

Stuff Starmer's tough decisions



PHOTO: UY/PRIMENOVOC

MAKE THE RICH PAY

JOSH ASKER

EDITOR OF THE SOCIALIST

Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves stood very smartly (and expensively) dressed on stage at Labour conference in Liverpool to tell us how “tough” the decisions they are making are, again.

‘Close your eyes and it could be Tories talking’ was the point that John McDonnell made. He served as Jeremy Corbyn’s shadow chancellor and is currently sitting like Jeremy as an independent MP – suspended from Labour for voting to scrap the two-child benefit cap. He’s right.

The Tories came into office talking of tough decisions before proceeding to slash public service funding with devastating consequences for our NHS, schools and councils, among other things.

Reeves says there is “no return to austerity”. But taking winter fuel payments from pensioners feels a lot like austerity! Labour’s general election manifesto ‘promises’ amounted to a huge real-terms cut in public funding. And since, they claim to have been surprised by a £22 billion black hole.

Among other inconveniences during conference, such as trade union opposition to the winter fuel payment cuts and donations scandals, was the news that members of the Royal College of Nursing had voted to reject the government’s 5.5% pay offer, just as Reeves gloated that Labour had ended public sector pay disputes. Nurses can see that their junior doctor colleagues won their 22% pay rise over two years by showing the government they were prepared to strike.

People “want us to rebuild our public services”, Starmer told conference. “But their pockets are not deep – not at all.”

What about those who do have very deep pockets? Like the billionaire Labour donor who dipped into his to buy new wardrobe for Starmer, his wife, Reeves, and Angela Rayner.

There are billions sloshing around in the bank accounts of big business and the super-rich. Something like £85 billion of dividends is being paid to shareholders every year. The energy companies hike our bills (with the government’s say-so) and continue to rake in record profits.

Unite the Union general secretary Sharon Graham has called on the government to implement a wealth tax on the richest 1% to raise £25 billion. Really that is just a fraction of what could be raised by seriously taking on the wealth of the super-rich.

A wealth tax should be just the start. Why leave the fat-cat bosses in charge of the profiteering, polluting energy and water companies, or the vicious outsourcing companies leeching the NHS dry? We need to fight for nationalisation of the big businesses and banks that dominate the economy. In public hands and under democratic workers’ control and management, wealth and resources could be put to use as part of a plan to meet all of our needs – give pay rises for nurses, save jobs of steelworkers and others, and provide free education for all.

Opposition to yet another government acting in the interests of the bosses and against the working class is only just beginning. The trade unions have a central role in building the fightback, and part of that is taking steps to build a new mass party that fights in our interests against those of the bosses.

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“The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.”

Karl Marx

Labour conference: Wrestled out, sick jokes and cynical shenanigans

“This is a changed Labour Party”, Rachel Reeves told Labour Party conference as a young heckler was throttled and thrown to the ground by security for shouting: “We are still selling arms to Israel, I thought we were voting for change”.

If you can’t physically eject opposition, why not cynically manipulate the agenda? A motion tabled by Unite the Union with the support of other unions, opposing the cut to winter fuel payments was pushed back to the Wednesday graveyard shift, when the lights are all but turned off and most of the delegates have left.

Keir Starmer laughed at his own sick joke in response to his own heckler raising the mass slaughter of children in Gaza: “His pass must be from the 2019 conference.”

Starmer and the Blairite party machine have ruthlessly purged the left from the Labour Party since Corbyn’s general election defeat in 2019. An election in which the party received over 600,000 more votes than in its latest ‘landslide’ under Starmer.

How many more votes has Starmer lost Labour in his 2 months as prime minister?

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Football bosses strike back at any threat to profits

JOHN REID
SURREY SOCIALIST PARTY

UK and Ireland are due to host the Euros men’s football tournament in 2028. But UEFA has warned that England could face a ban from the Euros and European competitions if government plans to introduce an ‘independent’ regulator go ahead. They claim this would flout UEFA rules of no government interference in the running of football.

A letter to Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy from UEFA General Secretary Theodore Theodoridis says the game’s independence is a “fundamental requirement”.

The government states that “the Football Governance Bill will put

fans back at the heart of the game... and ensure football is sustainable for the benefit of the clubs’ communities going forward.” This is a continuance of plans first put forward by the Tories – unlikely therefore to include the kinds of reforms we actually need! (See ‘Tory football review won’t save the beautiful game’ at socialistparty.org.uk)

It is unlikely that it will reach the stage of a ban, but in whose interests are UEFA acting in threatening the government against even the hint of oversight? The fans, or the bosses who want to continue making massive profits? Fans want football to be accountable and are sickened by the greed and poor governance of clubs.

My book, ‘Reclaim the Game’, published by the Socialist Party, calls for the end of ownership by billionaires, dodgy states and un-fit owners. Instead, football should be democratically owned and controlled by fans, players and the local community.

We call for a truly democratic governing body which would have the interests of football at heart, not the profit and greed motive. At the moment, unelected boards run football clubs. Fans, players, club staff and the local community should all be democratically represented on the club’s boards.

We must regain control of our clubs. Reclaim the game from the billionaires.



Reclaim the Game being sold at a protest against the Super League

LENNY SHALL

MPs don’t look gift horses in the mouth

The ‘tough decisions’ facing senior Labour politicians seem to be ‘how many free tickets to Taylor Swift do I want?’ and ‘is my wardrobe large enough for all my new freebies?’ Super-rich donors don’t give MPs gifts because they’re modern-day Santa Clauses. They do it for influence and access to make sure we pay the economic price while their profits are secure.

And its not just MPs out of touch with reality. Starmer’s top aide Sue Gray is being paid a handsome £170,000 a year.

These scandals drive home how the people who hold the levers of power of government live lives completely divorced from the rest of us. They make decisions on behalf of their big-business backers and we face the consequences. Our tough decisions are between heating and eating, doing anything we can to make ends meet.

The political system is rotten – we need workers’ representatives on a

worker’s wage. And with the right to recall them to hold them accountable to our class so they can’t be bought off with football tickets or fancy glasses.



Education minister Bridget Phillipson when asked why she accepted free Taylor Swift tickets: “One of my children was keen to go along. It’s hard to say no”

LAUREN HURLEY / NO10/CC

Creeping privatisation of NHS Services

When did syringing of ear wax become unavailable on the NHS? It used to involve a quick appointment at the GP and the job was done. Now you have to pay £60 or more to get it done privately!

NHS dentists - if you can find one - no longer do regular descaling, cleaning and polishing. So, if you can afford to, you have to pay a private hygienist £80 or more every six months, or risk being kicked out for not looking after your teeth properly.

Basic, minor surgical procedures, like the removal of benign skin lesions, are no longer available at the GP either. They are regarded as ‘cosmetic’, which means that many people have to just put up with them or fork out hundreds of pounds privately; again, only if they can afford to.

Even some clearly beneficial dental procedures - like complicated root fillings - require discretionary referral from a dentist. This is often not forthcoming because demand is too high for the available resources, cut to the bone after decades of austerity.

Minor ailments have effectively been outsourced to private pharmacists, who are now so overwhelmed by the additional workload that it can prove impossible to get a timely appointment. It seems like there was little or no forward planning to ensure that sufficient capacity existed within pharmacies to cope with this.

I’m pretty sure that this was not the vision of the NHS that Aneurin Bevan had in 1948. All of these procedures should be brought back fully within the NHS, free at the point of use as Bevan envisaged.

JONATHAN GOLDING
CARDIFF EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

Starmer’s workers’ rights U-turns

While the Labour leadership resorted to conference agenda shenanigans against trade union attempts to condemn the new government’s cut to winter fuel payments, other battles are rumbling. Talks have been reported between union representatives and the Labour Party that they fund over attempts to water down workers’ rights reforms. It has been reported that, instead of the previously pledged rights from day one of employment, workers will have six months’ probation with the threat of being more easily sacked hanging over their heads. Under pressure from big business, that it is striving to represent the interests of, the Labour government is trying to protect their profits based on exploiting workers, without a union backlash.

The Socialist Party fights for union action for the removal of all anti-union laws, for working-class control and management of our workplaces and a mass party that represents our interests not the bosses. Here Socialist Party members respond to some of the pro-business U-turns that could make it into the new Workers’ Rights Bill that gets presented to Parliament.

‘Fire and rehire’ - one rule for the bosses, another for the rest of us.

SCOTT HUNTER
SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY

When workers sign an employment contract, we’re expected to abide by all the terms. But, if the bosses feel they can get away with it, they’re quite happy to break the rules. With ‘fire and rehire’ bosses not only try to attack our pay and conditions, we have to go through the humiliating ritual of reapplying for our jobs and the anxiety and uncertainty that comes with it.

Labour promised before the election to end fire and rehire as part of a package of improvements to workers’ legal rights. As part of his

campaign to show that the Labour Party is safe for big business, Keir Starmer has already rowed back on a complete ban – proposing the practice is banned apart from ‘very limited circumstances’. For example, Labour may permit it if a business is facing bankruptcy.

But how can the bosses prepared to slash workers’ pay, terms and conditions be trusted? Companies must be made to open the books to workers and trade union inspection, to see where the money has really gone. Bosses taking fat pay packets and monster dividends should be made to pay, not workers.

Unite the Union’s general

secretary Sharon Graham already criticised Labour’s plans in the run-up to the general election as having “more holes than Swiss cheese”. We shouldn’t forget either that Tower Hamlets Council under Labour control shamelessly fired and rehired thousands of its own workers in 2020.

The bosses want to keep us in our place and remind us they hold our livelihoods in their hands. If the ban on fire and rehire becomes law, it should be workers who decide what limited circumstances should mean it is allowed – none! And to enforce that will need collective working-class action and trade union struggle.



RMT protest against P&O firing and rehiring workers in 2022

PAUL MATTSOON

End the spectre of ‘ghost jobs’!

MARY QUATE
SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY

There is a spectre looming over the job market. Or, perhaps, many of them. ‘Ghost Jobs’, fake job listings which are never intended to be filled. Everyone who has been on Jobseekers’ Allowance (JSA) has their share of horror stories, but there’s a common thread in many modern ones - applying for a job, receiving no response of any kind, and then seeing

the same job reposted over and over again every few days for the rest of time.

In the wake of Covid, the Tory Brexit deal and a general economic downturn, many workplaces are practically running a skeleton crew, with hiring freezes constantly in effect. Since it’s terrible for morale to tell employees to pick up more duties with no hope of ever having new co-workers to pick up the slack, some job listings exist solely to point to as an indication that the company is, indeed,

trying to fix that problem. However, nobody seems to be hiring.

It’s not the only reason HR workers are pressured to do this. Worryingly, surveys of hiring managers indicate that around one third of job listings are simply not real jobs any applicant will ever be given. Instead, these listings exist for the purposes of making it look like the company is growing despite a hiring freeze, tracking job dissatisfaction rates in rival companies, a formality when an internal applicant has already been selected, keeping a readily accessible pool of workers or simply harvesting data to sell on to

marketing firms (or for agencies to keep for their own databases).

The DWP demands more and more of those claiming JSA, with means testing requiring an arbitrary minimum number of job applications per week.

Purportedly, some 59% of job listings for veterinary nurses appear to fall into this odd category of jobs that don’t really exist. The next worst is software development jobs, which hover around the 45% mark.

We need decent, secure trade union-organised jobs for all, and an end to the punitive benefits system with real benefits for all who need them.



MARY FINCH

How can you have a non-exploitative zero-hours contract?

JOHN WILLIAMS
CARDIFF EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

Ever since Starmer said, if elected, his government would deliver a new deal for workers, all we’ve heard about is U-turns and get-out clauses for big business. Now it’s the turn for zero-hour contracts.

Labour ministers have been wrangling with trade union representatives to avoid a clash at Labour Party conference. The ban has been softened to banning ‘exploitative’ zero-hour contracts and workers will be able to choose a zero-hour contract if they wish.

It should be the workers and their trade unions who decide what is exploitative. Workers are exploited all the time: on low pay, bad managers on their back, and there’s no sign of capitalism suddenly getting a conscience and allowing workers to define what’s ‘exploitative’ so they get a better deal.

This get-out clause would be an open door for businesses to force workers into carrying on signing zero-hour contracts with no improvements. Far away from the golden age of workers’ rights we were promised! Workers already are pressured not to take breaks and holidays they are entitled to under pressure from bosses. The Trades Union Congress found that over 1.1 million employees didn’t take a single day of the 28

days paid holiday they were entitled to last year.

The backtracks on workers’ rights expose the power of lobbying from the capitalist class on Starmer’s Labour leadership, which is more than pleased to give in! Contrary to what Labour says, there isn’t a partnership between workers and the capitalist class - their interests are completely opposed to each other. Any worker will tell you that. All it takes is looking at your payslip and the profit sheets of the company to see the ‘partnership’ in action. Workers’ rights and pay clash directly with the bosses’ needs to maximise profit.

Unions must fight for a real ban, and other legal rights too. But legislation on its own isn’t enough, unless it’s backed by workers’ control and input and the willingness of trade unions to fight. To ban zero-hour contracts with no loss of pay, we need fighting unions. And we need a mass party that will fight for the rights of workers against the bosses – because Starmer’s Labour certainly isn’t.

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Oliver Campbell - free after 34 years!

TERESA MACKAY

IPSWICH SOCIALIST PARTY

“My fight for justice is finally over. After 34 years, I can start my life as an innocent man.” These were the words of Oliver Campbell after his recent appearance at the Royal Courts of Justice.

Three judges decided that his 1991 conviction for murder of shopkeeper Baldev Singh Hoondle could not stand.

In questioning, Oliver was “badgered and bullied by the police and his absurd admissions [used to convict him] contained a litany of inconsistencies with the facts”, his barrister Michael Birnbaum KC told the court.

The Lord Chief Justice said: “We accept that, considered in the light of fresh evidence the rulings might have been different. A jury knowing of the fresh evidence would consider the reliability of those confessions in a materially different context. We cannot say the fresh evidence could not have affected the decision of the jury to convict.” He also mentioned that it would be a heavy blow to the Hoondle family, but the courts must reach their “decisions in accordance with the law, uninfluenced by emotion.” Oliver also feels for the family and hopes that the real perpetrator is brought to justice for their sake.

Hopefully, the ruling will put more pressure on the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) which first rejected his pleas in 2005. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) said it respected the judgment but added: “The judges rejected seventeen grounds of appeal. The convictions were only quashed based on new evidence about Oliver Campbell’s mental state when he confessed. Understanding of the factors which may contribute to a false confession has increased.”

Oliver has a learning disability as a result of a brain injury as a child, which the CPS says was not properly understood or explained at the trial. After 48 hours of questioning, Oliver began to believe he must have committed the murder, despite being nowhere near the scene when it happened!

Youth against Racism in Europe

Oliver’s case first became known to the Socialist Party (then Militant Labour) through the Youth against Racism in Europe (YRE) campaign in 1992. This was one of several major injustices, along with those facing Winston Silcott of the Tottenham Three, the M25 Three, and others, that the YRE was involved in. While many other convictions were eventually overturned, Oliver’s case was not. Oliver was sent to nine different prisons in the 11 years he was incarcerated.

I collaborated closely with the TV programme Rough Justice and Oliver’s solicitors to put his case in an episode called ‘If the Cap Fits’, pertaining to the fact that Oliver’s cap had been stolen from him by one of the two men who went on to commit the robbery and murder.

The cap was found close to where the murder had taken place. Oliver saw the cap on Crimewatch and went back to the shop to check it was his. The other man who was convicted of the crime admitted in the Rough Justice programme that Oliver was not his accomplice.

Kirsty Wark, the presenter of the BBC programme, stated that it was the most blatant injustice she had ever seen. Oliver was subsequently released on licence soon after and stayed in Ipswich.

Due to the determination and resolve of Oliver and his supporters, the fight continued. ‘Double jeopardy’ came in as part of the Criminal Justice Act in 2005, which allowed

for retrying of people acquitted of a crime. A lot of the evidence in Oliver’s case, which was so badly presented at his original trial, could not be used again. Oliver’s legal team presented fresh evidence, which was rejected several times, making it harder to present his case.

Sandy Martin, the Labour MP for Ipswich between 2017 and 2019, knew Oliver and was asked by Oliver’s solicitor Glyn Maddocks to present the case to Parliament, which he did. It was then presented back to the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC).

Oliver’s case is just one of a long list of miscarriages of justice. There should be a public inquiry to establish why a man so clearly innocent had to wait almost 34 years for his conviction to be overturned. Also, to get to the bottom of why the arresting officers pursued Oliver so strongly when no one, let alone a police officer, would believe that Oliver could commit such a crime.

Oliver’s case took place before the horrific racist murder of Stephen Lawrence. After which, it took the Metropolitan Police over 16 years to admit being institutionally racist.

There is much more to this case than just Oliver’s horrendous experience of witness intimidation that needs to be exposed.

Oliver could have helped the police identify the perpetrators rather than become the sacrificial lamb. Asked after he received the news of his acquittal whether this had restored his faith in the British justice system, Oliver said: “no”.

He can now restart his life as a free man, which will allow him to travel without having to get the permission from his probation officer, including travelling abroad. However, there is still no guarantee of compensation, even though he spent nearly 34 years of his life perceived by the establishment as murderer.

Oliver Campbell
(centre) PHOTO:
SOCIALIST PARTY



PHOTO: TOMER GABEL/CC

Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

The right-wing Israeli government has set about turning parts of Lebanon into rubble, as it has already done in Gaza, following its decision to escalate its war against Hezbollah to a much higher level.

The ominous opening move by the Israeli regime in what it called a “new phase” in the war was the placing of hidden explosives in over 3,000 paggers and walkie-talkies which blew up in the faces and hands of Hezbollah personnel and anyone else who happened to be near them - including children and medical staff. Over 40 were killed and most of the people holding the devices were injured, many losing eyes and fingers.

That barbaric action was followed by massive bombardments, mainly targeting areas of Lebanon’s south, but not sparing the east, north, and parts of its capital, Beirut. In the first few days alone, the missile strikes killed over 500 people and injured over 1,600. It has already included the highest daily death toll since Lebanon’s 1975-90 civil war.

Israeli security forces sent text messages to many Lebanese people telling them to evacuate their homes or face being bombed. However, as the war on Gaza has already shown, such messages won’t prevent an escalating civilian death toll. Nowhere

is really safe. Even so, there has been a massive exodus of Lebanese people fleeing their homes in the south, not knowing where they can go and what will be left when they return.

Israeli ministers say they haven’t ruled out a ground invasion, which would add to the scale of the war and suffering. Hezbollah would no doubt take advantage of that development, as it would give its fighters much greater ability to inflict losses on Israeli forces.

From the start of the Gaza war, Hezbollah has fired missiles into Israel, arguing that it is giving backing to the Palestinians in Gaza. The result is that there has been a certain level of war across the Israel-Lebanon border throughout the past year. But that low-level war has now been raised to a full war by the Israeli military escalation, which in turn has made it likely that Hezbollah will try to increase its military response. It also raises fears in the region and globally of the potential for an even wider war to develop across the Middle East, impacting on the world economy and international relations, and creating massive instability with potential for wider conflicts.

Hezbollah’s military capability has suffered some setbacks in the war so far. As well as hundreds of its fighters having been killed or maimed, and the sudden sabotage of its communication devices, two leading Hezbollah commanders have been killed in Beirut. But it still has a sizeable military apparatus with significant fighting capacity, often described as one of the strongest non-state military forces in the world, and probably the strongest in the Iran-aligned ‘Axis of

Resistance’ across the Middle East.

Neither Lebanon’s ordinary people or those in Israel have anything to gain from this terrible escalation - whether the ruthless bombardments by Israel’s forces or the missiles fired indiscriminately into Israel by Hezbollah, which hit Israeli civilians and are used by the Israel right to justify using overwhelming force back. Neither do ordinary people in Gaza or any other part of the Middle East have anything to gain from it.

Workers and poor

In Lebanon, it will be workers and the poor who pay the main price of it through further death, injuries and mass displacement. And the worsening war conditions in Lebanon bring an even harder struggle to afford and manage daily life, in a country that has had enormous economic, political and social crisis during the years before the war, at the hands of a ruling elite that uses wealth, sectarianism and corruption to enrich itself further while increasing misery for those below.

Benjamin Netanyahu’s right-wing Israeli government declares that the use of overwhelming military might is the only way to achieve security in Israel’s north and enable the return of 60,000 evacuated Israelis. However, just as the hi-tech weaponry of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) has been unable to decisively defeat Hamas after nearly a year of war on Gaza, neither can it wipe out Hezbollah’s militia, which is stronger and larger than that of Hamas, and much more able to import weapons. Also, like with Hamas, for every Hezbollah fighter killed there will be other

youth so enraged at the Israeli offensive that they will be willing to fight in their place.

While much of the Israeli population might initially be drawn to support this bombardment of Lebanon, especially as little alternative is being offered by their pro-capitalist parliamentary politicians, that support will no doubt lessen as this wider war impacts on the social and economic fabric of Israel - already damaged by the war on Gaza - and brings no greater physical security for the Israeli population. If a ground invasion takes place, that process could accelerate due to an inevitable death toll of Israeli soldiers.

That process has happened during the war on Gaza: support for the war has eroded in Israeli society to the extent that at the start of September hundreds of thousands of Israelis protested on the streets and workers took general strike action. They were demanding a ceasefire so that a deal can be made to release the Israelis who have been held captive in Gaza since 7 October 2023.

The IDF invaded Lebanon in 1982, during Lebanon’s 1975-90 civil war, but a mass anti-war movement broke out in Israel that same year following news of a massacre in the Sabra and Chatila areas of Beirut by the right-wing Christian Phalanges, aided by the troops of Israeli defence minister Ariel Sharon. The movement demanded the resignation of Sharon and an inquiry into the massacre.

The Israeli government felt compelled to withdraw its troops from Beirut and be reduced to occupying a strip of land in southern Lebanon alongside the Lebanese Christian



Lebanese workers and the poor have felt moments of collective potential power during which they have resisted ‘divide-and-rule’ politics, a path they will need to develop further in the next period - starting with opposition to the present war

‘South Lebanon Army’. That occupation, which lasted 18 years, became a quagmire for Israeli forces. They suffered the loss of hundreds of Israeli soldiers at the hands of Hezbollah fighters and ended up abandoning the occupation as a failure, in a chaotic and humiliating withdrawal.

Hezbollah, ‘Party of God’, based on right-wing political Islam, was formed at the start of that war. It gained widespread support in Lebanon for a period of time because of its military resistance to the Israeli occupation. But socialists warned that its pro-capitalist politics and sectarian character - mainly being based on Shia Muslims - would inevitably mean it would develop to be as divisive and anti-working class as the many other pro-capitalist parties in Lebanon that are based on different ethnic, national and religious factions. This has proved to be the case and over the decades Hezbollah has become one of the main power brokers at the top of Lebanese society, including having government ministers. It is aligned with the authoritarian theocracy in Iran; while the Lebanese state army is funded by the US, UK and other western allies, reflecting the interventions of outside powers who will be poised to fight a new proxy war in Lebanon - though not necessarily all backing those they presently fund - if they feel their interests are threatened.

In 2006 came another round of war between Israel and Hezbollah and now, today, this present war brings yet more devastation and suffering. Workers in Lebanon will only be able to counter these cycles of bloodshed by building a mass working class-based non-sectarian political alternative to their pro-capitalist leaders.

In 2019, a mass movement broke out across Lebanon against tax rises, lack of public services and the rampant corruption at the top of society. It overrode the sectarian divides and demanded the removal of the entire political elite and structure, chanting: “All of them means all of them”.

Then in 2020, after a devastating explosion of stored ammonium nitrate in Beirut’s port, there were more mass protests blaming government ministers and others in authority, and the government resigned. So Lebanese workers and the poor have felt moments of collective potential power during which they have resisted ‘divide-and-rule’ politics, a path they will need to develop further in the next period - starting with opposition to the present war.

In Israel too, the movement against the government urgently needs to escalate further, to remove Netanyahu’s government, stop the wars on Gaza and Lebanon and the attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank. Renewal and building of mobilisations and trade union actions internationally against the wars is also urgent.

Members of the Socialist Party and Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI) will continue to help build those movements, while putting forward socialist ideas within them - the ideas needed for workers’ solidarity internationally and the path towards building workers’ organisations that can challenge and remove capitalism in the Middle East and worldwide. We call for a voluntary democratic socialist confederation of the Middle East that defends the democratic and national right of all the peoples of the region.

UCU: We need a national fightback to end the crisis in post-16 education

Universities

Reject the £900 pay rise – we can win more

End the marketised fee-based funding system

BEA GARDNER
UCU MEMBER

The University and College Union (UCU)'s message to Keir Starmer on the eve of the Labour Party conference was “tax big business to fund British universities”.

The big question facing the union, however, is what kind of campaign and strategy is needed to achieve it?

The university sector is facing a major funding crisis, which the new government has yet to announce its response to. In the meantime,

university bosses have intensified their lobbying for an increase in tuition fees, with Universities UK (UUK) – a bosses' club for university vice-chancellors – calling for an increase from the current £9,250 to as much as £13,000 a year.

UCU has rightly responded that it should be those “with the deepest pockets” who pay, not students. Instead, it has called for an education levy “to provide universities with much-needed extra funding and end its tuition fee-based system”, all while “still leaving corporation tax below the rate at which Tony Blair set it”.

UCU figures indicate a 4.3% increase would raise £17 billion. That could not only replace the £11 billion in fees English students pay each year with funded teaching grants, but also provide an extra £4.58 billion to the sector. That is the equivalent of an increase in tuition fees to £13,000.

Now the UCU leadership must convert its words into deeds, by launching a serious campaign

linking the industrial disputes for jobs, pay and conditions with the political campaign to scrap fees and not only increase funding but win full public funding for universities. Why stop corporation tax at the rate Tony Blair set it?

Workers and students

Such a campaign would be extremely welcome to university workers facing threats of redundancy, and to students facing fee hikes.

Over 70 higher education (HE) institutions are already undergoing redundancy or restructuring programmes. UCU branches have boldly fought back to save jobs, but a nationally coordinated campaign that lays the blame with the current marketised, fee-based funding system would strengthen these disputes.

Such a campaign would also be important for the pay dispute. This week, UCU members in HE will decide the next steps following the flat £900 annual pay award being imposed by the employers – just £75 a

month. There is a strong mood that this is not enough, but members do not want to fight for pay if it will come at the cost of jobs.

Members are also questioning what kind of strategy can win on pay, after extensive strike action in recent years has had limited results for UCU members.

A strategy that links the fight against job losses, job insecurity and pay erosion with a political campaign to end the fee-based system and make the super-rich pay would unify university workers and students. It would give confidence that we can win gains in members' interests.

Control of how funding is spent is also key. Even when university income was growing, the percentage of it spent on staff fell.

UCU should join with other campus unions and student organisations to fight for democratic staff and student control of HE, so it is run in the interests of staff, students and local communities, not the financiers and profiteers.



UCU FE strikes 2022 SOCIALIST PARTY

Further Education

Build for united action on pay
Fight for full public funding

DUNCAN MOORE

UCU NEC MEMBER REPRESENTING FE, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The new academic year begins under a new Labour government, after years of neglect and growing crisis under the Tories, who cut spending per student by 14%.

Any hopes in Starmer's government have been dashed by the announcement that there will be no additional funding for further education (FE) this year, despite growing numbers of students.

UCU's “New Deal for FE” demands:

- A 10% or £3,000 increase in pay, whichever is greater – as a first step to restore the more than 40% cut in real pay over a decade
- Close the pay gap between FE and schoolteachers' pay within three years
- A minimum starting salary of £30,000

And crucially, we need binding national pay bargaining in FE.

Privatisation in the early 1990s led to a collapse in funding and destroyed national pay bargaining. Lecturers' pay now stands at £9,000 below that of schoolteachers. 25% of lecturers quit the profession within three years.

What we need is a serious strategy to win UCU's demands.

The current strategy of the general

secretary, president and vice president - using local claims to put pressure on the employers' body, the Association of Colleges (AoC), and the government - is not working. No pay recommendation has yet been made by the AoC!

National campaign needed

Talks are due on 7 October, by which time many individual branches will have already agreed pay deals with local college bosses. Overwhelmingly, these will likely not be enough, and be below even the 5.5% awarded to schoolteachers – which in itself still does not begin to restore lost pay.

UCU should launch an indicative national ballot of England FE members, asking whether they are willing to take industrial action in support of the union's pay demands.

Our union also needs a serious political strategy to back up our industrial action. Before the election, instead of placing clear demands on Labour, general secretary Jo Grady said that the shadow cabinet was “engaging positively with the unions” and talked about the potential of “partnership” with Labour.

The announcement of 0% extra funding for FE shows the reality of this pro-capitalist Labour government. We cannot let our members become victims of Starmer's austerity measures.

Jo Grady expresses “disappointment” with Labour. UCU should appeal to the independent left MPs, including Jeremy Corbyn, and those suspended from Labour, to advance our union's policies in parliament.

Nurses reject Labour's 5.5%



PAUL MATTISSON

As chancellor Rachel Reeves told the Labour Party conference they had ended public sector pay strikes, members of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) in England voted to reject the government's 5.5% pay award.

The anger of nurses is clear: the turnout of 145,000 is a record high.

This is despite the RCN leaders not making a recommendation. Now members will expect their leaders to launch a campaign, including balloting for action.

And it is despite Unison and Unite members in the NHS already having voted to accept the pay award. Socialist Party members campaigned for rejection but the Unison leaders recommended acceptance and Unite made no recommendation.

This result is a major blow to Keir Starmer and health secretary Wes Streeting, but should be a boost to all those public sector workers still considering their pay awards – including in PCS and UCU (see neighbouring articles).

Teachers in the National Education Union are voting in a snap poll till 30 September – again Socialist Party members are campaigning to reject, despite the leadership recommending acceptance.

Unison and Unite members in local government are balloting for strike action over their low Tory pay offer, not improved by Labour.

Join the fightback

Socialist Party members campaign for fighting, democratic trade unions, wherever possible working alongside others, to campaign for the industrial and political strategies workers need

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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

to find out more today!



Civil service pay – reject 5% Build a serious campaign

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN PCS

Across UK civil service departments, agencies and arm's-length bodies, pay negotiations are mostly now under way between the employers and the PCS union.

Early news indicates a mixed picture. Some areas, for example, the Department for Education, are securing a £15-per-hour wage minimum for many grades. In some areas, such as DWP and HMRC, we expect that a trade-off will be demanded by the employer, sacrificing some pay for more senior grades. In some departments, higher figures will be achieved by non-consolidated awards that do not contribute to pensionable salary.

This is due to the Labour government's civil service pay remit, which limits the average rise in pay to 5%. It is a trade-off that socialists in PCS oppose.

When the 5% pay remit was published in July of this year, the elected majority of the National Executive Committee (NEC) called for further talks with the Cabinet Office.

5% goes nowhere near compensating for the real pay lost by civil



PCS members distributing the bulletin from the NEC majority

Nationalise to stop Grangemouth jobs slaughter!

GARY CLARK

SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND

In a brutal blow for workers and the Grangemouth community in Scotland, Petroineos has confirmed that the oil refinery will shut by mid-2025. Almost 500 workers' jobs are in jeopardy. An estimated 2,000 others – sub-contractors and those in the supply chain – are also threatened as a result.

Grangemouth is the only oil refinery in Scotland, which supplies around two-thirds of the oil in Scotland and around 15% for the UK. Petroineos is joint-owned between PetroChina and Ineos.

Ineos received over £140 million in grants and loans from the Scottish and UK governments in 2013. This was in response to management threatening closure, while insisting on a three-year no-strike deal, cuts in workers' terms and conditions, as well as the removal of trade union convenors.

The economic impact if this shutdown goes ahead will remind many of the effect on pit communities that were devastated by the closure of the coal mines in the 1980s and 1990s. Grangemouth sits right between the Lothian and Fife coalfields.

Sharon Graham, Unite general secretary, whose union represents the oil refinery workers, commented: “This is an act of industrial vandalism, pure and simple. This dedicated workforce has been let down by Petroineos and by the politicians in

Westminster and Holyrood who have failed to guarantee production until alternative jobs are in place. The road to net zero cannot be paid for with workers' jobs.”

Socialist Party Scotland wholly agrees with these sentiments. But the defence of these vital jobs can best be secured by Unite demanding that the Westminster and Holyrood governments bring the facility into public ownership. This would allow the continuation of oil refining while giving time and also funding for the necessary and rapid transition to alternative forms of use, including sustainable aviation fuels, low-carbon hydrogen and other alternatives.

It is welcome that the Labour MP for Grangemouth, Brian Leishman, has now said it is “most definitely” time for nationalisation. “We've got to pull out all the stops and that includes nationalisation.” Leishman accused both the Scottish and UK governments of “holding the hand” of Petroineos and that they had “meekly accepted the narrative that the refinery is unprofitable, which I would absolutely contest.”

Open the books

This underlines the necessity of demanding the opening up of the books of the Petroineos joint venture for trade union inspection. Why should the workers simply accept the bosses' propaganda that this is a loss-making operation?

So far, the demand for nationalisation has not been made by Unite,

servants over years of austerity and high inflation; and there is no new money, meaning it will be funded by department cuts. Additionally, Labour's chancellor Rachel Reeves called for “administrative savings”, i.e. cuts, of 2%.

PCS president vetoes debate

But each time the elected majority of the NEC has attempted to bring proposals for a serious campaign to the NEC meetings, these proposals have been vetoed by the national president.

Socialist Party members and other Broad Left Network (BLN) supporters on the NEC, along with others from the elected majority, have been blocked from attending any discussions with the Cabinet Office by the president and general secretary.

BLN supporters have been elected to pay teams in different departments, however. We have put forward what was agreed at the PCS annual conference, including a 10% pay rise for all grades, a clear roadmap to pay restoration, and a minimum of £15 per hour for all staff. We have also sought guarantees against compulsory redundancy, and much more.

Negotiators can make the most of the pay remit as it exists – but for major gains for members, we need a serious national campaign.

We argue for every department and agency to reject the pay offer from their employer. Rejection of

offers of approximately 5% – which the employers will impose, meaning money still goes into members' pockets immediately – would set the stage for reps across PCS to come together to prepare a campaign. But the obstructive attitude of the president and general secretary is a barrier to this.

Call a Special Delegate Conference

Under the union's rules, a special delegate conference (SDC) of the union may be called by a written application from branches representing 25% of the union's membership. An SDC would bring together all of the branches to debate what needs to be done and once again make clear the wishes of the reps and members.

BLN supporters have been hard at work to call Extraordinary General Meetings in the PCS branches, to involve members in the process of calling an SDC. Where possible, we are connecting this to discussing pay. Members need to be left in no doubt that their union has not given up the fight.

- For more explanation about the role of the PCS general secretary and president, blocking efforts of the elected NEC majority to put forward a fighting strategy, see PCS majority strives for a fighting strategy against general secretary and president blockage at socialistparty.org.uk



SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND

which is a mistake, particularly as the response from the SNP-led Scottish government and Starmer's Labour UK government has been so completely insufficient.

Jointly, the two governments have announced a fund of £100 million to “create new opportunities for jobs” in the area, to “provide tailored support that will help affected workers in finding new employment” and investment in “local energy projects”.

Promises of the creation of 1,600 jobs in the Grangemouth and Falkirk area over a 30-year period will taste like ash in the mouths of skilled workers facing immediate job losses. It smacks of the blatant lie of “regeneration” that Scotland's mining, steel and heavy engineering communities were promised under Thatcher when faced with mass redundancies.

Rumours of a potential private buyer for the site are circulating, but there would be no guarantees on jobs, pay or pensions from another big business operator.

Ineos is owned by billionaire anti-union hatchet man Jim Ratcliffe, as is the whole Grangemouth complex. There is no way that a vital energy resource like Grangemouth should be held in the private hands of a billionaire with a record of trying to smash effective trade union representation.

As we said in our leaflet distributed at the Unite demonstration at Grangemouth in August, Socialist Party Scotland believes that key is the “nationalisation of not just Grangemouth but the energy industry as a whole, under workers' control and management.

“A workers-led energy transition

would be based on public ownership and the drawing up of a plan for alternative use for the skills of workers at Grangemouth. Crucially, it would be based on job expansion, not the loss of hundreds and thousands of jobs like we have seen in the energy sector over the last decade.”

The demand for nationalisation has to be central, as does the building of mass trade union and community campaigning including industrial action.

- This is an edited version of the full article available at socialistparty.scotland.org.uk

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After I pay my rent, I have no money left to live on

● Plymouth – no money left

One student told us that after they have paid their rent, they have no money left to live on. Students are increasingly finding university life to be stressful, rather than the fulfilling life experience it should be, due to the crushing financial pressures.

Many students sought us out, declaring themselves to be lifelong socialists. But there was also interest from people who did not know what we stand for, who wanted to know more about socialism. They liked our programme of nationalisation, free education, liveable wages, and decent housing for all.

Another student was interested in joining us as her mother had been a Communication Workers' Union (CWU) rep. She had left her job as a postal worker, as it became an unpleasant work environment. Seeing her mother treated so badly by the employer – Royal Mail – has opened her eyes to the injustices of the privatised workplace.

We had two very successful days collecting over 20 names of students who are interested in attending Socialist Students meetings. We have high hopes for a good turnout for our first meeting, as so many of this new intake are fired with the desire to see real, genuine change in our society. They want socialism.

ALEX SAMPSON
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

● Worcester – unaffordable

It was fascinating to talk to students about what attracted them to our



Queen Mary



Some are lifelong socialists. Others like our programme of nationalisation, free education, liveable wages, and decent housing for all

campaign stall. One reason being the ever-increasing unaffordability of university, and discussing socialism too.

Worcester Socialist Party is frequently out campaigning. Many are eager to learn about our cause and discuss about the Socialist Party's stances.

In particular, people want to talk about housing, the many crises afflicting the NHS – privatisation, staffing, and waiting lists – the continuing cost-of-living crisis, and the ongoing slaughter in Gaza.

This time we were in front of the university. 25 people signed up to Socialist Students, making it our most successful campaign stall yet.

We launched Worcester Socialist Students at our first meeting on 23 September.

THEO HERCULES
WORCESTER SOCIALIST STUDENTS

● Birmingham City – from the ground up

We met over 30 people interested in Socialist Students over three days at freshers. Our new contacts have mainly been first-years.

Many of those approaching our stall resonated with the ideas we were putting forward – all were opposed to the capitalist system.

Their interests and reasoning varied too. Some are interested in trade union activity, some had already read Karl Marx.

And as more symptoms of capitalism spring up, these students will mobilise. And we can build Socialist Students from the ground up.

TOM PORTER-BROWN
BIRMINGHAM CITY SOCIALIST STUDENTS



Liverpool

Join the student fightback: join...



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

No tuition fee rises – fight for free education

The University bosses' organisation Universities UK has called on the government to increase tuition fees. It says each student now costs between £12,000 and £13,000 to educate.

Since the introduction of tuition fees, and their trebling by the Tory-Lib Dem coalition in 2010, government funding for universities has been repeatedly slashed. The fees-based model forces unis to compete with each other to attract evermore students (and their fees), packing out

overflowing lecture theatres, libraries and halls of residence.

One in five universities is in deficit and 70 universities are already planning course closures and cuts.

Starmer

Socialist Party members have been helping to build Socialist Students groups on university campuses up and down the country this autumn. Students are getting organised to fight back against any attacks from Starmer's Labour government - including a potential fees rise - and to

defend university courses and staff from cuts.

Super-rich

The six-figure-salary university bossess will argue that a fees rise is needed to stop the cuts. But there is billions in the banks of the super-rich. The FTSE 100 biggest corporations have been paying around £85 billion annually in dividends to their shareholders. The University and College Union's (UCU) call for a £17 billion education levy on big business is just a fraction of what could be raised by

taking wealth off the super-rich (see page 6). It would be enough to scrap tuition fees and reintroduce student living grants.

But Keir Starmer's Labour government is doing everything it can to show it is acting in the interests of big business and not workers and students. Fully publicly funded free education won't be won without a fight.

Socialist Students is taking this message to freshers, and getting a great response among students. Read about that on the rest of these pages.



Leicester STEVE SCORE



There is a lot of anger about the state of the NHS, and Labour's first weeks in office



Their own university took them to court!

SOCIALIST STUDENTS SAYS:

- No to further fee increases – get organised on campus to fight for free education! Cancel student debt, replace student loans with living grants tied to the rate of inflation. Make the super-rich pay!
- No cuts and no closures! Build

democratic student organisations to link up with the campus trade unions and wider working class to fight for the funding our universities need

- Kick big business off campus! End marketisation of our education. Open up university finances to democratic oversight and control

including by elected students' representatives and the campus trade unions, with the power to terminate all contracts and research tied to war and occupation and profiteering and exploitation while guaranteeing jobs and funding.

- Students need a political voice.

Build a new mass workers' party that will stand up for students and workers, and that fights for socialist policies

- Fight for socialist change – for democratic public ownership of the banks, monopolies and major industry to provide us with a future



University of South Wales MARIAM KAMISH

● Sheffield Hallam – nursing students and state of NHS

We talked to a lot of students undertaking nursing and other health degrees at one of the campus buildings. There was a lot of anger about the state of the NHS, and the Labour leadership's first weeks in office.

We ran three campaign stalls. 21 people signed up to Socialist Students, 46 bought a Socialist paper, and we raised over £80 for the Socialist Party fighting fund too.

We gave out hundreds of leaflets. And there are new supporters who are willing to help us build Socialist Students within Hallam University.

Our petition opposing the slaughter in Gaza was popular, as was our petition to build a movement to smash racism. And we'll be out campaigning at the University of Sheffield for the whole week too, so watch this space.

JOHN BUNN
SHEFFIELD SOUTH EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

● Queen Mary, London – ignored by uni bosses

Students are eager to find an alternative to the broken system of capitalism. People have mobilised in waves through the anti-war movement and to oppose the far-right riots.

Last term, students at Queen Mary were ignored when they demanded and protested for divestment of funds to companies complicit in the Israeli state terror on Gaza. Instead, they were taken to court by their own university!

With a financial crisis shaking universities, the need for a political student voice is stronger than ever. The concerns of students were felt across the board during freshers week.

We discussed our ideas with hundreds of students. They had concerns about the housing crisis, the possibility of an increase in tuition fees, and the staggering cost of living.

The continued war on Gaza was an especially important topic, which we will discuss in one of our first meetings. Many students and staff agreed with our demands, as we plan to campaign on an anti-war, anti-austerity programme, and raise the strength and representation of the student voice on campus.

We had 150 sign-ups, and held two very successful meetings, where we planned activity for the next week. Join Socialist Students as we fight for every issue facing students, for free education, under our democratic control, and for the end to oppression for all on campus and beyond.

MIHAELA IVANOVA
QUEEN MARY SOCIALIST STUDENTS

● Manchester – education becoming expensive luxury

Students shared common anger at the anticipated rise in tuition fees from Keir Starmer's government. They don't feel there is a party in Parliament which meets their demands.

We have been out on the streets at the universities, followed by a vibrant public meeting with over 20 attendees. We discussed the crisis in education.

Another concern is the university's ties to big business in Israel amidst its government's onslaught on Gaza, a continuation of the sentiment which exploded around last term's encampments.

Along with the cost-of-living crisis, we will continue to politicise these issues, and make the case for a new mass workers' party to challenge them.

The message from students was clear. Free education should be a right for all, and can only be

accomplished by taking control of universities out of the hands of big business and fat-cat bosses.

We will continue to build the fight to bring education into the democratic control of workers, students, and communities. But if this is not met, and education continues to become an expensive luxury, the foundations are there for a huge student backlash and mass campaigns.

It's time students had a say in our future. We're making this case at both Manchester universities, and Salford too. Socialist Students are putting ourselves on the map ahead of further attacks.

ROBBIE DAVIDSON
MANCHESTER SOCIALIST STUDENTS

● King's College London – Gaza slaughter and fee hikes

Our campaign stall had information on future meetings we have planned, and information on what Socialist Students is. This allowed for us to talk about a range of different issues that Socialist Student members have been campaigning on.

This allowed us to see what the pressing issues are among King's College London (KCL) students. Many are worried about what is happening in Gaza, the possible hike in tuition fees and international rates – more than half of undergraduates at KCL are international students.

Students were willing to find out more about Socialist Students, with many asking what socialism is. This allowed us to explain how Socialist Students is a place to learn and discuss – you don't have to be an expert in Marxism to come to our meetings! Many students were receptive to that.

SAADA MOHAMED
ENFIELD AND LEA VALLEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Aerospace action: ‘Bosses must think we’re stupid!’

NICK CHAFFEY
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Strike action continues at Eaton aerospace manufacturers in Fareham, Hampshire, after a new derisory offer of an extra 0.25% was rejected by Unite union stewards.

Anger and determination is growing among workers who are facing the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. Over 100 attended the picket on

Monday 23 September. Some grades take home £2,000 a month basic pay, which barely covers the necessities, forcing many into long hours of overtime.

Workers here were badly hit by the last three-year pay deal and made it clear to the company that a new three-year deal would not be accepted. Despite this, the company returned to negotiations with the same proposal!

Reflecting the anger, many walked out of a meeting organised to hear from the management in disgust at their attitude. Management had attempted to bully workers into accepting their deal, by exaggerating the losses in pay they were suffering due to the three days of strikes. “They must think we’re stupid, we’re not taking home £300 a day!”

Strikers report their action is having an impact on the company, which is under pressure from customers waiting to receive their materials. Unite reports that Eaton’s parent company made profits of €3.5 billion in 2023 and paid its directors nearly €60 million. The money is there and workers are determined to have their fair share. Further action is set for 27 and 30 September.

PHOTO: NICK CHAFFEY



Slough and Reading schools strike over unfair medical absence policies

NEIL ADAMS
READING SOCIALIST PARTY

National Education Union (NEU) members at the Baylis Court School in Slough, along with Reading Girls School, are striking over an unfair medical absence policy. Both schools are part of the Thames Learning Trust.

The policy forces staff to take unpaid leave to attend medical appointments, or when accompanying dependants. Unpaid leave in these

circumstances is granted to the majority of staff working in education, including all schools under local authority control.

An NEU member told me that across both sites combined, there was a 78% turnout with a 100% vote in favour of industrial action, easily surpassing the threshold imposed under the draconian Tory anti-union laws.

Since recognition of the NEU and other unions by the Trust in March 2021, management has failed to act in accordance with the terms of the

recognition agreement. All requests for termly meetings with NEU reps have been ignored.

Faced with intransigence from the Trust, members began balloting for industrial action in June. The threat of strike action led to two new proposals, including the offer of paid leave, but members considered the policy to still be too restrictive, and at the discretion of the headteacher.

Further strikes will take place on 24 and 25 September, and on 1, 2 and 3 October.

Nigeria Solidarity UK

Hundreds of protesters in Nigeria face ongoing political and police repression. This includes two members of the Democratic Socialist Movement, the sister party of the Socialist Party in Nigeria. Michael Lenin has been charged with treason, which carries a maximum sentence of the death penalty, part of the state’s attempts to intimidate protesters.

Protests against the dire cost-of-living crisis, made worse by the policies of President Tinubu, swept the country in August. In the early hours of 5 August, security services stormed the flat where they were staying and arrested Michael and two others. National trade union leaders have been among those facing repression too.

Michael has been granted bail with onerous conditions – including a large sum and restriction on his right to speak out. Socialist Party members are supporting the campaign organised by Nigeria Solidarity UK, fighting for all the charges to be dropped and for the release of all protesters still held.

Nigeria Solidarity UK activists are organising protests nationwide on 5 October, including at 2pm outside of the Nigeria High Commission in London, 9 Northumberland Ave WC2N 5BX

● For resources, including a model trade union motion, visit nigeriasolidarity.com or scan the QR code

Committee for a Workers' International
FIGHTING FOR A SOCIALIST WORLD
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Strike at Swindon hospital as cheapskate Serco refuses pay to staff



PHOTO: ROB PETTEFAR

ROB PETTEFAR
SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY

At 7am on 16 September, porters, security, cleaners and caterers walked off the job for 48 hours at Swindon’s Great Western Hospital (GWH), in a situation similar to the Barts NHS strike last year.

A deal with NHS staff reached in June 2023 included a one-off payment of £1,655. This has been denied to hospital staff employed by private company Serco. Some told us they were paid the lump sum by mistake, and then were asked to repay it!

The outsourcing company announced profits of £249 million in 2023 and plunged £90 million into share buybacks to boost its share price.

Unison members voted unanimously for strike action. Speaking to the workers, it was clear that it wasn’t just the denial of the lump sum that they were outraged by.

Many have worked at the hospital since at least 2005, outlasting their previous private employer, Carillion. Most are working for £11.44 an hour on day shifts.

There was the feeling from management that they do not work hard – yet at times a single person had been responsible for keeping an entire Covid ward clean. Hospitality and cleaning staff have been asked to take over nursing tasks for no extra pay, and overtime has been cut.

One worker told me how booking holiday time was very difficult and you couldn’t even get time off to go to a funeral. Other workers described how the work was getting more stressful, with timed criteria for how long tasks should take, and no provisions made when one person on a two-person shift is unavailable.

But one thing was clear from all the workers I spoke to: they were determined to win and would strike again if their demands were not met.

Birmingham support staff strike for equal pay Labour council should demand the money from Labour government

CLIVE WALDER
BIRMINGHAM SOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

School support staff, members of the GMB union, struck in 35 schools across Birmingham on 23 September over a long-running equal pay dispute. It is part of the equal pay claims that Birmingham council says led to them declaring ‘bankruptcy’. The council refuses to even speak to the union about the claim.

The workers mounted picket lines and attended an open air rally despite heavy rain. None of the workers I spoke to believe that the money can’t be found to give them equal pay

with male workers of an equivalent grade.

The Socialist Party leaflet was enthusiastically taken. The fact that the Labour-controlled council refuses to ask a Labour government for more money for local services hadn’t gone unnoticed. The idea of needing a new workers’ party was well-received.

The newly elected Labour MP for Birmingham Northfield, Laurence Turner, who is a former GMB full-time official, failed to send a message of support.

A further 15 schools are being lobbied to increase the pressure on the council.

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BUILD THE FIGHTBACK	Why socialists argue for nationalisation	Students v Starmer - the battle on the campuses	Council cuts - the fight to defend our jobs and services
TRADE UNIONISM TODAY	Do the trade unions need to fight under Labour?	PCS turmoil: a debate on the future of the union	



Birmingham: Northfield anger developing

CLIVE WALDER
BIRMINGHAM SOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Birmingham South Socialist Party branch decided to do the first stall for a while in the Northfield area of Birmingham on the subject of NHS privatisation.

It turned out to be an inspired choice of campaign. While we have sometimes had difficulty in getting people to stop and talk, not so on this occasion! There was a steady stream of people stopping to sign our petition and voice their opinion about things. A real hatred of Starmer and Reeves is beginning to develop, particularly over the withdrawal of the winter fuel payments. Our prediction that working-class people will begin to oppose the new government was borne out before our very eyes.

Interestingly, as we were campaigning on a bread and butter issue and making clear socialist demands, immigration was discussed much less than is usually the case.

It was the best stall I've done for ages, and importantly raised some much-needed donations for the fighting fund.



Birmingham

Week of action in Teesside - the winds of change are blowing

DANIEL
TEESSIDE SOCIALIST PARTY

Teesside Socialist Party branch has been busy with three activities showing the winds of change are blowing on the Tees.

On 11 September, we held a stall in Stockton. Our campaign focused on the cuts to the winter fuel allowance, which attracted a lot of conversations from people old and young horrified at the treatment of old people by Keir Starmer's government.

This was followed on 15 September when we had an eye-catching and busy stall at the Middlesbrough Unity Event held at a local working men's club. We sold eight copies of the Socialist newspaper and met several

enthusiastic people who wanted to join the Socialist Party.

The final event of this trinity of success came on 17 September with a fantastic campaign stall at Teesside University in Middlesbrough. We had a very busy stall, while others leafleted the library and students' union. Plenty of students greeted us with enthusiasm, happy to see a socialist alternative to the establishment on campus.

Overall it's been a busy few weeks for Teesside branch. We've gone from strength to strength in the last year and show no signs of ending our momentum. It'll be a marathon not a sprint to turn Teesside red, but even these first steps have been utterly inspiring.



At Middlesbrough Unity Event PHOTO: TEESSIDE SP

South Acton by-election Stand up to austerity - vote TUSC!



Campaigning in Acton PHOTO: LONDON SP

JASPER CHAPLIN
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The Socialist Party is once again standing for real political change in South Acton ward, Ealing, West London. David Hofman, a long-standing member of the West London branch, is running as a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate to fight against Labour austerity in a 10 October by-election.

With a Labour council, Labour London Mayor and Labour government, many people will have hoped for positive developments - instead, cuts continue.

Ealing council, like all councils across the UK, has suffered from 14 years of Tory austerity, and it has lost 56% in real-terms funding in the last decade. But rather than fight against it, the council has transferred these cuts to the borough's working-class residents. And while it awarded a £99 million contract to the big business responsible for the Grenfell fire to refurbish High Lane Estate homes, 7,500 people are stuck on the council

housing register, facing waiting times of up to 12 years.

The budget squeeze will affect a myriad of services - pothole filling, adequate street lighting, libraries and leisure facilities.

We don't accept that the working class should have to pay for austerity, including through increased council tax. We say that councils should fight for more funding, instead of rolling over and cutting services which are vital to public health, wellbeing, and safety. We need mass building of affordable council housing, caps on private rent and service charges, and to hold landlords and big businesses accountable, so that everyone can afford a safe place to live. Most importantly, we need councillors that will act in the interest of the working class, instead of abstaining from using their voice like Labour councillors do when they risk being suspended.

Vote for TUSC in the upcoming South Acton by-election; release Ealing council from the grip of Labour, vote for a real political alternative to austerity and capitalism.

TRADE UNIONIST AND SOCIALIST COALITION

TUSC, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, is the electoral coalition under which the Socialist Party stands in elections. It was set up in 2010, co-founded by the late Bob Crow - then general secretary of the RMT transport workers' union - with the primary goal of enabling trade unionists, community campaigners and socialists to stand candidates against pro-austerity establishment politicians.

Find out more visit: tusc.org.uk



Rotherham NHS Trust plans over 80 evictions of health workers



Rotherham Hospital PHOTO: JTHOMAS/CC

MICK SUTER
SHEFFIELD AND SOUTH YORKSHIRE SAVE OUR NHS CHAIR AND SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

Over 80 hospital workers face eviction from their accommodation at Rotherham Hospital at a time when Rotherham NHS has severe staff shortages. The Trust sent out letters on 30 July informing staff they have to leave by the end of January 2025. There was no consultation with the tenants or their trade unions, or an attempt to offer alternative accommodation.

The Trust claims there is a health and safety report which says the three accommodation blocks - Swale Court, Derwent Court and Loxley Court - all need upgrades which the Trust cannot afford to pay for. Tenants have requested to see this report but so far no copy has been sent.

Individual tenants and those from the action group have requested a copy of the report, as well the one completed in 2022, which we believe states the buildings were safe to live in until 2027. Tenants are still waiting for answers. One of the questions is: can the Trust supply the fire service reports and letters for the past four weeks? None have been provided so far - why?

The eviction letters came as a bombshell to the tenants. Many were

attracted to work in Rotherham with the offer of accommodation. The housing blocks on site provide safe and secure accommodation for some staff.

One of the tenants reported: "Many have chosen to bring their careers here, personally I applied to do my training in Rotherham because of this accommodation". This clearly shows how having accommodation helps with staff recruitment and retention.

Sheffield Save Our NHS, alongside the tenants' action group, will be holding a protest outside Rotherham Hospital in early October and will continue to collect names for the petition, as well as launching an online petition. NHS workers and tenants are determined to halt these evictions and save Rotherham Hospital from further service cuts.

Sheffield and South Yorkshire Save our NHS and Rotherham Hospital Accommodation Tenants' Action Group demand the following:

- All the proposed evictions of health workers by Rotherham NHS Trust to be halted
- All health and safety reports/audits in regards to Derwent Court, Swale Court and Loxley Court are published and given to the tenants
- All and any necessary repairs are properly carried out and fully funded

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Kirklees: Save specialist dementia care homes

ANGIE WALLER
SOUTH YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY AND KIRKLEES UNISON STEWARD, PERSONAL CAPACITY

About 50 people lobbied a Kirklees Council full council meeting on 18 September with campaigners from Save Our Homes Campaign and Stop the Closures joining forces in another attempt to defend council services under attack.

It's just one year since campaigners won the fight to stop the closure of local specialist dementia care homes Castle Grange and Claremont House in Kirklees. However, the council has revealed that it is in active talks with private providers to transfer staff and residents out of the council.

The council cabinet will meet on 8 October to decide whether to 'actively engage' with as yet unspecified private providers. Unfortunately, the council has already provided payroll, pensions, financial, and client/customer information to those organisations without seeking the permission of the relatives or staff giving their consent. This has angered all those affected, some even asking why a Labour council would treat them so insensitively.

Have they learnt nothing from the failed privatisations of the last three decades? Water, rail, mail, energy are all in dire straits because profit has been put before our needs.

At the rally, many speakers questioned the motives of the council and

its management.

Relatives and trade unionists from Unison, GMB and the NEU spoke about the recent fight we had to save the homes and that forced the council to do a U-turn. One relative said: "We will not allow this Labour council to do the same to our homes".

So once again, the campaigners will be back out building a campaign against backdoor privatisation by a minority Labour-led administration.

The campaign will be represented at the cabinet meeting on 8 October, with deputations to appeal for the council not to move on outsourcing dementia care.

Unfortunately, at the council meeting, the council spokesperson confirmed that the local authority has been exploring the option of a transfer to the private sector, despite the campaigners urging councillors to think about the detriment to the service users and the legacy this would leave.

The campaigners have relaunched their Facebook campaign and WhatsApp groups, have a new petition and are planning to fight this all the way!



Angie speaking at the protest PHOTO: YORKSHIRE SP

Gaza protest greets Labour Party conference in Liverpool

ROGER BANNISTER
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

When Prime Minister Keir Starmer, Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves and the rest of the right-wing Labour government and MPs arrived in Liverpool for Labour Party conference on 21 September, they were greeted by thousands of demonstrators, protesting against the horrendous war in Gaza, now threatening to develop into a regional conflict across the Middle East.

These continuing demonstrations of working-class people and broader

layers across society show just how far removed from widespread public opinion Starmer and his allies are. Britain continues to supply weapons to Israel, and although 30 arms export licences to Israel have been suspended, 320 still remain.

20 Socialist Party members attended the demonstration, meeting protesters as they came out of Lime Street station, as they assembled, and on the march itself, selling copies of the Socialist, distributing leaflets explaining the need for working-class people in Palestine, Israel and the Middle East to be allowed to resolve

the issues at stake on a socialist basis, and received a good response from many of the demonstrators.

The Labour Party is clearly no longer the party of the working class, and our calls for the creation of a new mass workers' party were also well received. The day after the demonstration, people lobbying the conference delegates were quick to notice their middle-class appearance and, following revelations about rich big business backers providing Starmer and his wife with clothing, taunted the delegates, shouting: "Did you pay for that suit?"

Help us raise
£4,298
this week

Every quarter, the Socialist Party sets itself the target to raise £25,000 through our public campaigning. The money is vital to fund all our work, including things like the posters and leaflets that we take out with us when we are campaigning.

The deadline for this quarter is upon us at the end of September. We still have £4,298 to raise.

Lots of Socialist Party branches made a special effort to raise funds on 21 September. Make sure all money is paid in by branches before the deadline!

Fund the fightback

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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.

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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Kłodzko, Poland PHOTO: JACEK HALUCKI/CC

Socialist change and planning needed to combat climate change

RÓŻA KWIECINSKA
NEWHAM AND EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

After weeks of heatwaves with temperatures reaching up to 35°C, a flood wave is currently moving through southern Poland. Regions in the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Austria, and Germany are struggling with on-going heavy rainfall.

In 2020, experts associated with the Polish Academy of Sciences warned that we should expect more frequent occurrences of droughts, as well as destructive excess water. Even in a single year, both droughts and floods can occur, and what was once considered 'abnormal' is becoming the new normal. This is exactly what we are facing today.

Water is seeping into cities, reaching heights of up to 1.5 metres. Some streets in Polish cities are closed to vehicular traffic. Many residents have also been given the option to evacuate. In some cities, schools, kindergartens and nurseries are closed. Residents are working on raising flood defences. In some areas, higher water levels are expected than during the 'Millennium Flood' of 1997.

Poland has declared a state of natural disaster.

The intense rainfall and severe flooding currently affecting southern Poland were preceded by heatwaves with temperatures around 30°C, which were unprecedented for this time of year in Poland. From 3-9 September there were six consecutive record-breaking warm days. When the rains finally arrived, their scale reached catastrophic proportions, resulting in the flooding of many towns and the loss of lives, with rescue efforts requiring tremendous effort from emergency services. Meanwhile, Poland still faces reduced water levels in rivers and lakes, termed hydrological drought.

It takes longer for water to soak into dry ground after a heatwave than into ground under normal summer conditions. Droughts, storms, and floods have always occurred, but due to climate change, they are happening more frequently and are more intense.

It's time for politicians to take climate change seriously.

When asked how the current situation compares to that of 1997, Prime Minister Donald Tusk said: "There is no doubt that local flooding is now a reality. But we are definitely better prepared to act than in 1997, and also better than in 2010." The government

is also preparing a relief package for the affected areas, with a reserve of 1 billion zloty allocated for this purpose. The prime minister added that after discussions with leaders of other affected countries - namely the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, and Romania - he will request the European Union to fund part of the damage.

Unfortunately, however, Polish politicians have so far been unable to launch effective political initiatives aimed at protecting citizens from the effects of climate change. Successive governments have consistently ignored the need for change and energy transformation.

Polish scientists have issued a dramatic appeal to politicians to finally begin a debate and concrete actions to address the climate crisis. What is the government doing to protect citizens from the human-caused effects of climate change?

After the 1997 flood, substantial work was done, primarily in constructing hydraulic structures. However, at the same time, floodplain areas have been developed, forests have been cut down, and flood-prone areas continue to be built upon. There are not enough restrictions in place.

Already today, droughts are driving up food prices, heatwaves are leading to increased hospitalisations, especially for vulnerable patients, and floods and inundations are causing losses for both the Polish state and ordinary people. According to the experts' report, there is a risk of rising inflation, which could be a result of damage to agriculture and disruptions in supply chains.

The flood still continues. One of the largest cities, Wrocław, is

preparing for a wave. Preparations have been going on continuously for several days. Thousands of people are helping.

There is a lot of work, filling and laying sandbags, securing collections of libraries and universities, moving from cellars to higher floors, and saving homeless animals. There are also lots of donations for people and animals, with many people travelling to flood areas to help.

If we are genuinely committed to combating climate change, we cannot accept the constraints of the current system. Instead, the economy must be reoriented from focusing on profits to addressing the needs of people and the environment. Profit-driven capitalism cannot address climate change effectively.

This can only be achieved through socialist measures: the transfer of banks and corporations into public ownership under democratic control and management and a democratically planned economy.



Mexican judicial reform - what measures can give workers real justice?

IAIN DALTON

YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Amid scenes of protesters attempting to stop its parliament from sitting, the populist Morena government under Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (Amlo) in Mexico passed its reforms to the federal level judiciary, including the Supreme Court, by a two-thirds majority.

This is part of a package of 20 constitutional amendments and initiatives that Amlo has pledged to pass before he hands over the presidency to his Morena-backed successor in October, Claudia Sheinbaum. The other reforms, as well as some re-organisations of state bodies, are a lengthy list of provisions including the right to a pension at 65, that the minimum wage will rise with inflation, capping maximum salaries of public officials to that of the president, banning of GM crops, as well as fracking and open-pit mining.

Morena campaigned in the recent elections on these pledges and, combined with Amlo and Sheinbaum's opposition to the corrupt, oligarchical establishment, saw it win a two-thirds majority necessary to carry through constitutional reforms.

The proposals call for the election of federal judges - from magistrates up to the supreme court, as well as reducing the number of supreme court judges from 11 to 9 and reducing Supreme Court term-lengths from 15 to 12 years. The reforms fall short of electing judges at lower-level

courts, and they allow a process of nomination before whittling down a shortlist of approved candidates before they are put to voters.

Like the rest of the capitalist class in Mexico, sections of the judiciary are widely seen as corrupt and in the pockets of the drug cartels that effectively run parts of Mexico. Half of respondents in an annual government survey of confidence in the judicial system said they had little to no confidence. The Mexican Supreme Court has also acted to block a number of reforms advocated by Amlo and Morena.

Federal judges have been on strike against these proposals since late August, while other court officials whose jobs are tied to the federal judges appointing them have also taken strike action over the threat of losing their jobs. These non-judicial court officials should simply be brought into permanent public employment, rather than allow the current situation where capitalist interests are exploiting their insecurity.

The capitalist class has been apoplectic at these proposals: "Electoral democracy is at stake in Mexico" states a law professor interviewed by Al Jazeera. US business associations have written to the Biden administration demanding they exert pressure on Amlo and are quoted in the Financial Times stating the need for "US investors to have fair and predictable recourse in Mexico's justice system", ie a justice system that will defend the interests of the

multinationals!

What is at stake for them is a key cog in the capitalist state machine that protects their interests. The judiciary is only independent in a formal sense - judges' benches around the world are packed with representatives of the interests of the capitalist class - drawn from the same social backgrounds and often financially remunerated so their living standards (and therefore outlook) are the same. This acts as an important check for the capitalist class on any particular government who can be restrained if they are not acting in the interests of the capitalist class as a whole.

We would also raise subjecting judges and other public representatives to only take an average worker's wage, and improving access for those from working-class and poor backgrounds to train in law and other forms of higher education, including proper financial support.

The capitalists fear not just this step to potentially make judges more accountable to the population, but that it can be a step to more thoroughgoing measures - to act against their profits in the interests of the working-class majority. It is only with such measures being taken, that put the control of the vast resources in society in the hands of elected workers' representatives, that the resources of society can be democratically planned to improve the living standards of all. That would bring about real justice for working-class people.



Mexican parliament PHOTO: ENCA/MX/CC

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the Socialist

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FUND SERVICES NOT WAR

Fight for socialist change

ALEX SAMPSON
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Over 40,000 people have been killed in Gaza in nearly a year of Israeli state attacks - schools, hospitals and refugee camps levelled. Attacks are expanding on Palestinians in the West Bank and now hundreds are being killed in air strikes in Lebanon. And when the majority of United Nations attendees voted to call on Israel to withdraw from Gaza, Britain abstained.

Keir Starmer's Labour government continues to grant more than 300 export licences to arms manufacturers to sell weapons and components for use by the Israeli military, despite a token revoking of 30 licences. £7.6 billion

has so far been sent for military use in the war in Ukraine, causing even more devastation for the working class of Ukraine and Russia.

A small number of super-rich capitalists are making a big pile of cash from the horrors of war. Global military spending reached \$2.2 trillion in 2023, a 9% rise on the previous year. Companies like BAE Systems are making record profits.

Labour is "the natural party of British business", according to chancellor Rachel Reeves. Meanwhile, she and Starmer tell us they have to make "tough decisions" to cut pensioners' winter fuel allowance and cap benefits for families with more than two kids. Once again, the poorest and most vulnerable people in Britain, the sixth-richest country in the

world, will have to decide whether to heat or eat.

Fund services

If billions can be found to spend on war and destruction, then services can be fully funded and NHS workers given a decent pay rise too!

Tens of thousands of people continue to flood the streets in solidarity with Palestinians and to protest against war. Hundreds of thousands took part in the biggest strike wave in a generation over the last few years. Millions are angry at a Labour government continuing the criminal policies of the Tories in Britain and abroad.

Like the Tories, Labour are trying to make

us pay for the failures of the capitalist system. That's why we need to get organised to fight for a socialist alternative - a genuinely democratic socialist system led by working-class people for the benefit of the working class in Britain and abroad.

We need a party that fights for the working-class majority, not the corporations and fat-cat bankers. Join the Socialist Party to help us fight for a new mass workers' party and for socialist change.

Do you agree?

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SOCIALISTS**
socialistparty.org.uk/join



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

