

# END TWO-CHILD BENEFIT CAP MAKE THE SUPER-RICH PAY

LINDSEY MORGAN  
BRISTOL SOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

**422,000** households went to bed last night affected by the two-child benefit cap. Many of those households will have parents who have skipped meals, spent a summer trying to keep children entertained when they only get benefit for two of them, exhausted with stress due to their finances.

Some of those children will go to school this September knowing that their parents are struggling, unable to concentrate on schoolwork due to lack of food, and themselves developing mental health problems due to poverty. With all that pressure on families, worsening pressure on services and all the workers trying to keep them going, you'd hope that they may be helped by the New Labour government. Many of them had said how disgusted they were with the cap - wringing their hands when they were the opposition. The message from the government so far has been that they're 'very sad' about it.

But politicians feeling sad doesn't pay the bills,

feed families, clothe them or pay for nappies. We're expected to settle for the sadness of politicians on £91,000 per year plus expenses - they really feel our struggles! And now Keir Starmer has warned that things are going to get worse before they get better! People are angry.

The two-child cap itself has been cynically used by some on the right to argue that 'we can't afford any migrants if we can't afford benefits for British-born children'. But as ever, this rhetoric is being used to force us to fight among ourselves for scraps from the table rather than looking at the real thieves in society - the super-rich.

The idea that we can't afford to pay for decent benefits for all families and children is a nonsense, based on the lie that there isn't enough money. Britain is the sixth-richest country in the world. The money is there to pay for all the things we need: council houses, fully funded NHS, winter fuel payments for pensioners and more. An immediate wealth tax on the super-rich could fund it. If the worry is the rich running away with their cash, then we should nationalise the banks and pay compensation only on the basis of proven need.

Labour has nationalised banks before. Maybe this time it could be to our benefit rather than the bankers and shareholders.

The fightback can't wait! Trade unions, community campaigners and all those willing to fight now for what we need must build a new workers' party - of us to fight for us. At every step we need to fight for what we deserve by putting all the wealth and resources in society under democratic working-class control.



the**Socialist**  
*formerly Militant*

Issue 1287  
29 August - 4 September 2024

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

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

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

**DEADLINES**  
Friday before publication, or Monday morning for urgent news, unless otherwise agreed with the editors.  
The Socialist goes to press on a Tuesday night. We publish online on Wednesday and in print on Thursday.

**SUBSCRIBE**  
to the Socialist for weekly working-class news, analysis and fighting strategy  
**socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe**  
● Paper subscription £4.50 a month, or £6.50 including Socialism Today  
● E-subscription £2.50 a month, or £4 including Socialism Today

**SOCIALISM TODAY**  
our monthly Marxist magazine  
**socialismtoday.org**  
● Paper sub £3 a month, e-sub £2.50

**SOCIALISM: THE PODCAST**  
weekly on all podcast platforms

**FOLLOW US**  
facebook.com/CWISocialistParty  
Instagram @SocialistPartyCWI  
YouTube - Socialist Party  
Twitter @Socialist\_Party

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



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

**OUR NEWSPAPER TEAM**  
**Editor of the Socialist** Josh Asker  
**Editorial staff** Scott Jones  
**socialistparty.org.uk** Ian Pattison  
Mark Best  
**Circulation manager** Paula Mitchell  
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**

# East London fire fuelled by profits and cuts

**PETE MASON**  
NEWHAM AND EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY AND  
CHAIR OF BARKING REACH RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

At 3am bank holiday Monday, a major fire consumed another London tower block covered in flammable cladding.

Residents pounded on their neighbours' doors to get them to flee, reporting that no fire alarms could be heard.

80 people fled into the street in Dagenham, east London, relying on each other for their safety. Firefighters risked their own lives to save 20 more survivors from the seven-storey building. Many have lost all their possessions, their children traumatised for life.

The London Fire Brigade shed 27 fire appliances, closed ten fire stations and cut 552 firefighters when Boris Johnson was London Mayor. Labour's Sadiq Khan has not reversed these cuts during his time in office, vital response times have increased to a record high.

A "horror movie", as one resident called it, has become reality once again due to the negligence of landlords and the big home building companies, and the criminal lobbying from major building firms and suppliers to get the government to relax fire safety requirements again and again.

The displaced residents from the almost totally burnt-out building must be properly housed immediately in empty properties such as nearby new builds, which should be co-opted from the landlords for the purpose. This is what we won after the Samuel Garside House fire on our estate in nearby Barking Riverside,



Protests against flammable cladding in Barking, east London PAUL MATTSSON

after a mass-based residents' association battle. We had another massive battle to get cladding removed without cost to residents of other blocks on our estate.

The Labour-run council, Labour Mayor and Labour government should ensure those battles aren't necessary for these residents, and set about immediate remedial works to remove unsafe cladding nationwide.

It has been over seven years since 70 people died in the Grenfell tower block fire, and five years since our fire yet, despite the known dangers, a great many buildings have yet to have dangerous flammable cladding removed, including this one in Freshwater Road.

Scaffolding had gone up to replace non-compliant cladding in Dagenham. But so have the profits of the

home building companies as they delay and prevaricate, and attempt to get residents to pay for remediation of a problem not of their making.

### Developers' deadly games

The boards of directors of the top ten home building companies, and the big landlords and their managing agents, have long since proven themselves to be guilty of playing a deadly game with people's lives. They need to be sacked.

The Socialist Party says: immediately nationalise the big home builders and landlords, with compensation paid only to those shareholders who can prove need. Elected bodies of tenants, housing workers and representatives of trade unions should democratically control and manage home building and planning.

All the land, the so-called 'land banks' held by big homebuilders and used to speculate up the price of both land and homes would become available.

Home prices could be based on actual material and in-house labour costs, slashing new home prices and rents. A plan for a genuine mass, nationwide home building programme could be developed to meet our needs, not for the profits of a few.

Safe, well-built, spacious, carbon neutral, and genuinely affordable homes could be built. In-house labour would remove the massive subcontracting profit element that multiplies prices and reduces both fire safety and the build quality – and would create thousands of well-paying building jobs.

# TRADE UNIONS MUST FIGHT NEW LABOUR AUSTERITY

## Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

When asked in a recent poll what was the best thing Keir Starmer's Labour government has done so far, most people answered 'public sector pay increases'. And that shouldn't come as a surprise after years of austerity, public services at breaking point and a devastating cost-of living crisis that isn't over yet. Average energy bills are set to go up by around £150 a year in October - just as pensioners will be losing their winter fuel payments.

But let's be clear, those inadequate pay rises haven't been given because Labour is a 'friend' of the unions, as sections of the mainstream media have been peddling. They are the direct result of workers standing up and taking strike action, 11 times in the case of the junior doctors, who won a 22% rise over two years.

Chancellor Rachel Reeves said it herself: better to pay up now than face the 'cost' of more strikes down the line.

### Striking works

But even 22% isn't enough to take junior doctors' pay back to the level it was before austerity kicked in. They would need at least another 12%. Around 5% for health workers, teachers, civil servants and other workers might be slightly more than most were initially expecting but goes nowhere near making up for the last 14 years of pay cuts and freezes. And it's certainly not enough to reverse the acute staffing crisis in the NHS, schools and other parts of the public sector.

What's more, in most cases even these offers won't be fully funded, so will have to come from 'efficiency savings' and 'increased productivity' - New Labour-speak for cuts, increased workload, deteriorating workplace conditions and public services ending up even worse than they are now.

For many local government workers, who have lost 20% of their pay over the last decade, their pay offer, made to them under the previous Tory government, is well below the 5% made to other workers.

As things stand, Reeves is planning a 'blood and tears' budget on 30 October. No extra money for local councils facing 'bankruptcy' - sacking more workers and decimating more libraries, children's centres and other services. Nothing to resolve the crisis in the universities. Forcing more children into poverty by refusing to scrap



the two-child benefit cap. The horror list goes on.

But the message that union leaders should be taking from the first few weeks of this Labour government is that when working-class people organise and fight back through strike action they can win. If given a determined lead, workers in the public sector will be confident that they can fight to win increases that go much further towards restoring what they lost under austerity, while defending public services for everyone.

Even capitalist economists have been arguing for some time that Reeves's tough 'fiscal rules' are self-imposed and that there is room for 'flexibility'. According to press leaks, she is already preparing to bend the rules slightly to release an extra £20 billion, in addition to possible increases in capital gains and/or inheritance tax.

This will be just a drop in the ocean given the scope of the crises. But the fact that she is even considering these measures so soon after the election is yet another sign that this

government can be pushed much further under pressure.

### Bosses vs workers

The key question is who can push the hardest - the bosses and the super-rich looking to maximise their wealth and profits, or the working class.

The struggle over workers' rights poses this starkly, with the bosses pressing Labour to water down their electoral promises even more than they already have. The lobby of the Trades Union Congress in Brighton, organised by the National Shop Stewards Network on 8 September, will be an important event in the fight to make sure the weight of the workers' movement prevails.

Where pay ballots for strike action are being organised - in local government for example - a resolute campaign needs to be waged to convince workers, who know that the pay offer is not enough, that the unions are serious about fighting to win and that Labour can be budged.

The left in the unions need to

organise to counter the idea, which some union leaders have argued, that workers should 'bank' these 'better than expected wage rises' as they are the best that can be achieved given the 'colossal mess' that Labour has inherited from the Tories.

The struggle for pay restoration and increased spending on public services and benefits can't be deferred to 'more favourable times'. It's not ok to 'wait and see' what Starmer and Reeves come up with further down the line. The advantage needs to be seized now while the memory of the strike wave and the gains made are still fresh in workers' minds.

It's not just our starved public services but the entire capitalist system that's broken. Better times are not on the horizon and working-class people have to fight tooth and nail to hold on to what we have and to force any concessions we can from the bosses and from Labour.

### Capitalist crisis

After being bottom of the G7 countries for investment for 24 out of the last 30 years, no amount of pricking and prodding the private sector via deregulation and very limited state funding through a national wealth fund and GB Energy will force the capitalists to invest, unless they have profitable markets for their goods and services. As one top executive of a building company told the Financial Times recently: "The reason we aren't building 1,000 or 2,000 more homes a year is because people aren't there to buy them".

With the world economy set to grow at levels well below the pre-2007-08 financial crash period, and intensifying global instability and rivalry between the main capitalist powers, prospects for capitalism in Britain and worldwide are bleak.

The far-right riots, erupting within just a few weeks of the election of Starmer's Labour government, are just warning shots of this volatile new era we are in. Even before the election, as the results testify, tens of thousands of workers had already drawn the conclusion that Labour no longer represents their interests. If the unions were to take the first steps towards building a political alternative it could rapidly build into a mass force to challenge Labour, the populist and far right, and to fight for the socialist change we need.

So far, the union leaders have stubbornly resisted such an initiative. But in this changed political landscape, more and more workers will inevitably come into direct conflict with Starmer's pro-capitalist government as it is compelled to attack them under the impact of economic crisis.

Those experiences will build pressure from below on the union leaders to break with Labour and to form or support a new workers' party - as the unions eventually broke from the capitalist Liberal Party in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in order to create the Labour Party to independently represent their class interests.

Even those union leaders who are today buying into and sowing the illusions of Labour being the workers' friend will find it difficult to resist the impact of the stormy battles to come.

Do you agree?  
**JOIN THE SOCIALISTS**  
**socialistparty.org.uk/join**



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

**nationalshop** **network**  
THE NSSN IS SUPPORTED BY THE FOLLOWING:

# LOBBY THE TUC

## KEEP THE PRESSURE ON TO SCRAP THE TORY ANTI-UNION LAWS

Sunday 8th September, 1pm  
at The Old Ship Hotel, 32-38  
Kings Rd, Brighton, BN1 1NR



# Jobs, homes, and services - not racism

## ● What happened in my union?

Socialist Party member **Bill North** explains what happened when he put the following motion to Brighton, Hove & District Trades Union Council.

**B**righton Trades Council had decided not to have a meeting in August – traditionally a difficult month to get people together. But that changed after the horrific events in Southport on 29 July, and the violent protests that followed.

A few hours before the meeting, I emailed a copy of our model trade union motion – which had just been published on the Socialist Party website – to the trades council secretary, with the comment: “I’d like to propose that the trades council circulates the following model resolution – which is supported by the Socialist Party – to delegates, affiliates, and the wider movement, as part of our discussion on how to combat the threat from the far right”.

### More than a ‘wrong idea’

This proposal became the main item discussed at the meeting. No one at the meeting opposed any part of the motion. The meeting agreed that

we’d vote on it to become trades council policy, not just circulate it to branches etc.

In moving the motion, I emphasised that racism is not just a ‘wrong idea’. It is a weapon used by the bosses to divide workers by blaming ‘others’ for the very real problems that workers face.

That is why it is absolutely necessary to combat the far right with socialist policies – summed up in the slogan ‘jobs, homes and services not racism’.

There’ll be another trades union council meeting in early September. And I’ll propose that we produce a leaflet with a clear ‘jobs and homes, not racism’ position.



Far right seen off in Crawley

## Unite to end racism

A United Nations (UN) committee has “expressed its concern” about racism in Britain. Its report is a long list of all of the horrific consequences of a system built on exploitation and division.

As well as police racism and extremist far-right violence, it also points the finger at the “xenophobic rhetoric” from “political and public figures.” That would include the previous Tory ministers spending months and years talking exclusively about people on small boats while we all suffered a devastating cost-of-living crisis.

## Farage fraud

No doubt Nigel Farage is another one of those that they are referring to, the man who is earning more than a million pounds a year in addition to his MPs salary, all the while peddling

the fraud that he is an anti-establishment ‘man of the people’.

## Labour too

But it’s not just him and the Tories. Labour is promising to reopen two immigration detention centres, locking up vulnerable people fleeing war and oppression to wait in a growing queue to find out their fate. Already short-staffed and underfunded by the Tories, Labour is promising more cuts to the civil service.

## Racist police

The UN report calls for the government “to set up an independent complaint mechanism to investigate allegations of racial profiling, stop-and-search practices, strip searches, and excessive use of force by police.” Meanwhile, ten black Metropolitan Police officers told the BBC that racism is getting worse, not better.

The Socialist Party calls for working-class democratic control of policing, to give control over policies and priorities, including firing and hiring, to our communities.

## Unite and fight the bosses

The UN is right, Britain has huge problems that need addressing. But we can’t rely on the UN to do anything about it. Instead, workers of all backgrounds need to fight together against our common enemy – the super-rich bosses – for decent public services, council homes, a well-paid secure job, and everything we all need.

To bring an end to racism for good means standing firm against it whenever and wherever it raises its ugly head. It also means fighting to end the exploitative capitalist system that has racism baked in, and bring about the socialist transformation of society.

## Pass this model motion in your union

- This union branch/trades council condemns the violent protests called by far-right and fascist groups
- They have sought to exploit the horrific incident in Southport on 29th July
- We send support and solidarity to all those affected by that attack, especially the families of those killed or injured
- With absolutely no evidence and on the basis of deliberate misinformation, the far-right have targeted refugees, migrant workers and the Black and Asian and Muslim communities

### THIS UNION BRANCH/TRADES COUNCIL BELIEVES:

- That it is essential that the trade union movement plays the leading role in building a united movement against the far right. This is especially the case as history has shown the far-right and fascist forces have targeted unions and striking workers
- With 6.5 million members, across all working-class communities, the unions can unite workers against racist division which weakens our movement and only assists the bosses
- But this requires a militant industrial and political programme
- The strike wave over the last few years has shown that workers and their unions are prepared and able to fight to defend jobs and living standards, and when they do so, they become a pole of attraction for all those suffering from austerity
- The vote for Reform is a warning of how vital it is to build a working-class political voice that fights for socialist policies. The new Starmer-led Labour government has announced cuts affecting parents and pensioners, showing its intention of continuing austerity. A party based on the organised working class that fought

for anti-racist, anti-war, socialist policies – for the pay, jobs, homes and services we all need in order to prevent the far-right harnessing growing anger of working-class people with Starmer’s Labour

- It is therefore necessary that such a movement fights for the policies that can transform the lives of working-class people, including on jobs, pay, housing, the NHS and education, after decades of neoliberal policies of successive governments. Motion 44 passed at TUC Congress in 2018 launched a “Jobs, Homes, Not Racism campaign to unite the wider trade union movement and to campaign effectively against the far right.”

### THIS UNION BRANCH/TRADES COUNCIL DEMANDS:

- That the TUC and the unions call an emergency national Saturday demonstration on the theme: ‘Workers unity not division – jobs and homes not racism’
- That where the far right call protests in localities, the trade union movement – including unions, regional TUCs, local union branches and trades councils – takes the lead in organising counter-protests, linking up with migrant, refugees and any targeted communities as well as anti-racist and anti-fascist organisations
- That all such protests are well stewarded by trade unions to guard against any threat from far-right groups
- That the unions fight to compel the Labour Government to implement pro-worker policies and if it does not do so, the unions will call a conference to discuss the building of a political vehicle for workers

● If your union branch/trades council passes this motion - let us know. [editors@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:editors@socialistparty.org.uk)

## Labour increases energy bills and bosses profit

Keir Starmer has said ‘there is a deep rot in the heart of British institutions.’ I assumed he meant the Labour Party and the fact that its MPs have declared tens of thousands of pounds of donations from energy companies since the election, the government

subsequently hiking households’ energy bills by £149 a year on average.

As recently as 2023, Labour pledged an immediate freeze on prices. That’s changed now they are in office getting their MP’s salary of £91,000 plus travel, living, eating, heating and office costs covered, with cabinet ministers earning £158,000, also with cushy expenses.

MPs should take the average wage of a skilled worker, like Militant MP, now Socialist Party National Committee member, Dave Nellist did in the 1980s. We need a workers’ MP on a workers’ wage, not fat cats in suits who laugh in our faces every time they go to the bank at our expense.

To add insult to injury, last year

the eye-watering bonuses of the ‘big six’ energy bosses totalled enough to power 23,000 homes for an entire year! By cutting CEO’s pay, companies like Shell and Paypoint could save money, they could also spend less paying for the breaking and entering of 4,000 homes to install pre-payment meters.

And when they’re found to have broken so-called market rules on competition set by ineffectual government regulator Ofgem, they are told to donate a few million quid to Ofgem’s ‘voluntary redress fund’.

Labour has planned tiny tweaks to the windfall tax on oil and gas profits, increasing it to 75% to 78%, extending it until 2030 and removing some

tax breaks. Bosses of 42 fossil fuel companies have written an open letter threatening to pull £200 billion of investment, including into green energy.

While a small number of super-rich capitalists keep their hands on the industry, they will continue to profit at our expense while destroying the environment. You can’t regulate what you don’t own. We need nationalisation not devastation, take over the huge energy companies under workers’ democratic control, with no compensation for the polluting fat-cats, only where there is proven need.

MAX MCGEE

NUNEATON SOCIALIST PARTY

## SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

September issue includes...

- Lightning flashes
- and what to do?
- After the far-right riots
- Gender in crisis?

[socialismtoday.org/subscribe](https://socialismtoday.org/subscribe)  
020 8988 8777

- Paper sub £3 a month, e-sub £2.50





# Birmingham: Make Commonwealth flats 100% council homes, Make no cuts!

Perry Barr Regeneration, what was supposed to be the Perry Barr Athletes Village PHOTO: ELLIOTT BROWN/CC



**CLIVE WALDER**  
BIRMINGHAM SOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Brutal cuts to services worth hundreds of millions of pounds, and a 21% council tax hike. Now Birmingham City Council is selling off accommodation built to house athletes at the 2022 Commonwealth Games at a loss of £320 million.

The apartments were built too late to serve their intended purpose, because of delays caused by lockdown, and have stood empty ever since. The council has been paying to heat and secure them since, deriving no revenue.

Brummies have been told that the Games made a profit, but this particular development cost £325 million, of which £292 million was borrowed. After selling off the homes, it is expected that up to £152 million of

debt will remain unpaid.

The council said it would be homes for local people after the Games finished but now they consider that this sale is the best option. All the council will get is a mere 213 units for social housing when there are 23,000 households on the waiting list for social housing in the city.

Incredibly, the council states it has been unable to sell the flats due to a lack of "market appetite" for one- and two-bedroom apartments in the area. Try telling that to people on the housing waiting list!

The loss will be paid for by cuts to even more local services. The way to stop that is to fight against all the cuts carried out by the Labour council, under orders from unelected government-appointed commissioner, Max 'the axe' Caller.

Ayoub Khan, the independent MP

for Perry Barr, where the apartments are located, has called on the Labour government to provide funding so that all 968 homes can be kept council-owned, rather than selling them off to serve private investors' profits.

Until 4 July, the Labour council could try to hide behind the fact that the Tory government wouldn't provide the money. This no longer applies; it's 'their' government in power now.

Khan is right, and we should be demanding that the Labour government recalls the Tory-appointed commissioners and comes up with the cash to fully fund services and build more council homes to help solve Birmingham's chronic housing crisis.

If the existing councillors won't stand up for us, then they should be challenged by anti-cuts candidates at the 2026 council elections.

## Probation is in crisis, it needs funding now

**ADAM HARMSWORTH**  
NAPO VICE CHAIR FAMILY COURTS,  
PERSONAL CAPACITY

The planned early release of thousands of prisoners to relieve pressure on the overstretched prison service is set to overstretch the probation service, and has alarmed many probation workers.

This is a crisis years in the making. Alongside over a decade of real-terms pay cuts, probation also went through disastrous part-privatisation before being stitched back together under state control.

The result is a horrifying shortage of staff, and an abysmal work situation for probation workers. The latest

figures show a vacancy rate of just under 30%. Up to 2,000 prisoners are being released at once in September, then up to 1,700 in October. This is a dangerous situation to begin an early release scheme.

Many ex-prisoners are already not supported properly by probation, creating more risk of harm to the public. This has even been said by the Criminal Justice Inspectorate, the National Audit Office, and Public Accounts Committee.

A Napo official told The Guardian: "The government must take urgent action to invest in the whole system". Labour has re-opened pay talks following demands from the probation unions, but there is no mention of

investment yet or any substantial change. The unions' joint workloads campaign Operation Protect hasn't been seriously acknowledged.

In the short term, probation can only begin to operate safely again with significant investment. Unions must press for significant above-inflation pay rises like that awarded to junior doctors, and challenge Labour's "black hole" narrative. Operation Protect must be built as a serious campaign engaging with all branches of the probation unions, to set the groundwork for industrial action if Labour doesn't deliver. Only serious investment will immediately help to heal the wound of over 2,000 vacant probation officer roles.

## Save pensioners' Winter Fuel Payment from Labour axe

**CLARE WILKINS**  
SECRETARY EAST MIDLANDS NATIONAL  
PENSIONERS' CONVENTION (PERSONAL CAPACITY)  
AND SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

**D**espite having no expectations for Starmer's Labour government to do anything to improve the lives of working-class people, the speed of their attack on pensioners was a shock.

Axing the Winter Fuel Payment for pensioners who do not get Pension Credit and reneging on a pre-election promise to cap care costs are a huge blow.

Britain has the lowest state pension in Europe. Over 2 million live in poverty. The Tory government froze the tax threshold till 2028 and Labour has said it will keep it frozen. 9 million of 12 million pensioners already pay tax. In 2028, those who only receive the state pension will be paying tax too. The frozen tax threshold hits pensioners and low-paid workers hardest.

The Tories and the media have attacked Labour for prioritising public sector workers' pay over pensioners. But the Tories consistently threatened not to honour the Pension Triple Lock, removed free TV licences from the over-75s and threatened free prescriptions.

Rachel Reeves has said that she has discovered an unexpected £20 billion 'black hole' in government

finances and used this as an excuse to further attack pensioners. Even just collecting unpaid tax from the super-rich would fill this 'hole' many times over!

In October, the energy price cap will rise by 10% and fuel prices will remain high. Even more pensioners will have to choose between heating and eating. There will be even more pressure on the NHS and care, and tragically there will be even more excess deaths (last year there were 5,000, despite the existence of the Winter Fuel Payment and other government help).

The money is there to keep the Winter Fuel Payment, cap energy prices and raise the tax threshold in line with inflation! It is not a choice between workers' wages or pensioners' payments. Workers should have decent pay and conditions and pensioners decent pensions. We have to safeguard and improve pensions for now and the future,

Workers and pensioners need to campaign together to get the Labour government to reverse the decision in the 30 October budget.

- *An Age UK petition already has over 440,000 signatures*
- *The National Pensioners Convention is calling on the trade unions and TUC to join in the campaign to reverse the decision, and to join a lobby of Parliament on Tuesday 29 October*





# PCS: NEC majority strives for a fighting strategy against general secretary and president blockage

In May, members of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) elected a campaigning National Executive Committee (NEC) – a coalition for change. But this new NEC majority has so far been blocked by the general secretary and president, both of whom are in the misnamed Left Unity group.

At an emergency NEC on 27 August, the NEC majority submitted the motion below, rejecting the government’s 5% pay remit and preparing a strategy to campaign.

At the meeting, yet again, the national president, Martin Cavanagh, ruled out the motions and amendments from the NEC majority coalition. This is an outrageous abuse of presidential powers, which has again prevented full open and democratic discussion at the leading elected lay body of the union.

This is why there are growing calls for a Special Delegate Conference to allow reps and members to debate the way forward on vital issues such as pay, jobs, pensions and cuts, and to reassert democratic lay control over the union leadership.

As we go to press the NEC is meeting, and a full report will follow.



PHOTO: PAUL MATTISSON

## The motion they ruled out Motion from the NEC majority to the emergency August NEC

This NEC notes that despite having no agreement from the NEC, the general secretary (GS) has circulated her views to members regarding pay, namely:

- That the 5% pay remit should be accepted
- The national campaign should be abandoned
- Delegated pay talks should go ahead

The NEC further notes the general secretary confirmed in her reply to the debate which took place at the 17 July NEC, her opposition to the alternative strategy which had been proposed. She deliberately failed to notify members in her recent email of that alternative, nor that the president refused to allow this to be discussed or put to the vote. Rather, he proceeded to close the meeting.

The alternative strategy included:

- The Civil Service pay remit of 5% to be rejected nationally
- Demands posed by conference motion A315 - considering previous conference policies such as the reduction in the working week - are placed without delay

The NEC notes that the senior lay reps’ forums [SLRF] accepted the NEC majority position that the remit of 5% is not enough, and that other elements of the national campaign should have been pursued. Concerns were raised that the lack of funding for the pay remit will mean cuts in jobs and services, burdening an

already overworked and underfunded workforce.

The NEC agrees we:

- Urgently seek further meetings with the Cabinet Office to make clear that 5% is not enough
- Reopen discussions on the remit and PCS’s other negotiating priorities
- Ensure the negotiating team reflects the views of the NEC and that the Senior Officers Committee [SOC] should determine the composition of that team

The NEC shares the concerns expressed at the Senior Lay Rep meetings and asserts that the failure of the GS to appropriately press PCS’ demands on pay and other priorities, combined with the president’s obstruction of any alternative to the GS proposals, has created a situation whereby reps feel they have little choice but to engage in delegated pay bargaining talks. Unhelpfully, the national MAB [briefing] instructing negotiators not to engage in delegated talks was distributed without the agreement of and prior to the NEC meeting to consider its response to the pay remit. This instruction (in line with those issued in previous years) would have been correct had the GS told the employer that 5% is unacceptable and committed to building a campaign capable of winning, rather than a cynical attempt to undermine the NEC.

Given the actions of the national president and the general secretary, the NEC can only conclude that they have no intention of allowing any debate which will lead to a strategy which would prepare the ground for the battles that will come on jobs, pay and conditions. The committee believes this to be an abuse of power and an affront to our democratic traditions.

Given this context, the NEC believes that it is in the best interests of our members to proceed with delegated talks and agrees to:

- Authorise reps to engage in delegated pay talks
- Notify groups and national branches without delay
- Produce guidance for pay negotiators that makes clear they must continue to challenge the pay remit in line with union policies, including that PCS does not accept the 5% pay remit, the lack of progression, eradication of low pay, alongside seeking to secure the best possible outcome for members. Full disclosure must be sought from employers as to how pay will be funded given there is no new money
- Ensure the NEC is notified of progress and outcomes of delegated discussions
- Pledge full support to any area that wishes to exercise its strike mandate and/or ballot areas who wish to move into dispute on pay and/or pay related issues

The NEC notes some reps at the SLRF questioned the need for the levy, which was imposed by the previous NEC without any consultation. The NEC understands these concerns but also recognises the need to build the union’s current fighting fund which is not sufficient to support the action we can anticipate in support of our national campaign.

The NEC agrees to:

- Instruct the GS to write to the minister making it clear that PCS rejects the “up to 5%” set out in the pay remit, set out why we are not content with the guidance, state that we expect any pay award to be fully funded. This letter will be agreed with the SOC and published to members
- That the levy should continue, but at a reduced rate of £1 for our lowest-paid members effective immediately, i.e. those earning below £25,000. Additionally, the review, already agreed by the NEC, should begin immediately. Income from a reduced rate of 50p, £1 and £2 is to be modelled and shared with the NEC urgently, and a final decision taken by the National Disputes Committee. Thereafter a wider review of the levy to commence, overseen by the National Disputes Committee with proposals put to the NEC in advance of the November meeting

## Aslef train drivers’ pay offer - Striking works!

After 18 strike days since July 2022, plus overtime bans - with union members voting for action repeatedly in the reballots demanded by Tory anti-union legislation - Aslef train drivers’ union has put a pay offer from the new Labour government to members, with a recommendation from the leadership to accept.

The pay offer of 14.25% covers three years, with backdated rises for 2022-23 and 2023-24, plus 4.5% for 2024-25. That means it still does not recover pay lost in real terms over that time. But Aslef says the offer does not include the attacks on terms and conditions that were attached to previous offers under the Tories.



PHOTO: NICK HART

### KRIS O’SULLIVAN, ASLEF MEMBER, SAYS:

After five years of no pay increase during one of the worst cost-of-living crises, and being key workers during Covid ...

After two years of industrial action, making countless sacrifices both financial and personal ...

After multiple attempts to break our union through threatened use of minimum service levels legislation (MSLs) and media spin ...

And after four prime ministers and five transport secretaries ...

Aslef members up and down the country should be proud of making it to an actual pay offer - they’ve fought for it!

Unity and solidarity have proven yet again that workers are stronger together collectively as a class and as a union.

We have only got this far because of our action - Starmer’s Labour government is under pressure and trying to avoid more strikes. Hopefully this will inspire workers in other sectors to fight for more!

## GPs taking action: ‘Protect patients, not the system’

GPs in the British Medical Association (BMA) in England are taking unprecedented industrial action in a fight for sufficient funding. The BMA explains that “General Practice is collapsing. Every practice across England is struggling to keep its doors open.” GP practices receive just £107.57 per year for each patient, whatever their health needs.

The Socialist Party argues that the ‘bigger slice’ of NHS funding for GP practices that the BMA demands should be achieved by increased funding for the whole of the NHS and an end to the privatisation that leaches billions from the health service every year.

### A ROTHERHAM GP REPORTS

After an overwhelming 98.3% of general practice BMA members voting ‘yes’ to collective industrial action, Rotherham GPs have started to implement this into practice. We are united in this fight and are very confident that we have very strong bargaining power.

My practice has now begun limiting the number of patient contacts back to a safe level of 25 patients per GP a day. We will not be rationing referrals, investigations and admissions, and will refer anyone based on clinical need.

GP Connect (digital data sharing) has been switched off, and so the wholesale sharing and selling of patient personal data will no longer be permitted.

These are a few of the steps we are taking to highlight the value of general practice within the NHS and our aims to protect our patients rather than the system.

## Sheffield bin strike for union recognition



PHOTO: ALISTAIR TICE

ALISTAIR TICE  
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

Following a one-week strike at the beginning of August, Unite members working at Veolia bin depot at Lumley Street in Sheffield began an indefinite strike for union recognition on 20 August.

Now representing around half the workforce, Unite is demanding

recognition alongside the GMB union. Unfortunately GMB members are still working, meaning the strike action will need to be sustained to have a cumulative effect.

Unite members are up for the fight, putting pressure on the GMB and the council to support recognition and not allow a very bullying, victimising Veolia management to divide and rule.

# Unison: Vote ‘yes’ in the local government pay ballot



PHOTO: ROGER THOMAS

ANGIE WALLER  
KIRKLEES UNISON STEWARD, PERSONAL CAPACITY

More than one million local government workers in Unison are about to be balloted on pay after the derisory pay offer from the previous Tory government of £1,290.

This came after the National Joint Council (NJC) of recognised local government unions put in a claim of £3,000 or 10%, whichever was the greater. Unison conducted a digital consultative ballot in June which overwhelmingly rejected the offer.

Local government workers have

faced more than ten years of below-inflation pay rises. For many, this has meant they have lost 25% from the value of their pay since 2010. The cost-of-living crisis is pushing our members further into debt. The cost of food, travel, rents and mortgages all overtook the pay increase in the last year. Alongside this, local government pay is still among the lowest in the public sector. Unison demands a minimum of £15 an hour.

Council workers have seen successful strikes across different parts of the public sector, such as the doctors and train drivers, and this will give them confidence to strike for

## DWP security guards in G4S strike for decent pay and conditions

### Bring workers back in-house!



PHOTO: HACKNEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Security guards in DWP offices in GMB and PCS unions have been on strike over pay and conditions. These workers do a difficult and dangerous job and 90% of them are paid just the minimum wage of £11.44 an hour.

The GMB began action in May, subsequently joined by PCS. The strikes involve continuous action for a week then a week’s pause. The action has been well supported in many areas and has forced DWP to close offices and Jobcentres.

As well as struggling on low pay, security guards are expected to work a Saturday shift for a flat-rate payment and are being asked to take more duties on for the same pay. Team leaders have also seen their pay drastically cut.

One of the concerns is over training. G4S does not build in enough time to complete the required training, and doesn’t always provide adequate IT for online training. Poor quality

equipment is another issue – including workers using their own phones because walkie-talkies don’t work.

Yet management are prepared to bring in agency staff without training or proper equipment, and on higher rates of pay, to try to break the dispute! Workers face disciplinary action if they don’t wear body cameras, yet agency staff are not required to wear them.

It is reported that G4S has received over £250 million in funding from the DWP, with £190 million for security wages alone, since the strike began, so G4S can easily afford to offer a backdated cost-of-living increase.

more - and equally they will expect more from the Labour government.

The previous two years saw most NJC unions accept a flat-rate increase of £1,925. This below-inflation increase was rejected by Unison and Unite members in ballots for national industrial action, but they only passed the Tory anti-union 50% turnout threshold in a small number of branches so there was no national fight.

### Learn lessons

This year, it is important to learn the lessons from this. Under the pressure of active branches, Unison organised a pay seminar where branches like Lambeth and Knowsley could share their tactics on reaching the 50%.

With this in mind, it is essential that the Unison leadership raises the tempo of this dispute and demands that Starmer’s Labour meets Unison’s local government claim in full.

The ballot starts in September and ends in October. A ‘yes’ vote with over 50% turnout in the majority of branches is what is needed to put the pressure on Labour to deliver the full pay claim.

An improved pay offer would also give confidence to many members that are currently fighting for their jobs and services against council cuts and redundancies – especially in the light of increasing numbers of Section 114 ‘bankruptcy’ notices. We need to prepare for a campaign, coordinated with other public sector unions, that could force the Labour government not only to pay up, but also give the councils the funding they need.

G4S has now announced plans to cut the number of security guards across the Jobcentre network.

Members we spoke to agreed with the PCS demand that the work should be brought in-house. The DWP contract with G4S is due to end in April 2025. PCS and GMB should put demands on the Labour government to bring this security work back into the DWP rather than opening up the new tendering process.

● **As we go to press, GMB has suspended the next planned action due to a new offer, but the PCS strike days from 27 August are going ahead**



# UKRAINE FORCES INVADE RUSSIAN KURSK REGION - A DANGEROUS TWIST

NIALL MULHOLLAND  
COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL

In a dramatic twist to the Russia-Ukraine war, Kyiv ordered its armed forces into the Kursk region of Russia on the 6 August. This marks the first serious incursion into Russian territory since the Nazi invasion in 1941, which will not be lost on millions of stunned Russians.

The Ukraine army advance, involving a number of brigades and experienced troops, claims it has conquered 1,000 square kilometres of Russian soil and is advancing a few kilometres a day, capturing hundreds of Russian soldiers. Jubilant Ukrainian troops have videoed themselves in some of 80 Russian villages captured, as well as the town of Sudzha, pulling down Russian flags and replacing them with Ukrainian flags. Drone attacks on Russian airfields and air defences give cover to the invasion. Hundreds of thousands of Russian civilians have fled the advancing Ukrainian army in the western Russian region, creating another refugee crisis in the two countries.

The Ukrainian armed invasion is a major embarrassment for Russian president Vladimir Putin's regime, which has had Ukrainian forces on the back foot in eastern Ukraine for months. Moscow was taken by surprise by the Ukrainian army's advance as the vulnerability of its vast borders was exposed. Putin has tried to downplay the major Ukraine assault on Russian territory as 'terrorism' and 'a provocation'. After the initial shock,

Russian forces responded, and a week of heavy fighting took place. It is reported that Russian forces are building extensive trench battlements ahead of the advancing Ukraine troops. A significant rise in military engagements in the region is likely, with large-scale casualties.

The Ukraine president, Volodymyr Zelensky, ordered the occupation of Russian territory from a position of weakness, as Russian forces have made slow but steady advances in the Donbass and eastern regions of Ukraine. Morale among Ukraine armed forces was reportedly falling, raising conscripts proved difficult, and large parts of the Ukraine population have been more open to a peace settlement as the war has dragged on since early 2022, with no sign of forcing Russian forces out of the Donbass region or Crimea.

Despite large-scale financial and military hardware funding of the Ukraine war effort from Nato powers, Zelensky has publicly bemoaned that it was not enough to turn the tide in the war with Putin's regime. The Kyiv regime is also concerned that a return of the Republicans to the White House would see President Trump acting on his threat to quickly bring the war to an end without a withdrawal of Russian forces, so as to pivot US imperialism more firmly against China.

## Reckless gamble

While the incursion into Russia has lifted morale in the Ukraine armed forces and wider population in Ukraine, it is a reckless gamble by the

Zelensky regime, with potentially far-reaching consequences. It appears that, as well as an attempt to improve troop confidence and facilitate prisoner of war swaps, the main motive for the invasion into the Kursk region is to try and alter the balance of forces on the battlefield in Ukraine. On that front, events are not going well for Zelensky. At the time of writing, Moscow's forces are advancing rapidly towards Potrovsk, a "defensive stronghold and a key logistics hub" in the eastern Donetsk region. The town's "capture would compromise Ukraine's defensive abilities and supply routes and bring Russia closer than ever to its stated aim of capturing the whole region", according to the Guardian newspaper.

Kyiv hopes that Moscow will be forced to withdraw significant numbers of soldiers and war machinery from the frontlines back into Russia to contend with the unexpected incursion. While there are big questions over whether Ukraine has the forces and equipment to maintain its gains long term, Zelensky has hinted that his hand will be strengthened by the Ukrainian army's land grab in Russia in any future negotiations with Moscow. Mykhailo Podolyak, an aide to Zelensky, said on Telegram that Ukraine's lightning offensive into several Russian border regions is designed to persuade Moscow to engage in a "fair negotiation process".

Western powers have publicly reacted with surprise at the latest military developments and raised some concerns, but have also given implicit support to the Ukrainian occupation of parts of the Kursk region. Moreover, Western-supplied armoured vehicles and air defences are being used by Ukraine forces inside Russia.

The British Ministry of Defence has given permission for its weapons to be used in operation on Russian territory, albeit with restrictions on the use of long-range Storm Shadow missiles remain, for the time being. Whether Western imperialist countries knew beforehand about Kyiv's plans is an open question. A major Nato conference took place just weeks before the land incursion and western military personnel are stationed in Ukraine as advisors and trainers. Is it possible that such a large-scale military operation was not discussed between Zelensky and his Western allies?

These developments mark a new stage in the widening of the war and the 'normalisation' of military actions by much of the media and governments that would have been unthinkable to most people in Europe and across the world not so long ago. As well as the biggest war in Europe since World War Two, we now have a



PHOTO: MOD UKRAINE/CC

significant invasion of Russian territory with at least tacit Western backing. This is a serious and dangerous ratcheting up of the conflict. Local and potentially regional wars - as we see possibly developing in the Middle East - are now lodged in the world situation, as part and parcel of the crises of the system of capitalism and the increasing tensions and open conflicts between imperialist powers.

So far, Putin has limited his response to the incursion with threats that it will be repelled decisively. He has not yet repeated threats of a nuclear armed response. Previously, Putin warned that foreign armed attacks on Russian soil was a 'red line' that could provoke all potential military options. Nevertheless, Putin may resort to such blood curdling threats again should Ukraine forces continue to make significant advances, putting Russia's 'territorial integrity' under an 'existential threat'. Some Western commentators nervous about Ukraine's incursion ominously warn that if Moscow feels its back is to the wall it could take more drastic action militarily. This can include, once again, they claim, attacking a nuclear power plant, following a fire at a plant earlier in the war which they allege was purposefully carried out by Russian forces.

It is likely that Putin will aim to assemble such a military force in the Kursk region as to push back the Ukrainian forces beyond the border to avoid getting bogged down in another drawn out 'meat grinder' conflict, this time on Russian soil. However there are reports that Russia lacks ample

reserves to divert to expel Ukraine forces at this stage. While the Russian economy has been turned into a 'war economy', there are signs it is overheating and faces a growing labour shortage.

On the other side, Zelensky faces the danger that his forces will be overstretched. He could be forcibly driven out of Kursk and lose so many troops and equipment that it will dent the Ukraine army's ability to stop Russian advances in eastern Ukraine.

The outcome of the conflict in the Kursk region is therefore open. As the Financial Times (London) puts it: "Ukraine's advance into Russia may yet turn out to be a turning point, a strategic blunder, or neither".

## The war's broader context

Zelensky and his Western backers have taunted Putin that he is now getting a taste of his own medicine. It is true that Moscow launched an unjustifiable bloody invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. However, for Marxists it is not just a question of who pulled the trigger first but the wider context that explains the causes of wars and what approach socialists should take. After the collapse of the former Soviet Union, a gangster-capitalist regime that looted the state-owned sectors came to power in a chaotic Russia and the living standards of millions of workers plummeted.

Western imperialism saw the opportunity of a hugely weakened foe to expand its power and influence eastwards, as part of its aim to exploit huge natural resources and hundreds

of millions of workers. A number of former Stalinist states joined Nato, up to the borders of Russia. The ruling elite in Russia posed this as a long-term existential threat. They warned the Russian population with the example of the dismemberment of Yugoslavia by meddling Western powers whipping up local ethnic and national animosities.

Later, the tensions between Western imperialism and the rise of a more assertive Russian imperialism, as the Russian economy re-grew largely due to its oil wealth, found its sharpest expression in Ukraine and the struggle between different factions of the ruling oligarchy. The country has a large ethnic Russian minority, mainly in the traditionally industrialised east of the country and in Crimea.

This led to mass protests and violent clashes, including the 'Orange revolution' of late 2004/early 2005, that were manipulated by contending oligarchs and their political representatives. A succession of unstable, authoritarian and corrupt pro-Western and pro-Russian governments were followed by violent street battles in Maidan Square, Kyiv, in late 2013, and the coming to power of a pro-Western regime in 2014. Russia then annexed the majority ethnically Russian Crimea. The eastern parts of Ukraine around the Donbass region also declared separation from Kyiv, with Moscow's support. Fierce fighting ensued between Ukraine armed forces and Russian-backed fighters in the Donbass region up to the 24 February 2022 invasion by Putin, who said he drew a red line at Ukraine joining Nato.

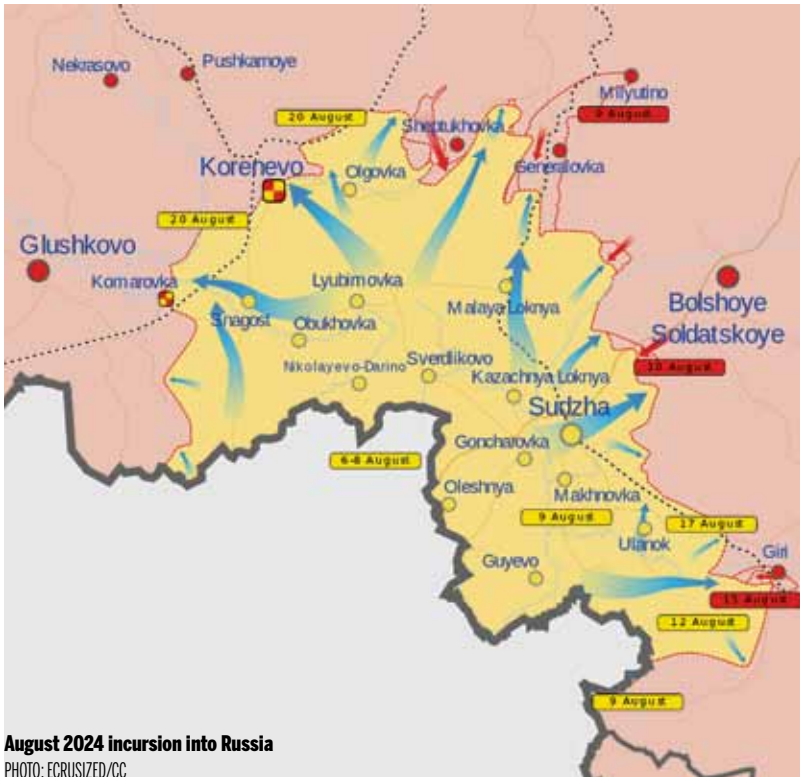
Putin probably hoped that a quick military victory over the Ukraine regime would force the Western powers to change policy. Instead, his reactionary regime faced a Ukraine army that had been rearmed and upgraded by the West. Russia got bogged down in a drawn-out conflict at a huge cost in human life and infrastructure on both sides.

For the working class of Ukraine and Russia, capitalist restoration and the ensuing conflicts between factions of oligarchs and their outside imperialist backers have only heaped disaster upon catastrophe.

The Committee for a Workers' International supports an immediate end to the war, for which young Ukraine and Russian soldiers and civilians on both sides pay with their blood, and for all foreign troops to leave both Ukraine and Russian territory. The people of Donbass and Crimea should be allowed to determine their future in a genuinely democratic way, free of all coercion. A socialist Ukraine and a socialist Russia, as part of a genuinely voluntary federation of equal states in the region, is the only long-term solution to poverty, exploitation, ethnic division and wars.

Building independent workers' organisations and working-class unity is a prerequisite to reaching these goals and a common struggle to oppose all the capitalist gangsters and their imperialist backers, and for a socialist society - a democratically planned economy - to transform living conditions.

● Article published online on 17 August 2024



August 2024 incursion into Russia  
PHOTO: ECRUSIZED/CC

A WEEKEND TO DISCUSS HOW TO

# BUILD THE SOCIALIST OPPOSITION

9&10 NOVEMBER,  
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, LONDON

SOCIALISM

2024

**Tickets and info:**  
socialism.org.uk  
or scan here:

Presented by

**Socialist Party**  
www.socialistparty.org.uk





## WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

### WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

### PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

### ENVIRONMENT

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

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

### DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

### SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

## JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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

to find out more today!

Help fund the fightback!

## DONATE TODAY

[socialistparty.org.uk/donate](https://socialistparty.org.uk/donate)



# SPS Technologies worker speaks out



UNITE THE UNION MEMBER SPS TECHNOLOGIES, LEICESTER

SPS Technologies makes parts for aerospace and the defence industry.

In January-February 2020 - the start of the pandemic - we were given notice that 200 people were to be made redundant and that our terms and conditions were to change. Effectively, fire and rehire.

In March-April 2021, we replied with an all-out strike. At the end of it, we were better off than if we hadn't struck, but we are still worse off now than before 2021.

Since that strike, we have had two wage negotiations both for two-year deals, both ending with a ballot for all-out strike action. Both disputes were settled at the eleventh hour, when we were about to be pushed over the edge into the abyss of more unwanted industrial action.

What is it with employers, money-men, that make them treat you not as a person but as a commodity, an outlay, a consequential cost to them making even more money?

Both negotiations could have been settled months before, but they dragged on and on, damaging relationships both with management and work colleagues. All of the falling out with some of our workmates, all

of the uncertainty for our future, all the anxiety of 'what happens next', could have been avoided.

Unions are democratic and we go with what the majority of members vote for. It's not about division. If it is not the outcome the company wants then they should get back round the table and not let negotiations fester.

I work for a profitable aerospace company that is owned by one of the richest men in the world - Warren Buffett. Do they really have no idea?

"Everyone goes out on strike for different reasons," we were told by management. "Some people want a two-week break, some people haven't been on strike before and want to see what it's like, some of you might have jobs to do at home!"

Yet, we all know the real reasons why we make a stand, together in solidarity. Who else do we have to help us through the cost-of-living crisis? Who else will better our terms and conditions? Who else will stand and fight in our corner? We have no one but ourselves.

We won a ballot for strike action this year and management came back with a better pay offer which the union recommend we accept. 65% voted for and 35% against. I think if we had held out we could have got more.

# Labour's ten-year rent robbery pledge

SUZANNE MUNA  
SOCIAL HOUSING ACTION CAMPAIGN AND SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

The new Labour government has tied its colours firmly to the landlord mast with a declaration that social landlords (both housing associations and councils) will be allowed to raise rents above inflation for the next decade. It is a guarantee to housing associations that, no matter what happens in the economy, they will enjoy an inflation-busting rental income stream.

The announcement in The Times by new Labour Chancellor Rachel Reeves did not come as a great surprise – housing associations have spent the last year lobbying hard for exactly this. The political influence of the sector's lobby was strengthened recently with the election of four Labour and one Liberal Democrat MPs who were previously housing association executives.

Private landlords will also benefit from rising rents. Many private rented sector landlords provide high-cost temporary accommodation to the councils who sold their own stock and were left wholly dependent on external provision. And private landlords are also influential among the current cohort of MPs. This is particularly so for Labour as, the Financial Times revealed, the biggest landlord in the House of Commons is now the Ilford South Labour MP, Jas Athwal.

### No change

Labour leader Keir Starmer's mantra throughout the general election campaign was that they represented the 'party of change'. This is not the case as far as housing is concerned. The social rent cap formula has been CPI (inflation) plus 1% for a number of years, originally having been introduced in 2013.

While it was paused during the exceptional inflationary peaks of the last couple of years, it has nonetheless remained the standard formula. Labour's offer to renters is therefore a continuation of old Conservative policies, with no support or relief for households struggling with housing costs.

This commitment cuts across two manifesto pledges. Firstly, that of 'fiscal responsibility'. It's not long since inflation spiked at around 11%, with nothing to stop this happening again. This has implications for the public purse which funds housing costs for around 70% of the social renting population. Secondly, it exposes Angela Rayner's promise to protect tenants from extortionate rent rises to have been an expedient sham.

### Housing Association wealth

Most social housing is now provided by housing associations not councils, something that the Social Housing Action Campaign (SHAC,



The biggest landlord in the House of Commons is now the Ilford South Labour MP, Jas Athwal

shaction.org) and other campaign groups seek to reverse. Housing associations already have a £4 billion surplus and don't need their coffers swelled further. They benefit from both city investment and government grants to build new housing, so the idea that a lack of money is preventing development is not borne out by the facts.

By contrast, we know that the financial squeeze has impoverished thousands of people in social housing, creating exceptional hardship. Rents rose by 7% in 2022, when people were already stretched by the heightened cost of living. These inflated rents then rose by another 7.7% in 2023. Such rises far outstrip average pay rises.

One third of social housing tenants do not get any help with housing costs through the benefits system, so those rises meant a severe drain on household income. Service charges are uncapped and for many have doubled or even trebled over the last couple of years. What this means is that more people will be driven into arrears and even onto the streets. This is hardly a formula for resolving the housing crisis.

The long-term guarantee to landlords on the rent settlement is an embarrassment, thinly shielded by the excuse of offering financial stability so that they can build new homes. There are many alternative ways that government could fund the building of more social homes.

It does not need to pick the pockets of social renters. Government could raise taxes so that the wealthiest in society pay what they owe – including private developers, second-home owners, and landlords like MP Jas Athwal with massive property portfolios.

If the Labour government insists on backing the interests of landlords, it will not be long before a very deep disillusionment sets in as people realise that, instead of voting for a change in government, they've just elected different characters to pursue the policies that created the housing crisis. This, combined with ever bigger impoverishment, is a recipe for disaster.

SHAC is demanding a freeze on rents and a cap on charges and serious investment in councils to deliver public housing that remains under their control instead of being handed over to private businesses like housing associations. It is lobbying politicians, building alliances with other housing campaign groups, and organising protests. Most importantly however, it is supporting those affected by the rent and service charge rises to resist them directly by withholding payment of the increase, empowering them to challenge the daylight rent robbery planned by Labour.

- Suzanne is also an elected member of the Unite the Union Executive Council

# Rents up 8.6% Rent controls now!

MIHAELA IVANOVA  
TOWER HAMLETS SOCIALIST PARTY

The UK has been sinking further into an irreversible housing crisis. The average private rents increased 8.6% in the 12 months up to July 2024, according to the Office for National Statistics.

Rents are soaring at a faster rate than both inflation generally and wages, and have been the single biggest cost for tenants. Students are acutely affected, many are forced to work while studying full-time as we struggle to cover rent with insufficient maintenance loans.

Landlords get away with cranking up rents as high as they possibly can while renters are increasingly forced into homelessness and poverty. Crippled by Tory austerity, and with Starmer's Labour making its austerity intentions clear, there is a desperate lack of safe and affordable housing and a drained welfare system that cannot manage the longest social housing waiting lists since 2014. The system is broken.

Starmer has firmly put the new Labour government on the side of big business, scrapping Corbyn's plans for council house building and telling London Mayor Sadiq Khan that it has "no plans whatsoever" to give the go ahead for his limited rent control plans. The truth is, Labour councils, Mayors and other devolved administrations don't have to wait for permission, they could do it now!

The Socialist Party calls for rent controls that cap the level of rent, democratically elected bodies of tenants, housing workers and trade unions to play a leading role in decision making, and the nationalisation of privately owned land banks, large building companies and estates to provide genuinely affordable and high quality, carbon-neutral council housing.





# No-brainer to join, we’ve been made to feel at home in Socialist Party

TRISTAN GJERTSEN  
SWANSEA SOCIALIST PARTY

My husband and I were not planning on joining the Socialist Party on the day we came across the campaign stall by pure chance. We are both lifelong socialists, but had always felt let down when other parties that we had looked into claimed to be socialist, but never fully committed to the cause.

We struck up a conversation, and it didn’t take long for us to be quickly won over by the commitment to and practice of socialism. When showed in questions, the campaigners

were quick and clear with their answers.

My husband – Robyn Gjertsen – asked about the party’s stance on LGBT rights, and told me how refreshing it was to have a party that has such a clear-cut, no-tolerance stance against oppression, no matter against who or what form it takes. They also told us of the hard work they do alongside the trade unions.

It was a no-brainer to make a donation there and then. And we left with as many flyers and leaflets as we could take.

But we also left with a burning desire to take part and join the effort

**Join the fightback**

**JOIN THE SOCIALISTS**

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

*to find out more today!*



being made to work for a better society. It took less than a day for us to

solidify our commitment, and soon we became proud members of the Socialist Party.

Due to our two young children, and my role as the full-time carer to my husband, we have not been able to fully commit ourselves as much as we have would have liked. Pair that with a lack of consistent transport to attend branch meetings, we started to feel like imposters.

But, once again, Swansea branch and its fantastic members were there to offer support, and show the kind of care and commitment that can be expected of the Socialist Party as a whole. From offering lifts to and from

branch meetings, to regular check-ins on our wellbeing – not just as Socialist Party members, but as people – as well as reminders of events and goings on we might have otherwise missed out. We’ve especially enjoyed having visits to help clear up matters that were not totally clear to us.

Time and time again, I’ve been shown why the Socialist Party is the only real choice for socialism. It’s the party that cares about the working class.

After years of not feeling like I truly felt totally comfortable, I can now safely say I have found my political home.



## Yorkshire – class struggle is rising

Sheffield Socialist Party hosted fruitful, productive discussions based on the Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI) school held in Berlin in July, celebrating 50 years of the CWI. Both the Socialist Party branches in Sheffield attended, as well as Leeds and South Yorkshire branches.

The first discussion was on what’s happening in the world, and this new era of capitalism in crisis. Prevalent issues were raised – climate disaster, migration, increasing worries over war, and the rise of right populism. All this comes with a backdrop of increasing class struggle across the globe, placing increased pressure on the ruling class.

France’s left-wing New Popular Front that beat the far right in the recent election was another topic of discussion. Working-class struggle towards a socialist future can truly combat the threat of the far right.

Lastly, the history of the CWI was covered, and our consistent orientation to mass struggle and working-class organisation. Additionally, the importance of discussion and debate, democratic centralism, and a Marxist analysis of changing situations were emphasised. Debate is key to our party, to explore and agree on our ideas and what we think will happen.

ISIS SMYTH  
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

## Thames Valley – pitfalls of populism

Oxford Socialist Party hosted a day school for members in the Thames Valley district. Rae Cox delivered the opening introduction, bringing much of the knowledge she had gained from attending the Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI) school.

Later, James Morbin drew upon his extensive experience of left-wing movements to analyse the socialist idea of a ‘united front’ approach, in contrast to the pitfalls of populism. The day concluded with a discussion on the role of the Socialist paper, and how best to utilise it, which I led as Oxford Socialist Party’s paper and resource organiser.

Each section was thoroughly discussed by everyone assembled. The resulting discourse was highly illuminating.

The conclusions we came to will prove useful in future campaigns, since we can now approach them with a sharpened understanding of the issues at hand, and a greater array of tactics at our disposal.

The experience was instructive and enjoyable. I would recommend that other Socialist Party branches try to host similar events.

ALEX CHAPMAN  
OXFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

## Come to a Socialist Party meeting near you

- Go to [socialistparty.org.uk](https://socialistparty.org.uk)
- Or text 07761 818206 with your name and postcode.

**LEFT BOOKS**

The bookshop of the Socialist Party

[leftbooks.co.uk](https://leftbooks.co.uk)



# Save Caerphilly Meals on Wheels, Blackwood Miners’ Institute and Llancaiach Fawr Manor!

MARIAM KAMISH  
SECRETARY CAERPHILLY TRADES COUNCIL  
(PERSONAL CAPACITY) AND SOCIALIST PARTY

Caerphilly Council’s cabinet is proposing to close two South Wales Valleys cultural icons and end an essential service to the community. Not out of financial necessity, but on the advice of a consultancy firm.

The plans, out for public consultation until 10 September, include the closure of Blackwood Miners’ Institute – beloved for championing local acts, while delivering big names like Black Sabbath and Mark Steel – but also as a venue for public meetings and local community groups.

Blackwood Miners is a beautiful, well-maintained, recently renovated 99-year-old building, built by miners and their families.

Llancaiach Fawr, a Tudor Manor House dating to 1540, would also close – losing popular ghost tours and reenactments and a popular tourist attraction.

Most shocking of all are proposals to axe Meals Direct (ex-Meals on Wheels). This would rob the most vulnerable people in Caerphilly borough of their one hot meal a day. But the council says it has no statutory duty to provide hot meals.

The cuts of £1 million a year have been proposed by consultancy firm Perago, whom the council have paid an estimated £2 million for ‘help’ with restructuring.

All Caerphilly Council departments



underspent last year. Jointly, they returned £8.2 million from their allocated budgets. Council reserves stand at £184 million.

Even by the standards of Welsh Labour, there’s no financial need to lose these irreplaceable institutions.

Caerphilly Council has already agreed £45 million of cuts – and plans £44 million more over the next two years.

**THE SOCIALIST PARTY SAYS:**

- Keep Meals Direct and the

venues open! Dip into the council’s £184 million reserves as a temporary measure

- Build a mass campaign of communities and trade unions to defend all council services and jobs
- Band together with other councils to demand adequate funding from Labour Senedd and Westminster government
- Councillors – represent those who elected you or stand aside for those prepared to fight for what our communities need

## Bradford solidarity against repression of Rohingya in Myanmar

Socialist Party members joined a demonstration of 30 people in Bradford against the ongoing genocide happening to the Rohingya people in Myanmar, particularly recent attacks on the community by the Arakan Army that has left hundreds dead.

There was a very harrowing speech from an eight-year-old girl, who spoke about the experiences of family members, who were either killed or currently trapped in Myanmar.

Socialist Party member Iain Dalton spoke about the uprisings that have taken place against authoritarian capitalist governments in both Myanmar and Bangladesh. Iain put forward a socialist programme to take those struggles forward, on a united working-class basis, to seize the wealth of society to meet the needs of all, which could avoid the ethnic divisions leading to the repression of the Rohingya.

This was very well received, and our presence was very welcome. We handed out lots of leaflets, and sold our socialist paper and magazine too.

TOM GIBSON  
BRADFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

Committee for a Workers’ International

**FIGHTING FOR A SOCIALIST WORLD**

[socialistworld.net](https://socialistworld.net)



# Anti-racist protests



## West Midlands - Young Socialists day of action against racism

TOM PORTER-BROWN  
BIRMINGHAM CITY SOCIALIST STUDENTS

200 people attended the Birmingham anti-racist demo, and went unchallenged, despite rumours of a far-right gathering. Socialist Party members had engaging discussions with a lot of attendees, and most of them seemed to resonate with our ideas. Many working-class people remain willing to oppose the far right’s racist ideas.

While the far-right riots may have died down, the root cause hasn’t disappeared. Nigel Farage’s voice finds an ear because there is no mass working-class alternative to tackle the real cause of our declining services, economy, and living standards. Farage and Reform can be cut across if we challenge their oppressive ideology, both in discussion and practice.

Counter-protests such as this

are a good place to start. We spoke to counter-protesters, making the case for linking the struggle against racism and the far right to wider working-class struggle. A lot of them agreed with our criticism of capitalism. More people are becoming socialists.

### Socialist Party youth meeting

We began the day with a meeting to discuss our youth and student campaigns. We shared a lot of good insights – what worked last year, going into the upcoming academic year.

Students face price hikes on all fronts – accommodation, groceries, transport, and potentially tuition fees. New students’ concerns mean they have the potential to be politicised. We address those concerns, whilst also opposing these capitalist policies and attacks.

In order to practically put up an opposition, students need to be active

and organised. This is why Socialist Students will hold meetings where we discuss and plan, such as how we can support striking university staff, as well as organising walkouts and demos to put pressure on the student unions and university management.

We also suggested hosting meetings on student movements, both historically – student participation in the Russian Revolution, for example – or more recently, like the Bangladesh mass protests that toppled the government. Or even closer to home, how Socialist Students in Northampton helped win rent refunds after a cost increase.

New students can become politicised more easily when they see that they can win.

Join the student fightback

**JOIN** socialist students

[socialiststudents.org.uk/join](https://socialiststudents.org.uk/join)



## ● Dover – Tory and Labour cuts worsen problem

One hundred counter-demonstrators from all over Kent assembled in Dover to protest against a planned mobilisation by the far right. The far right failed to materialise!

The political crisis around immigration is particularly sharp in Dover and Kent, due to its proximity to the English Channel, where most of the ‘small boats’ cross over into Britain. It is also home to a number of migration centres, along with hotels used to house immigrants.

Unfortunately, the lower standard of living and lack of access to quality jobs and housing – especially in Dover, which is the most deprived area of the county – means that the scapegoating of immigrants is able to gain more traction. Despite this, Kent Tory council appears likely to implement more budget cuts to jobs and services – something that will only further inflame the situation.

At the anti-racist demonstration, we gave out our material calling for jobs, homes, and services for all to end racism, raising the need for a socialist alternative to end this rotten system that allows racist ideas to spread.

I was able to give a speech to the crowd. I explained that the blame for the growth of racist ideas lies with the bosses and their politicians, who have overseen years of austerity and wage stagnation, allowing a genuine anger to develop among working-class people that has been partially hijacked by the far right.

I called on the Trades Union Congress (TUC) to use its annual congress next month to launch a major campaign in every workplace and community against racism, and for the investment in services and infrastructure that we need.

I also explained that we cannot trust Labour to fight against racism, especially given Keir Starmer’s racist attacks against the Bangladeshi community in the run-up to the election. Instead, the trade union movement should stand its own candidates in elections, and build a new mass party with socialist policies to take the wealth off the super-rich, and invest it according to our needs instead.

Socialist Party members in Kent are standing in the county council elections next year, part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), to raise these ideas in opposition to the mainstream capitalist parties.

We will also be joining the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) lobby of the TUC in Brighton on 8

September, to demand that the trade union leaders take up this fight as well, and build genuine working-class opposition to the divisive, racist ideas of the far right.

CALLUM JOYCE  
SOUTHERN AND SOUTH EAST SOCIALIST PARTY ORGANISER

## ● Bournemouth – ‘There’s a lot to be angry about’

Socialist Party member **Ali Cook** spoke at the Bournemouth protest:

“There’s a lot to be angry about. We’ve seen cuts to our public services, historic falls to our living standards, and billionaires are getting richer and richer. Whilst the riots have been terrible, many of the counter-protests were much greater in size.

“Rachel Reeves is continuing the austerity policies of the last 14 years of Tory rule. The longer we go without a voice for the working class, the louder and louder the right will get. What we need is a new mass workers’ party that seeks to overcome division, in favour of workers’ unity – that calls for homes, jobs, and services for all.

“We need mass council house building. We need to restore services and jobs. We need a £15-an-hour minimum wage. We need to ban zero-hour contracts. We need a party that will fight for these, and other socialist policies. We have a world to win.”

### Uplifting Bournemouth protest

We made our way down for a counter-protest, against a proposed far-right presence. Many on the anti-racist protest appreciated our call for workers’ unity, and the need for a mass workers’ party, some taking our leaflet and buying our Socialist paper.

While 200 turning up for ‘stop the boats’ is an upsettingly high number, they were still very much outnumbered by 500 of us, as they have been throughout the country. The far right had mostly dissolved by 1pm, while the counter-protest remained strong.

Our energy felt uplifting and promising. There is a solid community of people who are fundamentally against the racist, anti-immigration rhetoric being spread. Our counter-protests will not back down.

ONYX MC GARVEY  
DORSET SOCIALIST PARTY

| SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND |            |          |                         |  |  |  |                             |     |      |
|-------------------------------|------------|----------|-------------------------|--|--|--|-----------------------------|-----|------|
| AREA                          | £ RECEIVED | £ TARGET | Q3: JULY-SEPTEMBER 2024 |  |  |  | DEADLINE: 30 SEPTEMBER 2024 |     |      |
| South West                    | 1,565      | 2,100    |                         |  |  |  |                             |     | 80%  |
| North West                    | 701        | 1,200    |                         |  |  |  |                             | 58% |      |
| Northern                      | 321        | 800      |                         |  |  |  |                             | 40% |      |
| London                        | 1,719      | 5,000    |                         |  |  |  |                             | 34% |      |
| Wales                         | 766        | 2,400    |                         |  |  |  |                             | 32% |      |
| Southern & SE                 | 515        | 2,400    |                         |  |  |  |                             | 21% |      |
| Yorkshire                     | 567        | 2,650    |                         |  |  |  |                             | 21% |      |
| Eastern                       | 243        | 1,300    |                         |  |  |  |                             | 18% |      |
| East Midlands                 | 368        | 2,050    |                         |  |  |  |                             | 18% |      |
| West Midlands                 | 447        | 2,700    |                         |  |  |  |                             | 17% |      |
| Other                         | 5,701      | 2,400    |                         |  |  |  |                             |     | 238% |
| TOTAL                         | 13,026     | 25,000   |                         |  |  |  |                             |     | 52%  |



# Mpox outbreak: Socialist planning needed, not capitalist chaos

JON DALE  
RETIRED DOCTOR, MANSFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

The latest outbreak of mpox virus is exposing once again global vulnerability to new pandemics. This outbreak had been largely ignored by politicians and media in wealthy countries when it remained confined to Africa. Since 2022, 40,874 cases and 1,512 deaths have been reported across 15 African states.

An upsurge of mpox cases is taking place in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). During the first six months of 2024, over 15,000 cases and 500 deaths occurred - more than all of 2023. Instead of mobilising resources to control this outbreak and prevent it spreading, very little was done.

On 15 August, after the first case was reported in Sweden, the World Health Organisation declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. Only then did widespread reports in the international media appear.

### 2022 outbreak

Mpox is not a new virus. Discovered in 1958, the first human case was identified in 1970. Formerly known as ‘monkeypox’, the name was changed as monkeys were not the host animal or usual source of infection. Some right-wing publications, like the Spectator magazine, still call it monkeypox, with underlying racist connotations, just as Donald Trump called Covid-19 ‘a Chinese virus.’

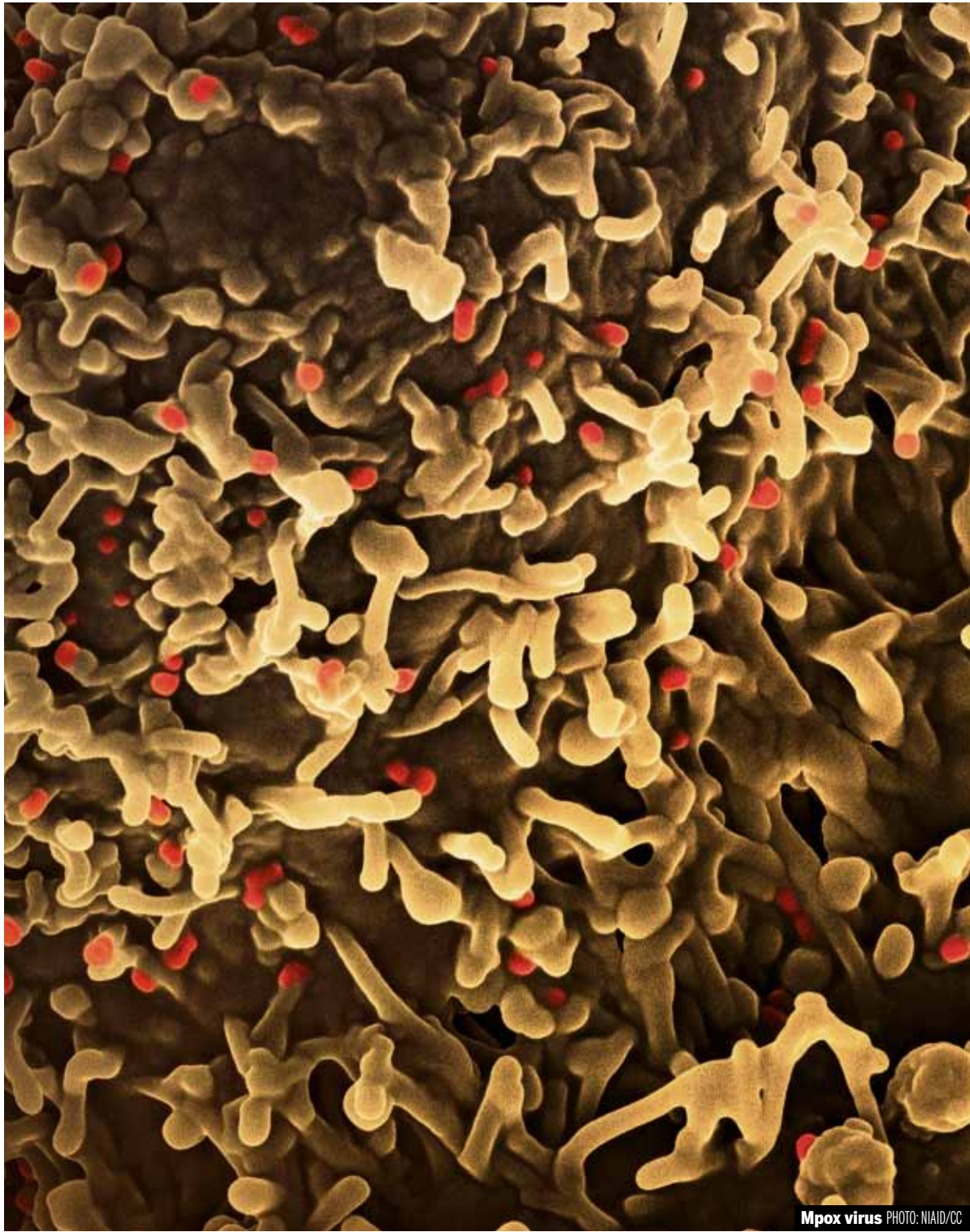
An earlier global outbreak took place in 2022, starting in Nigeria, spreading across West Africa, the USA (where 30,000 cases were reported) and other countries. 87,000 cases were recorded in total, but many more were likely to have occurred. After ten months, new reported cases fell.

New York City declared an end to the mpox outbreak in February 2023, when transmission remained very low in the city for two consecutive months. 100,000 New Yorkers were vaccinated, over 155,000 doses administered and a community education programme introduced.

However, Professor Dimie Ogoina, president of the Nigerian Infectious Diseases Society, warned in 2023: “I think this is a false decline. I believe that in Nigeria and many other African countries we have continuous transmission. We’re just seeing the tip of the iceberg.”

### New outbreak

Now a new mpox variant, clade 1b, is spreading from DRC, with cases reported in neighbouring Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda since July. Burundi has identified 100 new cases, 28 being young children. Argentina quarantined a ship on 20 August after a crew member became



Mpox virus PHOTO: NIAID/CC

ill, although he subsequently tested negative.

Close physical contact can lead to transmission. Children in overcrowded homes are especially vulnerable. The death rate of infected under-one-year-olds is 8.6%, compared to 2.4% in over 15 year-olds. As with HIV, sex workers and their clients are particularly vulnerable to infection.

After the rigged election in December 2023, civil war in the DRC eastern region has flared up (see ‘DR Congo: War and conflict leads to mass displacement’ at socialistworld.net). Half a million refugees and injured people have fled their homes to squalid camps around

Goma, near the Rwandan border. It is in this region that new mpox cases have surged.

Health services are at the point of collapse, after past outbreaks of Ebola and Covid-19, long-standing diseases like malaria and TB, and a lack of staff and medical supplies. In some health centres, patient intake is 4,000% higher than capacity.

### Vaccines and treatments

Unlike Covid-19, mpox vaccines and treatments already exist. The problem is they aren’t available where desperately needed now. The preferred vaccine is made by Danish company, Bavarian Nordic. Development was subsidised by large US

government contracts. It says it can supply ten million doses by the end of 2025, with two million by the end of the year. While children and health workers suffer, shareholders profited as the share price rose more than 40% between 11-16 August.

Meanwhile, there are plentiful alternative vaccines. US multinational Emergent BioSolutions’ smallpox vaccine ACAM2000 is in national stockpiles around the world. It is kept for national security in case the now-eradicated smallpox virus somehow resurfaces, or is deployed as a biological weapon. It has a higher risk of potentially serious side effects, but in the short term could help save many lives. It’s share price also shot up 40% in four days.

Japan’s government has a large stock of vaccine, manufactured by KM Biologics. But despite the corporation’s ‘mission of making the world a healthier place through the unlimited possibilities of biotechnology’, the vaccine is not available commercially.

Russia also has a vaccine, developed by the Vector institute, historic home of the Soviet Union’s biological weapons programme and host to one of two globally authorised smallpox repositories (the other being the US government’s).

These stockpiles could be quickly mobilised for those at highest risk in central and east Africa, along with the money needed to provide the health workers, refrigeration, logistics and transport to deliver them. Capitalist national interests and profit-seeking corporations’ business interests prevent this.

The same situation exists for treatments. The antiviral drug tecovirimat (TPOXX) is licensed for use and made by US corporation SIGA. In July 2024, SIGA received a \$138 million order from the U.S. Government for delivery to the U.S. Strategic National Stockpile. On 21 August there were 1,200 ‘call options’ to buy its shares, compared to 78 on an average day. Profit-hunters can smell an opportunity to make a fortune.

However, a new study in DRC showed those with mpox who took the drug did not recover more quickly than those given a placebo. 1.7% died, regardless of whether they received the drug or not. But this was much lower than the 3.6% death rate reported among all cases in the DRC. Fewer people with mpox die if hospitalised and provided high-quality supportive care.

Three in four Congolese people live on under \$2.15 a day, making it one of the world’s five poorest countries. Average health expenditure per head was \$25 in 2021 (latest figures). Buying vaccines, treatments and providing decent health services can’t be done while DRC’s vast mineral wealth is stripped out by big business, corrupt politicians and warlords - or while the pharmaceutical industry seeks vast profits.

A health threat anywhere can rapidly become a health threat everywhere. International socialist action, with public ownership, democratic workers’ control and democratic planning to meet need instead of profit, is the only way this can be prevented.

Committee for a Workers’ International  
FIGHTING FOR A  
SOCIALIST WORLD  
socialistworld.net

# India: A million strike against rape and murder of female doctor at work

HEATHER RAWLING  
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

The brutal rape and murder of a trainee doctor in Kolkata, West Bengal in India, has re-ignited anger over the way women are treated. The victim was having a nap after an exhausting shift when she was attacked. The incident highlights the huge discontent over working conditions and lack of safe spaces for medical staff. The Indian Medical Association said that it has been protesting against violence for years and called for strike action of hospital workers who were already angry at their working conditions.

About one million doctors struck, calling for better protection for women, and increased security at hospitals. Protests have been held across India. Tens of thousands of women in West Bengal joined a ‘Reclaim the Night’ march demanding independence to live in freedom and without fear.



PHOTO: TEENA KURIAN/CC

In 2012, hundreds of thousands protested against the rape and murder of Jyoti Singh, a young paramedic in Delhi. She was raped in a moving bus by several men and left to die on the streets. But very little has changed since then.

The doctors’ strike is an important development in the struggle to protect women at work and in the community. Women’s safety and freedom from sexual harassment should be taken up in all unions and workplaces.

The strike took place just a few weeks after India’s parliamentary elections where Narendra Modi and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) suffered a huge setback. Modi and the BJP’s authoritarian grip on society has been loosened, which probably gave the doctors more confidence to strike.

The health system in India has been in crisis for many years. Neoliberal policies, implemented over decades, put most of the healthcare system into private ownership. The public health care system has been chronically underfunded.

Modi has cynically used the protests declaring that “monstrous behaviour against women

should be severely and quickly punished.” But a rape occurs every 16 minutes in India and Modi has been prime minister since 2014.

The Modi government aims to achieve 8% GDP growth. To achieve that, it has been calculated that it will have to raise female labour force participation from 33% to 43.4% by 2030. But violence against women in India deters them from working. A report by Deloitte in 2024 showed that 46% of Indian women worry about their safety at work or on their commutes. There are a whole number of laws that are meant to protect women in India against violence and sexual assault, but they are largely ineffective.

The right to economic independence is essential for women to be able to make independent choices about how they live their lives. Being part of the wider labour movement and feeling their strength as part of the working class will help to break down barriers.

The labour movement must campaign against sexual harassment and assault, demand safe working practices, and fully staffed and safer public transport. As the economic crisis in India deepens, more workers will be forced into struggle. Through struggle and recognition of their common interest as workers, attitudes can change.

## Release Nigerian socialists and activists abducted by police for anti-government protests



## The Campaign for Democratic and Workers’ Rights demands the immediate and unconditional release of protesters

CHINEDU BOSAH  
CDWR NATIONAL PUBLICITY SECRETARY

The Nigerian Police and the Bola Tinubu-led regime are hell-bent on sustaining the incarceration of #EndBadGovernance protesters and activists. It is three weeks, and counting, that Michael Adaramoye (Michael Lenin), Sodiq Mosiu and hundreds more have been illegally and unjustly detained by the Nigerian Police without trial. The Nigerian Police have ensured that Michael Adaramoye

and others are denied access to legal representation, and family members, as they are kept incommunicado. The detainees are also held in deprivation of basic human needs like food, healthcare and essential housing materials like beds etc. Due to the inhuman and deplorable conditions the detainees are subjected to, some have fallen ill and been denied medical treatment; the Tinubu government will be held responsible if any of the detainees die in detention.

In furtherance of the incarceration,

the Nigerian Police on 22 August clandestinely procured a remand order at the Federal High Court, Abuja, to extend the unjust detention of the protesters by 60 days, without their legal representatives present. The judiciary is used to enable the dictatorship of the Tinubu-led regime. We condemn this undemocratic and underhand tactics of the government.

In Nigeria, the corrupt capitalist ruling elite loots and walks freely while innocent activists, trade unionists, socialists, and protesters are unlawfully victimised and attacked.

We of the Campaign for Democratic and Workers’ Rights reiterate our condemnation of the illegal and unjust incarceration of Michael Adaramoye, Mosiu Sodiq, Elejo Opaluwa and many others. We demand their immediate and unconditional release.

*The following is a model motion which trade union branches can pass*

This union branch notes:

- The peaceful 10-day protest that started on 1 August for the #EndBadGovernance campaign against hunger and hardship in Nigeria has been met by brutal oppression by the Nigerian state with 13 people killed
- Organisers and activists were abducted from their beds and arrested by the Nigerian state at 2am Monday 12 August and have been held without charge for around two weeks. This includes Elejo Opaluwa, a member of the National Union of Electricity Employees and a vice-chairman of Kogi State Nigeria Labour Congress, Adaramoye Michael Lenin, Mosiu Sodiq, and Elejo Opaluwa
- No fewer than 1,400 peaceful protesters are in prison, barely getting one meal a day and have been denied their right to meet lawyers
- The Nigerian president Bola Tinubu has a record of smashing unions. As governor of Lagos he sacked the union leader Ayodele Akele and many workers, over their struggle for payment of the minimum wage.
- The Nigerian Labour Congress trade union body had its offices raided by the state on Wednesday 7 August
- Joe Ajaero, the President of the NLC, was hospitalised in a Tinubu regime-backed attack last year and is now facing an investigation for charges of “terrorism financing, cybercrime, subversion, criminal conspiracy, and treasonable felony.”
- In response, several unions in Nigeria are preparing to

strike. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and individual unions internationally have supported the movement through letters to Nigerian ambassadors and other action

This union branch believes:

- The Tinubu regime’s ever-increasing and dangerous tyranny poses a serious risk of a step back in rights, similar to the period of military rule where activists were frequently arrested, abducted, detained, tortured and killed
- There needs to be a strong response from the international labour movement to support the workers’ movement and oppose these attacks with demands for:
  - The end of harassment and attacks on the trade union movement and the President of the NLC, Joe Ajaero
  - The end of state attacks on activists and labour leaders, as well as an immediate release of Michael Adaramoye Lenin, Angel Innocent, Mosiu Sodiq, Elejo Opaluwa and all others currently in detention over the #EndBadGovernance protests

This union branch agrees to

- Show support for Nigerians and their unions as they prepare to oppose the attacks on the working class, the labour movement and their unions through protests and strikes as well as local action
- Send a letter to the Nigerian Embassy calling for release without charge of all arrested, and an end to the attacks on the labour movement and the wider working class
- Send a donation to The Campaign for Democratic and Workers’ Rights (CDWR) (crowdfunder.co.uk/p/cdwr)
- Push our trade union to take similar action to the branch



£1/£2 solidarity price

socialistparty.org.uk



# the Socialist

Issue 1287

29 August - 4 September 2024

formerly **Militant**



## End war and oppression

## Fight for socialist change

**SAADA MOHAMED**  
ENFIELD AND LEA VALLEY SOCIALIST PARTY

**T**he war on Gaza has been raging for now close to 11 months, which has meant almost a year of the brutal destruction of everything in the Gaza Strip from residential buildings to hospitals. Even refugee camps are not being spared from the full force of the Israeli state.

The Middle East seemingly edges closer to regional war, with even greater, more widespread misery for workers and poor people.

Many are watching this unfold on the news and social media, questioning what kind of sick system gives this 'legitimacy'.

As a young person living in the UK, I saw the support the Israeli government has received from both parties, with Rishi Sunak meeting Benjamin Netanyahu early on in the conflict and Keir Starmer defending Israel's right to turn off water for Gazan residents.

The recent Democratic National Convention in the US that confirmed Kamala Harris as candidate for the next president heard 'Israel's

right to defend itself' emphasised throughout. The official death toll of Palestinians is now over 40,000 and rising by the day.

### Capitalist class

The Western capitalist class clearly has an interest in supporting the Israeli state for its own strategic and profit interests, specifically the US which has sent billions in aid to Israel.

The constant slaughter in Gaza and the relentless disregard for human lives in the Western media made me realise that under

capitalism, working-class and poor people are seen as collateral damage. In this conflict it is possible up to 200,000 people have died, thousands of bodies lying unretrieved beneath rubble.

To end the horror we need to end capitalism and fight for a socialist world.

### THE SOCIALIST PARTY IS FIGHTING FOR:

- End the siege - for the permanent withdrawal of the Israeli military from the occupied territories
- For a mass struggle of the

Palestinians, under their own democratic control, to fight for liberation

- For the building of independent workers' parties in Palestine and Israel and links between them
- For an independent, socialist Palestinian state, alongside a socialist Israel, with guaranteed rights for all minorities, as part of the struggle for a socialist Middle East
- No trust in the capitalist politicians, internationally or in Britain. Fight to build a workers' party in Britain that fights for socialism and internationalism

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS ►► see column on p10



9 771366 962103

ISSN 1366-9621