

SAVE OUR NHS

FROM STARMER'S BAD MEDICINE

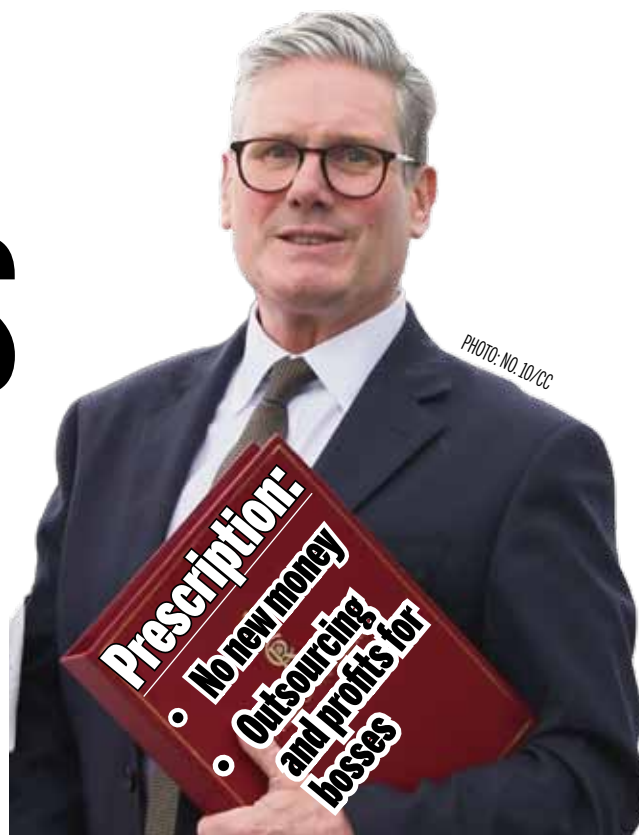


PHOTO: NO.10/CC

Fight back against cuts and privatisation

HOLLY JOHNSTON

SHEFFIELD SOUTH EAST SOCIALIST PARTY AND NURSE

Record-long waiting lists for treatments, people stuck in A&E for hours and patients treated in corridors.

We didn't need the government-commissioned 'Darzi report' on the crisis in the NHS. The NHS has been devastated by funding cuts for years.

The report states: "It is not a question of whether we can afford the NHS. Rather, we cannot afford not to have the NHS, so it is imperative that we turn the situation around."

How will New Labour's Wes Streeting, Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves attempt to cure the NHS? Starmer himself said "no more money without reform". It is clear they will use it to try and justify plans to further out-source and privatise NHS services.

Health secretary Streeting has talked of a digital transition, shifting from hospital to community care and a focus on prevention.

A digital transition cannot replace the need to address recruitment and retention. Any transition should be decided on and run by the workers themselves and shouldn't be another front for creeping privatisation.

Community care is vital for a healthy society and to ease hospital pressure. However there are no shortcuts and funding is needed in both primary and secondary care. In social care, devastated by council cuts, vacancies are as high as in the NHS, and conditions and pay are atrocious. They are under-unionised workers in a vulnerable position. No doubt Labour will plan to continue to syphon out parts of community healthcare to private companies.

And how is cutting winter fuel payments helping to prevent sickness? Or keeping millions of families in poverty by maintaining the two-child benefit cap?

Prevention is necessity for a healthy society. But the capitalist system makes us ill. Chemicals and hormones in food, poverty, pollution, inadequate mouldy housing, alienation and a mental health crisis, exploitation and a lack of autonomy of our own time and lives. Capitalism is driving huge increases in health inequality - life expectancy is decreasing.

A socialist prescription for the NHS would mean: reversing austerity cuts to services; kicking out all the profiteers, including by nationalising the big pharmaceutical companies under democratic working-class control; and tackling inequalities across society by fighting to end the rotten capitalist system.

The NHS remains a significant reform won by working-class struggle. But since its birth, the NHS has constantly been under attack.

Ultimately our class will always have to fight tooth and nail to defend everything we have won through struggle, unless we have fundamental change in society. We need to fight for the socialist transformation of society - to put the working class in charge of the vast wealth that exists, to democratically decide what we want, not what makes a profit for a few.

The Socialist Party fights for:

- A fully funded NHS and social care system run democratically by workers and service users. Immediate investment is essential
- Trade union struggle for NHS staff to restore the pay they need. A fully staffed workforce could meet the demands, work through the waiting lists and backlog, and reduce the rate staff are leaving. Abolish student fees and bring back nurses' bursaries
- Renationalise the NHS. Kick out all the profiteers. End PFI schemes sucking millions out of our health service

theSocialist

formerly Militant

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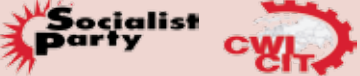
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."
Karl Marx

Labour's bus reforms: more council control but profit still in the driver's seat

ANDY BEADLE
SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY AND
RETIRED BUS DRIVER

"Today is the first step on our journey to delivering better buses across the country," said transport secretary Louise Haigh as she outlined the new Labour government's proposals for bus reforms.

New legislation will allow all local authorities to introduce a franchising system, so they can decide routes, timetables and fares, with operators bidding to run services for a fixed fee. Currently, only areas with metro mayors can introduce 'franchising' to private companies, such as Andy Burnham's Bee Network in Greater Manchester.

"With local communities firmly back in the driving seat, our bus revolution will save vital routes up and down the country and put passengers first" added Haigh. Such stirring optimism to reverse the long-term decline of the bus industry has seldom been heard since Margaret Thatcher's ministers legislated deregulation and privatisation in 1986.

Until next month's budget decisions, which Keir Starmer and chancellor Rachel Reeves have talked up as being full of "difficult decisions" ie cuts, nobody knows how this will be paid for. It is not clear if the current (limited) £2 fare cap will be extended beyond the end of 2024. Even the last government's modest support for local authorities to invest in bus services may be discontinued next April.

The planned Buses Bill will reverse the ban on setting up new publicly owned bus companies. Starmer has no plans to provide councils with resources to restore existing services, never mind provide more! An industry spokesperson questioned whether councils retained the "institutional knowledge" to run their own



A Bee Network bus
STEVEN'S TRANSPORT PHOTOS/CC

transport operations. Instead, he foresaw a "partnership with private operators."

Labour's policy doesn't even go as far as its planned rail reforms to nationalise passenger services as contracts come to an end. Private operators like First, Arriva and Stagecoach run most bus services inside and outside London, as well as most of the trains. They'd love a set up like Transport for London (TfL), in which private companies bid to run services and extract a profit from city hall. The same is true in Manchester with Bee branding but a number of private companies being paid to do the routes.

On top, bus bosses would enjoy more opportunities to take advantage of systems like the 'revolving door' in TfL, which takes in bus executives into highly paid TfL positions then releasing them and their knowledge back into private industry.

Most people forced to use the chaotic, underfunded public transport system outside London crave an integrated system like TfL which, despite costly fares and frequent overcrowding, may seem like an advance on next to nothing. If you're a campaigner, at least you can put pressure on a local government to take back services from private companies. And bus workers can take coordinated strike action against different bus operators for shared pay and conditions, as has happened in limited examples in London.

Failures of privatisation

Louise Haigh is right when she denounces "decades of failed deregulation" on the buses, confessing Labour as well as Tory complicity while in government. She is also right when she says: "buses are the lifeblood of our communities, but for too many people it has become impossible to

rely on local services, as routes have been slashed and timetables hollowed out."

But, despite the nauseating Tory hypocrisy, shadow transport secretary Helen Whately is also partially right when she says councils would be expected to raise taxes or cut services to fund the proposal for more routes. Labour, Tory and all major parties' councillors have implemented Tory cuts over the past 14 years, stripping council services to the bone.

Massive investment in public transport and all services is an urgent requirement. Given a serious redistribution of wealth away from the super-rich and kicking out private profiteers, those resources are available for a high-quality, free-to-use public transport system. Socialists fight for the democratic planning of all public services by workers in the industry and by the users.

Starmer caught with his very expensive trousers down

It must be tough being offered tens of thousands of pounds of gifts. Too hard to say 'no', apparently.

Labour prime minister Keir Starmer, who had income of £404,030 last year, has been kitted out in new uniform by billionaire donor Lord Alli. Victoria Starmer, his wife, has received lavish gifts too. In total, 'Sir Keir' has had £76,000 of freebies since the 2019 general election.

Starmer insists he is sticking to the rules. What kind of sick rules are we playing by?

He's sticking to the rules when he freezes pensioners, forcing them to wear most of their clothes to keep warm. He's sticking to the rules when he keeps children in poverty, their parents scraping together the pennies to buy new school uniforms.

We need politicians prepared to break the 'rules' and act in the interests of the working class instead. MPs should be paid a workers' wage, with

no extra privileges. They should be subject to recall by those who elected them too. And we need a party that isn't beholden to billionaires and the bosses, but our own workers' party that fights for socialist change.



Nice shoes!
DOD/PUBLIC DOMAIN

Cost-of-bearhats crisis

While Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves have talked about the need for cuts to placate the markets, you might have to 'bear' with those in charge of the pomp and circumstance for the royal family.

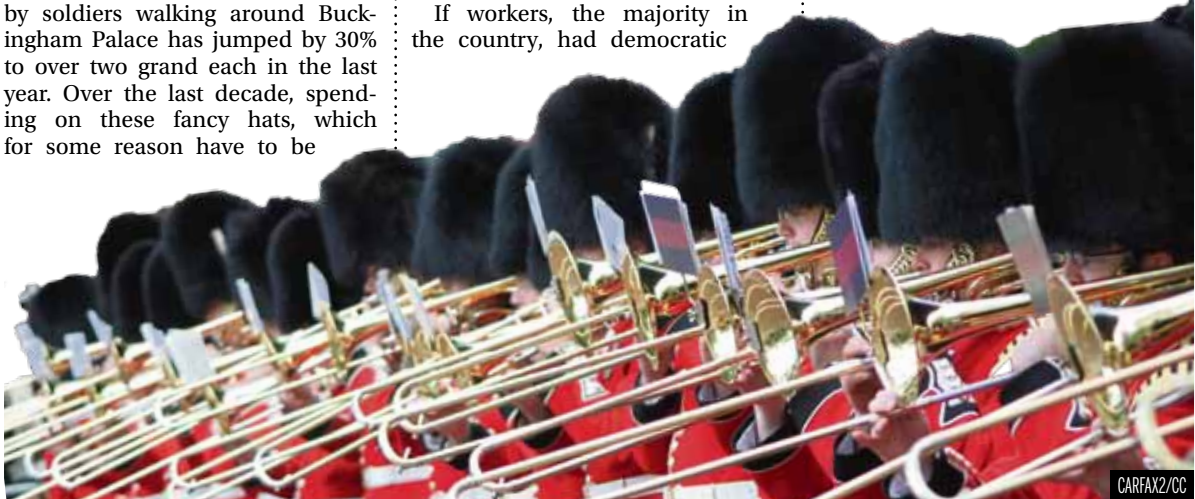
The price of bearskin hats worn by soldiers walking around Buckingham Palace has jumped by 30% to over two grand each in the last year. Over the last decade, spending on these fancy hats, which for some reason have to be

made from one dead bear each, has cost over a million pounds.

And the cost-of-living squeeze hasn't affected King Charles. Thanks to increased profits from the royal estate, he's getting £45 million more next year!

If workers, the majority in the country, had democratic

control of the land, investments and wherever else the royals have stashed their cash, imagine all the nurses, public investment works and all the other things that people need, that wealth could be put towards.



CARFAX2/CC

Nationalise big-pharma – don't force working-class families to pay

CHRISTINE ASHER

I recently contacted our GP to get a repeat prescription for my son's eczema cream but was told this is no longer available on prescription, free for children. We will need to buy it over the counter.

My son has chronic eczema, triggered by several environmental allergens which, if not managed, can result in stubborn patches of damaged skin, vulnerable to infection. We will now need to pick up the cost of his treatment, even though we have been seen by a specialist paediatrician who advised we should apply emollient several times a day to prevent flare-ups.

The effect of the extra cost on our finances will be significant, but what option do we have except to pick up the bill? I asked if any help with costs was available and was told we could ask to be referred to a specialist dermatologist to prescribe the creams.

The NHS was founded on the principle that all medical care would be free at the point of use, for everyone, including for all prescriptions plus dental and eye care. It meant an end to working-class families having to chose between medical care or a roof over their heads. With the NHS in the state it is, increasingly people are being faced with those types of impossible decisions.

Too expensive

How many people skip dental and eye check-ups because of the cost? One NHS survey found 372,000 people haven't had a dentist appointment in the last two years because it is too expensive.

We know there is a funding crisis in the NHS. The NHS bosses' solution is making more people pay for services and cutting the numbers of treatments and medicines available. But it's a false economy.

An appointment we don't need with a specialist dermatologist is surely a waste of resources. So is cutting preventative treatments. Not long ago, our son was hospitalised for an unknown infection which could well have been related to his skin. Hospital admission can cost anywhere between £345 and £2,349 a day!

Pharmaceutical companies are known to inflate prices when selling to the NHS, which means sometimes treatments are more expensive to the NHS than if bought over the counter. The solution is nationalising these big pharmaceutical companies, bringing them into the NHS, so they don't rip off the health service anymore - not passing the costs on to already struggling families.

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

Oliver Campbell wins fight to clear his name

Earlier this year, the Socialist ended an article with the words "Hopefully 2024 will be the year that Oliver gets justice". Oliver Campbell, who has learning difficulties, was forced into a false confession by the police without a solicitor or appropriate adult present, spent decades in prison and since then campaigning to clear his name. The news that Oliver, convicted of a murder he did not commit in 1991, has had his conviction quashed is an important step towards him realising justice. Below is an edited version of Socialist Party member and campaigner for justice for Oliver, **Teresa Mackay's** speech to Thurrock trades council in 2022.

More than 30 years ago, Oliver got involved in the campaign against the poll tax. Because of this, Socialist Party members heard about his case and campaigned for him.

In the same year as Oliver's arrest, others faced similar charges – Cardiff five, M25, Tottenham three. They had one thing in common, they were all

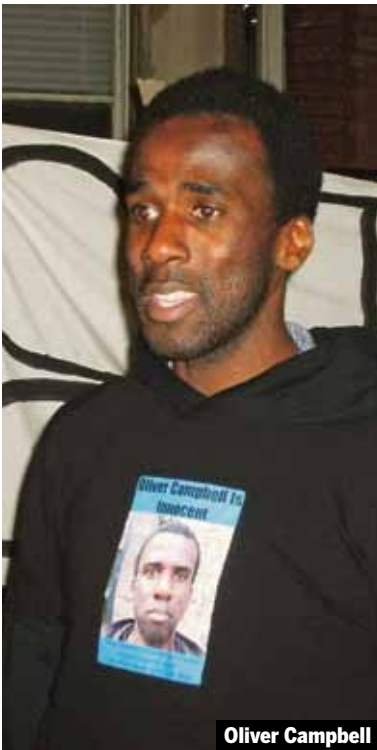
Black. Some have seen justice, Oliver has not.

There is no forensic evidence linking Oliver to the 1990 murder, and Oliver was not capable of conducting such a crime. In 2015, the local MP wrote to then Tory home secretary Theresa May about Oliver's campaign for justice, but nothing happened.

As Oliver said: "I was put under pressure to say things I didn't want to say." Stephen Mullinger, his solicitor at the time, said his confession would be ruled inadmissible today because of his severe learning difficulties and the fact he had no legal representation when he confessed.

Oliver is not a free man. Due to his criminal record, he is forever under threat of recall and being hauled back in by the police at any time.

He desperately wants to visit his Mum in the US, but cannot until his name is cleared. Oliver has said: "I could have had a full-time job, married and travelled the world". He has waited twice as long as the Birmingham Six and Maguire Four to clear his name. Oliver recently turned 51. Well over half his life has been spent, if not in prison itself, in the prison without bars, fighting for justice.



Oliver Campbell



Pharmaceutical company
GlaxoSmithKline's headquarters in
Brentford, west London | IAN WILSON/CC

TATA BOSSES’ JOBS MASSACRE WILL DEVASTATE PORT TALBOT



ALEC THRAVES
SWANSEA SOCIALIST PARTY AND
SWANSEA TRADES COUNCIL

As the Socialist goes to press, steelworkers in Community and GMB unions are awaiting the results of a vote on whether to accept a settlement with Tata Steel. Unite the Union representatives decided that the terms were not good enough at that point to be put to the vote.

Up to 2,800 direct-employed jobs will be slashed, mainly from the Port Talbot plant, with thousands of contractors, supply workers and local jobs being thrown onto the scrapheap. Instead of the last two blast furnaces, steel will be produced through recycling old scrap in an electric arc furnace.

But as Tata management has shown, it cannot be trusted even to deliver this. Socialist Party members will continue our support and solidarity to fight for every job.

However, primary steel production is ending, cynically confirmed even before negotiations had concluded, when the ‘MV Trinity Island’ cargo ship berthed into the deep-water harbour on 7 September to unload the last ever shipment of 44,000 tonnes of coke, which will be used in blast furnace 4 before its decommissioning later in September. Gallingly, Tata even produced a video to mark this event.

Tata Steel executives have been intransigent from the outset that their

proposals to shut down the ‘heavy end’ of the plant and close down the last two blast furnaces were non-negotiable.

Tata management is justifying this on the basis of a ‘green transition’. The same dishonest game of claiming that this is the cost of transitioning to more environmentally friendly production is being used by Ineos, which has just announced the closure of the oil refinery at Grangemouth. But this is utter hypocrisy from profit-hungry employers who have consciously run down both operations over a long period, and will effectively insource primary production at cheaper rates from abroad.

Nationalisation

Ineos owner billionaire Jim Ratcliffe brutally threatened to close Grangemouth in 2013 in order to drive through attacks on workers’ pensions, and Tata management wanted to start the Port Talbot steelworks closure in 2016, but was pushed back by the pressure of workers and the local community. The call for nationalisation won big support then.

Unfortunately, without such a demand now to strengthen united militant industrial action by all the steel unions, inevitably it has become increasingly apparent to many steelworkers over the past several months that any so-called negotiations with this brutal multinational corporation would not centre around retaining the remaining blast furnace 4, saving all the jobs and putting in place the

investment required for a green transition, despite Unite maintaining this position throughout talks.

There were divisions between Community and GMB on one side, who enthusiastically supported the ‘Syndex’ plan of accepting job losses, and Unite on the other, whose alternative ‘Workers Plan for Steel in Port Talbot’ rejected the need for any steelworkers to lose their jobs.

The historic acceptance of ‘concession bargaining’ in which the steel unions, particularly the largest union, Community, have agreed huge job losses in an attempt to retain threatened terms and conditions, has seen the workforce decrease at the Port Talbot plant from almost 20,000 under the nationalised British Steel corporation down to around 4,000 in Tata - before the mass redundancies were proposed!

Unite the Union was absolutely correct in its energetic campaign to mobilise its members and the wider community around its workers’ plan “to expand capacity so that we can defend all jobs and actually grow employment in the steel industry.”

However, for such a campaign to gain support and to build confidence among steelworkers that a victory was possible, two vital ingredients were necessary to combat this ruthless employer.

Firstly, a united workforce, with mass, local community backing. And secondly, an industrial and political strategy with a clear programme of industrial action able to



The steel unions’ failure to call for nationalisation throughout the Tata dispute and the failure to put that political demand onto the Labour governments in the Senedd and Westminster will be a lesson that needs to be learnt by a new generation of militant trade unionists urgently at British Steel in Scunthorpe, Ineos in Grangemouth in Scotland, Harland and Wolff in Belfast, and in the inevitable future struggles

win widespread trade union support across Wales and the UK.

A united union campaign was possible, despite decades of inter-union rivalry, particularly as community support was overwhelming, considering the impact the loss of thousands of jobs would have in Port Talbot and the surrounding areas.

There was significant support in the community from the start of the dispute for the Socialist Party’s clear demand that the only realistic solution to stop the proposed jobs slaughter, was to bring Tata back into public ownership: to nationalise Tata under democratic workers’ control and management, with any compensation based on proven need, meaning Tata’s bosses would get nothing!

Our demand for “nationalisation not devastation” became increasingly relevant as it became abundantly clear that Tata was determined to shut down the furnaces, ending primary steel production and turning Port Talbot into a ghost town.

Tata executives contemptuously dismissed pleas from trade union leaders, Welsh government and Westminster ministers, first Tory and now Starmer’s Labour, to put in place the billions of pounds of investment needed for a green transition which could preserve primary steelmaking, as well as saving and expanding jobs, as Unite’s ‘workers’ plan’ proposed.

When negotiations stalled and Tata walked away from talks, the strategy of the unions was not to prepare for serious industrial action to

nationalise Tata but to call a strike ballot of its members in order to force Tata back to the negotiating table.

Increasingly, steelworkers were becoming confused, frustrated and demoralised. The fact that Unite stood alone in being serious about industrial action, rather than a combined united stand by all three unions, had an impact. Workers inevitably saw the unions as being split and so had less confidence in action going forward.

In the middle of the dispute, at the Wales Trades Union Congress in May, instead of preparing to mobilise the whole trade union movement for solidarity action and support, the steel unions moved an ‘emergency motion’ that was to just demand “the transparency of the remit of the transition board and to map the impact on the supply chain”!

The motion from Swansea Trades Council, moved by a Socialist Party member, put forward the alternative way forward: for the nationalisation of Tata, with solidarity strike action and mass picketing. This was rejected as being too ‘premature’, and was overwhelmingly rejected with the exception of some of the more militant unions and trades councils.

Unite the Union poured resources, both physical and financial, into protests, demos, and local community activity but unbelievably the word ‘nationalisation’ was not mentioned once by any of the trade union leaders, throughout this struggle.

Sowing illusions that Tata could be pressurised to drop some of its proposals, alongside limited government intervention, instead of building consistent and ongoing support for nationalisation was a critical mistake,

especially during the general election campaign. There should have been a loud demand that a Starmer government immediately takes Tata back into public ownership.

A political strategy, coupled with the preparations for industrial action, could have transformed the mood of an increasingly sceptical and disillusioned workforce.

Of course, it is the duty and responsibility of any trade union leadership to fight to save as many jobs as possible and to secure the best-possible redundancy terms and conditions when a battle has been engaged, fought but defeated.

Industrial action

The fact is that, apart from Unite’s overtime ban and work to rule, no industrial action was taken during this dispute, despite the ‘yes’ strike vote from all the unions.

Ultimately, despite being the minority union to Community, Unite stood alone in calling indefinite strike action, which was due to start four days after the general election. It did play a role in forcing Tata back to the negotiating table but even then the union leadership didn’t demand that the incoming Labour government nationalise Tata.

The statement from the government includes “a commitment by Tata to consider future investments”. But despite the fanfare from Labour, the only confirmed detail relates to the electric arc furnace. These promises by Tata will be met with scepticism by the remaining workers because of government inaction, and regrettably an incorrect union approach.

Therefore, it will now be imperative that the full details of those future

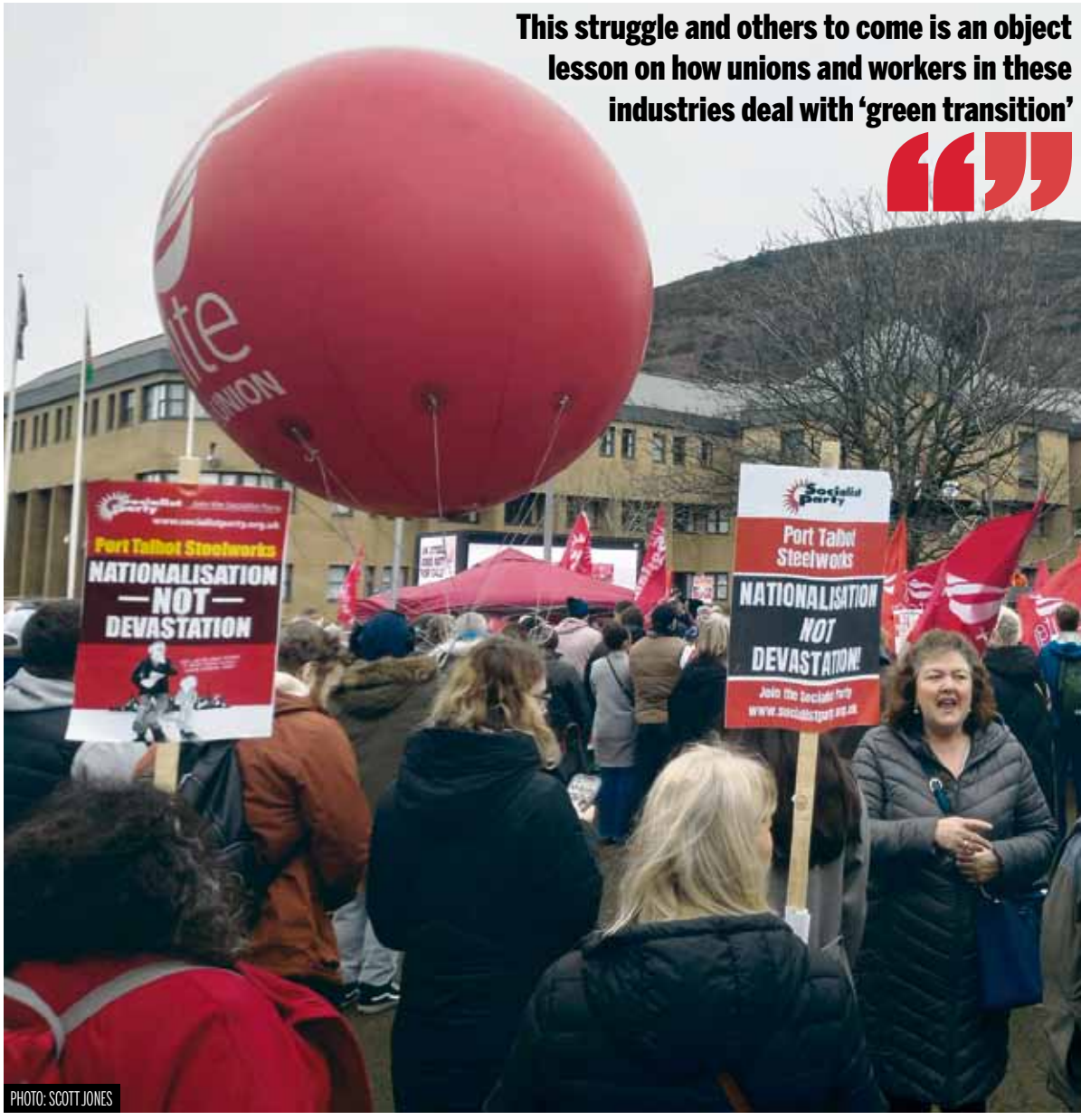
investments are put to the workforce and it will need workers’ pressure to ensure that these promises are kept. There will now be a key second stage of talks to discuss this investment. The Unite Convenor has stated in a press release that: “Our union will hold their feet to the fire to make sure this happens”.

Embarking on a major industrial struggle against a brutal and determined employer like Tata, entails the union leaders convincing the membership of a strategy for success and an action programme to deliver.

This struggle, and others to come, is an object lesson on how unions and workers in these industries deal with ‘green transition’. We counterpose a ‘workers’ transition’ as the only possible way to win over workers, facing mass redundancies and closures.

Unite has launched the ‘no ban without a plan’ campaign in response to government plans not to issue new licences for North Sea oil and gas drilling. We demand that any green transition to alternative production should be on the basis of guaranteeing workers’ jobs, pay and pensions. But this can only be done by taking these companies, such as in the energy, utility and steel industries in to socialist public ownership.

The steel unions’ failure to call for nationalisation throughout the Tata dispute and the failure to put that political demand onto the Labour governments in the Senedd and Westminster will be a lesson that needs to be learnt by a new generation of militant trade unionists urgently at British Steel in Scunthorpe, Ineos in Grangemouth in Scotland, Harland and Wolff in Belfast, and in the inevitable future struggles.



This struggle and others to come is an object lesson on how unions and workers in these industries deal with ‘green transition’



SOCIALISM

2024

A WEEKEND OF DISCUSSING IDEAS TO

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Hosted by **Socialist Party** socialistparty.org.uk

SATURDAY RALLY

SATURDAY 9 NOVEMBER, MAIN RALLY: 5-7PM

This rally, hearing from leading socialists from here in Britain and internationally, will be the event of the autumn that sets out how workers and young people can organise to fight Starmer’s Labour for what we need, and for socialism

Socialism 2024 will have big rallies and over 30 workshops (including on these themes):

- ‘You can’t have capitalism without racism’: The origins of racism and the struggle to end it today
- Is the rise of the far right inevitable?
- After the riots: the role of the trade unions in building a Community Defence Stewards’ organisation

MIDDLE EAST: FAILED BY CAPITALISM

- How can a Palestinian state be realised?
- Where now for the Iranian revolution?
- What rôle can the Israeli working class play?

A NEW ERA OF STRUGGLE

- Tasks for socialists under a Starmer government
- Could AI and a green new deal give capitalism a new lease of life?
- Do we face an authoritarian future?

STUDENTS V STARMER - THE BATTLE TO COME

Socialism 2024 will also host the opportunity to debate how the movement to defend universities, end marketisation, and fight for free education can be built

A WORLD IN CRISIS

The USA - just days after the presidential election. Nigeria; Bangladesh - and more.

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A Marxist understanding of the state; Marxist economics; Historical materialism; Dialectics. Trotskyism will also be a theme of Socialism 2024

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- After the Cass Review: the battle for trans rights
- Will a Starmer government help disabled people?

Tickets start at £7.50. Free creche available

‘Golden’ tickets include a hostel

Travel with local socialists can be sorted!

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

Socialist Students face down fee threat and cuts at freshers

● Huddersfield – job and course cuts

At the end of the last academic year, Huddersfield University cut 200 jobs, hoping that it might pass students by. But when hundreds of students turned out to protest against this back in May, the university may have realised its mistake.

The university still plans to cut at least 12 courses. And the threat of more job cuts remains.

This was noticeable when Socialist Students was at the freshers' fair. One university worker told me she was struggling to do her job, after so many of her colleagues' jobs had been cut.

A new student said the modules that they had wanted to take no longer existed, because of these job cuts. It is no surprise then that our 'stop university cuts petition' was the most successful.

Students are worried about course cuts, and losing teaching and support staff. A third-year student told me that they are glad to be leaving before things got any worse.

There is a crisis coming to the universities, and students need to be ready to fight it.

CAS MIDDLEMAS

WEST YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

● Enfield College – Gaza

People saw our 'End Israeli State Terror' posters, and before we'd even opened our mouths about the issue, they were coming over to our Socialist Students campaign stall to talk to us about it.

One person in particular appreciated us campaigning against the war. They got people from the college going past to stop, and told them what we were doing.

This person took 100 of our leaflets, and borrowed some of our tape, to put them up around the college. Outrageously, they were told by college security that they couldn't do this inside, because it was "political".

And disgustingly, the same security accused this person of being a "terrorist", because he was opposing the war on Gaza. But this will not stop us campaigning.

IAN PATTISON

ENFIELD AND LEA VALLEY SOCIALIST PARTY

● Liverpool – run out of leaflets on first day

On the first two days, dozens signed our petitions, and 90 signed up to Socialist Students. Many more accepted our leaflets, to the point where we had almost run out!

This shows the discontent with the

Coventry TOM B



new Labour government, and that any illusions in Starmer that may of held out before the election, are now disappearing. There is an eager appetite for a genuine socialist alternative to the current system.

We are the biggest left-wing student group on campus. And a lot of students we meet also join the Socialist Party. We were introduced to the Socialist Party via the Socialist Students society at the University of Liverpool.

We have three unis in Liverpool. Two have freshers' fairs in the first week.

We have committed to at least two Socialist Students campaign stalls per day. The size of our group makes this easier. The freshers' fairs themselves gives us chance to come across thousands of students within just hours.

We are also organising a protest rally, during the Labour Party conference in Liverpool, for students to show our opposition to the new government continuing austerity, after 14 years of Tory cuts.

Socialist Students seeks to be at the forefront of demonstrations. We are prepared for the Starmer raising tuition fees, and ready to be part of the fightback.

We demand universities be run democratically by students and workers, with the abolition of tuition fees, and extra funding paid for by the super-rich.

JOE WOOLFALL AND THOMAS BUTLER

LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST STUDENTS

● Salford – anger at Starmer

Liverpool Socialist Students journeyed up to the University of Salford. As the new government carries on the attacks on working-class people, including students, we anticipate

growing anger and disappointment with Labour.

Many will be looking to join the fight against this new wave of austerity. It is more important than ever to ensure a socialist alternative is present and active on campus.

Even though Labour has only been in power for just over two months, the disappointment and despair felt by students on campus was palpable. Even those that were typically apathetic, expressed a great dislike towards Keir Starmer.

We discussed multiple issues on our campaign stalls. From obscene rent prices, growing food and energy costs, and anxiety surrounding the climate crisis.

Salford has many international students. It was clear that they had discontent towards Starmer's stance on immigration, and how that would impact their studies.

The new Labour government has failed to resolve the anxieties about the political and economic situation that many students have.

Over three days, we handed out lots of leaflets, sold the Socialist paper, and had 37 sign up to Socialist Students. Students are seeking to mobilise and bring the fight against capitalism to the campuses.

By doing stalls and being present on campus, Socialist Students is growing. This will only continue as more students wake up to the reality that under Starmer and his government, they will continue to pay more for less.

JESS EVANS

LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST STUDENTS

● Coventry – education cuts worry

In the first few hours of our freshers stall, over 20 people put their name down to get involved building support for socialist ideas on campus. It



Uni bosses demand tuition fee rises

Adam Powell-Davies, Socialist Students national organiser, said: "University bosses have announced that they want students to pay higher tuition fees to make up for the gaping hole in higher education funding."

"These are the same university bosses, who over the last 14 years have gone along with Tory attacks on universities. And now they want to work with the new Labour government to do exactly the same."

"We say that if Labour and the university bosses make any attack on students, including increasing tuition fees, then we're going to fight back."

"We want to fight for free education, for full public funding for universities, and to build a mass movement to take the wealth off the 1%. And for socialism to do that. And if you agree, join us."

Join the student fightback!

JOIN socialist students

- Visit socialiststudents.org.uk/join
- or call **020 8988 8761**
- or text your name and school, college or uni to **07749 379 010**

Huddersfield



was over 30 by the time we packed up on the first day.

Many students already had growing concerns about their education, bringing up the cuts to the university and Labour's 'fiscal black hole'. Students stepping into their first, second, or third year are concerned about their future under a Keir Starmer government. The battles students are facing are not going to shy away this freshers.

Students need to be prepared to protest against university management and demand government funding to keep courses open, and prevent staff redundancies and tuition fee hikes. To build a fightback against all cuts, students and young people must also be organised as part of the wider working-class struggle.

MILA HUGHES

COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

PCS: Build a campaign to win more from Starmer's government

'Who runs our union?' Call a special delegate conference

We carry here an extract from the 'Bulletin of the PCS National Executive Left Majority', which includes Socialist Party members and the Broad Left Network (PCS – Public and Commercial Services union, which organises in the civil service)

We are the elected majority on the PCS National Executive Committee (NEC), that won the union election in May with a 19:16 majority.

However, obstruction from the president Martin Cavanagh, and general secretary Fran Heathcote – who are part of the Democracy Alliance (including 'Left Unity') which failed to secure a majority – has prevented us from taking decisions on important issues affecting members.

The NEC majority recognises that the new government will not end cuts to pay, jobs and conditions unless we apply the necessary pressure to do so. This was made clear when the government published the 5% pay remit, which is to be part-funded through a 2% cut in admin costs (job cuts), and departments cutting £3 billion to fund the public sector pay bill!

Starmer has already stated that it will "get worse before it gets better". PCS needs to be prepared for the battles that will come and yet we are being prevented from having that discussion at the NEC.

5% is not enough

The president and general secretary [emailed members] saying

that the NEC majority voted down a paper on pay put forward by the general secretary. That is true.

What that email doesn't tell you is that we tabled an alternative strategy. The national president vetoed it and ruled that there could be no challenge or alternative to the proposals put by the general secretary. This has been done repeatedly, and makes a mockery of a lay-led union and any form of democracy.

We voted against a strategy which capitulates to our new employer at the first test.

[The NEC majority] strategy would have enabled us to try for more than 5%, consult and begin to prepare the ground for the battles to win on jobs, pay and conditions that we believe will become necessary in the next period.

Who runs our union?

Since May, the general secretary and the national president have repeatedly vetoed discussion and debate, and undermined the democratically elected NEC.

This includes imposing a new staff structure without NEC agreement, which included promoting candidates defeated in elections

to newly created senior positions and huge pay rises at members' expense.

The general secretary, national president, and a small unelected bureaucracy at the top of our union, are preventing us from doing the job you elected us to do.

It is now clear that they accept the 5% remit and through their actions want to ensure there is no campaign.

Call a special delegate conference

We believe we have no choice but to call for a special delegate conference to determine who runs the union.

A special delegate conference can break the impasse created by the constant vetoes of the national president, and can halt the wrecking tactics of the so-called Democracy Alliance, which he represents and which lost the union elections.

It would hear activists from across PCS putting forward clear demands on pay, jobs and services. It can act to defend union democracy and discuss how we win the mass of union members to an active campaign.

PCS members on strike at National Museums Liverpool earlier this year LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY



● For more information about the motions of the NEC majority and the developments in PCS, go to the website of the Broad Left Network, the campaigning group of reps and members in the PCS in which the Socialist Party participates: bln.org.uk

NEU snap poll of teachers: Vote 'Reject'!

SEAN MCCAULEY

WORCESTERSHIRE NEU DISTRICT SECRETARY,
PERSONAL CAPACITY

The National Education Union (NEU) is running a 'snap poll' of teachers in England on the Labour government's pay award from 21 - 30 September.

The National Executive is recommending members accept the 5.5% award. However, a third of Exec members, including Socialist Party members, argued to recommend rejection. Socialist Party members are continuing to recommend members vote to reject.

There can be little doubt that striking works. Eight days of strike action in 2023 forced the Tories to come up with 6.5% and £900 million in funding.

Last year's award was below inflation and not fully funded. Despite the Exec recommending acceptance, many local activists believed that last year's pay deal did not go anywhere near redressing the 15% fall in teacher pay in real terms since 2010. What's more, it was not fully funded. Socialist Party members argued that we could have continued to fight for more.

This year, the mere threat of strike action in the autumn term has forced Keir Starmer and his New Labour government to implement a 5.5% uplift.



NEU strikes 2023 PAULA MITCHELL

Not fully funded and not enough

However, while it will cost £1.1 billion, Starmer's government is providing only an extra £417 million. £683 million will come from existing school budgets – budgets that were given by the Tories in April. It was believed at the time and we believe now that the "headroom" for a pay award in the Tory budgets was no more than £400 million for a 2% pay award. This means that £283 million, on top of what New Labour has pledged, is still needed. Heads will again dig into existing school budgets.

According to the NEU's own School Cuts website, £12.2 billion is needed immediately to reverse 14 years of Tory spending cuts. If any part of our pay award is unfunded, it will result in more cuts and, potentially, redundancies and cost-saving restructures. The lowest-paid members of our union, support staff, could face cuts to hours and jobs.

While 5.5% is above current inflation, it is not enough to recover lost real-terms pay. Teachers in Scotland won 14.6% over two years in 2023. A teacher on M6 pay grade in Scotland earns £8,000 more than a teacher in England!

The government has failed again to meet its teacher recruitment targets in more than 50% of areas. New Labour wants to recruit an extra 6,500 teachers but the NEU estimates we need 33,000 extra teachers. With unsustainable levels of workload, this pay award is unlikely to be enough to attract more new entrants, and retain them and experienced staff.

Cannot afford to give them time

Rachel Reeves and Keir Starmer have continuously striven to lower expectations, claiming that it will "get worse before it gets better". A further round of austerity is on the cards. We cannot afford to 'go easy' on Starmer or 'give him time'. We need to fight now on pay, funding and workload. Voting 'Reject' will give us the chance to launch that fight immediately.

Starmer and Reeves claim the cupboard is bare, but the money is there. They could stop further academisation immediately, and boot out the fat-cat academy chain CEOs and their entourages on inflated salaries. Bring all schools into genuinely democratic local authority control, with the requisite levels of funding.

Energy, Royal Mail, railways, water and telecoms should all be rationalised under the democratic control of those who work in the industries and those who use the services. Use the wealth for the greater need of society rather than greed of a few directors and wealthy shareholders.

Whatever we get from a Starmer-led New Labour government will only be won by a fight.

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

PREPARING FOR STORMS IN STARMER'S BRITAIN

The Socialist Party National Committee met in London from 14-15 September to discuss developments in Britain and internationally, and prepare for the important tasks we face this autumn. **Lenny Shail**, Executive Committee member, introduced the discussion on British Perspectives. We print an extract of his speech.

We said before and after the election that there wouldn't be a quiet summer or a honeymoon for Keir Starmer. He was only elected two months ago, think what has happened since.

Not counting Liz Truss, you'd have to go fairly far back to find any government thrown into the cauldron of heat so quickly, but also against the backdrop of still small but rising tide of working-class struggle.

You have to go back to 1987 to find any period where there's been as many strike days lost in the three months preceding and following a general election.

Under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, it took five months for even a single vote against the Labour government by a Labour MP. Starmer had to deal with it within the first two weeks. He removed the whip of seven MPs in the first two weeks. The Blair and Brown governments didn't remove the whip of any MP throughout their whole premierships, for voting against the government.

Starmer's government was elected with extremely low support and a shallow social base. The latest Ipsos poll tracking Starmer's favourability shows a rapid fall in support for him and his government, and of course the Tories are even more unpopular.

The decades-long hollowing out of the Tory party, once the most successful capitalist party in the world, reached a tipping point in the general election with the worst result in its 200-year history, and its lowest-ever number of MPs.

It is possible that the aftermath of 24 July could lead to its final shattering. Although it is also the case that the capitalist class – acutely aware that Starmer's New Labour could suffer the same fate – are likely to do their best to salvage something from the wreckage of their historic party.

The 2024 election was a continuation of the process of fragmentation of politics, reflecting the growing alienation from capitalist politicians, which has taken place over the last 30 years. The two main parties received the lowest share of the vote (57.4%) since Labour first contested a majority of seats in 1918.

Alienation

This alienation was reflected in the riots and far-right attacks that developed over the summer. These events were serious developments, understandably provoking fear among many Black and Asian workers, particularly during those few weeks, but since too.

The editorial of the September issue of Socialism Today 'The first lightning flashes – and what to do' (see socialistparty.org.uk) draws a careful

balance sheet of what the riots represent. It looks at how deep the roots of support for far-right ideas in society really go. It also compares the numbers of those who attended far-right protests with the tens of thousands who turned out to oppose them, and the many hundreds of thousands who have protested to oppose the Israeli state slaughter of Palestinians, for example.

The riots are part of a wider picture of 'Broken Britain', as so many capitalist commentators call it. You only have to read the Grenfell report to get an element of that, where it talks about 'incompetence, dishonesty and greed' and of decades of government and corporate failure.

Those who have 'No trust in politicians' has risen from 12% to 47% since 1987. Is it any surprise?

Labour Party research from 2017 claimed Tory plans to scrap the winter fuel payment for better-off pensioners could lead to almost 4,000 additional deaths over winter. Now the Labour government is carrying it out.

In the past 14 years, 1,200 youth clubs have closed, 1,100 children's centres and nurseries, 1,400 libraries, 1,600 public toilets. No part of the country is untouched by the housing crisis. The local government funding 'black hole' stands at £4.3 billion, and will grow to £8.5 billion next year. Birmingham Council has already directly cut 13,000 jobs since 2010, for example. The same is reflected in every town and city.

Darzi's NHS report that came out this week talks about the £14 billion gap in spending on health compared to the rest of the developed world. It details huge mortality rates and deaths, starvation of investment, crumbling buildings, record levels of sickness, sickness and exhaustion amongst NHS staff. And Labour says 'You won't get anymore money without reform'.

Even the Financial Times has warned that Starmer "cannot escape the fact, that curing the NHS will need money too!" It also raises at the same time the prospect of moves to a European-style social insurance model with greater private market access in order to attract investment.

Economy

Real GDP per head has risen by just 5% over the last 16 years, after going up by 46% over the previous 16. The UK once used to fear being caught by France or Germany but now faces the prospect of being overtaken by Poland in 2031.

The Times has made the point that even with government tax cuts, subsidies and investments and other perks, the economy is unlikely to be very responsive, given the sluggish modern-day character UK capitalism and business.



Despite its best efforts, this government will be rocked by mass working-class struggles. Protests and strikes may be the first roads taken in opposing the new government, but the need for that action to have a political expression will also be quickly posed



NUMBER 10 & KASSIAMELOW/CXC

Britain has record levels of government debt. Its economy is full of 'zombie companies' and businesses surviving hand-to-mouth, paying off interest only on record levels corporate debt.

The government is walking a tightrope on how to manage its debt. There are plenty of spikes in the road that could accelerate the economic crisis and force Starmer's government into quicker and harder confrontations with the working class.

Workers' opposition

Starmer is desperate to show the capitalist class that he can be trusted to act in its interests. But how long can it

last? Will this government, or Starmer himself, last until 2029?

The capitalist class is clearly trying to boost the authority of the Labour government, fearful of its lack of social base and its ability to implement policies in the interests of the capitalist bosses.

At the same time, the government, under pressure – including from furor over strike action – is desperate to appease working-class anger which will grow even greater with further cuts coming down the road. That's what is behind its limited concessions on workers' rights, the details of which are still to be fought over. The government is already attempting to

step back or blur the lines over promises made in advance of the general election.

We have to welcome any reforms in the interests of the working class, however limited. But use it as an opportunity to raise what is really needed and how it can be fought for.

The vast majority of workers do not see the Labour government as representing their interests. But there are some who are still waiting and hoping for something from this new government. And there will be trade union leaders who lean on that mood, trying to persuade their members to 'give Labour more time'. But there is no prospect of Labour

avoiding huge battles with the organised working class.

The government has been able to get a whole number of public sector pay deals over the line. Even if it resolves the remaining pay disputes too, the issues will arise again quickly with new pay rounds in the Spring, as well as over issues of implementation and funding, and cuts to jobs and services.

Political opposition

It's not possible to predict when big movements will take place. But the lessons of the strike wave have not gone away, including that striking works. Despite its best efforts, this

government will be rocked by mass working-class struggles. Protests and strikes may be the first roads taken in opposing the new government, but the need for that action to have a political expression will also be quickly posed.

The issue may be raised especially sharply in the public sector trade unions which are currently directly funding the Labour Party. It could also develop in unions representing workers in failing industries facing job losses and attacks where issues like nationalisation, if fought for, could become a central issue.

Jeremy Corbyn has long been a member of the parliamentary groups of several trade unions, particularly those with more left leaderships. What's to stop the other independent MPs and the 'rebels' suspended from Labour playing that role?

If the trade unions put demands on these MPs to act on their behalf in parliament, advancing policies in the interests of members, these forces could develop along the lines of a workers' bloc of MPs, looked to by sections of the working class coming into struggle. Even at a local level, what's to stop Trades Union Councils approaching MPs and asking them to act on their behalf in parliament, for example?

Developing political opposition to Starmer's government along those lines would be a step forward. It would be an important reference point with which to raise what is needed in the form of a new mass workers' party, with the central role of the working class as an organised form and the trade unions.

There is a whole array of forces identifying the political vacuum of working-class political representation and looking to take shortcuts to fill it, bypassing the working-class itself taking steps towards its own political representation.

At this stage, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition is still best placed to reach a layer of workers and push forward that process. That includes fighting for the biggest possible stand in next May's local elections, which are largely to County Councils.

It also includes fighting in council by-elections, including St Michaels ward in Coventry, where Socialist Party National Committee member Dave Nellist will contest the seat which he held between 1998-2012.

Elections like these are important opportunities to point the way forward for what is needed. For example, we can raise that councils must step in to fund emergency heating grants for those affected by the Winter Fuel Payment cuts. And then fight the government for the funding.

In areas where there are no elections, we can revisit the idea of peoples' budgets, bringing together trade unions and campaigners to draw up a plan for what is needed in our communities – and raising the need for a political force to fight for it.

Youth and students

Also this autumn, Socialist Party members will be taking our ideas into universities, which themselves face a deep crisis. In response to questioning over the summer, Jacqui Smith, minister for skills said: 'We'll let some universities go bust'.

The capitalists quickly responded to correct her. The Financial Times said: "The collapse of even a handful of the UK's 140-plus universities would not have the same cataclysmic effect as a run on the banks but the consequences would be serious... If one or more higher education institutions were to collapse, the government would have little option but to step in to protect the wider reputation of one of the UK's globally successful industries – regardless of what ministers are currently saying."

Any government intervention opens the door to us raising the need for workers' and student oversight of where the money is going, how it is spent. It is an opportunity to raise the need for fully publicly funded, free education.

Many of the young people coming to university this autumn will have voted Labour to get rid of the Tories. Many will have already seen what the Labour government means on issues such as Gaza, the two-child benefit cap and the Winter Fuel Payment. But Rachel Reeves's budget on 30 October has the potential to include more direct attacks on students, including the possibility of a fees increase.

The Socialist Party has to be prepared to act and to help lead developing protests and movements. That starts by the vital task of helping to build Socialist Students groups in universities.

There are huge opportunities for us to build amongst young workers too, including building support in the youth sections of trade unions. The development of strikes and unionisation at Coventry Amazon is a glimpse of how workers not yet organised can move into action.

We have to prepare for workers to be thrown into struggle by developing capitalist crisis in Britain. There are huge opportunities to win support for socialist ideas and for us to play a role in helping to lead working-class struggle.

Come to a Socialist Party meeting near you

The Socialist Party has regular meetings in towns and cities across the country.

If you would like to participate:
● socialistparty.org.uk/events
● Or text 07761 818206 with your name and postcode.

‘COUNCILS ON THE BRINK’

Fighting Unison activists plan to force leaders to act

PAUL COUCHMAN
BRANCH SECRETARY, SURREY COUNTY UNISON.
PERSONAL CAPACITY

A new Unison report, ‘*Councils on the Brink*’, shows that councils across England, Scotland and Wales are facing a £4 billion funding shortfall for the coming year, stretching to £8.5 billion by 2026-27.

Unison general secretary Christina McAnea says: “Councils are teetering on the brink of financial disaster ... As tough as the financial situation may be, ministers cannot ignore the terrible plight of authorities of every political persuasion.”

On 10 September, I chaired an on-line meeting called by branch secretaries covering many councils on the frontline of the cuts. This was a follow-up to the highly successful fringe meeting on fighting the cuts held at the June Unison local government conference, particularly on the failure of Unison nationally to lead a fight on this issue.

The meeting at conference was attended by about 100 delegates, representing members in many of the councils that are affected by cuts and, in some cases, by Section 114 ‘bankruptcy’ notices - with many other councils saying they may issue Section 114 notices in the near future. Delegates from branches whose motions on fighting the cuts had been ruled out by the Standing

Orders Committee were also in attendance.

There was a very clear mood at the fringe meeting that we need to do more as a union; at the very least carry out the policy agreed by the Local Government Service Group Executive (SGE) to lobby councillors for legal no-cuts budgets and to work towards national industrial action against the cuts.

The fringe meeting agreed to continue to network and build upon the event. Hence this follow-up meeting, which was open to any Unison activist who wanted to be part of the discussion. No Unison resources were used to organise the meeting.

National campaign

Jean Thorpe, chair of Nottingham City Unison, introduced the meeting. She reminded people that conference had voted for the union to organise an autumn national demo against local government cuts, yet nothing has happened. Branches are still being left on their own to fight back against cuts in jobs and services.

Jean also made it clear that the cuts are going to continue under this Labour government.

Many at the meeting said the union leadership lacks confidence, and seems to be waiting and hoping for Starmer to step in and solve the crisis. It was noted that there are hundreds of Labour councillors linked

to Unison, many of them ex-Unison full-time employees, but there appears to be no attempt by the union to win them over to a no-cuts budget position.

Unison should demand the funding needed immediately from Starmer, and prepare a national campaign to back up that demand.

Speakers made it clear that Unison’s policy adopted by the SGE in 2016 supported legal no-cuts budgets, but the union bureaucracy has never acted on this policy, saying there is no such thing as a legal no-cuts budget. But Mark Evans from Carmarthenshire County Unison gave an example of how their branch has developed a no-cuts budget over the years, using borrowing and reserves, as a breathing space to develop a workforce and community campaign, and put it to the council.

The possibility of getting a special Unison local government conference on the cuts was raised, which would need branches representing 25% of the membership to call for it. Jim McFarlane, from Dundee City, spoke on the need to devolution-proof any model motion so all the nations can come behind it.

The meeting closed with unanimous agreement that the original sponsoring branch secretaries would meet and draw up draft model motions and a potential strategy for getting the union to take up the fight on a national level.

St Michael’s by-election

Get socialist Dave Nellist back on Coventry council

Vote TUSC on 10 October



Dave Nellist (left) campaigning in St Michaels COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

MAX MCGEE
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

What is the answer to the Labour council that meekly passed on Tory cuts, and now proudly slashes services mandated by the new Labour government?

A by-election has been called in St. Michaels ward for 10 October. The Socialist Party has won all three councillors there before.

Dave Nellist was the Socialist Party councillor for 14 years, and a socialist Labour MP for nine years, only taking a worker’s wage, not the big fat MP salary. So it was clear that standing Dave for re-election was the best choice.

People see the impact of austerity on their lives and services. But just opposing austerity verbally, and shrugging at hustings, like local Labour politicians do, is not enough when people’s lives and quality of lives are at risk. Keir Starmer has suspended local MP Zara Sultana for opposing the two-child benefit cap.

We aim to link up with striking workers, with students facing education and bank accounts hollowed out of by uni bosses let off the leash. Parking charges for residents are up, transport costs are up, uncapped rents are rising, inflation is higher than wages. But politicians’ expenses remain high.

This by-election is an opportunity to fight back that can’t be missed. And we’ve shown what’s possible even with a minority of three socialist councillors surrounded by 54. We had the balance of power in some

council votes, successfully oppose PFI privatisation schemes, and saving a daycare centre.

The three Socialist Party councillors visited and supported strikes, linked up with local unions and residents groups to save Charterhouse Fields, campaigned against school and hospital closures, and saved hundreds of jobs. The Charterhouse free parking scheme that our socialist councillors helped win for us is now being charged for.

We also ensured the council adopted a position supporting free education, while Coventry’s three Blairite Labour MPs were voting to increase uni tuition fees.

When workers are given a lead, their sights are raised, and their confidence to struggle is boosted. Re-electing Dave to the council would be a step towards this.

● *Dave Nellist is the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate in the St Michael’s by-election on 10 October*

Wales – Hundreds march against cuts

Llanelli – Plaid’s broken school promise

MARK EVANS
CARMARTHENSHIRE UNISON RETIRED MEMBERS
BRANCH SECRETARY (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Carmarthenshire County Council, led by Welsh nationalist party Plaid Cymru, has reneged on its commitment to replace Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Heol Goffa school in Llanelli.

200 people marched, as part of the campaign to get the council to reverse its decision not to fund a new purpose-built school. For years, the council, including the previous Plaid leader Emlyn Dole, gave an undertaking to staff and pupils that a new school that would replace Heol Goffa, which was in a dilapidated state, and not fit for purpose.

The demonstration was attended by parents, pupils, and trade unionists, representing members in the school. Carmarthenshire County Unison, including its retired members branch, were there in force. We had our banners, along with the National Education Union (NEU) and Unite Community.

Unison is the biggest union in the school, and we will campaign until the council fulfils its commitment to build a purpose-built school that retains the expertise and skills of our members.

The council’s decision, we are told, is due to the rising cost. We do not accept this explanation.

If the council had not dutifully implemented Tory central government cuts, passed on by the Welsh Labour government, it would be in a far better position than it is now. The council always finds the money for its pet projects.

The stance of our Unison branch, the previous lobby of the council, and this demonstration, sends a clear message to the council – fulfil your previous commitment to replace Heol Goffa school.

Marching in Llanelli and Blackwood SOCIALIST PARTY WALES



Mark and Unison members on the march



Marching in Llanelli and Blackwood SOCIALIST PARTY WALES

Caerphilly – Labour put private consultants above elderly

Save Meals Direct, Blackwood Miners, and Llancaiach Fawr

DAVE REID
SOCIALIST PARTY WALES

Hundreds and hundreds marched through Blackwood to oppose Caerphilly Labour Council closing ‘meals on wheels’, Blackwood Miners’ Institute, and Llancaiach Fawr museum –with the loss of 87 jobs.

Caerphilly Council is proposing to end an essential service to the community, and close two South Wales Valleys cultural icons. Not out of financial necessity, but on the advice of a private consultancy firm which profits from cutting our services.

Meals on wheels is about much more than just food. It provides a daily contact for elderly people in the borough, and a check on how they are.

The council says social services will fill that gap. But we all know social services cannot cope with the existing workload.

So, the only way that would happen is if the council increases spending on social services by more than they plan to cut from meals on wheels! Meals on wheels is the cheapest way to provide contact for our elderly.

The council is basically abandoning our elderly people. And this follows the decision of the Labour government to cut their winter fuel allowance.

The Labour government is cutting their heating and the Labour council is cutting their food. Scandalously many pensioners in the UK will have to choose between heating or eating this winter. Labour in Caerphilly is not even giving them that choice!

The Socialist Party has consistently called for the council to carry out the Wales Trades Union Congress (TUC) policy of preparing no-cuts budgets, using reserves, and fighting for funding from the Welsh Labour government and the Labour government in Westminster to retain services.

There is no need for Caerphilly Council to carry out these cuts. The council’s financial reserves have risen to £192 million, with £90 million unallocated. Just the interest accrued from the reserves would cover the cost of meals on wheels nearly twice over!

Now join campaigners as we lobby two council meetings.

The cuts of £1 million a year have been proposed by consultancy firm Perago, which the councils pay an estimated £1.2 million for ‘help’ with restructuring. The company is actually profiting the more they cut our services. So these fat cats will profit from depriving our pensioners of food.

Caerphilly Socialist Party says:

- Cancel the cuts – Keep Meals Direct and the venues open. Use the council’s reserves as a temporary measure
- Build a mass campaign of communities and trade unions to defend all council services and jobs
- Build a mass campaign with other councils to demand adequate funding from Welsh Labour government and Westminster Labour government
- For workers’ candidates to stand against all councillors who vote for these cuts
- Make the super-rich pay for the Tory mess, not our pensioners

Lobbies of Caerphilly Council

Tuesday 24 September, 1.30pm – Scrutiny committee
Wednesday 25 September, 4.30pm – Council cabinet
Both Tredomen Park, Ystrad Mynach CF82 7PG

- Read what we’ve said before – ‘Blackwood packed by anti-austerity protest. Build up the pressure!’ at socialistparty.org.uk

Sheffield Unite bin workers demand union recognition

Morale boosted in face of management provocation

ALISTAIR TICE
YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

The Unite indefinite strike for union recognition at Veolia in Sheffield is now in its fifth week.

Around 40 strikers took their case to Sheffield City Council on 4 September, lobbying and petitioning the full council meeting. The council has outsourced the city’s waste management contract to Veolia for 35 years.

Strikers had been assembling every morning outside their workplace but management have closed the depot so pickets can’t talk to the working GMB members who do have union recognition. So now most strikers are

protesting outside the nearby Veolia waste-to-heat incinerator site where bin waggons tip their loads.

This more pro-active protesting by strikers last week has certainly got in the face of Veolia management. Whilst the strikers are wary of picketing the working bin workers due to the fear of victimisation by a very bullying management, this didn’t stop a Socialist Party member supporting the dispute from crossing the road to try to talk to GMB and non-union members in their waggons coming in and out.

This led to incidents of reckless driving and unwanted physical contact which have been reported to the police and Veolia. And provoked

the manager into calling me a “twat”, and the peacefully protesting strikers (her employees) “idiots” and “a disgrace”. Even worse, when I was stood in front of one waggon, this manager told the driver to “Run him over - I’ll do the paperwork”!

As several drivers have been previously disciplined for driving incidents much less serious than running over a member of the public, an official complaint has gone in about this unprofessional and abusive behaviour.

These incidents have lifted the morale of the strikers and forced management to relocate where the working waggons tip again. The new site will now be protested at as well.

Save Enfield libraries and leisure centre from Labour cuts

SAADA MOHAMED
ENFIELD AND LEA VALLEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Enfield was the London borough with the most libraries – 16 in total. However, the Labour council has decided to close half. These cuts will save the council around £600,000, and earn it £3 million on property sales. This is yet another example of Labour carrying on the Tories’ austerity measures, truly demonstrating that the only difference between the Tories and Labour is their colours.

The council is also refusing to reopen Edmonton Leisure Centre, and is refusing to admit that privatisation has failed. The private companies

that operated this service before ran it into the ground.

In Enfield, Labour is defending these cuts, while Tory councillors have cynically launched a petition against library closures. But the national Tory government cut funding for councils for 14 years, and local Tory councils were happy to pass on those cuts.

These capitalist politicians do not work for the people. This is why the Socialist Party says the council should not make these cuts. Take the wealth off the super-rich, so that working-class people do not suffer under another wave of austerity. Keir Starmer’s Labour is threatening us with ‘tough choices’. Instead they should give councils the money they need.

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Nigeria: Onerous bail conditions prolong detention of Adaramoye Michael Lenin and others

FRANCIS NWAPA
NATIONAL SECRETARY YOUTH RIGHTS CAMPAIGN
(NIGERIA)

We, of the Youth Rights Campaign (YRC), unequivocally condemn the conditions attached to the bail granted to Adaramoye Michael Lenin, Mosiu Sodiq and eight others, who have been incarcerated in connection with #EndBadGovernance protest for about six weeks now, by Justice Emeke Nwite of the Federal High Court Abuja. These conditions, which require a surety each with property in Abuja and 10 million naira, not only reflect a troubling disregard for the fundamental rights of ordinary people but also reveal a judiciary system that does not care about the legitimate grievances expressed by the Nigerians in the August protests, particularly the worsening economic hardship and mass hunger.

In other words, it is a bail which does not guarantee freedom for those subjected to injustice by Tinubu government as it is difficult to meet the financial demands of the conditions. In addition to Michael Lenin and Sodiq, others are: Adeyemi Abiodun Abayomi Suleiman Yakubu, Opaluwa Eleojo Simeon, Angel Love Innocent, Buhari Lawal, Bashir Bello (aka Mur-tala), Nuradeen Khamis, Abdulsalam Zubairu.

Michael Lenin, National Coordinator of YRC was arrested and blind-folded together with Sodiq in the wee hours of 5 August by the operatives

of National Intelligence Agency on the order of Nuhu Ribadu, National Security Adviser to President Bola Tinubu.

The charges are trumped-up and fabricated, aimed at stifling dissent and suppressing protests. For instance, one of the ridiculous charges is treason, which carries death penalty, for merely carrying placards with the inscription “End Bad Governance”.

We demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of charges against Micheal Lenin and nine others, and the immediate and unconditional release of all individuals arrested in connection with the August protests yet to be charged. These include 39 who have been slammed in Kuje prison without being arraigned in court since 22 August, and Daniel Akande who is being held at the facility of the Inspector General of Police's Intelligence Response Team in Abuja without trial since 2 September. There is also Khalid Aminu who has been in custody of the DSS without trial since the first week of August.

We also call on the police and other security operatives to stop the constant harassment of President of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) Joe Ajaro and desist from the planned arrest of some socialist and left activists based in Abuja. We also demand the unfreezing of bank accounts of activists and organisations which have been barred in connection with #EndBadGovernance protests. Labour and pro-masses’ organisations

should support these demands. End the atmosphere of intimidation and repression by the Tinubu government. Its descent to civil dictatorship must be resisted.

Moreover, we must highlight a glaring hypocrisy within the legal system. Corrupt politicians and other members of the thieving elite accused of serious offences often receive lenient bail conditions that starkly contrast with those imposed on ordinary citizens. This disparity underscores a systemic bias that favours the rich ruling elite who steal public wealth but penalises ordinary people for exercising their democratic rights.

We call on the labour movement, especially leadership of Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC), civil society organisations and human rights groups to practically lend weight and voice to ensuring that Michael Lenin and nine others who have been granted bail to regain freedom and demand the immediate and unconditional release of all in different detention facilities in connection with the #EndBadGovernance protests.

We specifically charge NLC President Joe Ajaro to walk the talk he made during a visit to the new President of the Nigeria Bar Association (NBA) as he was reported to have “reaffirmed the NLC’s commitment to working alongside the NBA in promoting the rights of workers and all Nigerians” (Punch, 14 September). The NLC must ensure that all those arrested and detained over #EndBadGovernance protests are

● Add your name to the statement



● Pass the motion in your trade union



released. Instructively, they include Eleojo Opaluwa, a regional officer of National Union of Electricity Employees (NUEE) and Vice Chair of NLC Kogi State council.

Tinubu is using the detention of activists and attacks on democratic rights to serve as deterrent to further mass protests. Working people and youth must fight for the freedom of detained protesters and prepared to join a future protest against Tinubu anti-poor policies.



Committee for a Workers' International
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Sri Lanka: Trade unionists debate way forward and international solidarity

CWI REPORTERS

Over 75 trade unionists and international visitors attended a conference organised by the Free Trade Union Centre in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The conference debated the way forward for workers in Sri Lanka following the protests which saw the removal from office of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa in 2022, and what will follow the presidential elections on 21 September. It also discussed how Sri Lankan trade unionists could build solidarity internationally.

The chairperson, Srinath Perera, opened the meeting and introduced visitors from around the globe, including two branch secretaries from Unite the Union in Britain, Jon Dale from Nottinghamshire Health branch and Kevin Parslow from Waltham Forest Council branch, as well as trade unionists from India and Malaysia. Solidarity messages were received from Carmel Gates, general secretary of the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIP-SA), from the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) in Britain, and from Austin Harney of the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), who had to withdraw from attending the meeting at the last minute.



The conference agreed that the main target of whoever wins the presidential election will be attacks on workers and unions, so all workers should prepare for such attacks. The meeting committed to defending workers’ rights as a minimum agreed point of struggle.

Tony Saunois gave greetings to the conference from the Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI) and stressed the importance of

international working-class solidarity, but also how oppressed workers around the world are getting involved in struggle, through trade unions, strikes, etc.

It will be important to raise resolutions of solidarity though trade union conferences in Britain, and other countries round the world.

An Ansell worker talked about the importance of international solidarity and building international links,

and struggles to win wage increases. He also explained the battles they have taken on service conditions agreements.

A statement was generally agreed, with one or two suggested amendments, to take forward and campaign around.

● Representatives of the following unions took part in the meeting: Ceylon Bank Employees Union, Telecommunications All Employees Union, Free Trade Zone and General Employees Union, Ceylon Estate Staff Union, Working Journalists Association, Ceylon Mercantile Industrial and General Workers Union, Sri Lanka Jathika Guru Sangamaya (National Union of Teachers, Post and Telecommunications Officers Union, Workers Struggle Centre, United General Workers Union, Lanka Education Services Union, Progressive Samurdhi Employees Union, Textile Garment and Clothing Workers Union, Lanka Electricity General Workers Union, Inter-University Trade Union Federation, Free and General Service Workers Union, Protect Union, Dabindu Collective (defending women workers’ rights in free trade zones) and the Progressive Teachers Union

released. Instructively, they include Eleojo Opaluwa, a regional officer of National Union of Electricity Employees (NUEE) and Vice Chair of NLC Kogi State council.

Tinubu is using the detention of activists and attacks on democratic rights to serve as deterrent to further mass protests. Working people and youth must fight for the freedom of detained protesters and prepared to join a future protest against Tinubu anti-poor policies.

First ever Evesham socialist stall

‘We want to save our NHS’



JAMES GIRALDI
WORCESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Something special has happened in Evesham. For the first time ever, the Socialist Party set up a campaign stall in the Worcestershire town’s centre. And it was a real success – fighting against the erosion of our public services, and the struggle for a fairer alternative.

We started with nervous but optimistic energy. Evesham isn’t known as a socialist stronghold, so we weren’t sure what to expect, even for me as a local.

We had nothing to worry about. Many people welcomed us. There’s a strong undercurrent of discontent with the new Labour government.

We raised £41.20, which is crucial for keeping our campaign activities going strong. Every bit counts in the struggle for a fairer society.

10 people bought the Socialist paper. It was inspiring to see so many locals interested in our working-class newspaper - helping spread our message, and offering people a different perspective, one that actually speaks to their concerns and experiences.

39 people signed our petition to save the NHS from further privatisation - striking a chord with nearly everyone who stopped by our stall. The NHS is a lifeline for so many of us, and the thought of it being undermined by private companies is deeply upsetting.

People shared their frustrations with the growing waiting lists at local hospitals. Residents have been left in limbo, waiting months for treatments and surgeries that, not too long ago, would have been taken care of much more quickly.

These waiting lists aren’t just numbers on a page. They represent real pain, anxiety, and uncertainty for people in our communities.

The consensus was clear – enough is enough. We need to stop creeping privatisation of our health service, before it’s too late.

The most rewarding part of the day was the conversations we had. Two elderly sisters talked to us very strongly about the discontent they have for Keir Starmer and his cabinet.

A young family kindly offered us hot drinks from the Greggs next door. They also donated a bit of money, and bought a Socialist paper.

People are fed up with the status quo. They’re tired of being ignored by politicians who seem more interested in serving big business, than in addressing the everyday problems faced by ordinary people. There is real desire for change – a system that actually works for the working class, not just the ruling bosses’ class.

This stall was just the beginning. The response we got shows that socialist ideas have a place here.

With each stall, each conversation, and each new supporter, we’re one step closer to making that vision a reality.

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Southampton – Newtown puts Labour politicians on spot over racism and cuts

FRANCIS COULTAS
SOUTHAMPTON EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

In August, fears of far-right riots confined frightened Southampton residents to their homes, shut down businesses, and brought out a 400-strong anti-racist counter-protest. Newtown – located close to the city centre, with a diverse community, including many Muslims – was heavily impacted.

The local Trades Union Council and the Newtown community organised a meeting to ask questions and share concerns with local politicians, and police representatives.

Two Labour councillors – Jackie Raymont and Mike Denness – attended. Others did not, with some not even responding to the invite.

Socialist Party member Declan Clune, from the trades council, chaired the meeting of 40. Audience members did not hesitate in asking difficult questions on the subjects of racism and Islamophobia, the UK government’s complicity in the slaughter in Gaza, housing conditions and sanitation, healthcare, cost of living, and education.

The councillors admitted that there was more they could have done to address the issues affecting constituents. Attendees were concerned about the lack of proactive action from their local councillors, and stated that any councillor going against



their party’s whip in order to help their constituents would have the full support of those constituents and the trade unions.

The message from the community was that a lack of resources for the population was directly linked to racism and the recent far-right riots. Councillors should be doing more to fight for the resources that the people

of Southampton need. Far-right riots could rise up again if things do not change.

However, many of the questions about community safety were unanswered when the police did not attend. This sadly highlights the ongoing neglect suffered by the Newtown community and Southampton as a whole.

‘I am ‘bothered’ by cuts and privatisation’

Why I joined Socialist Party

SAMUEL FISHER (RIGHT)
READING SOCIALIST PARTY

I have always had opinions on politics, and been on the left side of the debate. Helping people out – yes; nationalising rail – definitely; making a fairer and more equal society – of course.

I have been in contact with my MP and my councillors over certain issues. My councillor asked: “That is not even in your area. Why are you bothered?” I replied: “It is not just about me. It is about that area and

the people who live there.”

It probably comes from my family, especially where my parents were looking after relatives, and putting others before themselves. Even when they were not feeling up to it, my parents made sure to take them out shopping, or to invite them over for tea or Sunday lunch.

I saw Socialist Party posters up in the town, and when a flyer came in the post that there was a local public meeting, I decided to go along. I agreed with a majority of what was said.

When I looked at ‘What we stand for’ at the back of the Socialist paper, of all the parties, this came closest to my beliefs. After attending a few public meetings, I decided to join, and have not looked back.



SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND									
AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q3: JULY-SEPTEMBER 2024				DEADLINE: 30 SEPTEMBER 2024		
South West	1,996	2,100							95%
North West	916	1,200						76%	
Northern	559	800						70%	
Southern & SE	1,649	2,400						69%	
London	3,116	5,000						62%	
Wales	1,235	2,400						51%	
East Midlands	796	2,050						39%	
Yorkshire	931	2,650						35%	
West Midlands	921	2,700						34%	
Eastern	356	1,300						27%	
Other	6,165	2,400							257%
TOTAL	18,639	25,000							75%

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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.

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USA: Who is Kamala Harris and what does she stand for?



Kamala Harris PHOTO: GAGE SKIDMORE/CC

The US is in the heat of a turbulent presidential election campaign. A second apparent assassination attempt on Republican candidate Donald Trump demonstrates the volatility and polarisation that exists. But who is his Democrat opponent Kamala Harris, recently put in place of outgoing President Joe Biden, and what is her record? Jeff Booth of Independent Socialist Group (CWI) supporters in the US) looks at what she stands for.

Money talks, especially to the Republican and Democratic parties. The Democratic National Committee (DNC) moved quickly to take down Biden, to get the corporate funds flowing again, and to legally use Biden-Harris campaign money already banked. The DNC pushed Harris forward. She was seen as a known quantity, vetted by years of being 'top cop' ('Kopola') as San Francisco District Attorney, then California attorney general, senator, and US vice-president. Harris is a safe bet, politically and financially, for capitalists backing the Democratic Party.

Kamala Harris: "I'm a capitalist"

President Joe Biden's campaign was on track to crash and burn after his debate with Donald Trump. Despite leading Democrats - including so-called progressive or 'left' Democrats like Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez - backing Biden to the bitter end. Press conferences and a high-profile television interview a week after the debate couldn't save him. Biden's interview performance reinforced the popular perception that he was losing it - both his mind and the election. These events triggered a sharp pause in big-money donations from corporate execs and other capitalists into the Biden-Harris campaign and Political Action Committees (PACs) supporting it.

by Diane Feinstein.

Other economic advisers to Harris include Mike Pyland and Brian Deese from the Blackrock corporate hierarchy, and Deane Millison, a lobbyist for Ford. Deese was also Director of the Office of Management and Budget when Obama bailed out the big corporations after the 2008 Great Recession. He led the government bailout of the auto industry.

Gaza

Harris is being marketed by the Democrats as somehow 'better' than Biden on Gaza. Harris, as a leading Democratic Party politician, is clearly against any arms embargo or cuts to the USA's record-breaking military aid to Israel. Recent protests in the US in mid-August against the war in Gaza called for "not one more bomb": an arms embargo against Israel. Harris's answer through her National Security Adviser: "She does not support an arms embargo."

Harris released a public statement attacking pro-Palestinian, anti-war protesters, claiming they supported Hamas terrorism, describing "despicable acts by unpatriotic protesters and dangerous hate-fuelled rhetoric." Harris says she supports a "ceasefire" without giving specifics. Biden and the Democratic Party leaders also talk about a ceasefire yet on 13 August, the Biden-Harris administration announced another \$23.5 billion for the Israeli military. At a campaign rally, protesters shouted: "Kamala,

Kamala you can't hide! We won't vote for genocide." Harris's response: "I am speaking now... You know what? If you want Donald Trump to win, then say that. Otherwise, I'm speaking." That sounds a lot like: "Shut up, they might hear you!"

Harris can't hide from a large number of voters who will remember her active participation in the Democratic Party's enabling of the Israeli state to invade and occupy Gaza and pursue genocidal policies against the Palestinian people. Harris uses the worn-out rhetoric of lesser evilism to literally shout down any criticism of imperialist policies against the Palestinian people, despite there being no real difference between the Republican and Democratic Parties on supporting the actions of the Israeli state, including the invasion and occupation of Gaza.

Minimum wage

Biden, and now Harris, have campaigned on raising the federal minimum wage. The Biden-Harris administration did nothing to accomplish this, despite controlling the House, Senate, and Presidency for two years. Harris recently promised she would, if elected, support a higher minimum wage. The federal minimum wage is a guaranteed poverty wage: \$7.25 an hour, and only \$2.13 an hour for tipped workers. 20 states do not have a higher minimum wage. The federal minimum wage has lost 30% in purchasing power over

the last 15 years. It's easy for Harris and her running mate Tim Waltz to promise more at this point, but they still refuse to put forward a number for a federal minimum wage. The reality is that a minimum wage would have to be at least \$25 an hour at this point to make up for inflation, with no sub-minimum wage. The Harris campaign, mimicking Trump, calls for no taxes on tips, a good indication that a Harris regime would not try to end the sub-minimum tipped wage.

Abortion rights

Obama and Biden both promised to pass federal laws guaranteeing the right to an abortion. Both had two consecutive years where the Democrats controlled Congress and the Presidency and could have passed a federal abortion rights law. Instead, they refused to pass abortion rights legislation and looked on as many states severely limited reproductive rights. Biden-Harris stood by as Roe v. Wade was overturned in 2022. The Democrats have used vice-president Harris's tie-breaking vote 33 times in the Senate for other issues. The Democratic Party didn't try to organise protests against the overturning of Roe v. Wade. They fear mass protest movements will move beyond Democratic Party control and escalate to make greater demands on the capitalist class.

Housing

In May of this year, the median selling price of an existing home hit a record \$419,300. Homelessness increased 12% in 2023, resulting in the highest number of homeless people since 2007, when collecting data first started. The Biden-Harris administration let pandemic relief measures end, including an eviction moratorium and emergency rental assistance. Letting these policies stop is a major contributor to the record homelessness. Over the last two years, rents have far outpaced wage growth in 44 out of the 50 largest United States metros. The absence of mass housing policy under the Biden-Harris administration has made a chronic housing crisis worse, regardless of which corporate party has been in power over the last 40 years of neoliberal policies.

Harris has made some incremental and limited proposals around housing that are a continuation of Biden's proposals that never went anywhere, including building three million 'affordable' homes over the next four years. This is nowhere close to what's needed. There were already six million houses added in the U.S. since 2020. 'Affordable' is not defined. \$25,000 in downpayment assistance is mentioned, with qualifiers, for first-time home buyers who have paid their rent on time for at least two years. Given the cost of buying a house now, this proposal is not enough and lacks specifics but it would be the most concrete and substantial of the minimal promises Harris is talking about. Like much of the Biden-Harris spending

proposals, Harris's proposals on housing are painfully incremental, minimalist, and centered around massive payouts to private corporations rather than money for publicly owned programmes.

There's no mention in Harris and the Democrats' housing promises about the need for mass construction of public housing, a national freeze on rents and rent control laws, limits on mortgage interest rates, or stopping corporations like Blackstone, FirstKey, and American Homes for Rent from buying massive amounts of single family homes and turning them into expensive rental properties.

Harris's flip flops

The Biden-Harris administration has already moved to the right (from already conservative positions) on policing, immigration, the environment and many other issues. Harris has followed this path before becoming vice-president, and since. Harris began as a law-and-order Democrat until the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement put some pressure on her. The minute the BLM movement receded she dropped ideas around police reform. Her political career is littered with false promises. She now opposes Medicare for All and the Green New Deal after saying she supported them. She supports fracking and also the death penalty, after opposing both.

The Harris campaign is ramping up its liberal populist promises. For example, they're promising, like Obama and Biden before them, to pass important reforms around organising workers into unions. Obama and Biden made the same kind of promises and then spit in the face of the labour movement by doing nothing to win the legislation they promised. Harris used this tactic, yet again, at a recent American Federation of Teachers conference saying: "President Joe Biden and I promised to sign the ProAct into law. I promise you, I will keep that promise." (That's a lot of promising). The ProAct promise was on the table when the Biden-Harris regime rushed through legislation declaring a potential railroad workers' strike 'illegal' and forced a contract on the workers that they'd already voted against.

The Harris campaign is presenting itself publicly as something new but really offering only repackaged corporate-friendly policies labelled as reforms. Harris's politics are rooted in the capitalist class, the Democratic Party hierarchy, and policies from the Biden administration. While the two corporate parties are not the same, increased inequality, economic crisis for working people, and imperialist proxy wars will be the core results of a government led by Harris or Trump. There is no way forward for the working class or unions through supporting and voting for Democratic Party or Republican Party politicians.

The Independent Socialist Group calls for a vote for Green Party nominee Jill Stein. In states where Stein is not on the ballot for President but Cornel West is, we call for support and a vote for Cornel West's independent campaign. Breaking with the corporate duopoly of the Republican and Democrat Parties is a crucial, immediate step towards bringing together working-class people to organise for a mass, independent political party with socialist policies.



The Harris campaign is presenting itself publicly as something new but really offering only repackaged corporate-friendly policies labelled as reforms. Harris's politics are rooted in the capitalist class, the Democratic Party hierarchy, and policies from the Biden administration

DON'T LET STARMER FREEZE PENSIONERS

NATIONALISE ENERGY

Maggie Fricker (Right) is standing in the Southampton City Council by-election for Shirley ward on 10 October, as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition PHOTO: NICK CHAFFEY



BRENT KENNEDY

CARLISLE SOCIALIST PARTY

50 super-rich families own £500 billion, as much as half the British population. If you took £1.2 billion off them, none of them would die. But thousands of pensioners will die of cold this winter after Labour takes their £200-300 Winter Fuel Payment away.

In 2017, when the Tories were considering it, Labour discovered that it would condemn 4,000 old folk to an early death. Now they're in power, they don't care.

Even when pensions go up next April, they will still be among the lowest in Europe.

Labour promised "change" but they are just continuing Tory austerity, worsening poverty and inequality. In terms of the £22 billion budget "black hole", £1.2 billion is peanuts. Sir Keir Starmer is sending a brutal message to the whole working class: "don't expect anything from us."

The privatised energy companies are increasing our bills by another 10% in October, costing an average family another £150. In January, they will put them up even higher. Even if they don't reach last year's price level we'll still be worse off, because the government subsidy has been scrapped.

Yet production costs for North Sea gas or wind farms haven't gone up – they're ripping us off just because the government lets them get away with it. Even if you scrimp and heat less, you'll now have to pay them a guaranteed £388 in standing charges before you've even flicked a light switch.

Did you agree to that when you 'chose' your supplier? No, because we don't have any real choice in a 'market economy'. And the toothless regulators only do the privateers' bidding.

Since the pandemic, electricity generating companies have tripled their profits. Last year, British Gas increased its profits tenfold.

Their excuse is Putin's war in Ukraine, but that was just their opportunity for war profiteering. BP made £28 billion in 2022. No wonder the head of BP described the company as a "cash machine." And we are his cash cows.

Last year, Shell profited from energy customers and motorists by £42 billion. So where has all this money gone? Straight into the accounts of shareholders in tax havens. Since 2021, their do-nothing shareholders have amassed additional fortunes of £48 billion in dividends and buybacks. That's about £1,700 per UK household – the same sum as an average family energy bill this year!

This 'greedflation' is a huge transfer of wealth from the majority to a tiny minority. Unless prices are cut, this inequality will be locked in. Price cuts and investment in renewables and insulation will only be possible by nationalising the energy and fuel industries and running them under the democratic control of workers and consumers.