

£1/£2 solidarity price

socialistparty.org.uk



the Socialist

Issue 1283

11-17 July 2024

formerly **Militant**

► FULLY FUNDED NHS & SERVICES ► A REAL PAY RISE



PHOTOS: PAUL MATTSSON

Prepare to fight Labour for the change we need

WHAT WE THINK: GENERAL
ELECTION 2024 ►► p4-5

PREPARE TO FIGHT LABOUR FOR
THE CHANGE WE NEED ►► p2-3

FRENCH ELECTION: LEFT WIN
MOST SEATS ►► p7

VENEZUELA: LESSONS FROM
CHAVEZ 25 YEARS ON ►► p8-9

the**Socialist**

formerly **Militant**

Issue 1283
11-17 July 2024

DO YOU HAVE NEWS FOR US?
The Socialist is written, read, sold and bought by ordinary workers, trade unionists, young people and Socialist Party members. We want you to write for the Socialist.

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

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

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

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

SUBSCRIBE

to the Socialist for weekly working-class news, analysis and fighting strategy socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe

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

SOCIALISM TODAY
our monthly Marxist magazine
socialismtoday.org

- Paper sub £3 a month, e-sub £2.50

SOCIALISM: THE PODCAST
weekly on all podcast platforms

FOLLOW US
facebook.com/CWISocialistParty
[Instagram @SocialistPartyCWI](https://Instagram@SocialistPartyCWI)
YouTube - Socialist Party
[Twitter @Socialist_Party](https://Twitter@Socialist_Party)

SOCIALIST PARTY
The Socialist is the weekly newspaper of the Socialist Party, the England and Wales section of the Committee for a Workers' International
socialistparty.org.uk
socialistworld.net



BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS
Socialist Books: our publishing house
socialistbooks.co.uk
Left Books: Marxist classics bookshop
leftbooks.co.uk

OUR NEWSPAPER TEAM

Editor of the Socialist	Editorial staff
Josh Asker	Scott Jones
socialistparty.org.uk	Ian Pattison
Mark Best	Paula Mitchell
Circulation manager	
Chris Newby	Mark Best

ISSN 1366-9621
Published by Socialist Publications,
PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT
Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office
Printed by trade union labour at Reach Printing Services

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

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

PREPARE TO FIGHT LABOUR FOR THE ‘CHANGE’ WE NEED

There’s no time to “wait for growth... People are literally hurting out there... and our crumbling public services need money”. That is what Unite the Union leader Sharon Graham told TV presenter Laura Kuennsberg the Sunday after Labour’s election win.

Keir Starmer’s Labour was elected with a tagline of “change”. But change in the interests of the working class needs to be fought for, and the trade union leaders need to take every opportunity to demand what’s needed from the new Labour government.

Socialist Party members, public sector workers and service users, report on the state of our services after 14 years of Tory ruin – and put forward just some of what’s needed to fix it.

Fully fund housing and mental health services

I work for a homelessness charity and support individuals with mental health difficulties. Now that Labour are in government, they need to sort out the huge problems faced by housing workers, and those who we support.

So many of the individuals we support are unable to find housing, their housing is unaffordable, or in an incredible state of disrepair. To combat this, the Labour government should fund and initiate a mass council housebuilding programme, so everyone can have access to a safe and reasonably priced place to live. This would undermine the ability of ruthless landlords and profit-hungry housing associations to exploit tenants.

Alongside this, mental health services continue to be underfunded and privatised, leading to extended

waiting times and individuals frequently having to wait to be in crisis before they are seen and offered support. The government should fully fund all health services and get rid of all the profiteers!

For workers in the housing and care sector, low pay is commonplace. Labour should immediately raise the minimum wage to £15 an hour, to ensure that all workers are paid a salary that they can live off, and so they don’t have to leave their role to find a job where they can actually pay their bills.

Stress also contributes to why many leave the housing sector or need to take time off. A recent survey highlighted that 69% of not-for-profit and charity workers suffer anxiety linked to a culture of excessive hours, while nearly 70% suffer it as a result of their work. The trade unions need to demand Labour fully funds services so they are adequately staffed. A maximum 35-hour working week, without loss of pay, would start to address stress and work-life balance.

BEN GOLDSTONE
HOUSING WORKER

‘Landlord tests my calm and patience!’

“As Starmer was making his way to Number 10 this morning to give his sermon on ‘calm and patient rebuilding’, our letting agent was writing to us announcing a £200pcm rent increase. I’m not feeling very calm or patient about that.”

“I doubt the Tata Steel workers or junior doctors or school workers are feeling very calm and patient now either. Waves of class anger are incoming against a government with a huge majority but no popular mandate.”

JAMES, EAST LONDON



PHOTOS: PAUL MATTSSON AND PHOTOEVERYWHERE/CC

Ban all zero-hour contracts now!

As someone who has worked on zero-hour contracts for most of my working life, I know the anxiety and stress they can cause. What will a Labour government do for workers like me?

Their manifesto and New Deal for Working People (they are dreadfully afraid of using the words ‘working class’!) have already been watered down on the issue of zero-hour contracts. It says that they will ban, “exploitative” zero-hour contracts. Which ones aren’t exploitative? Me and the vast majority of my co-workers would love to know how many hours we will work week to week.

Will Keir Starmer actually stick to his promise? Unfortunately, Starmer is about as honest as your average snake oil salesman, his record of lying to his own party members and U-turning on his pledges is long and well documented.

We can’t afford to wait and simply trust Starmer, the trade unions need to demand Labour implements a ban on all zero-hour contracts. The same goes for fire-and-rehire – don’t give the bosses any excuses!

DANIEL
TEESSIDE



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

Scrap all anti-trade union laws

Trade unionists will be among the millions celebrating the end of Tory rule, and the scale of their defeat. But most will also be at least a little sceptical.

For a start, thousands were voting in areas like Coventry, Cardiff, and Barnet where Labour-run councils have directly attacked striking workers. Only months ago, Coventry City Council fired and rehired its bin workers.

The trade unions must demand Labour repeal all the anti-trade union laws, not just the Minimum Service Levels legislation and the Trade Union Act 2016 that demands a 50% turnout for a strike ballot to be valid.

Every law from the Thatcher era onwards restricting the democratic rights of trade unions must be rid of, including the ban on prison officers striking.

Fire-and-rehire should be ended immediately. Zero-hour contracts need to be banned, and workers should have full rights from day one of employment. Any ‘new deal’ should have these basic rights for workers.

In the 13 years of Blairite Labour governments previously, no anti-union laws were repealed. This Labour government has been elected in the wake of a huge strike wave.

The unions should strike while the iron is hot (literally if needed), and force the Labour government to give back our trade union rights.

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY

Councils: ‘We’ve got rid of the Tories, now we need to get rid of their spending policies!’

Many public sector workers will believe that the defeat of the Tories has removed the biggest obstacle to ending poverty pay and rebuilding vital services.

But nothing has yet changed for Birmingham City Council workers. There is still a moratorium on expenditure that falls outside its legal obligations and the council is still run by commissioners appointed by the previous Tory government.

Birmingham faces the largest proposed cuts in local government history threatening 600 jobs, 25 libraries, fortnightly bin collections, a 50% cut in the youth service and special needs transport, the rundown of the homecare service and complete removal of arts funding. A Labour landslide should mean an end to all of that!

Birmingham council workers and service users haven’t taken these cuts lying down. The unions have organised campaigns of opposition including lobbies of the last two council meetings, at which not a single councillor was prepared to speak to the demonstrators.

The main reason for the council’s financial distress, and the issuing of

a section 114 ‘bankruptcy’ notice, is the £1 billion cut from the council’s budget by the Tory government since 2010.

We’ve got rid of the Tories, now we need to get rid of their spending policies! The trade unions should be demanding a reversal of all Tory spending cuts to local government and the withdrawal of the section 114 notices for Birmingham and all other local authorities who have issued them. Starmer’s ‘iron-clad financial discipline’ is completely unacceptable.

It was easy for some trade union leaders to just blame the Tories for the council’s lack of funds. But now we have a Labour government in Westminster.

Rather than ‘give the new Labour government a chance to sort things out’, we need to be telling them what’s needed now to sort things out. Council workers and service users have an urgent need for a big increase in funding for council services. The money is there in the bank accounts of big business and the offshore tax havens of the wealthy!

CLIVE WALDER
BIRMINGHAM



PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY/ALTS

Fund our NHS

I work in admin within the NHS. For now, my newly created department is well resourced, but we are waiting for the service ‘evaluation’ to find out what funding we will get in the future.

Elsewhere in the hospital the budget problems are more obvious to see. The A&E department has a temporary building outside of the main building. It is used to house waiting patients instead of trying to cut down waiting times. They built this initially so the patients wouldn’t get sunstroke last summer while they had to wait outside for hours.

Health Care Assistants (HCAs) are striking in our hospital at the moment. On the picket lines they talk

about what it is like on the ward, caring for elderly patients and being expected to do ‘doubles’ on their own (lifting tasks that need two health workers to help complete). They talk about how the workforce is divided between nurses and HCAs, but that just benefits the bosses, not workers or the patients.

There shouldn’t need to be strikes of different sections of workers in different hospitals to ensure they are on the correct pay band. Workers in the NHS across the board need a decent pay rise. The government should make sure it is fully funded and paid for by the super-rich. That would start to solve the huge recruitment crisis across a lot of the health service.

JESS
NORTHAMPTON NHS WORKER



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

Schools need funds!

The Tories have left behind an education system decimated by austerity, privatisation and neglect.

These is no quick fix, but there are solutions that can be implemented now, that would make a huge difference to the day-to-day running of education services. Labour must remove the two-child benefit cap and ensure children have access to food by providing free school meals to every pupil.

Local-authority maintained schools need to be lifted out of financial deficit by reversing cuts and increasing education spending, which the National Education Union (NEU) recommends should be 5% of GDP.

The national curriculum must be reviewed and designed by educators, not decided by a bureaucratic Department for Education which is not fit for purpose.

Strategies for staff retention must be prioritised. Teachers and education staff need to be supported to

maintain their professionalism by ensuring that directed time is adhered to, providing adequate and relevant training, and increasing support in schools for SEND, mental health and non-teaching time. Support staff must be valued in their roles starting with an increase in pay and better working conditions.

There must be an end to outsourcing contracts to private organisations. We are seeing huge amounts lost from school budgets in order to pay private companies for cleaners, catering, schemes of work and recruitment (which can cost a school as much as 20% of a teacher’s salary).

In the run up to the election campaign, the Stop School Cuts campaign has been mobilising to ensure parliamentary candidates made clear their position on education. As we transition to a Labour government, we must continue to drive this message forward and fight for education across the country.

EMILY
EAST LONDON NEU REP



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

GENERAL ELECTION 2024 TORIES SMASHED - BUILD THE SOCIALIST OPPOSITION

Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

Not just booted out. The Tories have been crushed. The electorate has punished them for 14 years of austerity, attacks on the working class, lies and corruption. Less than seven million people went out and voted for the Tory Party, its lowest vote in a century. Ten cabinet ministers and 250 Tory MPs have lost their seats, the biggest losses ever suffered by an outgoing government in Britain. Rishi Sunak's only achievement is that there is still a Tory MP in his constituency – alone among the constituencies of the last five Tory prime ministers. Over breakfast on 5 July, millions got to enjoy seeing ex-prime minister Liz Truss booted out as MP for South West Norfolk – a seat which previously had a 24,180 majority.

Landslide lies

The result, in terms of the number of seats, is a Labour landslide, just shy of Tony Blair's New Labour victory in 1997. But enthusiasm for Keir Starmer's Labour was absent from this general election. The absolute vote for Labour was 9.6 million, lower than the 10.2 million vote Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour got in 2019, never mind the 12.8 million he won in 2017. Labour's vote share, at around 34%, is the lowest ever for a general election victor, whereas in 2017 Corbyn got 40% of the vote, the biggest jump for a national party in one election since 1945.

The turnout was less than 60%, only the second time it's dropped below 60% since 1918. None of this, of course, has stopped spokespeople for Labour, echoed by the capitalist media, spending election night endlessly repeating how it was only Starmer's successful 'change' in the party (in reality into pro-capitalist New Labour) that had allowed them to go from the allegedly 'worst election result since 1935' in 2019 to victory in 2024.

In reality, voters picked up which ever they saw as the most effective weapon they could find to defeat a government which has presided over a massive fall in living standards. In 2022-23 the government faced the biggest strike wave since the 1980s: now came the electoral follow through. In Scotland that also meant using Labour to punish the SNP Scottish government, but in England it was the Tories that were the governmental enemy. As a result,



Keir Starmer PHOTO: UK PARLIAMENT/MARIA UNGER/CC



Labour's vote share, at around 34%, is the lowest ever for a general election victor, whereas in 2017 Corbyn got 40% of the vote, the biggest jump for a national party in one election since 1945



The Tory losses were so bad that recent prime minister and all her ministers in this photo are not even in parliament anymore, let alone government PHOTO: NUMBER 10/CC



The absolute vote for Labour was 9.6 million, lower than the 10.2 million vote Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour got in 2019, never mind the 12.8 million he got in 2017

while Labour's vote share in England was no higher than in 2019, many Tory seats had swings to Labour, but in seats Labour already held record numbers stayed at home or voted for other parties. In Wales the process was similar, although Labour's vote share actually fell from 2019, reflecting anger at the austerity that has also been inflicted by the Labour-led Senedd, the Welsh parliament.

In other seats, particularly in the so-called Surrey 'stockbroker belt' and the south west of England, it was the Liberal Democrats who were seen as the best means to defeat the Tories. As a result they gained an extra 64 seats, while only increasing their overall share of the vote by 0.6%.

Reform rise?

However, for many trade unionists and socialists, the most concerning thing about the election result will be the support for Nigel Farage's right-populist Reform Party. Reform won five MPs, but its absolute vote was just over four million, half-a-million higher than the Liberal Democrats. This is a warning for the future, and the danger of right-populist, racist forces stepping into the vacuum as anger with the incoming Labour government grows. Nonetheless, at this stage Reform's vote was not the breakthrough that the capitalist media are suggesting. The direct predecessor of Reform, the Brexit Party, got more than five million votes in the 2019 European Elections, and its incarnation before that – UKIP – got close to four million votes in the 2015 general election.

Tory collapse

What has changed in 2024 is the complete collapse of the Tory vote. Historically this was the most successful capitalist party on the planet. In the 1950s it had almost three million members, now it has been reduced to little more than a few rats fighting in a sack. Without doubt, in the aftermath of the election, there will be further battles in and around the Tory party, as the more serious representatives of capitalism fight with the Tory populist right for control of the wreckage of their party.

However, ultimately the Tories' unpopularity stems from their acting in the interests of British capitalism, which has presided over falling real wages, rising living costs, and collapsing public services.

The morning after, on 5 July, the mood of millions was lifted by the successful eviction of the Tories, but unfortunately the incoming government has promised, in essence, a continuation of Tory policies. Sticking by the Tories' 'fiscal rules', as Starmer has pledged to do, would mean – if growth averages 1.1% per year, as it has since 2008 – a 'black hole' in the public finances of around £60 billion. In other words, Starmer's Labour, acting in the interests of British capitalism, is set to oversee a new era of yet more austerity, including tax rises and attacks on the living conditions of the working-class majority. That is why the Sun, the Sunday Times, The Economist and the Financial Times all supported Starmer, reflecting the majority of the capitalist class' preference for a Labour government, something unimaginable when Jeremy Corbyn was leader.

What conclusion does the workers' movement need to draw from this? Not that nothing will change, but that we will have to be prepared to fight

for things to change. One YouGov poll in the week of the election found that only 2% of Labour voters expect the incoming Labour government to cut public services. That shows that, despite all of Starmer's attempts to dampen workers' expectations about how very little 'change' he will actually deliver, it is inevitable that some hopes are raised by the Tories' exit. Starmer, however, has made clear that he does not intend to restore the 40% of government funding cut from councils, or make up for the 10% plus real-terms pay cut suffered since 2010 by teachers, nurses, civil servants, doctors and other public sector workers. Nor has he pledged to renationalise steel, mail, water, or other privatised utilities.

Workers' action can win

The strike wave against the Tory government demonstrated graphically how collective action can win results, but now the trade union movement needs to prepare to fight for workers' interests under Starmer's Labour, rejecting the inevitable attempts of some trade union leaders to try and act as a cover for Labour when it attacks workers' interests. A Starmer administration would not be the first capitalist government to, for example, increase public sector pay or to make concessions to students facing poverty and huge debts. None of this will be achieved by asking nicely, however, but will require mass workers' struggle.

A workers' voice

And the workers' movement also needs to create a political voice, to fight for the interests of the working class in parliament, giving voice to the struggles in our workplaces and communities. In the run-up to this election, the Socialist Party fought for a workers' list of candidates, arguing that even a small bloc of workers' MPs in the next parliament would put pressure on Starmer from the left, and prepare the ground for the building of a mass workers' party under the next parliament. Some, justifying a Labour vote, argued that the 'first-past-the-post' system made it impossible to stand outside the major establishment parties, and that electing a handful of MPs could make no difference. Yet the election of just four MPs for the Greens and five for Reform has already created waves, giving a glimpse of what a bloc of workers' MPs could have achieved.

Imagine if when, at the height of the strike wave, Enough is Enough was launched by prominent trade union leaders, and half a million people joined, it had been a new political party fighting for the working class, rather than a nebulous campaign. It certainly could have got a bloc of MPs elected. It would also have been the best means to start to cut across the Reform vote. Remember that, in 2017, more than a million UKIP voters switched to Corbyn, demonstrating the potential to win workers voting for the right populists to an anti-austerity programme.

Of course, that is not how events unfolded. The Socialist Party participates in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), an electoral coalition which aims to enable trade unionists, community campaigners and socialists who are fighting for a new mass workers' party to stand candidates against pro-austerity, pro-war, establishment politicians under a clear banner. TUSC strove to



Steel is one of the burning issues in Starmer's in-tray PHOTO: SCOTT JONES



Reform won five MPs, but it's absolute vote was just over four million, half-a-million higher than the Liberal Democrats. The direct predecessor of Reform, the Brexit Party, got more than five million votes in the 2019 European Elections, and its incarnation before that – UKIP – got close to four million votes in the 2015 general election

34%
In the 92 constituencies where more than a tenth of the population identified as Muslim, Labour's vote fell 34%

bring together different forces under one umbrella but, while TUSC stood forty candidates on a fighting socialist programme, many others stood as independents or under other banners. As a result, rather than a clear workers' list in this election, we had a kaleidoscope of different independent and left candidates, which, while some got good votes, made a limited impact.

Greens, Corbyn and the independents

However, almost two million people voted for the Green Party, which stood on a 'Corbynite' programme, indicating the search for a left alternative in this election. However, unfortunately the Greens are not a workers' party, with no democratic rights for trade unions within it. And while there are socialists in the Green Party, they have made clear they are not a socialist party. For all they won votes by adopting aspects of Jeremy Corbyn's programme, they also stood against him in Islington North. Despite this, he won his seat as an independent, offering an opportunity to begin building a left bloc in parliament that, for example, can voice the demands of the public sector trade unions and the Tata Steel workers in the coming weeks and months. If the four new Green MPs are willing to act as part of that bloc, that will, of course, be very welcome, and would allow the Greens to play a positive role in the fight for a mass party of the working class.

In addition to Jeremy Corbyn and the Greens, there were other candidates who were elected by voters who wanted to protest to the left. Across the country, Labour's vote fell markedly in areas with large numbers of voters from a Muslim background, reflecting the deep anger with Starmer's support for the Israeli onslaught on Gaza. Despite our differences with him, it is unfortunate that George Galloway, standing for the Workers Party, narrowly lost Rochdale, the seat he had won in the by-election

a few months earlier. However, in four seats independent candidates standing against the onslaught on Gaza won victories: Leicester South, Birmingham Perry Barr, Blackburn and Dewsbury. Arch-New Labourite Wes Streeting in Ilford North was also nearly ejected by an anti-war independent. The four 'independent' victories are welcome but, if they are to be a step towards building a workers' bloc in parliament, it is important that the new MPs combine a battle on Gaza with all the other issues facing the working class in Britain, seeing themselves as representatives of the whole working class rather than just one section of it.

Volatility

The crisis of British capitalism is increasingly being reflected in the volatility of politics. Labour has been swept to power in a 'landslide', but so was Boris Johnson at the head of the Tories five years ago. At the time we said it would be a pyrrhic victory, but the same will also be true for Starmer's Labour. Any capitalist government will face mass opposition – because capitalism is offering only endless austerity for the working-class majority. Therefore, discussions on how the working class can build its own party, armed with a socialist programme, are being posed increasingly urgently.

The Socialist Party will argue for such a party to fight for the socialist transformation of society: for the nationalisation, under democratic workers' control, of the major monopolies and banks that dominate the economy, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need. This is a vital step to breaking the stranglehold of the capitalist class, and laying the basis for the development of a socialist plan of production, where all the science and technique created by capitalism could be harnessed and developed to meet the needs of all.

If you want to take part in the fight for socialism, join us today.



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!

GENERAL ELECTION 2024

£91,259.30 raised - Socialist Party rises to election appeal challenge!

ISAI MARIJERLA
SOCIALIST PARTY TREASURER

At the Socialist Party Congress in March, we launched the general election appeal, setting ourselves the target of raising £50,000 to fund 30-40 Socialist Party candidates, standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

The main message behind the appeal was that socialists and trade unionists can challenge pro-austerity, pro-capitalist parties and politicians at the ballot box. We have been consistently saying that Starmer and his Labour Party are no friends of the working class. Their policies are aimed at defending the interests of the bosses and the super-rich.

In the capitalist media, you will read that Starmer secured a great victory, to deliver a new beginning and 'change'. Numerous pro-capitalist politicians across the world have rushed to congratulate him on his 'landslide'.

However, only on the pages of the Socialist, will you find the real analysis of the election results. In workers' history, the 2024 elections will go down as the least enthusiastic, with a huge majority voting against the Tories or not voting at all. Turnout was below 60%, the lowest since 2001.

The £91,259.30 donated, with a further £6,496 pledged, shows the huge enthusiasm for our stand. Pledges can be paid using the donate link on the Socialist Party website.

Bigger battles to follow

The overall majority of the donations were from Socialist Party members. However, we also received generous donations from non-members, thanking us for standing, sending "solidarity" and "towards the election appeal, to advance the fight to build a mass party on a genuine socialist programme... and the bigger battles to follow!"

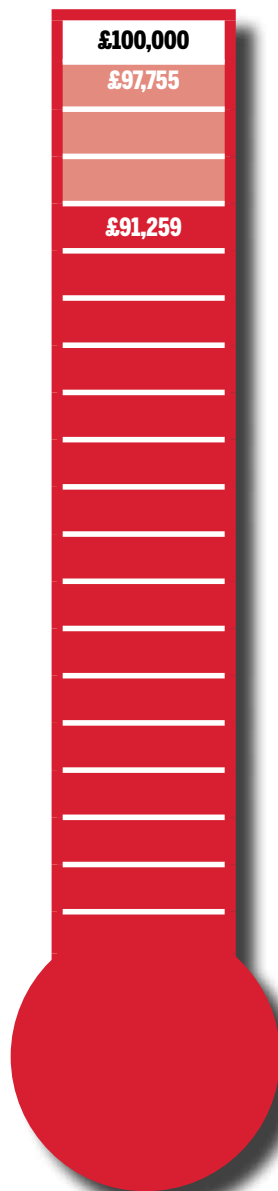
At the launch of the appeal, we said: "That is a large sum for a small organisation of workers and young people squeezed by the cost-of-living crisis. But we have to rise to the challenge and dig deep to have a socialist voice that can reach thousands of voters, strikers, anti-war protesters, workers and young people."

And we did rise to the challenge. All the public meetings held by our branches attracted people to come and discuss our programme. We want to say thank you for every single donation we received. We understand

that all financial donations we receive are a real commitment to building a socialist challenge.

We had so many donations and comments, it's impossible to list them all in this short space. Some included a £100 donation from a university student, £500 from a CWU member, £400 from an NHS worker, £250 from a retired member, £20 from a student, £32 from a low-paid worker, and many more.

If you want to continue to support the fight for a political representation of the working class and want to discuss socialist ideas on how we can improve our conditions. Join us.



Help fund the fightback
DONATE
socialistparty.org.uk/donate



Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition results

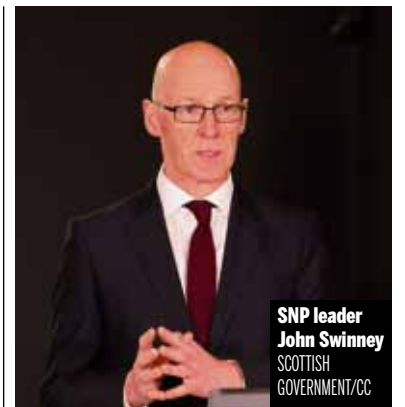
● The report in full is available at tusc.org.uk

TUSC AGAINST CUTS

40 candidates stood as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), on 4 July, many of them Socialist Party members.

Between them, TUSC candidates polled a modest 12,562 votes. This was a higher absolute vote per candidate than achieved by the TUSC stand in the 2010 and 2015 general elections, in an election with a lower overall turnout.

TUSC has compiled a report of statistics from this election, it includes the full TUSC results. It also includes statistics detailing: alienation from establishment politics, the long-term changes in electoral support for Labour, the electoral history of the Greens and Reform, and the effects of the Muslim vote on 4 July.



SNP leader
John Swinney
SCOTTISH
GOVERNMENT/CC

SNP loses big

The following excerpt is from the post-election article published by Socialist Party Scotland. Read it in full by visiting socialistpartyscotland.org.uk: 'Tories hammered - now build for socialist struggle'

Aside from the Tories, the biggest losers in the election were the Scottish National Party (SNP). They emerged bloodied with just nine MPs, down from the 48 they secured in 2019. It was a traumatising defeat for a party that has had three leaders in just over a year amid a series of crises. All of them rooted in their pro-capitalist, cuts-making policies that weakened their support among the working class in particular.

The SNP lost all of their MPs in Glasgow. There is now only one SNP MP across the working class heartlands of west and central Scotland. Labour, who could win only one seat in 2019, ended up with 37 MPs. Yet, the enthusiasm for Labour was negligible. As one former Tory advisor commented: "Labour's support is a mile wide but an inch deep."

Independence

A section of independence-supporting former SNP voters switched to Labour to get the Tories out and to protest at the SNP itself. Many others did not vote. The SNP vote share fell from 45% to 30%, while Labour's increased from 18% in 2019 to 36%. The issue of independence for Scotland did not feature in the way it has done in previous elections since 2014.

It was the class issues around the cost of living and public services that dominated. Primarily there was just a desire to see the back of the Tories and a feeling that voting Labour was the best way to do that. Support for independence remains at 50% however. And the potential for the national question to re-emerge with a vengeance under a Starmer-led Labour government is likely.

Despite Labour's gains, turnout in Scotland fell below 60%, reflecting the deep-seated disgust towards the main parties. The Scottish Greens polled 3.8%, including sizeable votes in Glasgow where they averaged closer to 10%. Overall, the Green vote in Scotland was half of that of the Greens in England. Partly a result of the role of the Scottish Greens in an austerity-wielding coalition with the SNP at Holyrood. Since the power-sharing agreement was ended by Humza Yousaf, the Greens have been more openly critical of the SNP.

Reform UK polled 7%, beating the Tories in a number of seats. Again, the Reform vote in Scotland was around half of that in England.

French election: Left wins most seats

No alliance with Macron and the capitalists

GAUCHE RÉVOLUTIONNAIRE (CWI FRANCE)

French President Emmanuel Macron had “thrown [his] unpinned grenade in at our legs” (in his own words) on 9 June, by dissolving the Assembly. He gave Jordan Bardella’s RN (far-right National Rally), winner of the European elections in France, the opportunity to place himself at the head of the government.

The results of the first round of elections on Sunday 30 June confirmed this threat. With 33%, the RN won a record number of votes. They capitalised on the immense anger against Macron, and the racism which his government has not stopped stoking. Their votes increased with a very high turnout, but also because many young people (2 in 3) and workers, chose not to vote, disgusted or despairing.

In the second round on 7 July, many youth and workers used their vote for the Nouveau Front Populaire (New Popular Front - NFP), an electoral alliance to block the RN. This tactic worked: we avoided an ultra-reactionary right-wing government, even more racist and also at the service of the capitalists!

The NFP has the highest number of deputies, 180. Some who abstained in the first round went to vote for the candidate of the NFP or against the RN on 7 July – notably a whole section of young people aged 18 to 34 (35-38%). This is a relief for a vast majority of young people and workers who do not want more authoritarianism, chaos, divisions and attacks on our living and working conditions.

Macron

Macron can still play his hand, he can appoint the prime minister and thus play a part in determining the political orientation of the future government. But the “unpinned grenade” has bounced back towards his legs.

There is no doubt about it, he will seek to divide the NFP, targeting its left participant La France Insoumise (LFI) and LFI leader Jean Luc Mélenchon. But his room for manoeuvre is narrow. Macron is seeking support from Francois Hollande’s Socialist Party (PS), the Greens (EELV - already used to carrying out policies for the capitalists, the ‘labour’ law known as El Khomri in 2016, for example), and from the traditional right of the LR (conservatives).

The Assembly dissolution and election confirm a fragmentation of the political situation with three major blocs: the RN, Macron’s Ensemble party, and France Insoumise - the biggest force of the NFP with the most deputies (71 out of 180). Within these blocs, some parties such as LR (39 MPs) and the PS (64 MPs) are divided on the alliances to be made in order to continue their careers and continue to serve the interests of the capitalists to the detriment of the majority of the population and workers.

The RN is the party with the most deputies (126 RN + 17 LR-RN). The



Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators took to the French streets following the first round of elections
PHOTO: JEANNE MENJOULET/CC

Macronists and the right, including the RN, have already passed laws together, such as the Asylum and Immigration Law. Clearly, if Macron’s policies are not challenged and defeated by mass mobilisations, they will continue to pave the way for the rise of the RN.

When workers and youth struggle together, Bardella and Macron lose their grip and divisions begin to erode. It is vital for workers to struggle to win better living and working conditions. To be able to turn the tide in the face of Macron, the RN and the capitalists, we must unite around our demands, while fighting against all the divisions that this capitalist system engenders. There is no capitalism without racism or discrimination.

A programme at the service of the majority of the population, workers and young people, is needed. The NFP’s programme promises to reduce the retirement age from 64, increase the monthly minimum wage to €1,600 net, freeze prices, provide real public services, and also to

assert a position against war, especially in Gaza.

These are emergency measures. An NFP government will have to put them in place. But implementing this programme implies a confrontation with Macron and the interests of the capitalists. It’s inevitable. But this is not what part of the NFP, especially the PS-EELV, defends. Macron knows this very well and will therefore try to fracture it.

But very important sections of workers remember so-called ‘left’ governments previously that have smashed public services, carrying out policies for the rich and the capitalists. The mistrust is therefore great, and rightly so. Any coalition with Macron would be a betrayal of NFP voters and the interests of the majority of the population because it would make it impossible to implement a programme in our interests.

In the elections, we did not have any confidence in the candidates in the NFP who, in office, would pursue a ‘Macron-compatible’ policy. After

having surfed on the NFP vote, often carried by the militant force that is France Insoumise, the Macron-compatible will not hesitate to make a pact with him.

The pretext of the risk from RN does not hold. We have not forgotten the demands of the NFP programme. La France Insoumise has often been a compass for all those who want to resist and win against Macron, the RN and the big capitalists. There must be no question of La France Insoumise entering this type of coalition.

Political instability remains. Macron wanted to take our breath away and exhaust us with an untenable political pace and the fear of a Bardella-Macron government. And now he says he wants to take his time to appoint a prime minister!

In addition to the political instability, the French economy is likely to fall into recession in the coming months. The capitalists and any government at their service will try to pass laws against the unemployed, continue to dismantle public services, rot the future of young people.

The need to put an end to this policy without further delay is raised. The labour movement, trade unions and parties defending workers were unable to cope with the scale of attacks last year. And, in part, this explains how the RN has been able to carve out a place for itself on the political scene. There is no question of having a peaceful period without massive strikes or struggle!

Whether with a pro-Macron and pro-capitalist coalition government, or with a New Popular Front government, to ensure that we no longer suffer defeats without a real battle, we must organise!

Join Gauche Révolutionnaire, to discuss and put into action revolutionary Marxist ideas, to get involved and commit to the fight against Macron and the capitalists, and for an authentically socialist, democratic society, free from exploitation, war, racism, sexism, and gender and sexual orientation discrimination.

We are fighting to strengthen our camp, and support any positive steps in this direction. Since the 1990s, workers and young people no longer have a party of our own, in which to organise. Meanwhile, the capitalists have the majority of the media and parties at their service.

We need a real mass party of workers against capitalism and for socialism, a political tool to discuss programme, coordinate and structure our actions, workers and young people together. At the moment, this force does not exist.

Today, La France Insoumise has a special place in the political situation. With more than 100,000 new registered supporters in one month, France Insoumise, Mélenchon and its leaders have a responsibility. They should, without further delay, raise their voices and arm themselves politically by creating a real party from La France Insoumise, around a programme of struggle against capitalism that activists can discuss and develop collectively.

By calling for a massive membership of a stronger more effective, more inclusive and democratic political force, thousands more workers and youth can be brought into political struggle against capitalism.

● This article is a translation of an article first published in French online on 9 July

VENEZUELA LESSONS FROM HUGO CHAVEZ 25 YEARS ON

February 2024 marked 25 years since Hugo Chavez became president of Venezuela. Following massive improvements to healthcare and education, the South American country was held up during the 2000s as a beacon of 'socialism in the 21st century' by many of those looking for an alternative to capitalism.

In the last 15 years though, Venezuela has become increasingly infamous for chronic food shortages, one of the world's highest murder rates, runaway inflation and violent protests. Capitalist politicians and commentators the world over have been quick to point to Venezuela's economic and social problems as proof that socialism doesn't work.

Nick Hart, Socialist Party National Committee member, looks at the real lessons from Venezuela.

Chavez won his first of 16 national elections and referendums in December 1998, promising a break with the austerity policies that ordinary Venezuelans had endured over the previous two decades.

Upon becoming president, he declared a new "Bolivarian republic" and launched a constituent assembly to write a constitution which, among other pro-worker reforms, enshrined free healthcare and education as basic rights.

As a result, literacy programmes reached 1 million Venezuelans within the first six months. The number of primary care doctors increased from 1,628 in 1999 to 19,571 by 2007 and overall social spending per person increased by 170% between 1998-2006.

This was possible to finance thanks to Venezuela's huge oil reserves, which accounted for 90% of the country's exports. The doubling of the price of crude oil internationally during the early years of Chavez's presidency created tens of billions of dollars annually in profits for the state-owned oil company which, as well as being used to expand public services, allowed for staple foods and other essentials to be sold in state-owned supermarkets at heavily subsidised prices.

This "first revolution of the 21st century" came about following a decade in which capitalism had seemed like the only game in town after the collapse of the USSR and other distorted 'socialist' regimes in Eastern Europe. Though limited in scope, the radical left governments elected in Venezuela, Bolivia, Brazil and Ecuador as

part of a 'pink wave' in Latin America during the early 2000s stood in stark contrast to the privatisations and austerity cuts that had been the policy of capitalist governments around the world over the previous 30 years.

Chavez, and other leading figures of his Movement For a Fifth Republic party, initially modelled themselves on reforming capitalist governments such as that of US President Franklin D Roosevelt, who carried out the New Deal in the 1930s, under pressure to save capitalism from a prolonged slump and working-class unrest.

Hugo Chavez became a household name after leading a military insurrection against the government of president Carlos Andres Perez in 1992. Perez had accepted demands from the International Monetary Fund to increase the cost of fuel and public transport. 3,000 protesters were massacred by troops in the 'Carazco' demonstrations that followed.

Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Chavez was one of the dissident officers that made up a secret cell of radicalised army officers sympathetic to the protests, and influenced by 19th century independence leader Simon Bolivar as well as more recent Marxist insurgents. The 1992 insurrection failed, it was deliberately organised prematurely to avoid the involvement of civil society organisations. According to Chavez: "Civilians only get in the way".

Historically, the organised workers' movement in Venezuela was weaker than its neighbours in Chile, Bolivia and Brazil. Independent trade unions and the Communist Party were only formed in the 1930s. Thousands of activists from the socialist left were 'disappeared' by state forces during the 1990s and many of the unions had become openly corrupt and in the pay of employers and the CIA by the time Chavez was first elected. This was one of the factors in the top-down nature of Chavism.

However, despite his attitude that "civilians only get in the way" during the 1992 insurrection, it would be the Venezuelan masses who would come to rescue Chavez ten years later.

In early 2002, the Committee For a Workers' International (CWI, of which the Socialist Party is a section) warned that the old ruling elite in Venezuela wouldn't accept the curbs on its wealth and influence threatened by Chavez, and there was the possibility of a right-wing military takeover as had happened decades previously in Chile and Argentina. We also pointed out that the same ruling class and their US handlers would underestimate support for Chavez among the poorest at their peril.

Coup

In April that year, Chavez was deposed in a coup, with the head of the employers' federation leading an interim government. However, this barely lasted two days!

Hearing announcements of austerity and anti-democratic measures by the new regime, and a message from Chavez, smuggled out from captivity and explaining how he had not



Hugo Chavez
PHOTO: PAUL MATTHEWSON

voluntarily resigned as they were claiming, hundreds of thousands of workers and shanty town dwellers marched on the presidential palace demanding his release.

With much of the rank and file of the army backing Chavez, the coup quickly collapsed and he was released and restored to the presidency.

Having failed to remove Chavez and his allies at gunpoint, the capitalist opposition attempted to cripple the government economically through calling a shutdown of industry and commerce in 2002-03. This failed, as did a desperate attempt at a recall petition using as many as a million fraudulent signatures, including from deceased voters!

It was in the period following this that Chavez swung sharply to the left. After announcing nationalisation of the largest energy and telecoms firms, Chavez not only said, "We are moving towards a socialist republic of Venezuela", but also referred to the ideas

of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky.

The socialist transformation of Venezuela would have meant mobilising the working class to take all the levers of control from the ruling capitalist class. That includes nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy under democratic workers' control, and wresting control of the capitalist state machine - including the military and police - out of the hands of the bosses. On that basis, a democratic planned economy could be developed to meet the needs of all - and crucially an appeal made to the working class in the region and internationally to join in the struggle for socialist change.

The actions of Chavez's newly re-fashioned United Socialist Party (PSUV) fell short of doing this, with the man himself declaring in 2007: "We are not extremists nor can we be. No! We have to pursue alliances with the middle classes, including the national bourgeoisie. The elimination of

private property is not our theses."

Following the recall referendum being defeated, nationalisations and land reform accelerated, but these only touched 700 or so bankrupt and 'lame duck' companies. A state super-market chain, telecoms company and airline were also set up to compete with private companies rather than replace them outright.

Working-class appetite

There was a clear appetite from sections of the working class to go much further than that. Factory occupations took place with workers calling on the government to nationalise them. The raw material for a revolutionary socialist transformation of Venezuelan society existed at that time, what was missing was an organisation with a clear rounded-out programme to lead the working class in that struggle.

During this period, the small forces of the CWI supported the steps forward taken under the Chavez

government, but pointed out the problems it could encounter later on and that a different approach based on the involvement of the masses would be needed to decisively take wealth and power out of the hands of the old elite.

In reality, the companies that were state-owned (often joint ventures in which private conglomerates took a stake) didn't use the initiative and ideas of the workers who ran them on a socialist basis, but instead functioned like extremely bloated and corrupt mirror images of their capitalist counterparts.

The term 'Boli-bourgeois' became common place, referring to the caste of senior managers in state bodies and enterprises who have used their positions to enrich themselves.

Though at one point staple foods were subsidised by up to 40% in the state supermarkets, over 60% of them were imported due to much of the farmland remaining underused in

the hands of the landlord class, and food manufacturing and distribution being controlled by five large conglomerates.

Many regulated goods such as foodstuffs and medical supplies were bought in bulk following import by black market traders, and later passed to street traders to sell at a huge markup to the prices in the state-run supermarkets.

Part of the responsibility for the widespread shortages that developed lies with these middle men and women. But the fact that it was possible for them to make a killing doing so is an example of the problem of trying to regulate prices in favour of ordinary consumers in a system where the distribution and sale of essential goods is still a source of private profit and subject to the vagaries of the market.

Though double-digit inflation and shortages were a feature during the boom years of the mid 2000s, the situation deteriorated rapidly when the price of oil collapsed during the worldwide recession from 2008 onwards and there was a 50% drop in exports of Venezuelan oil.

As the CWI had warned could happen as early as 2007, this had devastating consequences for the Venezuelan working class with cuts to subsidies of consumer goods and public services and suppression of wages in the face of hyperinflation that peaked at 130,000% in 2018-19 according to the president's office and 2,688,670% according to the opposition. Venezuela has gone from being Latin America's least unequal nation by some measures of wealth in the early 2010s to the most unequal today!

Maduro

As well as this economic crisis, a series of political crises followed the death of Chavez in 2013. His successor as president Nicholas Maduro continued the turn towards reconciliation with sections of the capitalist class and opposition, dressed up in patriotic language of national unity.

This has not been enough to prevent Venezuelan society becoming increasingly polarised. Far-right gangs of demonstrators emerged from among the upper layers of society and would vandalise and set fire to public buildings, shoot or lynch socialist activists and provoke clashes with riot police in the hope of creating a climate of instability more favourable for intervention by the UN or neighbouring capitalist powers.

In some parts of the west of the country the cost of living and shortages were further increased by extortion carried out by right-wing paramilitary groups from neighbouring Colombia, and criminal gangs buying subsidised goods to smuggle out over the border. At one point, Maduro estimated 40% of the regulated food in Venezuela was leaving the country in this way.

A landslide victory for the right-wing opposition MUD (Roundtable of Democratic Unity) coalition in parliamentary elections in December 2015, coupled with high levels of abstention, represented an exhaustion of the

masses who had previously supported Chavez and an inability to see an end to plummeting living standards under the Bolivarian system.

The declaration of Juan Guaidó as the "interim president" by the right-wing majority in Congress in January 2019 marked a step change in attempts to remove Maduro from power. For the first time, workers from former strongholds of Chavism joined opposition protests calling for Maduro to resign.

However, the call by Guaidó on 30 April that year for a military uprising against Maduro failed to gather substantial support at both the rank-and-file and upper levels of the armed forces. A call for a general strike failed to gain any support from workers, showing the limited social roots of the opposition.

Venezuela goes to the polls on 28 July. The return of an openly capitalist government would be a step back for workers not just in Venezuela but in Latin America more widely.

A right-wing government would be no more capable of solving the contradictions of Venezuelan capitalism than Chavez and Maduro have been - and would leave the economy more at the mercy of international finance capital. So what lessons can be learned from the Venezuelan experience?

In an increasingly feeble global capitalist system, governments aiming to implement wide-reaching pro-worker reforms as Chavez did are all the more likely to see the kind of political dirty tricks campaigns or attempts at military overthrow by an enraged capitalist class. But that's not a reason to settle for the status quo of continued capitalist austerity!

Instead, the events in Venezuela over the last quarter of a century show the need to make a clean break with the chaotic capitalist system and the need for the working class itself to take power. It also shows the need for a party with a clear programme to achieve that, and to begin the process of the socialist transformation of society.

● **Read 'Venezuela: Hugo Chávez and Socialism', written by CWI secretary Tony Saunois in 2007, at the height of Chavez's popularity, at socialistworld.net**



Socialist campaign stalls: Taking our ideas to the streets after the election

Oxford

In Oxford we spoke to large numbers of people at our campaign stalls on Saturday 6 July, just one day after people woke up to the news that Labour had won in the general election.

Multiple people said they did not feel represented by the major parties, leading to some choosing not to vote. Others voted for one of the local left-wing candidates.

Many people did not believe Labour will reverse the brutal cuts imposed by the Tories, especially in areas such as housing and local services.

Someone had not had a pay rise in some time. They were concerned that Labour's refusal to invest in services will impact the economy, leading to ever-increasing prices and pay stagnation.

Despite the overall feeling of distrust, there were pockets of people saying Labour should be given a chance. They felt that we should wait and see what Labour does in government before we judge them.

While the exact impact of the Labour government on the working class remains to be seen, the need to put forward a strong socialist programme is as vital as ever.

JAMES BONNER

Leicester

Leicester once again bucked the trend at this election. It is a city that was once a Labour stronghold, with all three city seats being held by them. At the local elections last year and now the general election, Labour has suffered heavy losses. Labour only managed to hold on to Leicester West. Leicester East went to the Tories, the only seat in the country the Tories gained. Leicester South went to Shokat Adam, a pro-Palestine independent who ousted Jon Ashworth from what was supposed to be a safe seat. With the political dynamic of the city seemingly changed, it was interesting to hear what people on the street had to say. The Saturday after the election we set up a stall in the city centre to find out.

Nearly all of those passing and those that stopped to have a conversation were glad to see the Tories gone. Most were holding on to Labour to enact some meaningful change, although this lacked any enthusiasm. I spoke to a man who said he had lost faith in Labour under the leadership of Keir Starmer and couldn't bring himself to vote for them. He was happy to see an independent candidate win in this city and hoped that the independents, along with the Greens who won across the country, could hold Labour to account.

Likewise we had a few more conversations with people that were receptive to our take on the election and were happy to still see us out campaigning, despite the election being over.

SAM WARD



Carlisle PHOTO: BRENT KENNEDY



Swindon PHOTO: SCOTT HUNTER



Mansfield PHOTO: PAUL TOOLEY-OKONKWO



When we said that we were working to build a new party of the working class, that was met with enthusiasm

Mansfield

I called into my local supermarket after getting back from election day stalls and leafleting in Mansfield.

When I came out of the shop, two young women I'd passed in the aisles came up and said they really liked my TUSC T-shirt, had wanted to vote socialist and were disappointed there wasn't a candidate in Bolsover.

I sold them a copy of the Socialist newspaper. They want to get involved and left contact details. A good spin-off from our Mansfield campaign!

JON DALE

Plymouth

The mood in Plymouth city centre was quiet, just two days after the hated Tory Government had been removed, and yet there was not much feeling of celebration or jubilation. Of all the conversations we had, not a single person was pleased with our new prime minister. The first response I had when I asked someone their thoughts about the election was "total dogshit." More than one person said that they didn't think Keir Starmer's Labour was going to be any better than the outgoing Tory government. People have been listening

to what Labour have to say and they can see no real difference between their policies and the austerity policies of the last 14 years.

More than one person said that things need to change, that we need an alternative to the big two parties swapping power and discussed the idea of proportional representation as an option. When we said that we were working to build a new party of the working class, that was met with more enthusiasm as everyone we spoke to agreed that Labour does not work for us.

In Plymouth we stood as part of TUSC to offer a working-class, socialist alternative as a steps towards this.

ALEX SAMPSON

Swindon

The atmosphere around our post-election stall in Swindon was like the eye of the storm - a moment of calm between two battles. Ironically, the weather was stormy!

Most people were just relieved that the election was over and didn't want to talk politics, not helped by the wet and miserable weather. There was relief that the Tories are out, desperate hopes that a Starmer government might offer some improvements and trepidation for what could be in store

in the near future.

Although few people wanted to stop and talk, we got some positive reactions. A woman repeated our headline: "Tories smashed - fantastic!" Another man wordlessly came up to the stall and dropped a £5 note into our collection tin, and later another did the same with a handful of change.

A few who stopped to talk were cautious about Starmer but were prepared to 'give him a chance'. The NHS was top priority, with a couple of people saying they would judge the Labour government by whether they could reduce waiting lists quickly.

Despite the desperate hope that Starmer's New Labour must offer some reprieve from the battering of the last 14 years, even those who were prepared to give Starmer some leeway agreed with us that Starmer is going to be under enormous pressure from the bosses to make cuts and attack workers' wages, and responded well to our message that the best way to counter this pressure is an organised and fighting workers' and trade union movement.

Now the Tories are out, it's clear that many people are looking for a 'return to normality' and the chance to 'switch off' from politics. This is understandable but will be elusive. The day of the election, I was recognised at a petrol station by a Royal Mail worker. She thanked me for standing as the TUSC candidate for Swindon North and we had a brief chat about the Royal Mail dispute, and why we were standing in Swindon. Our campaign has obviously reached some of the right people!

As socialists, we know that there will be no return to normality. Getting out on the streets, even when the going is tough, distinguishes us as fighting campaigners. We'll be there as working-class consciousness develops leaps and bounds in this new period.

SCOTT HUNTER

Smethwick, Black Country

With Starmer's Labour in full effect and the 14 years of Tory rule abolished, we set up a campaign stall on Bearwood High Street to capture the immediate reactions of the locals and to show the Socialist Party's ongoing efforts to affect change post-election.

Despite a gentle drizzle, a handful of eager people stopped to talk about the new political landscape. Among them, one middle-aged man stopped to speak about his worries for the coming five years; being aware of the flimsy promises Starmer has made. He echoed a common sentiment that Labour's fight against further council cuts could falter. An NHS worker, reflecting on the mismanagement of funds under previous Labour leadership through private contracts and senior management, expressed doubts about any significant changes under Starmer. Their first-hand experience highlighted the urgency of nationalising not just the NHS but all public services.

Bearwood's high street stall painted a vivid picture of a community grappling with the pessimistic realities of a new Labour government unlikely to provide much, and yearning for genuine change in a time of political ambiguity.

RAVALDEEP BATH

Why I joined the Socialist Party

The system is rigged against us



Ayo (centre) campaigning with the Socialist Party

AYOMIDE AKINSINMIDE
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Young people are plagued by crippling political and economic instability, unforgiving climate change, rising house costs and tuition fees, along

with many other problems gradually choking us. It's easy to feel helpless, faithless and forgotten.

The system is rigged against us – designed to keep the rich richer, and the rest of us struggling. Why is it that, in such a wealthy country, so many

people are struggling just to make ends meet?

As a university student, I've seen bright and gifted friends consider dropping out, because they couldn't afford the living costs. We work tiring part-time jobs on

top of studying full-time just to survive.

I know people who have graduated with mountains of debt, only to find themselves in a job market that offers little more than low wages and zero security.

During the local Palestine marches, it all clicked. I had to stop and see what was going on. I cycled past three times. I joined the protest, and days later I was at a Socialist Party meeting.

I finally realised that these weren't isolated issues. They are all symptoms of a broken system.

Gaza and austerity

The war in Gaza. More food banks than McDonald's restaurants. Food prices rising 25%, but maintenance loans increasing a mere 1.5% in the last five years. NHS waiting lists going from two million to nearly eight million under Tory rule.

The reason I joined is because the answers I've wanted are explained by the principles of socialism. The idea that everyone deserves a fair and equal chance, that wealth and power shouldn't be concentrated in the hands of a stingy and troublesome few. The fact that we should all have access to the basic necessities of life – something that will never be possible under a capitalist society.

All of these ideas resonated deeply with me. They always have. I just never knew the name.

Joining the Socialist Party felt normal. It felt natural. If anything, it

would be easier to talk about why I stay in the Socialist Party.

Having a community of like-minded people, who believe in fighting for social and economic justice for all ages, races and backgrounds, is the reason I stay in the Socialist Party. Socialism being about action and not just theory is why I stay.

Working class rising up

Having the chance to go out every week into the local community on the front lines, pushing for policies that we've seen make a difference is why I stay. That the Socialist Party is built by the working class rising up is why I stay.

In these challenging times, where there is no true political alternative, being part of the Socialist Party gives me hope. It reminds me that we don't have to accept the status quo, that we can fight for a better future. And every day, I am inspired by other Socialist Party members who are working tirelessly to bring about that change.

So, why did I join the Socialist Party? Because I believe in a fairer, more just world. Because I want to be part of the solution, not just an observer. And because I know that together, we can make a difference, that is why I stay.

Do you agree?

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

socialistparty.org.uk/join



Thank you! Together we smashed our funding target again

We did it! We hit the national fighting fund target again!

At the beginning of April, we set ourselves an enormous task of raising £25,000 for the Socialist Party fighting fund between then and now, as well as another £50,000 for our general election campaign.

And we smashed them both! Raising £90,190 for the general election, and another £30,771 on top for the fighting fund.

Thank you to all who contributed towards achieving the target. As well as smashing through the national target overall, at least 40 Socialist Party branches raised 100% or more of their own individual targets.

Below, one of our Socialist Party members explains how we did it.



SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q2: APRIL-JUNE 2024	FINAL CHART
South West	4,093	2,100		195%
Northern	1,070	800		134%
Southern & SE	3,097	2,400		129%
Wales	2,454	2,400		102%
East Midlands	2,076	2,050		101%
London	5,034	5,000		101%
Yorkshire	2,211	2,650		83%
Eastern	1,071	1,300		82%
North West	931	1,200		78%
West Midlands	1,496	2,700	55%	
Other	7,366	2,400		307%
TOTAL	30,897	25,000		124%

The people who sign have strong opinions, which lead to good discussions. This presents the opportunity for us to put forward socialist ideas, and to outline what we stand for.

There is always a donations column on the petition, which often prompts people to give generously, without us even asking for money. But we always ask if they can afford a donation to our fighting fund.

Sometimes we are asked where the money goes. We explain that it goes towards the cost of mounting our campaigns, and we do need it, as we have no rich backers. The majority of people will then donate if they are able to.

As a result of all this campaign activity, we have greatly increased sales of the Socialist, and the amount of fighting fund raised. We've also met new people who have joined the Socialist Party. It has been encouraging

to see some of our new young members participating.

The new Keir Starmer government is clearly pro-big business, and does not represent the interests of the working class. The country faces enormous problems, with so many issues deeply affecting the lives of ordinary people – cost of living, severe lack of housing, and failing public services.

Labour's manifesto policies will merely put a sticking plaster over the gaping wounds caused by years of cuts and austerity. We must continue to raise the necessary funds to fight for the formation of a new mass workers' party in order to bring about the socialist transformation of society.

Like what you've read?

SUBSCRIBE TO THE SOCIALIST

socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe



KATIE SIMPSON
NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

We united to prevent bailiffs changing the locks of the home of a single mother of three on election day. Northampton Socialist Party members, Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) supporters, and community activists stood in solidarity.

Despite being placed in the accommodation by Milton Keynes Council, and living in Northampton for nearly a year, neither the Labour council in Milton Keynes, nor the Tory council in West Northants, were willing to take any responsibility for the family.

Privately renting was their only suggestion. Anybody who knows how difficult it is to find a place to rent while working full-time, can imagine how hard it is for a one-parent family reliant on benefits. Try as they did, nobody was willing to offer them accommodation.

Northampton has a chronic housing shortage, despite hundreds of long-term empty properties across

town. One neighbour, who stood on the picket with us, told us about multiple properties a stone's throw away that have been empty for months.

As bailiffs showed up, we linked arms, and denied them access. They used every trick in the book. Intimidation, lying, and even trying to convince us that they were acting in the best interests of the family.

Eventually their shift ended, and they went home. With the prospect of them returning the next day, supporters were back at 6am keeping vigil. But the bailiffs didn't return.

As the nation celebrated the Tories being evicted from parliament, a family of four celebrated beating eviction. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition stood 40 candidates in the general election, including in Northampton South.

Our election campaign is there to help raise the voice of working-class people fighting back, like this family. The fight for every family to get suitable, genuinely affordable housing continues.

Help fund the fightback

DONATE

socialistparty.org.uk/donate



● Fund the fight for the policies we need

JANE WARD
TEESSIDE SOCIALIST PARTY

Teesside Socialist Party has been holding very successful campaign stalls in Middlesbrough and Stockton. Our petitions on opposing war on Gaza and opposing Tory destruction of our NHS have drawn people in.

Reader’s Comment: Transitioning to a sustainable energy industry

An energy industry worker’s view of Unite the Union’s ‘No ban without a plan’ campaign

As the global energy landscape shifts towards sustainability, the role of workers in industries like oil and gas has become more critical than ever. A worker-led transition to renewable energy sources offers a pathway that addresses environmental concerns while safeguarding workers’ rights and livelihoods. Socialists say, this transition should prioritise collective ownership, democratic control of resources, and equitable wealth distribution. Unfortunately, this is lacking in Unite the Union’s campaign “No Ban, No Plan.”

Workers’ control

A worker-led transition in the energy sector should advocate for the direct involvement of workers in decision-making processes. Socialists campaign for the big energy companies to be nationalised, with democratic working-class control and management, so that the planning and execution of energy projects is in the interests of the working class.

As I contemplate our industry’s future and hear the Labour Party talk of GB Energy and a renewable future, I see Port Talbot steelworks shutting down. It has been identified that the renewable industry will need 20% more steel by 2026. Would any sane working person not link these industries together? I wonder what Keir Starmer’s father, a toolmaker, would say about this situation!

Workers’ skills can be preserved, with



retraining programmes as needed, to equip workers for jobs in renewable energy sectors, such as wind, solar, and hydro-electric power. These programmes should be designed and managed by workers’ unions and representatives to ensure they meet the workforce’s real needs, not those of the oil barons.

Within this framework, shop stewards in the oil and gas industry play a pivotal role. These elected representatives act as the workforce’s voice, negotiating with management and advocating for workers’ rights. In a worker-led transition, shop stewards, representing workers and accountable to them, would be at the forefront of ensuring the shift to renewable energy does not come at the expense of workers’ livelihoods.

For instance, a shop steward in an oil refinery could push for creating a transition committee composed of workers, including engineers and environmental experts. This would put us on a pathway towards workers’ control. This committee could develop a comprehensive plan to gradually reduce oil production while ramping up renewable energy projects. The steward would ensure this plan includes provisions for job security, fair wages, and safe working conditions.

Alternative plans

A nationalised oil industry facing declining fossil fuel demand, with active participation from its workforce, led by dedicated shop stewards, would be able to diversify its operations. They might

propose converting a portion of their refineries into biofuel production facilities while also investing in offshore wind farms.

Look at Grangemouth, for example, and INEOS, owned by capitalist Jim Ratcliffe, notorious for attacks on oil refinery workers. Does he consider any alternative to closing Grangemouth? No, he does not. He is too busy preventing the catering staff from sitting with the players at the Manchester United training ground – something the club’s most successful manager, Alex Ferguson, a former apprentice toolmaker and shop steward, insisted on. Ratcliffe is only concerned with profit and does not think twice about the workers and communities left behind.

A worker-led transition underscores the importance of democratic control over economic resources. It challenges the capitalist model, where decisions are made by a few at the top, often ignoring the impact on workers and the environment. Instead, it proposes a system where those who produce the wealth have a say in how it is used and distributed.

This transition is not merely about changing the energy source but about fundamentally altering the power dynamics in the workplace. It envisions a future where workers are no longer disposable commodities but active participants in building a sustainable and just system. This should be included in any campaigns put forward by Unite and the other trade unions in the industry.

Review: An underfunded, understaffed probation service cannot keep us safe

AMY SAGE
BRISTOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Like many people working within the Probation Service, I was alarmed but also not surprised at the failures uncovered by the BBC’s Panorama episode ‘Undercover - Can Probation Keep Us Safe?’ The documentary followed a reporter who had gone undercover at an Approved Premises (AP) in Kent, where individuals released from prison on licence can spend up to three months before being released fully into the community.

The investigation uncovered numerous failings by the AP, including losing track of several individuals with violent offending histories, and use of unsuitable software to track the online activity of registered sex offenders. These findings were set against the national context of a number of high-profile cases where People on Probation (POPs) have committed serious violent offences whilst under the supervision of the Probation Service.

While it was hinted at, the documentary ultimately failed to explore in any real depth the underlying cause of the issues raised throughout the episode: chronic and persistent underfunding and understaffing. Instead,

the blame was mainly placed upon the shoulders of individual members of staff, who indicated that they were struggling under the pressure of high caseloads and budget cuts.

“

Since 2010, almost £2 billion has been cut from the Ministry of Justice budget, despite the fact that the number of people under the supervision of the Probation Service has been gradually increasing

Since 2010, almost £2 billion has been cut from the Ministry of Justice budget, despite the fact that the number of people under the supervision of the Probation Service has been gradually increasing over the past decade. Year upon year of real-terms pay cuts, combined with the impact of Chris Grayling’s disastrous privatisation experiment ‘Transforming Rehabilitation’, has caused the service to haemorrhage staff, leaving the system dangerously overstretched. It was reported in 2023 that 10 of the

12 probation regions in England and Wales were operating at over 100% of capacity.

The Tories introduced a new Early Prisoner Release Scheme, with thousands of prisoners made eligible for release 70 days prior to the end of their sentence in an effort to deal with prison overcrowding. These individuals are instead to be supervised and supported back into the community by the Probation Service. But there is no real plan in place to limit caseloads to safe levels, or to deal with the significant recruitment and retention crisis. Probation is likely to buckle under the weight, putting the public’s, staff’s and POP’s safety at risk.

New Labour government

This is the situation Starmer’s Labour government has inherited. However, they have yet to provide any concrete plans as to how they intend to solve the crisis. Instead, ahead of the election, then Shadow Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood vowed to ‘reinstate the rule of law’ by introducing several policies that would actually increase the number of people in prison and on probation.

Without committing to properly funding our public services, Mahmood will face a workforce

unhappy about long-term falling real-terms pay and deteriorating conditions. Back in 2022, probation staff, due to a lack of leadership from the unions, voted to accept a 12% pay increase over three years. With inflation remaining persistently high over this period, this pay deal amounted to a significant pay cut.

Many working-class people have genuine concerns about crime and their safety. Increasingly, more people also have a lack of faith in the police and criminal justice system to keep them safe.

Socialist Party members stood as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in the general election, calling for properly funded services, run democratically by workers and service users. We put forward policies to bring an end to the poverty, alienation and deprivation that can be part of what breeds crime.

In a society where everyone’s needs are met, and everyone has a say in how society is run, crime would be greatly reduced. For those who do pose a genuine threat to others, a socialist criminal justice system could be built which would be publicly owned with police, courts and a probation service rooted in and accountable to the communities they serve. Judges and other officials in

the system would be democratically elected, subject to the right of recall if they are judged to no longer be serving the interests of those they represent and paid a worker’s wage.

Ultimately, capitalism is based on the exploitation of the majority by a tiny minority of big business interests. The criminal justice system is necessary for the maintenance of that system and therefore only the socialist transformation of society can ensure a justice system that serves the interests of working class people. However, that does not mean that we should not fight here and now for a Probation Service that is fully-funded, properly staffed and can genuinely rehabilitate offenders, reduce crime and protect the public.

● ‘Undercover - Can Probation Keep Us Safe’ available on BBC iPlayer

WHAT’S YOUR VIEW?

● editors@socialistparty.org.uk

Gig economy bosses ‘screw us over’



A DELIVERY DRIVER

I work as a pizza delivery driver. We have to use our own cars for work and we are paid £1 for fuel for each delivery we do, no matter the journey.

During the football rush, and working five days, I made 38 deliveries, meaning I should have received £38 on ‘fuel day’. However, I was only given £8. Thirty crucial pounds lost!

The management sort through all of the recorded drops to be paid. However, commonly they have failed to give the correct amount.

I now have to wait till the following week to get the money. I have no money left as it is the end of the month; I have had to spare what little I have to go towards the car’s MOT. The money was vital to enable me to pay for the fuel to work this week.

Because I cannot do my job due to the bosses screwing up yet again, my store manager - trying his best with

no help from these bosses - is paying £20 out of what little money he has left for me to fuel up and work. While I am pleased he is trying to get it sorted and giving me the money in the meantime, a local manager should not have to be paying my fuel money out of his own pocket for a mistake of his bosses.

Money for deliveries should be done in-house by the workers who run and operate the store, rather than one person on a ridiculous pay rate controlling seven-plus stores and all the individual drivers’ pay.

£30 is a lot of fuel money, it’s around three days of work. The frustration is incredible as these things can make or break someone being able to work for their livelihoods.

Luckily, Socialist Party members helped me through the steps I need to resolve this. This is why I cannot stress enough the importance of trade unions in the workplace.

Amazon workers take on the biggest boss - again



The GMB union has held protests at Amazon warehouses around the country, and at the company HQ in London, on the first day of its union recognition ballot in Coventry. As the union says, this is a “bid to force Amazon to recognise a union for the first time” in the country.

There have been more than 30 days of strike action at the Coventry site in the last 18 months, fighting over pay and conditions, and for recognition. Strikes have also spread to the Sutton Coldfield site in Birmingham.

GMB filed legal proceedings in April, due to Amazon bosses’ “widespread attempts to coerce staff to cancel their trade union membership”.

Workers have previously told the Socialist: “Managers put posters targeting the union in the toilets, flyers on boards and in the canteen, saying: ‘We want to hear your voice’. Managers said: ‘We want to talk with you, the union wants to talk for you’. But the bosses have heard our voices plenty of times, and nothing’s changed!”

Amazon workers will now be

watching to see what Keir Starmer’s new Labour government says about workers’ rights, as well as the minimum wage. GMB’s demand is for £15 an hour – they should be pressing that demand immediately, along with repeal of all the anti-trade union laws and workers’ rights from day one of employment. These events at Amazon are now on Starmer’s watch.

Redbridge bin workers demand an end to exploitative conditions

KEVIN PARSLAW
UNITE BRANCH SECRETARY WALTHAM FOREST

Refuse and recycling workers in the London Borough of Redbridge, employed by a wholly owned subsidiary of the council, Redbridge Civic Services, were on strike in election week because of management’s refusal to negotiate on working conditions. Over 100 members of Unite the Union took the action in protest after management, and above them the Labour-run council, refused to do anything about exploitative working conditions. This includes aggressive pressure to work weekends, leading to increased sickness

absence, with worse sick pay arrangements than directly employed council workers, and lack of vehicle maintenance.

On election day itself, the workers marched from their depot in Ley Street to Redbridge Town Hall in Ilford High Road to highlight their issues. Arriving there, they were met by two senior council officers who asked them not to demonstrate directly outside the Town Hall steps!

Nevertheless the rally went ahead. As branch secretary of the neighbouring Unite branch for Waltham Forest Council, I spoke and reminded strikers that Unite had suspended Coventry councillors

from the union when it acted in an anti-union manner during the refuse strike in that city. I also called on Unite to demand the incoming Labour government properly fund local government services and bring them back in-house. National Shop Stewards Network chair and Unite member Rob Williams also brought support.

The workers are now considering their next steps, but from 8 July there is an effective overtime ban in place. Meanwhile, Redbridge council leader Jas Athwal is now the MP for Ilford South (health secretary Wes Streeting represents Ilford North). There will be pressure on him to lobby the government for more funding for council services, but Redbridge strikers won’t hold their breath waiting!

Highgate Wood School staff strike



HARINGEY NEU MEMBER

Teachers and support staff at Highgate Wood School were on strike on 4 July, and again on 10-11 July. National Education Union (NEU) members balloted overwhelmingly for sustained and escalating action against

a pay cut imposed on a number of members who have responsibilities in creative subjects.

A restructuring was imposed, reflecting the Conservatives’ downgrading of these subjects within the curriculum, and the school’s own budget deficit.

Staff are demanding that a shadow structure is retained whereby the affected members retain their current pay and conditions until their posts become vacant.

On the basis of an ‘injury to one is an injury to all’, members are determined that they should not pay the price for decisions entirely beyond their control. If agreement is not reached this term, the ballot covers escalating action into the next school year.

At this time especially, school leaders should not be implementing discredited Tory policies and austerity measures, and should instead be holding the new Labour government to account for their promises on education.

India’s parliamentary election ends Modi invincibility myth

YOUVRAJ
NEW SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE (CWI INDIA)

The results of one of the most important parliamentary elections in the history of India showed a resounding setback for the ruling BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) regime. The NDA (National Democratic Alliance) coalition, led by prime minister Narendra Modi, was always likely to form the new government, but that does not diminish the message of the mandate.

In the run-up to the elections it was publicised that BJP would win more than 400 out of 544 seats. Exit polls too predicted a big win. Notwithstanding such hype, the BJP lost 63 seats, winning only 240 seats, 32 short of a majority. The NDA coalition, led by the BJP, still secured a majority but fell short of 300 seats. For the opposition coalition, India (The Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance), the gains were significant. Far surpassing expectations, it won 233 seats. The myth of the invincibility of Modi is broken.

For the past ten years, Modi has run an authoritarian regime with complete centralisation of power. Investigative agencies like the ED (Enforcement Directorate) and CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation) have been weaponised to serve the political interests of the ruling party.

Even the highest statutory bodies like the Election Commission and Reserve Bank of India are subjugated to align with the political agenda of the BJP. Armed with the complete subjugation of the state apparatus, the BJP ventured on a reckless campaign of annihilation of any opposition to its rule - be it opposition parties or any mass protests.

In India, elections take place in a

mammoth country, if not a subcontinent, with its deep social divisions. Apart from acute class contradictions, various enigmas ranging from regional disparities to those of national questions still haunt India. These contradictions keep on asserting themselves more often than not, and the last ten years were no exception. Notwithstanding such upheavals, the BJP government continued to tighten its grip over power. The disjunct between politics and underlying conditions appeared too glaring.

BJP chauvinism

In its previous tenure, the BJP constantly whipped up nationalist and religious chauvinism. Various fictitious narratives ranging from Islamophobia to the myth of India becoming a superpower were peddled relentlessly, evoking anything from acute hatred to jingoism.

Barring few exceptions, major media houses would viciously propagate such narratives to be picked up by followers of Modi’s personality cult that was so assiduously created. The propaganda machinery of the BJP, churning out narratives laced with an acute sense of indignation, ran deep into society; often leading to heated, polarised discussions among not just groups of friends but also within families.

Of course, the chauvinism wasn’t an inconsequential feature but was cunningly harnessed to quell any social expressions of underlying issues. Those who pointed to the very flawed premise of ‘demonetisation’ would have to face a tirade of attacks by Modi supporters accusing them of being supporters of ‘black money’. Upholding the idea of religious harmony could earn one of the titles of

“”
For the past ten years, Modi has run an authoritarian regime with complete centralisation of power

‘sickular’ (mocking the word secular) and so on. The farmers that staged the historic agitation against the government in 2020 were referred to as Khalistani (Sikh-Punjabi separatist). With an army of online trolls, as well as mobs that could unleash violence on the streets, the regime could extremely polarise any public discourse.

The success of the regime lies in the fact that it had stitched together a band of the most vulgar, reckless elements. The Modi regime is very much the rule of the capitalist class but the form of this rule is not the general form of a capitalist regime. In fact, the Congress Party has been the classical party of capitalism in India.

Effects of capitalist crisis

The global meltdown of capitalism in 2008 and the subsequent crisis of Indian capitalism formed the basis of the capitalist class switching over to the BJP to represent its interests. Those who would term it as ‘crony capitalism’ ignore that this has been the feature of Indian capitalism (and, for that matter, of those other countries that entered late into the capitalist arena) from the beginning.

Under the Modi regime, it was a specific feature aligned with changes in capitalist structure. The aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union saw the global onslaught of neoliberal capitalism, seemingly defying national, regional or sectoral boundaries to penetrate deep and wide into each and every sector of the economy.

It appeared the iron grip of the Modi regime could crush or defuse any underlying contradictions and crisis ailing Indian society. This unfettered and incremental control



India prime minister Narendra Modi
PRESS SECRETARY FOR PRESIDENT OF RUSSIAN FEDERATION/CC

over not just the state apparatus but also over social forces is something that led many left-progressive forces characterising it as a fascist regime. For many, including those on the left, such characterisation was premised on a liberal outlook of capitalist democracy.

Authoritarian regime

While acknowledging the authoritarian character of the regime, we argued against such abstract generalisations. We pointed out how the rise of BJP over the last three decades was a result of a long historical process and that the Modi regime was the product of an onslaught of neoliberal capitalism and class struggles following global meltdown. More importantly, we pointed out that this regime, though vicious towards many, is not the master of the situation.

The structural crisis of capitalism meant that Modi could conjure up the (so-called) boom in Gujarat state when he was chief minister in the 2000s, but he would not be able to go anywhere similar in the period of global downturn after 2014. Sooner rather than later, such contradictions would assert themselves causing political upheavals.

While the Indian economy was slipping into recession even before Covid, things worsened significantly after it. Not just the working class but even well-to-do layers of the middle classes found their fortunes tumbling. Unemployment reached its peak. The share of unemployed youth was as high as 82.9% in some estimates. The share of educated youths among all unemployed people also increased to 66% in 2022, up from 54% in 2000. Inflation had soared too, eroding whatever meagre income the working masses could generate.

The ethnic conflict in Manipur, fuelled by the BJP government in the state, leading to large scale violence, rioting and rapes, which went unabated for months, thoroughly shocked the nation. Modi, with his adamant and smug attitude, refused to make even a single visit to the state.

When coming to power in 2014, one of the planks that attracted

“”
Instead of choosing ‘lesser evils’ the struggles of farmers, workers, and all oppressed sections, should be brought together to fight back against all capitalist policies

many was Modi’s promise of a ‘New India’ free from corruption, dynasticism and the associated evils of India’s political system. Youths and a section of the working class believed in it, only to be betrayed later. Some left dismayed stayed away from elections and voter turnout dwindled. Some others, infuriated by the betrayals of Modi, rallied behind opposition forces.

The opposition alliance, led by Congress, started late and did not appear well prepared initially to catch up in the recent election. The manifesto of Congress was based on the theme of social justice and could strike a chord with at least a section of the working masses.

Of course, this regime is not yet defeated and the BJP is coming to power again, albeit with a reduced majority. The challenges for left forces and the working class are acute and need to be addressed.

What opposition?

The opposition alliance, though not as brutal as the ruling clique, is nonetheless another wing of the capitalist class. Capitalist development in India is characterised by a complex mesh of capitalist interests. The historic peasants’ struggle represented the struggle of rich capitalist peasants against the onslaught of corporate capital in agriculture. Many regional parties, like the NCP (Nationalist Congress Party) in Maharashtra, which played a key role in halting a BJP rally in the state, is a party of a section of regional capitalists.

The opposition to the BJP and for the expansion of ‘democratic space’, while important, in itself is not the solution. So, even if in the next elections the opposition parties come to power, that would not free millions from capitalist and caste exploitation.

The underlying class disparities and divisions are too acute to be overcome by any reformist measures. The CPI and CPM - the communist parties of India - have utterly failed to wage any revolutionary struggle against capitalism,

confining themselves to parliamentary politics. Yet again in these elections they tailed behind the Congress Party to “stop the march of fascist forces”, as they have been claiming for past few decades. The right-wing forces, an inevitable part of capitalism, can only be overthrown by the revolutionary struggle of the working class.

Mass workers’ alternative

The New Socialist Alternative (CWI in India) organized a ‘Youth for an Alternative’ campaign, which highlighted the need for building a mass working-class alternative. While arguing to vote against the Modi regime and its anti-working-class policies, Youth for an Alternative exposed the bogus claims of the opposition.

The communist parties and many others who wanted to oppose the Modi regime took the wrong position of collaborating with the main capitalist opposition party, the Congress Party.

Instead of choosing ‘lesser evils’ the struggles of farmers, workers, and all oppressed sections should be brought together to fight back against all capitalist policies. Such a united position can also aid the process of building a real political alternative to the capitalist parties.

● This is an edited version on a longer article published online at socialistworld.net



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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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



£1/£2 solidarity price

socialistparty.org.uk



the Socialist

Issue 1283

11-17 July 2024

formerly **Militant**

Rip-off rents and mouldy homes BUILD COUNCIL HOUSES

LINDSEY MORGAN
BRISTOL SOCIALIST PARTY

We need council homes. Over a million people languish on waiting lists for council housing. In the main, these are people who cannot get together huge deposits either for rent or a mortgage, who can't afford gruelling private rents, and don't have the ability to buy a home either.

So-called affordable housing is out of reach for millions. 40% of council housing built in the last century is now in the hands of private landlords thanks to Thatcher's 'Right to Buy' - kept in place by Labour and Tories since - and the fact sold homes haven't been replaced.

Add in to the mix the amount of housing, social and private, that is in horrendous condition with black mould, damp, lack of proper fire access, and everything else making tenants unwell and sometimes causing death.

A tenant who puts their head above the parapet and complains about the condition of their home faces the threat of a Section 21 'no-fault' eviction. The previous Tory government said they were going to end these but, considering they have so many landlords in their ranks (as with Labour), it's no surprise that they weren't willing to make it happen.

Any attempt to deal with the crisis by boosting more private development will only encourage landlords who prioritise getting profit and a return on their investment. When profit is the guiding principle rather than high-quality and cheap-to-rent housing, tenants will continue to suffer.

The solution is a nationwide programme of mass council house building - high quality and well managed. We need consistent fast responses to any complaints and repairs, and for all existing stock to be brought up to the standards we deserve.

Council housing pays for itself. When it's good quality, it saves the NHS money. With lifelong tenancies, tenants more than pay the council back the cost of building the houses in the first place. It reduces the massive housing benefit bill caused by a combination of huge rents and low wages, which means we foot the bill for the profits of landlords. What is stopping Labour councils using their spending powers to build council homes now?

A decent home and a secure tenancy is the very least we deserve. We can't afford things to stay how they are. And we can't afford more privatisation.

Do you agree?

**JOIN THE
SOCIALISTS**

socialistparty.org.uk/join



When profit is the guiding principle rather than high-quality and cheap-to-rent housing, tenants will continue to suffer



The solution is a nationwide programme of mass council house building



PAUL MATTHEWSON

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on p14-15



9 771366 962103

ISSN 1366-9621