to end the cost-of-living crisis, NHS crisis, war, climate catastrophe - and the profit-before-all-else capitalist system lying behind them.

The election leaflets of our candidates, standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, put it clearly: "Fight for socialist change. Take the wealth off the 1%. Run society in the interests of the many not the few".

In joining the Socialist Party you join a party with a record of organising for the interests of the working class. That includes twice leading mass organised workers' action that defeated Margaret Thatcher. First in Liverpool City Council 1983-85, winning funding for 5,000 council homes, nurseries, and apprenticeships off the Tories; and against the Tories' hated and unfair poll tax, reducing the so-called Iron Lady, Margaret Thatcher, to iron filings.

Our party aims to bring together workers in struggle at every level - local community campaigns against cuts, student action against campus attacks, fighting discrimination, and trade union organising.

Socialist Party candidates are not unique in opposing the slaughter in Gaza, but we call for - and campaign for - "mass trade union action to stop arming the Israeli state".

The trade unions, the main mass organisations of the working class, have enormous potential strength, which needs to be at the heart of the movement to stop war.

Austerity represents a transfer of wealth from the working class to the rich. Millions will be relieved when the Tories get booted out.

But the Labour manifesto makes it clear that Starmer's party has no alternative, for example, to the local government austerity crisis. It only commits to giving councils "multi-year funding settlements and end[ing] wasteful competitive bidding".

Local government is about jobs and public services, including youth services, domestic violence refuges, social care, and special education needs. It's about homes and homelessness.

At the recent conference of Unison, the biggest local government union, the



leadership failed to offer a strategy to fight back in this area.

But the Socialist Party stepped up with the call for 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.

Fighting to realise this strategy - in the workplaces and communities ravaged by cuts and ready for change - will be a key part of what you will be involved in as a member of the Socialist Party.

Our ideas are the product of fighting to absorb the lessons of history and of our participation in the struggles of workers and young people. We do this collectively when we meet as local branches, trade union activists, and nationally - and internationally as part of the Committee for a Workers' International.

Young people have been at the sharp end of Tory attacks. But Labour has dropped its commitment to free education. No new money is promised for training, despite the 350 richest individuals and families in the country holding a combined wealth of £795 billion - a sum larger than the annual GDP of Poland.

In 1997, when student fees were introduced by the New Labour government, Socialist Party student members helped build a mass movement against tuition fees, including education strikes.

If you are a young person, joining the Socialist Party means getting active on campus, college, or at work, to fight for young people to get organised.

Taking the wealth off the 1% starts with the call for nationalisation of the likes of Royal Mail, transport, water, and other utilities, but also the main industries in the economy including steel, and the banks - with no compensation to those fat cats and under democratic working-class control.

In this rich country, everyone should be able to afford a warm home, have a well-paid job, access free education and health, while protecting our environment.

As Socialist Party members, campaigning for nationalisation allows us to explain the first steps towards that and the completely different way of running society we need, democratically planned and organised to meet the needs of the 99% and the environment, not the profits of the 1%.

And as Socialist Party members we fight for the organisation of the working class that can advance all these demands - campaigning trade unions but also a new mass workers' party in which we will unite behind a common socialist programme to end the rule of the rich. That will be necessary also to stop Farage and Co presenting their dead-end divisive ideas as a voice for the working class.

We hope this helps you see how your place is in the Socialist Party - join us!

Scan here:



Your donations fund socialist election stand

Thank you for your donations. We have reached the minimum needed to fund over 30 Socialist Party candidates. We have produced leaflets, posters, and more outlining the programme needed for working-class people.

We smashed our original £50,000 target! Whatever we raise on top enables us to present the biggest and boldest possible socialist alternative to the establishment parties. In addition to the £80,106 donations received, we have an extra £10,972 in pledges. The fantastic response to our election appeal demonstrates the enthusiasm for our stand.

Keir Starmer's Labour proves time and again that it represents big business, not the working class. We need our own voice in this election, and beyond.

Socialist Party members are out campaigning, building support for socialist ideas. We have public meetings across the country, we're participating in anti-war demonstrations, anti-cuts campaigns, and strikes - join us and donate.

- **Donate - socialistparty.org.uk/donation**
- **Pledges to be made by the end of June, and paid by the end of July**

£80,106

£91,078

£100,000

NSSN conference 2024

WE HAVE OUR DEMANDS OF STARMER – AND WE NEED TO FIGHT FOR THEM

PAULA MITCHELL

SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The conference of the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) on 22 June was no routine affair. It took place just twelve days before what is expected to be a historic defeat for the oldest capitalist party in the world in the general election.

The conference was preparation for what a Starmer-led Labour government will mean for the working class. Speakers were invited from the Labour Party, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), Green Party, Workers' Party,

Communist Party, and also Jeremy Corbyn. TUSC and the Greens sent speakers, enabling a real discussion about how a workers' voice can be built politically as well as industrially.

NSSN conference has always been a platform for national and local disputes, to build solidarity and assist in working out what needs to be done. This year was no exception, with contributors from many key strikes. And of course those two things are not separate – many of those disputes, most notably the junior doctors and Tata Steel, themselves put immediate demands on an incoming Starmer-led Labour government.

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NSSN bulletin
shopstewards.net

A workers' manifesto

As NSSN chair Rob Williams explained when he opened up: "Why is it that junior doctors are taking action now? To put demands on what is likely to be a Labour government.

"The Tories' impending defeat is a victory for trade unionists. It's a decisive answer to the pessimists in 2019 who predicted years of right-wing Tory ascendancy. Workers reacted to that Tory victory with a historic strike wave."

Rob cautioned: "We will celebrate but also we have a responsibility. We cannot ignore where Starmer's programme starts from. As Rachel Reeves said, it's the 'natural party of employers'."

The NSSN steering committee proposed a list of demands to form a workers' manifesto (see opposite). Rob proposed, and conference agreed, to add a demand for emergency council funding. Speaking from the floor, Gary Freeman, delegate from Nottinghamshire, Mansfield and Nottingham TUC, took up this demand, highlighting the horrific cuts in Nottingham, intensified under the 'Section 114' notice.

Regarding two of the most high-profile issues Starmer will face immediately, Rob said: "We call for Starmer to intervene – to nationalise steel, to nationalise Royal Mail. Don't allow the parasites to make more money at the expense of workers." Rob also argued that we cannot ignore Labour's position on Gaza.

As junior doctors prepare for national strike action in the run-up to election day, a message was read out from a Liverpool junior doctor: "The health service has been undermined by an unprecedented decade of underfunding. The Tory government

won't appropriately pay us. Now we have to ask Keir Starmer – what will your government do?"

Unite national lead officer Onay Kasab brought solidarity greetings from general secretary Sharon Graham. Kaz reported on the inspiring wins of Unite members since August 2021: £430 million won in increased wages; 1,250 disputes, with over 200,000 workers taking action, over 80% of them wins. Kaz said: "Our union is the only affiliated union that refused to back the Labour manifesto – as Sharon described it, 'more holes than Swiss cheese'."

President of the BFAWU bakers' union, Ian Hodson, lambasted Labour's manifesto. He explained some of the demands in the 'Bakers Dozen' manifesto, including £15-an-hour minimum wage and workers' rights from day one. The bakers' union disaffiliated from Labour in 2021. Pointing to the risk of the far-right, Ian said on 5 July we have to "come together."

Probation officers' union Napo general secretary Ian Lawrence sent a message of support, brought by national official Annoesjka Valent. Annoesjka explained Napo's demands, which include emergency funding for probation and family courts, due to the extreme workloads.

Unfortunately, the official speaker from rail union RMT, Jared Wood, was unable to attend due to personal reasons, but RMT members John and Ted spoke from the floor arguing for the need for rail to be nationalised immediately not as franchises expire, and for freight to be nationalised too. They pointed out that it was a serious plan of strike action that had enabled RMT members on London Underground to win an extra £30 million from London Labour mayor Sadiq Khan.



From left to right: Rob Williams, Dave Nellist, Annoesjka Valent, Ian Hodson and Katrine Williams PHOTO: SENAN

Tata Steel

Unite national lead officer Onay Kasab highlighted the importance of the struggle against Tata Steel, saying: "This is what happens when a foundation industry is run by a private multinational company". He announced that Unite members will be starting indefinite strike action on 8 July (see page 11).

Tata Steel Unite rep Jason Wyatt spoke to a standing ovation. When he started in the industry 25 years ago it was seen as a job for life – but after years of cuts and closures, "we're standing on a precipice". He highlighted the catalogue of examples

of communities left in destitution following the destruction of heavy industry.

Jason detailed how in response to appeals from the bosses to help save the plant, the workers had given up pay, bonuses, and pensions worth more than £2 billion. And now they're asked to pay with their jobs and their kids' jobs.

Yet in 2022-23 Tata Steel had reserves of £1.6 billion and paid out dividends to shareholders of £1.4 billion!

Alec Thraves, a delegate from Swansea trades council, argued from the floor that the only serious solution to avoid devastation is nationalisation of Tata.



Jason Wyatt PHOTO: MARY FINCH

Strikes

● Ebrima, Unite rep at the Royal London Hospital, reported on the campaign of strike action and protests conducted by workers at Barts NHS trust in east London – resulting in a new offer which members are currently balloting on.

● A group of Unite members from the only tractor plant in the UK, in Basildon, were represented by Pat, who reported on their 15 days of strike action over pay – while the boss gets £11 million!

● Charlie spoke about the ongoing battle of Unite members at Sanctuary, one of the biggest housing associations in the UK, where workers voted 100% for strike action for the first time in the organisation's history.



Ebrima PHOTO: DAVE GORTON



PHOTO: MARY FINCH

The fight for a workers' political voice

Former Labour MP, national chair of TUSC, and candidate for Coventry East, Dave Nellist argued: "The general election takes us into a new situation."

Dave asked: "How will unions deal with a Labour government with a three-figure majority, that prioritises the views of business, and is funded by billionaires? Campaigns and pressure outside parliament are key but it's going to need a political wing – like the 'parliamentary wing' of the anti-poll tax movement in the 1980s."

Dave said: "It would have been better if that political wing had developed before we got to the election. TUSC has consistently argued that trade unions should call a conference to discuss a workers' agenda and take necessary steps to establish a political alternative. Like Bob Crow did with two conferences in 2009, which brought together trade union and socialist activists from within and outside the Labour Party under the authority of a respected left trade union leader. That led to a workers' challenge in the euro elections and then TUSC itself."

Dave drew on the example of the developments at the end of the 19th century. Then, discussion in the trade unions and with socialist organisations led, in February 1900, to the establishment of the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) and the election of two MPs. Then developing structures as a distinct party meant that in the 1906 election, which saw a Liberal Party landslide, the LRC won 29 MPs. Working with the pressure of a movement outside won a series of concessions from that government.

In 2024, it is possible that Jeremy Corbyn and one or two other

independents will win, some Labour lefts will have survived, and there could be two or three Green MPs – that could be the kernel of a new workers' party.

Robert Magowan from the Green Party argued that the Green's manifesto is a manifesto for workers. It includes demands such as repeal of all anti-union legislation and nationalisation of energy and steel, and of Royal Mail "down the line". He pointed to the party's democratic structures, which he said is how £15 an hour became part of their manifesto. He admitted that the party does not have its origins in the trade unions but said that its 800 councillors back workers in struggle.

Speaking from the floor, TUSC candidate for Walthamstow Nancy Taaffe welcomed that the Greens had now caught up with the demands for nationalisation that were popularised by Jeremy Corbyn – but why did they stand against Corbyn?

What matters, she explained, is not just words but deeds. The record of the Greens in Scotland, Bristol and Brighton is of voting for cuts. "Workers reps should not implement cuts". She also explained that to develop working-class political representation, the working class has to exert its power over any new formation – for there to be an intrinsic link between the picket line and the political representatives; between councillors and the workers, as had happened when socialists led Liverpool City Council in the 1980s. There is no mechanism in the Green Party for the working class to exert control.

Nadia Ditta, who had been a TUSC candidate in Southampton council elections, explained how their campaign "made history" winning a big vote for a socialist alternative. TUSC candidate in Southgate and Wood Green, Karl Vidol, explained why he had stepped up as

Unions need to fight

Speaking in a personal capacity, newly elected vice president of Public and Commercial Services union PCS, Dave Semple, outlined the three battles faced by members: against the government, for a union leadership that is up to the challenges ahead, and for independent working-class political representation. He highlighted the role PCS played in 2011, leading the way in the fight against austerity, as an example of what role a fighting union could play now. He posed the question: "If the Labour Party doesn't speak for

us – who will?" That debate must be held throughout the union: "we need an independent political voice."

Also speaking in a personal capacity, **Unison National Executive Council (NEC) member April Ashley** spoke from the floor, hot from the debates at Unison conference – where the right-wing leadership blocked discussion about what's needed to fight council cuts. But even Starmer-supporting general secretary Christina McAnea, who just calls for everyone to vote Labour, had to admit that most members don't trust Starmer. She might want a 'honeymoon' for Starmer, but especially on local government pay, April

said, "we want to fight."

Unison rep Eve Miller made the point regarding NHS workers: "The Labour government won't do anything for us unless we put our demands forward clearly and back it up with action."

Recently elected **University and College Union NEC member Duncan Moore** argued (in a personal capacity): "We can't wait for Starmer. We'll negotiate – but we need a strike ballot in our back pocket". Communication Workers Union **CWU member Jordan** argued that the leadership must not backtrack on the demand for nationalisation of Royal Mail.



Eve Miller PHOTO: IAN PATTISON



April Ashley PHOTO: IAN PATTISON



Nadia Ditta PHOTO: IAN PATTISON

A workers' manifesto

- 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
- Renationalise Royal Mail, BT, buses, energy and utility companies, steel. Immediate renationalisation of the railways, rather than waiting for franchises to expire
- End privatisation in the NHS and our public services
- A real inflation-proof pay rise for workers, that protects our living standards
- A £15-an-hour minimum wage with no age exemptions

- End 'fire and rehire' and zero-hour contracts
- Workers' rights from day one of employment

● An emergency funding grant for local authorities to prevent the current and pending Tory council cuts onslaught, ensuring the withdrawal of Section 114 notices. This would be the first step in restoring the 40% cut from council budgets since 2010

The NSSN believes it is essential that the trade unions fight for the implementation of policies in the interests of workers, and will be hosting a rally at the start of this year's TUC Congress, in Brighton on Sunday 8 September at the Old Ship Hotel.

JON DALE
RETIRED DOCTOR, MANSFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

Long telephone queues for GP appointments. Agonising waits for ambulances. Hours in pain and discomfort in A&E waiting rooms. Months waiting anxiously for outpatient appointments, tests, treatments, operations.

Everywhere you look, the NHS is struggling to meet local communities' needs. Years of austerity, inequality and an ageing population mean more health care is needed than ever.

Staffing crisis

NHS staff work long exhausting shifts, often without proper breaks. The Tories blame strikes for record waiting lists, but skeleton staff levels maintaining essential services on strike days were often higher than on non-strike days!

No wonder staff burnout is a growing problem.

New General Medical Council research estimates 96,000 doctors currently practising in the UK say they are 'very' or 'fairly likely' to move abroad in the next 12 months, especially recently qualified doctors. The most common reasons given were "feeling undervalued professionally", "demands of role impacting well-being", and "the current system presents too many barriers to patient care".

Nearly 43,000 nurses aged under 50 left the profession between 2018 and 2022 (Royal College of Nursing figures). Reasons included inadequate pay, insufficient staffing to ensure patient safety, harassment and discrimination in the workplace, a lack of career progression and unsafe working conditions.

Likewise, Chartered Society of Physiotherapists analysis warns that 15% of physiotherapy staff leave the NHS each year, almost half of them within five years of qualifying.

All health workers face these same pressures. Agency spending to fill some gaps costs £3.2 billion a year, the equivalent of an extra 31,000 full-time nurses.

Making this staffing crisis even worse is NHS England's £4.5 billion deficit this year.

A leaked email to NHS chief executives in south west London instructed them to consider "agency restrictions/ban... a non-essential training freeze... consider what services should be stopped or consolidated."

Labour's solution? "... Incentivising staff to carry out additional appointments out of hours." When are staff supposed to rest, spend time with family and friends, recharge their batteries for their next shifts - or even catch up on housework? Burnout looks set to grow if shadow health secretary Wes Streeting pushes this through.

He insulted all NHS workers, saying: "I think what I find frustrating is the poor planning ahead of winter - the fact that we now see not just crises in winter but all year round... There shouldn't be an assumption that, every time the NHS runs into winter, system leaders can point to the pressures and just say: 'We need more money right now.'"

Not a word about the desperate shortage of money and staff all year round, or health workers' superhuman efforts to keep services going despite this! Health trade unions will need to prepare for future industrial action, as there has been under the Tories.

WHAT'S NEEDED TO SAVE OUR NHS?

Labour claims it will train and recruit more staff, but without higher pay or improved working conditions to retain existing staff. That would be the quickest way to cut patients' suffering on waiting lists.

The Socialist Party supports trade union struggle for:

- Restoration of pay to 2010 levels
- £15-an-hour minimum for the lowest paid
- All outsourced workers brought back into the NHS
- Pay increases linked to inflation
- Abolish student fees and restore bursaries, at a living level
- Expand free training for all health professions
- Fully fund the NHS, make the super-rich pay

Cheap labour

There is one way to recruit more staff with the same inadequate budget - pay them less! And that is already happening. A trend in recent years has been to recruit less-qualified staff, not to assist highly trained and experienced professionals but to replace them.

Leicester Health Care Assistants have been on strike. Paid in Band 2, just one penny an hour above the minimum wage, they have performed Band 3 clinical duties for years and are demanding recognition of this. Similar issues exist around the country.

Over 4,000 medical associates have been appointed, mostly in general practice, anaesthetics and surgery. They are science graduates given a two-year training, as opposed to five years as a medical student followed by another 5-12 years training as a junior doctor.

Paid significantly more than junior doctors, but significantly less than consultants and GPs, it's becoming increasingly hard for junior doctors to find posts as employers take on medical associates instead.

Jobs newly qualified GPs want "are not there for them", said NHS England's national director of primary care. No wonder so many are thinking of emigrating.

Incredibly, there are junior doctors facing unemployment. 700 applied for - but could not get - anaesthetic training posts last year. Despite a massive shortage of consultant anaesthetists, registrar training posts have been frozen. After junior doctors' and consultants' strikes last year, a new grassroots campaigning organisation, Anaesthetists United, emerged and has rapidly grown within the Royal College of Anaesthetists.

The Fire Brigades Union conference voted to oppose the use of medical associates at its recent conference, highlighting risks to patient safety from deregulation and deskilling.

But Labour's silence shows they will stick to this Tory path. Their manifesto pledge to recruit "8,500 mental health staff" does not say they will be fully trained mental health specialists.

Unions should demand good training and professional support for associates with a career path for



progression, but with clear limits of responsibility. They should not be misused by employers as cheap substitutes for qualified staff.

In 2012 the Thatcherite 'free market' Institute of Economic Affairs wrote: "The compulsory licensing of medical professionals should be abolished. Anyone should be at liberty to practice as a doctor or nurse, with patients relying on brand names or competing voluntary associations to ensure quality. Ending current restrictive practices is essential to enable private firms to increase productivity in the sector."

A BBC investigation in 2022 exposed this practice. For every 2,000 registered patients, the national average is the equivalent of 1.2 full-time GPs. But at Operose-owned practices

the average was a little over 0.6 full-time equivalent GPs. Operose employed six times as many Physician Associates as the NHS average.

Operose, a subsidiary of US health giant Centene, sold its 60 practices last year to HCRG Care Group, formerly known as Virgin Care. NHS services are becoming commodities, bought and sold for profit by huge corporations.

The Socialist Party says: Patients before profits! Kick all private companies out of the NHS!

Private hospitals

Despite Labour's last conference voting that "Under Labour the NHS is not for sale", this is not in its manifesto. Wes Streeting makes no secret

of his intention to continue blurring the lines between public and private health services.

This has been well-received by some. OPD Group donated £48,000 to his office. OPD is "controlled by" Peter Hearn, whose firms help "private healthcare providers recruit healthcare professionals".

Streeting also accepted £65,000 from John Armitage, a hedge fund manager with over \$500 million invested in UnitedHealth, one of the largest private health insurers in the world.

"Labour will use spare capacity in the independent sector to ensure patients are diagnosed and treated more quickly," says its manifesto. However, the 'independent' sector relies on NHS-trained nurses, radiographers,

physios, doctors and other health professionals.

Some work part-time in both sectors, so more private hospital work could mean less time in NHS hospitals.

Eye surgery is a warning of what will happen. NHS spending on cataract surgery has doubled in five years, with 60% now paid to the private sector.

The five biggest companies receiving this money have opened 101 more eye clinics in the past five years and now have 126 in England, making over £100 million pre-tax profits in 2022. SpaMedica alone made £72 million.

SpaMedica's European parent company, Veonet, was sold in 2022 by one private equity fund (Nordic Capital)

to another (PAI Partners). PAI "aims to increase the profitability and long-term strategic value of the businesses we own".

More unnecessary cataract operations are being performed, while sight-threatening conditions go untreated, with NHS hospitals short of surgeons and training opportunities.

Big business is greedily buying into private health care. The largest private hospital group, HCA UK, is owned by the biggest US profit-making hospital corporation.

Spire Healthcare, with 30 hospitals and over 50 clinics, made £136 million operating profit in 2023. It is 30% jointly owned by a South African shipping company and South Africa's richest family.

Labour will build the private sector further with NHS money.

The Socialist Party says: No NHS funds should be funnelled into profit-making hospitals. Nationalise all private health care facilities and integrate them into the NHS

Private laboratories

Since Blair's New Labour government 20 years ago, hospital laboratories have been targets for privatisation. The latest contract signed is between Hertfordshire and West Essex NHS and Health Services Laboratories, a subsidiary of Sonic Healthcare.

Sonic Healthcare, Australian-based, made A\$328 million from its UK business in the second half of 2023 and global net profit was A\$202 million.

Speaking in a House of Lords debate, Lord Carter called for more private providers within the NHS. Lord Carter is chair of Health Service Laboratories - and a Labour peer.

Our health data

In many GP practices it's becoming impossible to get basic healthcare without completing an online form (by a receptionist if the patient can't do this).

Millions of UK patients have to use 'Patient Access' to book GP appointments, order repeat prescriptions and more. 'Patient Access' is owned by EMIS Health, which was bought last year by Bordeaux UK Holdings II Limited, an 'affiliate' of Optum UK which is a subsidiary of UnitedHealth Group - one of the USA's largest health care companies.

Other data companies include 'Klinik2', which is now live across 300 NHS GP surgeries, while 'eConsult3' is used by 40% and 'Patches Health4' supports over 10 million NHS patients. Private companies then have access to personal data. AI is increasingly used in these systems.

There is tremendous potential for improving patient care with this technology, but only if democratically controlled by health workers and patients' representatives. Instead, the software is often developed by tech start-up companies, that get taken over by 'Big Tech' if successful. The data can then become a source of huge profit.

In 2019 accountancy giant Ernst and Young estimated NHS datasets could be worth as much as £9.6 billion a year.

Google owns physical premises and hardware where the data is held. Other companies like Amazon and Microsoft are cashing in too.

NHS patient data is unique in the world - held within one health care system and stretching back 76 years. GP practices and Trusts are being pushed by NHS England to set up Data Sharing Partnerships to trade our health data with third parties in return for 'rewards'. These third parties include private companies in pharmaceutical, digital, diagnostics and biotech industries.

An NHS business unit, the Centre for Improving Data Collaboration, provides commercial and legal advice on contract negotiations and forms of reimbursement. It wants profit-seeking companies to be charged no more for data than charities or academic partners concerned with public benefit. The private medicine insurance industry will also profit if it could access this data.

"Drawing on the strength of our National Health Service," says Labour's manifesto, "will also maximise our potential to lead the world in clinical trials. This means making the process more efficient and accessible..." Being "pro-business", Labour will follow the Tories' and sell personal data behind our backs.

The Socialist Party says: health research should be democratically controlled by elected representatives of health workers, scientists, patients and the wider community

Nationalise pharmaceutical, medical supplies and data industries, without compensation except with proven need!

Society makes us sick

Air pollution is now the second leading risk factor for death worldwide, after high blood pressure and ahead of smoking and poor diet. It affects poor people most, who are also affected by damp mouldy housing.

Poor working conditions lead to poor health. Long hours at work, trying to compensate for low pay, leave no time or energy to prepare healthy meals. A diet of takeaways and ready-made meals contributes to obesity, diabetes and other health problems.

Insecurity, bullying and harassment, advertising and influencing, competition, alcohol abuse and other features of society today all add to a growing mental health 'pandemic'.

Climate change is increasingly affecting health.

The Socialist Party fights for an end to capitalist causes of ill-health:

- A 32-hour week without loss of pay
- Rebuild school and community sports and leisure facilities lost through cuts
- A massive building programme of well-built and insulated council homes
- Free nationalised public transport
- Nationalisation of big agribusiness, food manufacturing corporations and supermarkets
- For a new mass workers' party
- A socialist society would enable everyone to live healthier lives - and have the best health care when they need it

Unison conference: Leadership under pressure

EVE MILLER
UNISON REP, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Public sector union Unison's National Delegates Conference took place from 18-21 June, just weeks before the general election and an expected Keir Starmer-led Labour government.

Socialist Party members participated from start to finish to pose our ideas on preparing for that new government, within Unison, as well as throughout the wider labour movement.

The mood of the conference was indicative of the struggles that workers in the public sector have faced over the last 14 years of Tory austerity cuts, decimating the services that Unison members work in. Delegates from across the country took to the stage during debates, detailing the fractures in local government, the exploitation of migrant and Black workers, the crisis in the care sector and many more issues - for all of which, the cause is devastating cuts and profit-creaming private companies.

Labour

General secretary Christina McAnea, along with some members of the National Executive Council (NEC), pleaded with delegates to vote Labour, with one NEC member saying that 'a vote for any other party is a vote for the Tories'. But even she had to address the elephant in the room: that delegates were critical of Labour. It shows that she is feeling the pressure from the 1.3 million disillusioned members beneath her, with many delegates pointing out the need to prepare and organise for Starmer's government failing workers.

The right-wing dominated Standing Orders Committee (SOC) spent most mornings being scrutinised by conference on their blocking of many important motions, citing arbitrary reasons such as "this can be dealt with in other ways", as they attempted to suppress discussion on issues such as trade union victimisation and strategies against council cuts (see 'Unison local government: Real debate shakes leadership' at socialistparty.org.uk).

In many debates, Socialist Party delegates led the discussions on the need for union demands to go further.

'Personal capacity'

In one motion, right-wingers attempted to prevent Unison members from "speaking in a personal capacity", claiming that could be used to promote right-wing propaganda or hate speech. A Socialist Party member pointed out that this would be a rare occurrence; that such instances would be down to Unison to deal with procedurally; and that members have the right to express and campaign for their views. Previous victimisation of Socialist Party members was raised on the conference podium. The motion was defeated by a large majority.

Three Socialist Party members spoke on the cuts and funding motion, posing the need for local governments to set needs-led, no-cuts budgets, and for Unison to respond with national campaigning and strike action if funding is not immediately restored to pre-2010 levels by the incoming Labour government.

There was a section of the conference, for the first time in many memories, dedicated to thanking all striking workers - encouraging those involved in disputes over the previous twelve months to march with flags across the front of the conference hall. This again was a real reflection of the pressure even right-wing union leaders are already under even before Starmer takes power, and ignited a real spark in the mood of delegates.

Right to strike

On the right to strike motion, four out of six speakers were Socialist Party members, calling for the repeal of not only the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 (MSL) and the Trade Union Act 2016, but all anti-trade union laws from the days of Thatcher and Major. As well as this, a clear strategy was outlined for trade union action - including if needed a 24-hour general strike - if the promised repeal of MSL was not followed through. This strategy was met with applause and agreement from delegates.

Socialist Party members also



PHOTO: SARA GILMAN

A first-time delegate reports: 'Socialist Party members leading the charge'

SAM CHURCH
SURREY UNISON YOUNG MEMBERS' OFFICER,
PERSONAL CAPACITY

Unison local government and national conferences were the first I have ever attended. As a young member this can be quite daunting, but thanks to the support of Socialist Party members, I never felt alone or unprepared.

The party had a fantastic showing, with a number of speeches swinging the mood of the room, especially over the push for councils to adopt no-cuts budgets. It was really inspiring to see party members leading the charge, especially as no other groups seemed to be suggesting any solid plans. I don't think there was another group at conference that came close to having such an impact.

Meeting other young members was also rewarding. They seemed to also be very impressed with the party taking a lead on issues, with many feeling let down by the lack of action proposed by those in power at Unison. The Socialist Party left a strong impression as the party fighting for the working class.

The lack of enthusiasm for a Starmer-led Labour government was clear and any indication of Unison allowing the watering-down of promises was swiftly countered by the strong mood for change in the room, especially among young members. Labour appeasement from the union right wing risks disillusioning the young membership. But the prevalence of Socialist Party members making strong speeches and offering solid alternative plans shows there is a group within Unison that is fighting.

The most intimidating part of my first conference was also the most rewarding: getting up in front of conference to speak. But one thing I was never short of was support. Being alongside party members was truly an honour.

raised a socialist programme in many more debates, including Palestine, devolution, the Windrush scandal, LGBT+ rights and community safety. After almost ten years, Surrey Unison branch, supported by the South East region, won unanimous support for the Truth About Zane and Zane's Law.

Socialist Party fringe

The Socialist Party fringe meeting on Wednesday night was well attended, with many members coming straight from conference to discuss with us.

April Ashley, a Socialist Party member elected to the NEC in the female Black members' seat, spoke alongside Socialist Party general secretary Hannah Sell. The discussion included the need for trade unions to take steps to build a new workers' party, and workers' candidates standing in the general election as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). Discussion also included the need to organise in the union so that the mood of members to fight is brought to bear on the leadership of the union.



UCU members striking in 2022 ROGER THOMAS

UCU NEC: Left makes gains but fighting leadership needed

UCU REP

The University and College Union (UCU) National Executive Committee (NEC) met on 21 June, just weeks before the general election, when we face an unprecedented crisis in post-16 education.

The left has a majority on the NEC following the latest union elections. This means there is a real responsibility to fight for a serious strategy on the issues members will face under the next government.

Motions were passed supporting trans rights and opposing the far right. Unfortunately, the need for unions to take steps towards a working-class political alternative that would greatly assist the fight on these issues was not mentioned in these motions.

The NEC debated finance and staffing, which relates to the current dispute of Unite members working for UCU. The president and legal advisers of the union strongly opposed debate in the NEC on these issues.

General Secretary Jo Grady reported correctly that the Labour manifesto offers nothing to address the crisis in post-16 education. However, no fighting strategy to win concessions from Labour was proposed, and no opportunity was given for genuine questions.

The need for the left to organise and build amongst UCU members to effectively put pressure on the leadership, and to challenge for key positions in the leadership, is very clear.

Tata steel: Unite prepares all-out strike

ALEC THRAVES
SWANSEA SOCIALIST PARTY AND SWANSEA TRADES COUNCIL

In a bold and decisive escalation of industrial action, Unite the Union has announced the beginning of indefinite strike action at Tata's Port Talbot and Llanwern plants from 8 July.

This move will be welcomed by many steelworkers, community campaigners and the wider trade union movement, who are determined to retain primary steel production, secure all the steel jobs and to provide a future for the younger generation in Port Talbot, Newport and the surrounding areas.

Tata bosses' intransigent and bullying methods are being confronted by a Unite membership that recognises militant industrial action is the only language this brutal multinational corporation understands.

Community and GMB unions, which have also voted for industrial action, should now urgently engage with their members to join Unite in their all-out strike action in a united front against this vicious employer.

Nationalise

Four days after the certain return of a Labour government, Starmer will face his first test in defending working-class struggle or bending to Tata's big business plans for a jobs and community devastation.

Keir Starmer, prime minister in



PHOTO: ALEC THRAVES

waiting, and Vaughan Gething, the Labour Welsh first minister, should use the election campaign to announce the immediate nationalisation of Tata Steel as the first priority of the incoming Labour government at Westminster.

Tata bosses have arrogantly and contemptibly dismissed both the Unite and the Community/GMB proposals for a transition to green steel production and are insistent both furnaces are shut down, with several thousand direct Tata employees and contractors losing their jobs.

Bringing Tata back to the negotiating table with 'a better deal for steel' is unfortunately, a ship that has long sailed away. There is a growing recognition amongst steelworkers and their supporters that the billions of pounds of investment needed to secure a green transition can only come from direct government intervention and public ownership.

This pending industrial battle has to be politically linked up to the demand for nationalisation of steel under democratic workers' control and management, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need - which means no compensation to the Tata bosses!

Steelworkers and their communities will expect to see newly elected Labour MPs on their picket lines promoting that demand.

The Wales TUC must also enact its recent Congress's call for all-out support for the steelworkers by mobilising their affiliated unions to form part of the mass picket lines that will be necessary on 8 July, the first day of strike action.

This is a battle that can be won, and we must mobilise both industrially and politically to save steel, save jobs and save our communities.

We say: 'Nationalisation not devastation!'

Jobcentre security strike alarms bosses



PHOTO: MARTIN REYNOLDS

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 had already been on strike; now, GMB guards are joined by over 200 guards in PCS union.

The workers are due to take further action on 4 July, polling day.

Martin Reynolds interviewed strikers at Walthamstow Jobcentre:

Chris said: "We want decent pay. We can't afford rent, food, we're really struggling. Our last pay rise was

a couple of years ago and then a couple of years before that, we didn't get any pay rise. Since we were taken over by G4S we've got less and less and less and now we're on the minimum wage.

"G4S has made some really stupid offers, saying they've got no money in the pot, but they made a profit of millions of pounds."

As Tony was speaking to us, the fire alarm in the Jobcentre started going off. As Tony says: "We're not sure what is going on. They've got some incompetent security officers in there and by legal rights, they're

supposed to evacuate the building once the fire alarm goes off. If G4S needs us back in, they need to come back to the negotiating table, make us a better offer and we'll be more than willing to come back and do our job, and switch the fire alarm off."

And PCS rep Marissa said: "I've worked for G4S for nearly 20 years and they have declined in their service a lot. Not only with the DWP pay offer. But for us as employees in general.

"This is my first time on strike and we are prepared to continue for further weeks if there is no negotiation."

Southampton school strike over safety

NICK CHAFFEY
SOCIALIST PARTY SOUTHERN REGION

National Education Union (NEU) members at Oasis Academy Lordshill in Southampton took strike action on Tuesday 25 June, demanding action to address staff and student safety in dealing with difficult and challenging behaviour.

NEU members explained: "This has been brewing since February and management has done nothing. This is not about money - Oasis gives every student an iPad. This is about supporting staff to do a good job for our students. There is huge staff turnover and use of agency teachers, which means students don't get the consistent support they need. Unless this is addressed, nothing will improve."

Messages of support from NEU members in the Oasis academy chain and beyond gave strikers taking action for the first time a huge boost. Their action forced the school to close, with a large number joining the lively picket line.

Support from Southampton and South West Hampshire Trades Union Council was welcomed, alongside backing from the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate Maggie Fricker, an NHS worker standing in the school's constituency.

"This issue is a problem in schools everywhere in Southampton and the strikes could well spread if nothing is done. We are planning further strike action if our demands are not met next week, including election day."

● Southampton TUSC election rally: Tuesday 2 July 7.30pm, Edmund Kell Hall, SO15 2AY

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Socialists beat Tories and Labour at Kent youth hustings

MOMTAZ KHANOM
TRADE UNIONIST AND SOCIALIST COALITION (TUSC)
CANDIDATE IN FOLKESTONE AND HYTHE

College students in Folkestone have sent a clear message to the political elite that they do not speak for the young, or have their interests at the core of their manifestos.

It was a pleasure to be invited to a hustings hosted by East Kent College. As a teacher, this was particularly special to me, as this is the field I care deeply about. It is the lives of our youth which matters most to me.

Tories hate young people

I have first-hand experience of the struggles and challenges young

people face in our society, from lack of funding and taking away EMA grants for poorer college students. Tories have snatched opportunities away from working-class youth, reducing the prospect of social mobility.

Voters don't want MPs who speak a lot of words with no substance. They want real people, who speak from the heart, whose passion stands out amongst the political jargon that we are bombarded with – our youth can see beyond that.

We had brilliant questions about mental health, young caregivers, and care leavers, as well as support for minority groups within our community. The students and educators at the college appreciated Trade Unionist

and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) policies about mentor support and equitable distribution of wealth, and community events around inclusion and social cohesion, led by local councils.

KENT SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER ERIC SEGAL SAID:

Momtaz spoke passionately to the students and lecturers, explaining that the ongoing atrocities in Gaza have ignited a fire within her, compelling her to stand as a TUSC candidate.

As a primary school teacher, Momtaz knows the daily struggle people in this constituency face – inability to get appointments, lack of affordable homes, and sewage being discharged onto our beaches.

We don't need another career politician in parliament. We need a socialist, a working-class fighter, like Momtaz, to hold the powerful accountable for their promises to the working class.

Neither the Tory nor the Labour candidates had any support from the students in the ballot at the end of the hustings.

Leicester Labour cuts all playground funding ‘What have the kids got left? Nothing!’

STEVE SCORE
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

A very lively demo, full of young people, was organised by supporters of Leicester's threatened adventure playgrounds. Council funding is to be ended, threatening the existence of these vital youth facilities in many of the poorest areas of Leicester.

One demonstrator, Charles Holland, said: "I'm here protesting on behalf of Braunstone Adventure Playground, and all the other playgrounds in Leicester, because the council wants to cut us all.

"Adventure playgrounds are free. Children can come and go as they please.

"We do activities with them, we keep them safe, we keep them off the streets.

"We try to teach them things individually. We've been going about 60 years in Braunstone.

"The council have just said 'that's it', and washed their hands of us. This will have a massive impact on the communities, not just on ours, but on all the others.

"If this goes, what have the kids got left? Nothing!"

It says something that the Labour council does not even expect the new Labour government to provide the funding it needs, and isn't even prepared to delay the cut one more year.

No to cuts in vital services. We need a new party that fights for working-class people.

● **Tories and Labour ‘empty chaired’ at hustings**

There were noticeable absences from both the Tory and Labour candidates at the hustings hosted by a local newspaper – The Great Central Gazette. To emphasise their absences, their chairs were left empty. Labour's candidate is Liz Kendall, the right-wing shadow work and pensions secretary.

In the hustings, there was emphasis on local people. But the other candidates focused on toeing their party lines when answering questions. They were just parroting the importance of local people.

Steve Score, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate for Leicester West, was different. He was able to answer questions in his own words, and answer questions directly.

Unlike the other candidates, Steve was not trying to buy people's votes, but pointed to the big picture of what we can build, and what we stand for. Steve talked about building a mass workers' party to achieve the goals of socialism.

There were questions about housing, questions about higher education. This allowed us to see if the candidates stood for anything.

SAADA MOHAMED
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Anger as Northampton anti-war candidates snubbed by hustings

Palestine protesters are disgusted to learn that local NLive Radio is not inviting any anti-war candidates to its upcoming hustings. Only Labour, Tory, Lib Dem, and Reform UK candidates have been invited to the live discussion.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), the Green Party, and the Workers Party have all been snubbed. Instead, their input has been demoted to a prerecorded interview that the station will play after the event.

Palestine protests

NLive Radio is hiding behind the excuse that it is following Ofcom's guidance. However, campaigners in Student Voices for Palestine wrote to NLive asking for a more inclusive debate, and a chance to hear from all candidates directly. Meanwhile, Socialist Party member Katie Simpson, who is standing for TUSC, and the Workers Party's Khalid Razzaq have both spoken out at local Palestine protests against their exclusion.

NLive Radio is owned by the University of Northampton, via an enterprise subsidiary. In February, protesters marched across the campus, part of a national student walk-out. They urged the university to cut ties with companies linked to the Israeli military.

The station broadcasts on campus from St. John's Halls of Residence. In November, Socialist Students led a protest against sky-high rent and squalid conditions, winning a victory, focusing on St. John's Halls.

BEN EDGE
NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

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Plymouth LGBTQ+ activists challenge ‘pinkwashing’

MYLES HATCHER
DEVON SOCIALIST PARTY

Plymouth's LGBTQ+ Pride parade had been fractured in the lead-up to the event. Some people broke away from planning the march after hearing of the involvement of companies Babcock and BT.

Gaza

Babcock, a UK-based multinational corporation, has made applications for export licences for military equipment to Israel, making them a questionable and inappropriate sponsor of Pride. Trans Pride and others stated: "No Pride in genocide"

BT has announced that 55,000 of their 130,000 employees will be laid off over the next six years, as part of a move into 'AI automation'. This will affect people in Plymouth.

Plymouth Socialist Party organised to show genuine solidarity, unlike the corporate sponsors. We had two campaign stalls.

Our leaflets said: "Part of fighting for LGBTQ+ rights is the fight for workers to organise and fight in all our interests, including building a

new mass workers' party. To liberate humanity from the misery of capitalist crisis, including LGBTQ+ oppression, means fighting for a socialist programme, a democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of all."

Our placards in Plymouth displayed anti-Babcock and anti-BT messaging. The atmosphere was ecstatic as crowds marched.

Corporate sponsors

The nature of these sponsors is to increase the corporation's 'investment score'. It's never a selfless act.

All rights won have been through struggle, a workers' fight. This is why we stand strong against these corporate parasites that leech on working-class grassroots movements.

Socialist Party members have been taking part in Pride across the country, explaining the need to struggle against LGBTQ+phobia, and all discrimination, including after the Tories are kicked out.

● **See the Socialist Party's LGBTQ+ charter at socialistparty.org.uk/LGBTQcharter2023**

SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND									
AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q2: APRIL-JUNE 2024				DEADLINE: 7 JULY 2024		
South West	3,952	2,100							188%
Southern & SE	2,277	2,400							95%
Northern	658	800						82%	
Wales	1,846	2,400						77%	
London	3,618	5,000						72%	
North West	840	1,200						70%	
East Midlands	1,432	2,050						70%	
Eastern	828	1,300						64%	
Yorkshire	1,483	2,650					56%		
West Midlands	888	2,700					33%		
Other	7,031	2,400							293%
TOTAL	24,852	25,000							99%

The Greens - are they the alternative we need?

TOM BALDWIN
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

“Angela Rayner says Labour has changed. She’s right. They have changed into the Conservatives.”

This quip by Green Party co-leader Carla Denyer during one of the TV debates summed up the reservations large swathes of people have about Labour under Keir Starmer.

Despite that lack of enthusiasm he’ll get enough of their votes to become the next prime minister. But for those that can’t bring themselves to support this vehemently pro-big business Labour Party, the Greens seem to offer an alternative. Promising investment in public services and a £15-an-hour minimum wage, as well as calling for ceasefire in Gaza, on paper their manifesto is markedly more radical than Labour’s.

They come off the back of good results in the English local elections too, becoming the largest party on Bristol city council. All opposition parties gained councillors as the Tory vote collapsed but the Greens made much bigger proportionate gains than Labour or the Lib Dems, with a 69% increase in seats won. Polling for the general election now puts them on 6%, meaning they could double their share of the vote from 2019. They could also win new MPs, targeting Bristol Central and Waveney Valley as well as the Brighton Pavilion seat they hold.

The Green manifesto may stand out amongst the unappetising diet of reheated Thatcherism we’re offered by the larger parties. But the illusion of radicalism doesn’t stand up to closer scrutiny of their policies and approach.

Trade unions

Even their signature environmental policy, their target for reaching net-zero carbon emissions, is less ambitious than the 2019 Corbyn-led Labour manifesto. The Green MEP for South West England at the time, Molly Scott Cato, criticised what she called the “small print” of Corbyn’s Green New Deal in a telling tweet. The offending policies, in her view, were the commitment to work with the trade unions to guarantee an increase in good, unionised jobs and that the cost of going carbon neutral should be borne by the wealthiest, not the majority. What she dismissed as “caveats to keep the unions happy” are in fact vital steps to ensure that protecting the planet is not at the expense of people already struggling to get by under capitalism.

This is just one example of a problem that runs through the whole of the Greens’ approach. They talk of a fairer, greener future but as a party do not say which force in society is actually capable of delivering it.

Many of the Greens’ policies run directly contrary to the interests of the big business. Were a Green government a possibility we would see the full force of the ruling class turned against them, as we did when Corbyn faced threats of an investment strike by the capitalists and even army



generals speaking ominously of their “worry” about his coming to power.

Achieving the future the Greens want is impossible without class struggle. It means not just changing the government or the law but would require the socialist transformation of society. To counter the threats of the ruling class means taking the power and wealth out of their hands - taking over the businesses that dominate the economy and putting them under the democratic ownership and control of the working class.

Socialist alternative

The Greens’ lack of vision of an alternative to capitalism or of working-class struggles to win gains even within that system is a limitation that pops up throughout their manifesto.

It says, for example, that they “seek to restore trust and confidence in the police”. But the police force is part of the state which exists ultimately to protect the interests of the big business-owning capitalist class. Rather than build trust in it, the Socialist Party calls for democratic control

over policing by the working class, raising the need to challenge the capitalists’ control of the state.

The Greens’ call for a ceasefire in Gaza, which is one reason their support has risen in opposition to Labour’s craven backing for imperialism and the actions of the Israeli ruling class. But the Greens still advocate membership of NATO, the military alliance dominated by many of the most powerful imperialist nations on earth.

And why are they standing against Jeremy Corbyn in Islington North, as he attempts to hold on to the seat that he has represented for over 40 years against the opposition of all the forces of the capitalist establishment?

Compare this to the 2019 election when they stood aside for the Liberal Democrats in 43 seats. This pact came just a few years after the Lib Dems had joined the Tories in coalition government, presiding over the biggest austerity programme since the second world war.

This alone belies some of their radical posturing. In fact, as with any

politicians, the best way to judge the Greens is not by what they say but by what they do.

Greens’ record

Their record in local government is poor. Without having any perspective for struggle to reverse the Tory spending cuts, they’ve parroted the line that councils had no choice but to pass the cuts on. Despite their verbal opposition to austerity, in practice they were indistinguishable from the other parties in implementing it.

In two periods of control of Brighton council they carried out cuts. They even provoked a strike of bin workers by proposing pay cuts of up to £4,000 for some council staff. Socialist Party members went down to support the strike while Green councillors found themselves on the other side of the picket line, being branded “Tories on bikes” by the workers.

Until recently, the Greens were in coalition with the capitalist SNP in the Scottish parliament, backing their austerity budgets. Green parties have also entered coalition governments in other countries including Ireland and Germany. Their role has not been to pull the other parties to the left but to give them ‘left cover’ as they carry out anti-working class policies.

Labour was founded by the trade unions in order to give a political voice to the workers’ movement. A new workers’ party today would need to offer a collective voice for the organisations of our class. It would need to be based on the principle of solidarity, that we lack power as individuals but are mighty when we stand up for one another.

That is not the approach of the Green Party. There is a Green Trade Union Group. But you don’t have to be a member of a union to join it! More significantly it has no constitutional role within the party. There is no provision for collective representation of a trade union or any other group. Even the Conservatives had a group for trade union members at one point – it is by no means an indication of a party representing the working class.

New workers’ party

The need for a workers’ party in British politics remains. The Greens will not be that party.

The Socialist Party has been active in building the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) since its inception in 2010, co-founded by the then general secretary of the RMT transport workers’ union, the late Bob Crow. It is by no means a mass workers’ party but it can play an important role in the process of building one. It has brought together those who are willing to fight for one and given an example of the principles on which such a party should be built.

What sets TUSC apart from other left of Labour projects is its focus on the mass organisations of the working class. It is the only one to have had the official backing of a national trade union in the RMT.

Campaigning and voting for TUSC is the best way of fighting for working-class representation in these elections, preparing for the workers’ struggles to come.

The Greens entered into an electoral pact with the Tories’ former coalition partners the Lib Dems in the 2017 and 2019 general elections

Fighting for rights and services for all

During any election campaign, candidates receive questions from constituents and campaigners, asking for clarification of policies or to sign pledges. We print a question and response below:

Dear Mr Williams,

As a voter in the General Election in the constituency in which you are a parliamentary candidate, I am writing to ascertain your position on women's rights.

Girls and women's rights are a vital responsibility of any government. Can I rely on you to ensure that my rights and those of my family are protected in:

- Single sex toilets and changing facilities
- Single sex protection for women in prison and refugees
- Single sex sports
- Same sex care in hospital, home and care settings
- The provision of factual, age-appropriate sex education that does not confuse children

Like many women, I have watched with dismay as public institutions and local authorities have dismantled basic safeguarding principles in the name of an ill-defined concept of inclusivity. Gender ideology has been introduced unchecked into the civil service, the NHS, schools and other services, without proper scrutiny or equality impact assessments being undertaken. Data collected by the police and the judiciary records gender rather than biological sex. Women and girls expecting single-sex services are confronted by men in their changing rooms, refugees and hospital wards.

The privacy, dignity and safety of women and girls is at risk in the prevailing climate, and I hope I can trust in your support to ensure those rights will be safeguarded. I write to ask how you, as my elected representative, would do that, and I hope I can rely on your support. Should you choose not to respond, I will assume that this is not a priority for you, and I will cast my vote accordingly.

I look forward to hearing from you.



Campaigning against cuts to domestic violence services in Doncaster WOMEN'S LIVES MATTER

Many thanks for getting in touch. Without doubt the last 14 years of Tory rule and austerity have taken a huge toll on women and girls and it is correct that issues relating to them are addressed during this general election.

When Rishi Sunak talks about protecting women he lies. And the division he seeks to open up is a threat to our ability to defend the services, facilities and rights of women and girls. I have gone into some detail to answer you as I believe discussion on these questions is important not only for the election, but for the struggle that will need to continue after to transform the situation facing women and girls, and society as a whole.

That's because Keir Starmer's Labour cannot be trusted to transform this situation. He is committed to continuing Tory policies not the socialist policies like nationalisation, trade union rights and opposition to war that we need.

Without doubt, many of the services and facilities you mention have been dismantled and the Socialist Party, of which I'm a member, is fighting against that and for an end to sexism and misogyny.

Toilets

You rightly identify access to single-sex toilets as an issue. We have lost nearly 60% of public toilets in just over a decade, according to the British Toilet Association.

This is a huge issue for women - especially menstruating, pregnant and menopausal women, disabled women, and elderly women. But also for everyone.

The fight for access to well-maintained public toilets of all the different types we need - single-sex, non-gendered, accessible - is a battle that will require a challenge to those parties who have overseen this destruction of public services.

Local authority expenditure on public loos has halved since 2010. Access to public toilets is under huge

attack from Tory spending cuts - and the Labour-led councils who have failed to defend these and all vital services. They would prefer we fight each other over what kind of toilets we want instead of uniting to campaign for funding all the toilets everyone needs.

Prisons

With regards women in prison, it is a disaster. In 2022, there were 1,343 recorded assaults in women's prisons in England and Wales - and that was up a fifth on the previous year. There were also 16,140 incidents of self-harm in women's jails - equivalent to five incidents for every woman in custody.

What measures could help with protecting women prisoners from themselves and others? Robust screening processes, with democratic and accountable committees that include prison trade unions and prisoners' unions, could reduce the chances of placing perpetrators of violence where they can harm others, whatever their gender. Prisoners who may be a risk to others or themselves could then be referred to support services.

But this all requires resources - staff, secure and ongoing funding, the expansion of public services - and an end to the austerity policies which are feeding the social conditions behind the rising prison population.

The court system is also a factor that the working class cannot leave in the hands of the capitalist politicians. This all requires the working class in struggle to secure these changes. They won't be given voluntarily.

Refuges
I agree that we must talk about women's refuges. They are sadly very much needed. About 1.5 million women are victims of domestic abuse each year in England and Wales. Two women a week are killed by a current or former partner. But again, Tory local government funding cuts and commissioning

practices, unchallenged by Labour, mean in 2022-23 more than 10,000 women escaping domestic abuse were refused safe housing.

The single biggest threat to women's safety in relation to refugees, is the fact that they have been closed. One in six refugees closed between 2010 and 2017. The second, is that the services are so reduced that even women who are granted refuge are forced back into the violent situation they are fleeing from. Expanding and improving refuge provision has got to be linked with the fight for council homes - so women and their families have somewhere to live. Actually a fifth of women leaving prison also have no secure accommodation - making them more vulnerable to homelessness and abuse.

In standing for election, Socialist Party members call for the building of a movement to fight for refugees and support for women. We also stand for changing society in a socialist direction to end the sexism and misogyny that lies behind the violence women face in society.

Sports
You mention also access to single-sex sports. This discussion requires us to start with the basic question of women and girls' access to and participation in sports. The obstacles are not only the lack of free and affordable facilities - for which the Socialist Party fights. Women are still the primary caregivers in the home - and make up the majority of low-paid overworked workers - so time is also a factor pointing to the need for a £15-an-hour minimum wage, trade

union rights and expansion of public services, all of which would increase women's leisure time.

A 2022 Sports England survey found that the other major factors include "fear of judgement, a lack of confidence and...fears for their own safety". A Women in Sport 2023 survey also found that "invisibility has long been a problem". What the research does not list as an obstacle to participation is the inclusion of trans women.

How sports facilities are run should be on an inclusive basis - ie that they are run in a way that encourages all women and everyone to participate. That can include things like individual changing rooms, women-only sessions, inclusive sessions, etc. These

questions should be worked out democratically through negotiation including users and workers and not on the basis of cost or profit.

Health and social care

Care in hospitals, the home and in care settings should also be organised in the best way to suit people's needs. The most pressing issue is the end of cuts and privatisation of health and care services - as well as the low pay that is widespread within them. For example, in 2021 NHS trusts spent close to a half a billion pounds on interest charges from private companies for private finance initiative (PFI) contracts - equivalent to the salaries of 15,000 newly qualified nurses!

These are just the first steps needed to end the waiting lists that millions of women are suffering on, and start to organise these vital public services on the basis of need.

You mention privacy and dignity. Dignity is impossible when you are receiving care in a hospital corridor or relying on a 15-minute care visit. Full public funding of health and care is the first prerequisite for dignity.

The question of the gender of your caregiver is important but poses the question of who controls our public services and in whose interests are they run. Only on the basis of democratic control, can the different needs of different sections of society be addressed.

Privacy is impossible when you are living in overcrowded homes. Rent control and a mass programme of council-home building must therefore be fought for to end the housing crisis.

Education

When it comes to sex education, like all our public services, it is necessary to fight for genuine democratic control. In schools, this would mean through elected representatives of the local community, parents, staff and their trade unions, and school students' unions. Those kinds of committees would provide the forum for discussing and arriving at decisions on areas of controversy, feeding into national policy. That would need to include policies on relationships, sex and health education, as well as provision for students and staff of all faiths.

I hope you can see that the Socialist Party shares your concerns on these hugely important issues. But we do not accept that, in fighting against having a name and gender imposed on them, trans people pose a threat to women or anyone. Limited

resources - services and facilities - do pose a threat though. The cuts listed here are often made by Labour-led councils carrying through Tory policies, not by trans people.

And who benefits? Not trans or non-binary people. These cuts are part of the transfer of wealth from the working-class majority to the super-rich elite, of which austerity is an important part.

How are the restoration and improvements to these services and facilities to be achieved? Women must get organised to fight for them - but not alone. Working-class women are vital to the building of a mass movement to end austerity and capitalism. There is no movement that can change the world without their mass involvement.

That includes the building of a campaigning trade union movement - but also the building of a new mass workers' party that can unite us in the fight for all our rights. This election represents an opportunity to take steps towards the kind of party we will need under a Starmer government. It is positive that Jeremy Corbyn 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, including women's rights. 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.

This includes standing candidates as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, 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 believe that the struggle for women's liberation, of fighting for a non-sexist society, is part and parcel of building mass working-class struggle to end the capitalist system and replace it with socialism. Fighting for maximum unity of the working class in struggle around a socialist programme is central to ending gender oppression.

Search: 'Debate: how to fight sexism and change the world' at socialismtoday.org for a contribution to a debate with WPUK, that was never answered



ACABASH/CC



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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- or call **020 8988 8777**
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the Socialist

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formerly **Militant**

STOP GAZA SLAUGHTER

VOTE SOCIALIST

Strike a blow against Sunak and Starmer

SCOTT JONES

NEWHAM AND EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Death is still a daily reality for Gazans - either from Israeli air strikes or the 'slow death' of hunger and disease with food and water scarce, replaced by rubble, rubbish and sewage. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's claim that the "intense phase" of fighting in Rafah in southern Gaza is nearly over will come as little comfort. 1.7 million of Gaza's 2.2 million people have been displaced. Almost 40,000 are dead.

And the war won't seem any less intense for those in its way. If anything it is due to get worse with all-out war between Israel and Hezbollah poised and the IDF being shown to strap a wounded Palestinian man to a jeep as a sort of 'human shield'.

But Netanyahu is becoming increasingly isolated, with mass protests all over the world a weekly occurrence, accompanied by anti-government protests in Israel itself. He has been forced to dissolve his war cabinet amid a split in his government and rumoured divisions between him and the IDF leadership.

Some international capitalist institutions and many individual governments voice support for a Palestinian state, and oppose the war.

Having largely simply echoed the Tories' and Biden's support for the Israeli state, Labour could recognise a Palestinian state when it likely takes power after 4 July. We say the Palestinian people should have the right to their own state.

That can only be won by a mass movement of Palestinians and of working-class people across the Middle East and internationally, fighting for a socialist programme.

We also need a mass working-class movement here, and a party that fights in the interests of working-class people at home and internationally.

40 Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates are standing across England, Wales and Scotland to give an anti-war, socialist alternative to the main parties.

The Socialist Party fights 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 page 15

