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the Socialist

Issue 1292

3-9 October 2024

formerly **Militant**

BUILD MASS WORKERS' ACTION TO

STOP WAR

END ISRAELI STATE TERROR

Socialist Party fights for

- End the war on Lebanon and Gaza
- A withdrawal of all Israeli military forces from the Palestinian territories, an immediate lifting of the blockade on Gaza and an end to attacks on Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem
- Build mass protests internationally in opposition to the war in the Middle East
- Stop funding Israeli state terror - trade union action to stop production and distribution of arms for use by Israeli state forces
- For mass democratically organised struggles of workers and the poor across the Middle East, in opposition to the wars, to fight for national and democratic rights, and an end to poverty and inequality
- No trust in the capitalist ruling elites across the Middle East and internationally. Fight to build and strengthen independent mass workers' organisations and parties
- For the right of national self-determination of Palestinians and other oppressed nationalities
- For a socialist Palestine alongside a socialist Israel, as part of a voluntary democratic socialist confederation of the Middle East that defends the democratic and national right of all the peoples of the region



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LABOUR'S NEW AUSTERITY >>> p5**

**LESSONS FROM THE FIGHT
AGAINST THE FAR RIGHT >>> p8 & 9**

END WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST >>> p3

theSocialist

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Editor of the Socialist Josh Asker socialistparty.org.uk Mark Best Circulation manager Paula Mitchell Chris Newby	Editorial staff Scott Jones Ian Pattison Paula Mitchell Mark Best
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."
Karl Marx



Tory Kemi Badenoch says maternity pay is too high!

CORINTHIA WARD
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Tory leadership hopeful and controversial right-wing figure Kemi Badenoch has once again stirred the news with her comments on maternity pay during the first day of Conservative Party conference.

She commented that: "Statutory maternity pay is a function of tax" and in her view "is excessive", further adding: "We need to have more personal responsibility. There was a time when there wasn't any maternity pay and people were having more babies."

In reality, the UK has amongst of the lowest levels of maternity pay of all the wealthy OECD countries. Someone receiving the average UK weekly wage of £689 would get the equivalent of just over £250 a week. Compare that to the figure of £540 which is required for a single person to maintain a minimum acceptable standard of living.

Badenoch herself resigned from her job at the Spectator when she became pregnant with her second child. This was her decision to make, so that is up to her - but a decision like this is easier to make when you know you have the salary of your highly positioned banker husband in Deutsche Bank to support you!

Many working-class families are choosing to either delay having children or having fewer, if any at all, due to the rising cost of living, high childcare costs

and low wages. There are already concerns about UK birthrates, which have fallen from 1.94 children per woman in 2012 to 1.55 in 2021.

Badenoch's comments are yet another display of how capitalist politicians are disconnected from the reality of normal workers' lives. Badenoch's class privilege means she will not face the uncertainties and economic instability of many mothers, parents or caregivers.

The Socialist Party fights for a new mass party, whose politicians are rooted in the conditions of the working class. Rather than making crass comments such as this, Socialist Party members fight for better maternity pay, and matching paternity pay, to ensure working families are kept out of poverty.



Kemi Badenoch
ROGER HARRIS/UK PARLIAMENT/CC

University fee hike threat – fight for free education

ADAM GILLMAN
READING SOCIALIST PARTY

Every week there is a drip feed of hints that Labour's first budget, coming up on 30 October, will include attacks on students. This could include increasing tuition fees with inflation which could lead to them hitting £10,500 within the next five years. Students are already facing high bills, rents and fees, with most students paying extortionate rents for a small dorm room that isn't fully maintained. They will leave university with an even bigger mountain of debt.

The University and Colleges Union (UCU), which represents university staff, says that we could fund universities with a 4.3% increase in corporation tax would raise £17 billion.

This could be used as an education levy to fund universities and end its tuition fee model.

This would be a great step forward. However, why stop there? We need to end the marketisation of universities - take them back and make them fully publicly funded by taking the wealth of the super-rich!

It's not just a question of funding, why should we allow our universities to be run into the ground by the university bosses? They should be democratically controlled by students and staff.

Socialist Students will fight for free education against any attempts to make students pay more. We fight for maintenance grants students can actually live on. And a democratically run education system for all.

A day in the life

Hospitality workers 'Worth more than rocket lollies'!

'SM', KITCHEN WORKER

Hospitality work is arguably a rite of passage for young workers. Despite making up only 10% of the workforce as a whole, 16 to 24-year-olds make up just under half of the industry.

So, when you're 16, and you get your first job in hospitality, what lies in wait for you?

Certainly not decent wages. Your age won't save you from the same physically and mentally demanding tasks that all your co-workers do, but it will earn you £2 less an hour - and that's if your boss decides that you're worth that measly £6.40. Many businesses will have you work 'trial shifts' to see if you're even worth the time. In my first job I ended up working four shifts for free, simply because I didn't know any better.

A consistent schedule? Rotas can be published at extremely short notice. One of my friends - who at 19 still works for £7.50 an hour - receives their rota for the week on the Monday of that week. With the prevalence

of zero-hour contracts, it is truly a gamble. Thirty hours or four? It depends on the business's needs. When I worked at McDonald's for a year, a company that pays its workers fortnightly, almost every two weeks I received a rota with four shifts one week and none on the other.

But what of workplace safety? Surely you can expect a duty of care? Well, if you're working a summer job between terms at college, you get the pleasure of tropical temperatures up to the mid-40s, something that is legal as there's no maximum working temperature for kitchen workers. If you're lucky, you may get a rocket lolly as a 'reasonable adjustment'!

Skeleton crews - implemented to maximise profit for the higher-ups - increase stress on workers, leading to long-term health effects, and also later closing times. In a country that is steadily killing off public transport, especially late at night, it leaves you stranded, choosing between a taxi costing multiple hours of wages and walking alone in the dark.

The Socialist Party demands:

- A minimum wage of at least £15 an hour with no exemptions
- Workers' rights from day one
- Scrap zero-hour contracts; end fire and reheire
- Trade union action for workplace safety
- If Starmer doesn't implement the 'New Deal for Workers' in full in his first 100 days, unions must meet to plan action

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END WAR IN MIDDLE EAST

Socialist Party
WHAT WE THINK

With Israel's invasion of Lebanon, the Middle East is facing the danger of regional war. With it, a spreading and intensification of the huge suffering that already exists, the vast majority of it at the hands of Israeli state forces.

The latest Israeli assaults in Lebanon come after Gaza has faced a year of brutal air strikes, a ground invasion and relentless cruel attacks on schools, hospitals, refugee camps, and more. Palestinians in the West Bank face violence, killings and repression, so too in East Jerusalem, and also discrimination in Israel.

The latest escalations - the Israeli forces' killing of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in Lebanon, and now sending ground troops into southern Lebanon.

At the time of writing, it is unknown what and when the retaliation will be from Hezbollah or any of the other forces that also form part of Iran's 'axis of resistance'. US sources report a planned Iranian missile attack towards Israel.

Israeli forces have ratcheted up their murderous terror - targeting a residential building in Lebanon capital Beirut and bombing targets in Yemen too.

One million people in Lebanon have fled their homes. Many receiving the ominous 'warning' from an anonymous number on their phone, at just a few hours' notice in the dead of night, that their neighbourhood faces destruction.

Western capitalist governments, primarily the US but also including Britain, continue to supply the Israeli state war machine with weapons and

ammunition. Meanwhile, hypocritically, calling for a ceasefire.

The US, Britain, and other major powers are desperate to avoid regional escalation. It would put world trade and energy supplies into jeopardy, as well as their power and influence in the region - impacting on their own capitalist classes' profits.

As the article in Socialism Today marking one year on since the 7 October attacks and start of the war on Gaza points out: "Throughout all this, the elites across the Middle East and the world powers have tried making diplomatic interventions to prevent the war from spreading, but not in a unified way because at the same time the region is a battleground between the world's main powers for influence."

The accumulation of atrocities carried out against civilian populations brings with it the risk of provoking mass movements of the working class and poor across the region. This, the ruling elites on all sides are desperate to avoid.

Accelerating crises

War is deepening the pre-existing social, political and economic crises facing working-class and poor people. The recent period has seen huge upheavals and workers' struggle in Lebanon, in Iran and in Israel, as well as across the Middle East region during the Arab Spring in 2011-12.

As recently as 2019-21, a mass movement swept Lebanon, workers uniting across religious and sectarian divides to fight against tax rises and corruption, then in protest against a deadly explosion (see 'Stop the war on Lebanon' at socialistparty.org.uk). In 2022-23, Iran faced an uprising sparked by the state 'morality police' murdering 21-year-old woman Masha Amini. Huge protests swept the country and developed into strikes.

In Israel, a general strike against the Netanyahu government took place on 2 September. This following

a pre-war mass movement and general strike.

Any reprieve from the masses' anger that ruling elites can get by virtue of being at war will be temporary. A further escalation in the conflict does not increase the safety of ordinary people on any side. A deepened and widening war inflicts huge misery and suffering, it also stores up even more material for future social explosions and mass revolts that can threaten the ruling elites.

The Socialist Party has argued throughout the year of war in the Middle East that it is the working class and poor masses that have the power to bring an end to the war, and to win national and democratic rights for Palestinians and other oppressed nationalities. By getting organised and developing democratic structures independent of the capitalists, steps can be taken towards the development of independent mass workers' organisations and parties.

By adopting a socialist programme, based on taking wealth and control out of the hands of the ruling elites and instead developing a plan to meet the needs of all, a route can be charted towards working-class collaboration across the Middle East and internationally, and an end to capitalist wars, through building a voluntary, socialist confederation across the Middle East.

In Britain, our members have energetically taken part in the mass protests, fighting for the mass workers' organisations - the trade unions - to take a leading role. We have worked with others to ensure the widest possible working-class and socialist stand against Keir Starmer, the Tories and the rest of the pro-war capitalist politicians in the general election.

If you want to help build the fight for socialist change in Britain and internationally, join the Socialist Party.

Do you agree?
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Starmer's Hillsborough Law won't deliver justice



DAVE WALSH
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

The new 'Hillsborough Law' will force public bodies to co-operate with investigations or potentially face criminal sanctions. Keir Starmer will put the law to Parliament next year.

The new law is being portrayed as a 'magic bullet' that will help prevent scandals such as Grenfell, Orgreave, Post Office Horizon, infected blood, servicemen used as guinea pigs in nuclear tests, and many others. In all these cases, victims were ignored, publicly ridiculed and denied justice for decades.

But does this new law really offer people protection? Would it have prevented the deaths at Hillsborough or the subsequent cover-up? After the 'Battle of Orgreave', many miners were prosecuted for riot, which carried a maximum life sentence, but the cases were dropped because police evidence was deemed 'unreliable'. How would that have been prevented by this law?

Would it have stopped property developers using cheap, flammable cladding? Or Post Office bosses from sending their employees to prison after they knew the evidence from their system was flawed? Or army chiefs from exposing their soldiers to a radioactive blast?

What all these crimes have in common, is they were perpetrated by a powerful establishment against powerless people. The crimes were committed and then covered up because it suited their needs, and they showed no fear of the law at any stage. That's because the law is theirs to use as a tool of oppression, not a means for ordinary people to achieve justice.

The New Labour government isn't pretending their new law will prevent tragedies in the future, they only pretend it will help provide justice after they happen. Look how long the various inquiries into these scandalous events take – and when they're done, the establishment hopes the anger has dissipated and those responsible get away with it.

The army veterans who were deliberately exposed to radiation, suffering devastating health problems, were all offered medals. The new Hillsborough Law is a medal which Starmer hopes will satisfy the public.

If we want to stop these tragedies and scandals from happening, then we must rid ourselves of the ruling class that causes them in the first place. And we must create a democratic worker's society where decisions are made based on need and not profit.

Nellist tells Jeremy Kyle: 'They ain't Labour anymore'

Dave Nellist: I was a member of Parliament for nine years, my partner and I brought up three children and for those nine years, I only took the wage of the average factory worker in Coventry, less than half an MP's salary. The rest went to charities and to strike funds and other causes. Not once did I take freebies for glasses or for clothes.

When my kids wanted somewhere quiet to revise, they had to go in the bedroom to do it.

Jeremy Kyle: For those tuning in, today Starmer is under more pressure for £20,000 worth of accommodation from Lord 'Back Alley'.

It turns out, ladies and gentlemen, that he had free accommodation this £18 million penthouse in Covent Garden. Initially, Sir Keir Starmer said, and I quote, this was for meetings, it's where he spent the night of the election, blah blah blah. His latest excuse is: 'My young son used it to revise for his GCSEs'. Dave Nellist, we might not agree on most things but we'll agree on this: he is taking the British public for idiots and they won't buy it mate, they won't buy it.



Dave Nellist: In Coventry we've had a Labour council mostly since 1937, their current latest cuts are to close four libraries and put them into smaller places with less computers, less desks and less staff. Ordinary working-class kids who want to go somewhere to do their homework and study for their GCSEs in Coventry have got less places to go to. Now the Socialist Party which I'm

a member of believes that anybody who becomes an MP or a councillor should do it because of what they can give to people, not for what they can take out of the system. So, all our representatives only take that average wage. The trouble is, people in the Labour Party, at the top of the Labour Party, they ain't Labour anymore. They're in it for what they can get out of it, not for what they can put in.

'Small town, big riot' Socialist cabbie's director's cut



"If you want a bit of sound common sense, ask a cabbie. It was taxi driver Neill who best described why people in his home town of Kirkby might be tempted by the occasional riot."

The Daily Mail journalist reviewing 'Small Town, Big Riot' on BBC3 didn't know they were agreeing with the socialist cabbie, Socialist Party member Neill Dunne!

Neill does a great job of explaining the 'lack of opportunities, a lack of housing, food poverty and wage insecurity' that breeds resentment in his Merseyside town. Resentment which the far right try to exploit to spread their hateful ideas, dividing the working class in the interests of the capitalist bosses.

Neill told us what he makes of the final edit:

"Overall, I'm happy with what they aired, but I went out speaking to them for about three and a half hours.

Every time I mentioned the Socialist Party or TUSC (Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition), they cut it out. They haven't aired everything I

was talking about, the issues with local government and stuff like that.

I had a copy of the Socialist Paper on the dash. They didn't show that!

I expanded on the deprivation in Kirkby and in the wider borough, to answer presenter Mobeen's question: "Why are people in Kirkby so angry?"

I responded with facts on funding withdrawn from essential services like health and social care, wage stagnation, access to housing becoming more and more difficult while council tax, rent, and the cost of living all rise.

Knowsley council has passed on austerity measures in a borough left behind while sitting on millions in reserves.

Access to dentists and doctors has become a privilege, it is widely known in Kirkby that it is amongst the worst areas for poor diet, poor health, drastically high cancer rates, lowest life expectancy for women in England, while the council feels content with the development of fast-food restaurants and a single

supermarket.

The alienation was seen in the ward I stood in, Northwood, where voter turnout reduced from 19% in 2022 to 15% in 2024 - well below the national average.

A few people have recognised me on the Socialist Party campaign stall or in my taxi and given me support, and we've had some great discussions. A fighting, socialist programme at the ballot box is needed.

Labour councillors are facing opposition in a campaign regarding the building of 800 homes, 720 of which are private (as explained in the article last month).

We want to see better infrastructure and access to dentists and doctors before a single home is built and the entire project should be social housing."

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

After Labour conference unions must lead fight against Labour's new austerity

Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

"I'd also like him to say that we're not going to take this country down austerity mark 2. People voted for change. They need to see change. And he needs to reverse the winter fuel allowance [decision] and let people have that £300 they can put their heating on this winter."

This was the advice Unite the Union's general secretary Sharon Graham gave to Sir Keir Starmer before his address to Labour Party Conference. But both Starmer and his 'iron' chancellor Rachel Reeves maintained their mantra of 'unpopular decisions' as they set the scene for their first budget on 30 October – snuffing out the prospect of a significant increase in public spending, desperately needed by the working class after 14 years of Tory austerity and the cost-of-living squeeze.

Reeves set out her 'fiscal rules', "a framework of economic and fiscal stability" - not to borrow to fund day-to-day spending and to reduce national debt as a share of the economy. The only tweak that she may propose out of that spending straitjacket is some 'flexibility' regarding capital/infrastructure spending.

Serving the bosses' interests

That is a recipe for faithfully following Tory spending limits. Starmer refused to step back from his planned cut to pensioners' winter fuel allowance. This is a clear sign to the fat-cat bosses that he will faithfully serve their interests, but also a signal to the working class to limit its expectations about what his government will deliver. Reeves is now indicating that she may even pull back from her 'crackdown' on non-dom tax avoidance, typically used by much of the super-rich.

But that doesn't mean that, like all pro-capitalist governments, Starmer's can't be forced into concessions, against its will. Even Rishi Sunak's Tories were forced by the strike wave to up his initial offers on public sector pay.

Towards the end of 2022, the leaders of the Royal College of Nurses (RCN) offered to suspend their impending strike, the first in the union's history in England, Wales and Scotland, if Sunak would agree to serious talks on pay. The Tories arrogantly refused, forcing the RCN to call strikes. But the result was that a new generation of nurses, along with the many other workers over the last few years, have learned the essential lesson, that you win far more if you are prepared to fight.

It is therefore ironic but not accidental that it is now RCN members



PHOTOS: PAUL MATTSSON
AND RIVENDLAND/CC

who are the first public sector workers to vote to reject a 5.5% pay offer from Labour. Starmer has sought to buy time for his new New Labour government by pitching public sector pay offers at 5% and over, and many of these have been accepted, with the recommendation of the union leaderships. It is also part of his attempt to draw the union leaders into partnership with his government and the employers – something he pushed in his address to TUC Congress earlier in September.

The right-wing union leaders are all too willing to sign up to this, indicated by their welcoming comments to Starmer's Labour conference speech. However, the more left-wing or militant union leaders are not all so clear in putting forward an alternative to the trajectory set out by Starmer and Reeves.

In the last few weeks, we have seen Mick Lynch of the RMT, which is not affiliated to Labour, not raise any concerns on Newsnight about Blairite health minister Wes Streeting's NHS 'reforms'. Although that word has long been a code for cuts and especially privatisation, a long-held viewpoint of Streeting.

CWU general secretary Dave Ward correctly lambasted the record and legacy of Royal Mail privatisation that threatens the jobs of 130,000 workers. But as he did at the TUC, Dave refused to demand that Labour re-nationalises Royal Mail, which is not only CWU policy but also Labour's! It was passed at the party conference two years ago, in the middle of the postal strike.

The RCN rejection vote is a taster of the other trend starting to be felt within the trade union movement

– to be prepared to confront any Starmer austerity agenda both industrially and politically. It is a struggle being felt within a number of unions, including the civil service PCS union, where the left NEC majority is resisting the leadership's attempts to settle on pay with the government. This is the music of the future as workers will inevitably come up against Starmer's spending limits.

This mood was eventually reflected at Labour's conference, when Unite's motion to oppose the cut to pensioners' winter fuel allowance was passed. In moving the motion, Sharon Graham contrasted Starmer's policies with the manifesto of the 1945 Labour government, which nationalised coal and the railways and created the NHS: "Written at a time when our debt to GDP was 270 per cent. Nearly three times higher than it is now. Yet, no mention of cuts, no mention of austerity and certainly no mention of making everyday people pay."

Changed Labour

But this is a very different Labour government. As Starmer said on 5 July, they 'won as changed Labour and will govern as changed Labour', echoing the New Labour speech by Tony Blair in winning office in 1997. Unite the Union has welcomed Reeves's comments on capital and infrastructure spending, but should demand that this should include a massive intervention into Tata Steel, Grange-mouth and Harland and Wolff to save jobs and defend communities, on the basis of nationalisation.

At one point during his conference speech, in response to a delegate heckling him over Gaza, Starmer chided: "This guy has obviously got a pass from the 2019 conference. While he's been protesting, we've been changing the party. That's why we got a Labour government."

Starmer has moved to rub out any semblance of the policies of Jeremy Corbyn from Labour, returning it to its New Labour status as safe for big business. Even when suffering the censure of losing the winter fuel motion, it was pushed back to the graveyard shift of the last session of conference, when Starmer had already departed to New York for the United Nations Assembly, partly to shore up the murderous Israeli regime. In any case, Starmer will ignore the vote on the Unite motion, showing again that Labour's conference is an undemocratic rubber stamp, leaving members and affiliated unions powerless.

Corbyn's transformative 2017 manifesto won 3 million more votes than Starmer's Tory-lite programme got in July. But Labour's conference, on the back of the continued suspension of the seven Labour MPs, showed once more that Starmer's Labour will govern in the interests of the capitalist class, not workers.

TUC passed a motion which included an amendment from PCS, inspired by the left NEC majority, that demanded a recall congress if Starmer moved away from his New Deal promises in his first 100 days.

Such a balance sheet will be required when that deadline hits in the next few weeks, and as Reeves sets out her first budget on 30 October. But as part of this resistance, the unions must begin the discussion of the political alternative needed to supplement and strengthen militant industrial action.

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Union conferences to debate how to fight the crisis in probation and family courts

Napo: We cannot wait – the crisis means we need a fighting union

ADAM HARMSWORTH
Napo NEC MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Year after year, at the AGM of Napo (the union of probation and family courts workers), members have expressed their anger at the state of the probation service and children and family courts (Cafcass). The Tories put probation through hell, not least through part-privatisation, which Napo boldly challenged with strike action.

The fact that the probation service was reunified and taken out of private hands proved Napo right. But it was taken back under civil service control, not the democratic workers' control the Socialist Party argued for, and has faced over a decade of pay restraints, budget cuts, and soaring workloads. That has had an effect on members' morale.

While union membership is rising, and Napo has begun building an outstanding new layer of activists, attendance at recent AGMs has been lower as a result of the attacks Napo has faced.

Napo needs fighting strategy

Members also openly talk about some branches struggling to effectively organise. Doubts have been raised about the union's ability to build an effective campaign of industrial action if that is needed. Being able to strike is necessary to demand what our members need and what probation and Cafcass services need.

The period we are going into is one of growing instability, but also

a renewed interest in the strength of trade unions and of working-class organisation. We cannot 'wait for a Labour government', because we now have one. We cannot wait for austerity to end, because it is continuing under the Starmer's government.

Napo must take the lead with its sister unions in probation and Cafcass to campaign for change. A fighting strategy on pay, funding and workload will draw in new members, build up our branches with reps and activists, and make the union a fighting fit and democratic organisation.

Organise for a combative union

Important in achieving this would be to bring together all those members who want a fighting union, to campaign for that throughout the union. Building a campaigning, democratic left organisation is a key task within many unions, and Socialist Party members are working alongside others where possible, such as in the Broad Left Network in civil service union PCS, which is now part of the new left NEC majority of PCS.

One of the urgent tasks facing socialist and other activists in Napo is how to bring people together into such a broad left grouping, to champion a programme which can build the union into the organisation it needs to be for the period ahead.

Socialist Party members in Napo are seeking to begin this discussion during and after this year's AGM, and want to work with any Napo members keen to see Napo rebuilt into an active and combative union that can win real changes for the membership and champion socialist policies.



Napo members successfully fought privatisation PAUL MATTISSON

Unison probation workers demand pay and funding to solve probation service crisis

AMY SAGE
UNISON MEMBER IN THE PROBATION SERVICE

Unison's 2024 Police, Probation and Cafcass (children and family courts) Service Group conference comes at a time when the probation service is facing one of its most serious crises in decades.

For years, probation workers have been pushed to their limits resulting from severe government underfunding and understaffing. The cracks in the system are widening, and it's probation staff who have been left to bear the brunt.

Since the last service group conference in October 2023, the pressures on the probation service have only intensified. The government's early prisoner release scheme, brought in due to prison overcrowding, has exacerbated the crisis. This quick fix may temporarily ease pressure in prisons, but it's dumping an unsustainable burden on probation officers, who are expected to manage increased caseloads with no additional resources.

With vacancy rates remaining persistently high, probation officers are, on average, expected to complete six days' worth of work in just five. This is a dangerous and unsustainable situation that puts public safety at risk, damages the health and wellbeing of probation staff, and reduces support for former prisoners. Instead of

solving the crisis, the government has simply shifted the overcrowding problem from prisons onto probation services - creating another crisis in the process.

Underfunding

Years of neglect have left the probation service desperately underfunded, making it increasingly difficult for staff to do their jobs effectively. Probation workers are being asked to manage increasingly complex cases with insufficient support, Labour is continuing to promise 'tough choices'.

Despite being at the forefront of public safety and rehabilitation, probation workers are still denied the fair pay they deserve, enduring over a decade of real-term pay cuts. 2024 is the last year of a three-year deal which awarded between 3.7% – 19.3% depending on grade over three years. In 2023, Unison called for this to be re-opened, demanding 12% at each pay point.

After failing to secure a meaningful pay increase through negotiations, Unison's national leadership launched a consultative ballot asking members whether they would be prepared to take industrial action if the probation service continued to refuse to renegotiate the pay deal. Over 44% of members voted, and an overwhelming 98% said they were ready to go on strike over the issue of pay.

Although this result clearly reflected the deep frustration and anger among probation staff, Unison's probation committee decided not to proceed to a full industrial ballot - an action that could have led to the first strike by probation staff in over a decade. Instead, in a move that many members saw as a betrayal, the union's leadership opted to 'give the new Labour government a chance,' despite previous assurances that the general election result would not influence the union's strategy.

Left must stand up to the Starmer supporters

The stakes are growing increasingly high. Without a leadership with a fighting strategy to reduce workloads, win pay rises that go some way to restoring lost pay, and the resources probation service staff need, staff, service users and public safety continue to be put at risk.

In 2020 Unison members, wanting a fight against austerity, voted for a left-led National Executive Council, but the general secretary Christina McAnea is a supporter of Keir Starmer's policies. It is clear that what staff working in the probation service need is a united left challenge that counters the Starmer-supporting right wing that makes excuses for Labour's lack of action and fails to really challenge the employers. We must demand more in pay and funding, and get organised to fight for it!

Nurses in RCN: 'It's no surprise that we're not happy'

A bold plan for action is needed

HOLLY JOHNSTON
RCN REP AND SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

Royal College of Nursing (RCN) members have voted to reject the 5.5% pay award from the Labour government. Members voted in record numbers, with over 145,000 voting and over two thirds rejecting the award.

In 2023, RCN members overturned the recommendations of the union's leaders and took strike action - for the first time in their history in England and Wales - as part of the strike wave.

It comes as no real surprise that nursing staff, support workers, nursing associates and student nurses are still not happy with our pay. The workload is unsustainable; staff are still leaving in droves. Over 40,000 nurses a year are leaving the NHS.



RCN members on strike in 2023 SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

And no government has made a meaningful restorative pay offer that tackles the real-terms loss of up to 30% in the last decade.

In a letter to Labour health secretary Wes Streeting, RCN general secretary Nicola Ranger said: "We are witnessing a fundamental shift in the determination of nursing staff to stand up for themselves, their patients and the NHS they believe in."

"Nursing staff were asked to consider if, after more than a decade of neglect, they thought the pay award was a fair start. This outcome shows their expectations of government are far higher. Our members do not yet feel valued and they are looking for urgent action, not rhetorical commitments."

Mood of members

The leadership of the RCN seems to want to act in good faith and with goodwill in terms of negotiations with the government. However this doesn't reflect the mood of the majority of members.

A clear and bold plan for escalation is needed to be taken seriously. As it stands, the RCN will be entering

negotiations without the pressure of balloting members for strike action.

Members of the other NHS unions voted to accept the pay award - in most cases on the recommendation of their leaders - and it is likely many are desperate for the backdated pay in their wage packets and have no confidence in negotiations.

Confidence from strike action

But members of the RCN have massive bold strike action already under their belts from the strike wave and again can put their leaders under pressure and inspire others to fight back.

RCN should ballot members for strike action and not wait for the government. That would mean entering negotiations with maximum pressure. Members have remained in dispute since 2023 when they voted to reject that pay award too.

Not addressing our pay in a meaningful way is deliberate. It is clear that Labour's plans for reforms in the NHS include selling off sections of workforces to private companies. Our pay is directly linked to the future of the NHS and keeping it publicly owned.

UCU: College workers ready to fight for funding, but we need a fighting leadership

DUNCAN MOORE
SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER ON UCU NEC
REPRESENTING FE, PERSONAL CAPACITY

University and College Union (UCU)'s Further Education Committee (FEC) met on 28 September to decide what to do about the dire state of pay and funding.

FE staff in England are outraged at Labour's announcement that there will be no additional funding for FE this year, and the absence so far of any pay recommendation from the employers' body, the Association of Colleges (AoC).

Other unions have won significant - though far from adequate - concessions from Labour in the last few months. Junior doctors got a 22% pay rise over two years. Most public sector pay awards are in the region of 5% or more.

The point is, striking works. It is the impact of the strike wave that has led to the public sector pay awards, as chancellor Rachel Reeves has acknowledged herself.

Teachers in schools were awarded 5.5%. The stark comparison with the neglect - contempt, even - with which FE staff, who do substantially the same job as school teachers, are being treated by Labour and our employers, is at least in part down to the lack of readiness of our union leadership to fight.

This is not because UCU members are content with what we've got! College staff have seen pay fall by nearly 40% in real terms since 2010. On 2010 money we could work three days a week and be paid the same as we are now!

Since the announcement of 0% funding and with the prospect of yet another year of inadequate pay deals, members are angry and want to have their voices heard.



UCU members in FE on strike in 2022 ROBERT THOMAS

In between congress and sector conferences, it is the role of the elected leadership to respond to the mood of members and put forward a strategy to fight for their demands.

Motion for indicative ballot

Socialist Party members supported a motion brought to FEC by the 'UCU Left' grouping, calling for an indicative ballot on pay. It wanted to give members an opportunity to say whether they are willing to take industrial action, if the government refuses to implement the same pay award as offered to the teachers. I put forward an amendment to strengthen the motion, arguing that the indicative ballot should be on our 2024-25 pay claim of 10% or £3,000, whichever is greater. We noted that National Education Union (NEU) members in sixth-form colleges are being balloted for strike action to get the matched pay award.

Against us, other members of the NEC, including the president and vice president, argued that an indicative ballot cut across the decisions made at the special sector

conference in April not to hold an aggregate ballot this year, and that an indicative ballot would divert resources from the UCU's 'New Deal For FE' campaign. "We are not the NEU", one member of the FEC said!

We argued that giving members a chance to have their say would show to the government and employers that we are serious about winning our demands. Though we are in talks with the AoC for binding national pay negotiations, the urgent crisis in FE and the lack of serious offers from the Labour government demands a fighting response.

The motion for an indicative ballot was tied in the vote 9:9, and unfortunately fell by the union's status quo rule. UCU and the other further education unions will meet the AoC later in October where they are expected to make a formal recommendation on pay.

If this is not acceptable to our members, then we will continue to argue for our members to have the final say, via an indicative ballot, or a new Special Further Education Conference.

NEU members accept 5.5%

Teachers in the National Education Union (NEU) have voted to accept the government's pay award of 5.5%.

It is the fantastic strike action of teachers in 2023 - drawing thousands of young teachers into the union and onto the picket line for the first time, with hundreds coming forward to be reps - that forced the Labour government into making an award that is above current inflation.

It is understandable that members have voted to accept this offer on the recommendation of the union leadership. Nonetheless, Socialist Party members in the NEU argued to reject the 5.5% as, despite the claims of the leadership, it is not fully funded, which means we will see more cuts in schools. We believe more could have been won to begin to recoup lost real-terms pay.

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

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LESSONS FROM THE FIGHT AGAINST THE FAR RIGHT

Cable Street, 1930s

On 4 October 1936 thousands of workers across the East End of London rose up to prevent a march through their areas by the uniformed thugs of Oswald Mosley's fascists.

The lead-up to the events of 4 October was a series of meetings throughout east London, as the fascists attempted to whip up working class opposition to Jews as the scapegoats for the economic crisis, saying "Jewish interests" were responsible for the looming war.

To consolidate his position, and to intimidate the population, Mosley proposed a march through the East End on 4 October, in full uniform.

There was an immediate response to this; the Jewish People's Council launched a petition calling for the march to be banned which gained 100,000 signatures within two days. There was massive opposition to the march. Yet, the anger and readiness to act of the youth and the rank and file of the movement was not matched by the leadership.

The Communist Party (CP) was at its strongest in the East End – CP member Phil Piratin was elected MP for Mile End in 1945. In the street where I lived as a child, virtually everyone was in the party. However, the Young Communist League had organised a rally in Trafalgar Square on the same day as the march, in solidarity with the Spanish Republic. East London CP organiser Frank Lefitte put out a statement: "If Mosley decides to march, let him. Don't attempt disorder."

As for the Labour Party, George Lansbury (the hero of Poplar council, jailed in 1921 for resisting cuts in poor relief – see <http://bit.ly/2dlAyEa>) wrote: "What I want is to maintain peace and order, and I advise people who are opposed to fascism to keep away from the demonstration."

But opposition from below was growing. Joe Jacobs, secretary of Stepney CP, was demanding direct confrontation with the fascists. The Independent Labour Party, the CP rank and file, Jewish groups throughout the

area, were demanding direct action.

On the day, the East End erupted. Over 300,000 packed east London's streets – 50,000 congregated around Gardners Corner, the site of a department store between Aldgate and Whitechapel. It was there that a police horse was pushed through the plate glass window of the store and there that my aunt was kicked in the head by another police horse.

At Cable Street, too, barricades were put up to stop the fascists marching and the police defending them. A shower of rubbish and the contents of chamber pots – few houses had indoor sanitation and these were a common feature of workers' homes – were thrown on the police, while children threw marbles under the horses' hooves to send them crashing to the ground.

If the fascists had marched through, there would have been an utter rout of the uniformed thugs of the fascists. To prevent this, the Police Commissioner decided the march could not go ahead and the Blackshirts were forced to retreat in complete humiliation.

TONY AITMAN

● **'Cable Street: When workers united and fought the fascist threat at Cable Street' at socialistparty.org.uk**

“On the day, the East End erupted. Over 300,000 packed east London's streets

National Front, 1970s

On 13 August 1977, some 800 members of the fascist National Front (NF) provocatively tried to march through Lewisham, a working-class area with a big Black and Asian population.

This was supposed to be the NF's big national mobilisation but the fascists took such a beating that NF leader John Tyndall was reduced to complaining bitterly that they hadn't had enough protection – there were 4,000 cops on the streets, armed with riot shields!

When news had broken of the NF's plans, the influential local body, All-Lewisham Campaign against Racism and Fascism (ALCARAF), comprising Labour Party 'lefts', Communist Party and religious leaders, opposed confronting the fascists. They wanted a protest meeting at Ladywell Fields, hours before the NF demonstration and miles away from New Cross where the fascists planned to march.

The Labour Party Young Socialist (LPYS) representative on ALCARAF was a supporter of Militant, The Socialist's predecessor. He argued that the march should carry on to New Cross. Militant supporters got a resolution passed through Deptford Labour Party calling for socialists and trade unionists to directly counter the NF.

At a meeting before the ALCARAF demo, Militant supporter Nick Bradley, the LPYS rep on Labour's National Executive, stood out from the timid



A National Front march in Yorkshire during the 1970s
PHOTO: TAV DULAV/CC

moralistic claptrap by saying that only united action by the working class on the lines of Cable Street could defeat the fascists.

After ALCARAF's meeting on the morning of 13 August, many protesters ignored the organisers' advice and made their own way through the huge police cordon to New Cross.

A large contingent of LPYS members congregated around the Militant banner. It was the most disciplined section of the counter-demonstration, and showed how to organise effective action against the fascists.

For the first time in Britain the police used riot shields, as deployed for years on the streets of Northern

Ireland, in Lewisham.

The police first of all smuggled small groups of fascists through the back streets. Then came the charge as three ranks of police on horseback trampled down protesters as they cleared the way for the NF just at the point where the LPYS contingent had formed.

Even before a barrage of bottles, bricks and smoke bombs came down on them, many fascists looked scared at the size of the anti-Nazi response. They started covering beneath their coats and banners for protection. As they strayed onto the pavements, with the police in disarray, the anti-fascists gave them a hammering.

When a second contingent of fascists came through, they were forced to retreat in panic. Protesters burned the fascist flag. At that sight, around a quarter of the 800-odd fascists refused to march.

The fascists faced bottles and an enraged population in New Cross and were humiliated – many of the older members were shaking. Angry Black, Asian and white youths confronted the fascists in New Cross and later in the day, angry young Black youth fought with the toolled-up police who had been seen to support the NF.

ROGER SHRIVES

● **'Lewisham 1977: Where the fascists met their match' at socialistparty.org.uk**

The working class has a long history of mobilising to resist attempts by far-right forces to attack and intimidate our communities. The Socialist Party and its predecessor Militant has a long history of taking part in those struggles, including at times playing a leading role.

We reprint extracts from reports of and about previous struggles. Each contains insights and lessons about tactics, the role of the police, and how sections of Labour leaders and others can try to hold back attempts to block the far right marching.

In all these struggles, the fight to stop the far right is completely bound with the fight for a socialist alternative, and mobilising the working class to fight for decent jobs and homes, fully funded services, and all our communities need.

AFTER THE RIOTS: THE CASE FOR A TRADE UNION COMMUNITY DEFENCE STEWARDS ORGANISATION?

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Mural commemorating the Battle of Cable Street PHOTO: ALAN DENNEY/CC



Lois Austin speaking at a YRE lobby of the Home Office against the BNP headquarters in June 1993 PHOTO: TIM BOLLWELL



Walthamstow protest against the EDL in 2012 PHOTO: PAUL MATTISSON

British National Party, 1990s

The BNP moved into Welling in 1987. At the time, the Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS) was a sizeable campaigning organisation, and the Bexleyheath LPYS, which is what I was a member of, responded to the BNP moving in. We set up the 'Bexley and Greenwich Labour Movement Campaign against Racism and Fascism'. And we set out to get the HQ closed down.

We organised protests and demonstrations. There were four racist murders in the area. Rohit Duggal, who was a young Asian man; Rolan Adams, from Thamesmead, who was brutally killed by a racist gang; Orville Blair; and then Stephen Lawrence.

We were out demonstrating in response to every racist murder and attack. We held demonstrations in Welling and Eltham, where the racists outnumbered us, skinheads giving fascist salutes. That's what we were up against – the presence of the HQ was giving racists and fascists confidence.

We linked up with the Greenwich Commission for Racial Equality and the Greenwich Action Committee Against Racist Attacks. And we took

the campaign to oppose the BNP to all the local trade unions, which affiliated to the campaign.

It was after Stephen Lawrence was murdered in April 1993 that the tables really turned on the BNP. It was such a terrible attack, there was a mass response, an outpouring from the local community. The YRE called a demonstration on 8 May, and we had 8,000 young people turn up. It was a joint demonstration with the Black socialist campaign organisation, Panther.

The Anti-Nazi League (ANL), led by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), organised a demonstration a week later, with the local Tory mayor on the platform and less than 2,000 in attendance. We wouldn't have the Tory mayor on our platforms because they had done nothing about the BNP. We'd lobbied and petitioned to get the council to use its powers to close down the HQ and they'd done nothing but denigrate our campaign. So we said they were partly responsible for what had happened. Instead, we mobilised the local community, Black and white.

But despite Stephen Lawrence's murder, still the authorities didn't

“We mobilised the local community, Black and white

act and the BNP remained. So we organised a second big demonstration, in October 1993. The YRE proposed a joint demonstration of all the anti-racist organisations and the 16 October march was co-organised with the Indian Workers' Association and the ANL. It was a massive demo. We knew it was going to be huge, you could feel it, such was the anger everywhere, especially in the local community. There were 50,000 people on that march.

The police and the state refused us our right to march past the BNP HQ. And when we got to the point where we wanted to march up the road to the HQ, all avenues were blocked by the police. The police brutally attacked protesters. YRE had argued for democratic stewarding of the demonstration. This was opposed by the ANL leadership but, on the day, YRE stewards were able to play an important role in defending the demonstration from police brutality.

LOIS AUSTIN

● **'30 years since the YRE was launched: How racism and fascism was fought in the 1990s' at socialistparty.org.uk**

English Defence League, 2010s

“We argued the anti-racist demo would need to revitalise the labour movement tradition of saying 'no passaran' – preventing the EDL from marching in our community

On 1 September 2012, the far-right, racist and hooligan English Defence League's (EDL) attempt to march through the streets of Waltham Forest, north east London, was blocked by a counter-demonstration of over 3,000 people.

I was one of the demonstrators. We had spent months leafleting, petitioning and door-knocking, all with the aim of mobilising maximum numbers against the EDL.

It has always been clear that getting a big counter-protest would be vital. But the Socialist Party also raised the need to have a strategy on how we use the numbers to maximum effect.

Rather than simply 'celebrating our diversity' we argued the anti-racist demonstration would need to revitalise the labour movement tradition of saying 'no passaran' – preventing the EDL from marching in our community.

On the day, the counter-protest began with a rally, before marching

down to intersect with the EDL's planned route. A decision was made for the march to stay where it blocked the EDL's route, but police 'kettled' the counter-protesters. This was a clear attempt to ensure we would not 'meet' the EDL at any point.

The blockade definitely had a big effect. The EDL were humiliatingly stopped, unable to have their planned march.

But after around 30 minutes blockading, Socialist Party and Youth Fight for Jobs attempted to keep the march together to avoid individuals or small groups becoming vulnerable to attack by the police or EDL. We linked arms and led protesters downhill to the Town Hall.

The people surrounding us, mainly local Asian young people, were all clear in their determination to stop the EDL. They were keen for us to

move people towards the Town Hall. We discussed with Daymer, a Turkish-Kurdish youth organisation, and began putting the call out to move the march.

At first we moved the crowd forward towards the exit which led most directly to the Town Hall. The police had blockaded this exit with vans, so we began chants of 'we demand – let us through'. The police refused to allow us to pass, determined that they would protect the EDL. It soon became clear that the only possible way to get to the Town Hall would be via side roads.

A surge forward meant the thin police line that had been guarding this exit was dispersed and hundreds of protesters began following us up the street.

Marching through the back streets, the Socialist Party and Youth Fight for Jobs attempted to keep the march together to avoid individuals or small groups becoming vulnerable to attack by the police or EDL. We linked arms and led protesters downhill to the Town Hall.

On arrival we were greeted by a line of riot police protecting the EDL's leadership – around five thugs without any 'back up'. EDL leader Tommy Robinson was clearly shaken by the situation. The rest of their members were unable to join them and rally as planned. Their vulnerability, protected only by the police, was evident.

● **'How we stopped the racist EDL' at socialistparty.org.uk**

Building Socialist Students

● Liverpool Uni

The first meeting of Liverpool Socialist Students this year was magnificent. After handing thousands of leaflets out and hundreds of names were gathered during freshers week, 60 people turned up!

The discussion was excellent with contributions from Socialist Party and Socialist Students members. The discussion was on 'what is socialism?' - an introductory meeting for newcomers, of which there were around 45 in attendance.

We worked hard through the week, doing at least two campaign stalls every day, one day we did four! In total we sold dozens of copies of the Socialist, as well as the Socialism Today magazine, What We Stand For pamphlet and raised donations, despite the fact that nobody even had their student loan through yet.

Our next discussion is on 'The struggle for reproductive rights'. Loads of those who came to our first meeting said they would like to come again, and help us with campaigning.

Throughout this academic year, we will meet weekly. In Liverpool, both Socialist Students and the Socialist Party are growing at pace!

JOE WOOLFALL



● Uni of South Wales

During the University of South Wales freshers' week, we met some excellent socialists. Last year, keen international students showed the most interest. This year, the most socialist-minded students from here in the Valleys made a bee line for us.

We were kicked out of the main hall. The uni isn't happy with us after we campaigned last term for the launch of a Gaza encampment and held a mini pop-up gig for Gaza. But with the sun shining, and our colourful pop-display grabbing attention, we did well outside.

67 people signed up over two days. The most political have already

attended the local Socialist Party branch and Socialist Students will be holding weekly meetings too.

No one issue dominated discussions at Freshers. Quite a few students mentioned inequality in Britain and internationally. And no one likes Keir Starmer!

We'll be addressing the redundancies the uni has announced – and approaching the uni workers' trade union UCU. The Socialist Party branch already has good links with the activists after attending all their picket lines in 2022-23.

The uni has a massive building project right in the middle of campus. Spending loads of money while cutting staff sets the scene for a fightback!

MARIAM KAMISH

● Sussex Uni

At the University of Sussex, many students spoke to us about the cost-of-living crisis, citing higher prices for rent, food and energy, with many complaining that the maintenance loans provided to students are nowhere near enough to cover this.

Others were outraged at the proposals to raise tuition fees again, with huge anger directed towards the new Labour government for even considering this.

A number of international students, who are already faced with much higher fees than domestic students, explained to us the extra burden this can create.

There was big support for our calls for fully funded free education and for emergency intervention by universities and the government to provide extra financial assistance to students.

Fightback

The overall feeling was one of relief that the Tories are gone, but an understanding that the only way we will get anything from Starmer's new government is if we are willing to fight for it. Socialist Students at Sussex is now meeting regularly and discussing plans for organising a campaign around some of these pressing issues.

On the day of the freshers' fair, 21 different students bought a copy of the Socialist and even more signed up to get involved, showing the growing appetite for ideas that can provide an alternative to the rotten system of capitalism that expects students and workers to pay for its crisis.

CALLUM JOYCE

● Nottingham Uni

Nine new students came to our first meeting to discuss 'what is socialism?', Socialist Students as a national organisation, the role of the trade union movement, and possible campaign ideas on campus. Our 'meet and greet' the day before was promising too, with students coming to both.

RAFI KAZI



● York student solidarity with Nigeria protesters

It was a great start to the semester with many students standing in solidarity with the protests in Nigeria. Despite the Monday rain and the lingering effects of freshers flu, lots of people signed our petition calling for the release of all protesters unjustly held in Nigeria, and for charges to be dropped.

Thank you to the people of York for supporting Socialist Students with your donations, turnout and encouragement!

LOUIE NARDINI



Vote Maggie Fricker in Southampton Shirley by-election

MAGGIE FRICKER
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY AND TUSC
CANDIDATE SHIRLEY BY-ELECTION

I'm a health worker and community activist standing for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition in the Shirley ward by-election in Southampton on 10 October.

Someone asked me why I was standing. Well, this is where I live, it's home. It has a really strong sense of community and people look out for each other. This was ably demonstrated when an old fella collapsed on the High Street on market day. So many people stopped and offered help. I phoned for an ambulance, a retired paramedic took his pulse and shop workers brought out water and a chair for his wife.

Our little precinct is where people stop and chat and where we have a campaign stall on market days. Passers-by stop to talk about our posters, the state of the health service, the winter fuel allowance and the world at large. No one is impressed with the new Labour government, and most are angry and feel let down.

Later, as we canvass the flats behind the shops, people tell it as it is - they are worried and frightened for the future and see politicians as all the same. I explain that I'm not a politician looking for a cushy job, but a campaigner and fighter for something better, and that if elected I'll stand up in the council chamber against every cutback, job lost, and service destroyed.

People are not sure, they like the idea of a people's budget to identify what's needed in the area to reopen the youth centre, Sure Start and the minor injuries walk-in centre. They nod when you say we must come together to fight for this, but most are tired and don't see a way out. The

We need someone to stand up in the council chamber against every cutback, job lost, and service destroyed

need for a new mass workers' party is evident at every doorstep. Word has got around that the council has spent £9 million on a consultancy firm to tell it how it can make more cutbacks in our city. "They are leaving us stranded", one old lady says. Others discuss with us what we could have spent that money on - free school meals for every child in the city, support pensioners hit by the winter fuel allowance cut and start to build decent well-maintained council housing again.

If we used the millions of reserves Southampton has, and its borrowing powers, we could make a people's budget a reality. This could raise people's sights to join in struggle to demand the resources from central government we need.

COMMUNITY ORGANISATION: THE ROUTE TO A NEW PARTY?

Come and discuss at
SOCIALISM 2024
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Fund our services, not their wars

Vote Dave Nellist in Coventry St Michael's by-election

Socialist Party National Committee member and Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition national chairperson Dave Nellist will run in a by-election in St Michael's ward, Coventry, on 10 October.

When Dave was a socialist MP, he refused to take an MP's huge salary. Instead, he took the same wage as a local skilled factory worker - living on a worker's wage. This sharply contrasts with today's Labour leaders, who accept tens of thousands of pounds of clothes and holidays from wealthy donors.

Labour's latest cuts are provoking an angry response on the doorsteps. It's common to hear people complain that we are paying more and more for less and less.

Lights are now switched off in Coventry at night, making streets less safe - yet the council is locked into a 25-year, £250 million private finance scheme, still paying for switched-off lights.

Gas and electricity prices have increased again, yet most pensioners' winter fuel allowances have been scrapped. Benefit caps remain, and Keir Starmer suspended the local Labour MP because she opposed them.

No major party in Britain defends working people against austerity and fights for a socialist foreign policy based on international working-class solidarity

And now, as part of £20 million in cuts this year, Labour in Coventry, supported by the two Green councillors, will close four local libraries and replace them with smaller units with fewer books, computers, and staff. Keir Starmer's son used a posh apartment in Covent Garden, allegedly worth £18 million, to revise for his GCSEs, while working-class youth in Coventry will be squeezed in like battery hens to do their studying.

Dave Nellist says: "No major party in Britain defends working people against austerity and fights for a

socialist foreign policy based on international working-class solidarity. We must build a new party that will. However, to have a party base, that new party needs to be rooted in the organisations and communities of the working class."

Dave promises that if re-elected as a city councillor he would use the platform to campaign to end Israel's war on Palestine and Lebanon and to end the council's pension scheme being invested in war. "I would fight to end all arms sales to Israel and help build links between the ordinary people of Palestine, Lebanon and Israel", he says.

Dave has previously represented the same ward as a Labour MP and Socialist Party city councillor for 24 years. He is the most principled and experienced challenger to Labour in this ward.

If you can help our campaign or want to see our election leaflets, go to linktr.ee/Dave4StMichaels

COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY



We've done it!

£30,414 fighting fund raised

BEA GARDNER
SOCIALIST PARTY FINANCE DEPARTMENT

Just days after the Tories were booted out at the general election, the Socialist Party set itself the bold task of raising £25,000 to fund our campaigning activities this busy autumn – and we've done it! An incredible £30,414 has been donated, 122% of our target. This feat is even more impressive because with just two weeks to go we still had over £6,000 to raise.

Our members responded brilliantly by ramping up activities to make sure we hit our target. For example, we've had reports of branches organising extra campaign stalls and paper sales, including for 'Super Saturday' on 21 September where we pushed for longer stalls, with more members participating. The people we met were glad to see our party was out campaigning against the appalling cut to Winter Fuel Payments and wanted to back us, with hundreds signing our petition.

We've also organised events, including socials such as a BBQ in Tower Hamlets raising £145, and a day school in the East Midlands



raising over £200. Members have fundraised through individual initiatives, for example, donating proceeds from sales of books, clothes and other personal items.

All of these efforts mean the party has the funds necessary to intervene in what is already set to be a very busy autumn. Escalation of war in the Middle East means we could see a new wave of demonstrations here in Britain, in which we are preparing to participate, putting forward the socialist solution to the misery and brutality of war.

We have already met hundreds of university students during freshers' events and are preparing to build and lead student struggles against proposals for a rise in tuition fees. We are organising People's Budget campaigns, bringing together trade unions and community campaigners to oppose further council cuts as well as any attacks against the working class proposed in Labour's budget looming on 30 October. All of this is part of building the socialist opposition to Starmer's government. Join us in our fight!

Leeds Little Owls nurseries campaign fights privatisation

IAIN DALTON
SAVE LITTLE OWLS NURSERIES STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBER AND SOCIALIST PARTY

Despite Leeds City Council closing three council-run Little Owls nurseries at the end of summer parents, carers and their supporters are fighting on to prevent the privatisation of up to 12 more across the city.

Around 25 adults and children marched through Harehills on 28 September, from the threatened Shepherd's Lane nursery to the local park. Parents were joined by local trade unionists, including Unison members representing nursery workers.

We received solidarity messages from other nursery campaigners in Hackney and Hillingdon, and from National Education Union executive member Sheila Caffrey.

None of our local elected councillors or MP attended the rally, disappointing given the previous support newly elected Green councillor Mothin Ali had given the campaign.

But we did receive support from many local residents we passed along the way. ITV regional news featured the march as the top story that evening, with myself and other parents interviewed.

The council is due to report on the expressions of interest from other providers in the near future, and has also held consultation sessions with parents and carers on a more flexible basis for attendance than previously, a result of the pressure from the campaign.

During this process, representatives of the campaign were invited to meet with senior council officers responsible for children's services, and



we put forward the following minimum standards parents had agreed that would need to be maintained to protect the quality of childcare provided by Little Owls nurseries:

- Nurseries are not run for profit
- No involvement of private equity firms
- Maintenance of quality standards of childcare service - including for special education needs and disabled children and their parents
- Significant and meaningful ways for parents to feed into the service
- Year-round service with before - and after - nursery/school care, from three months to five years
- Staff terms and conditions are not diminished in either the short or long term
- Fees to remain affordable in line with the median rate for Leeds

- No additional costs on top of funded hours

But the campaign has continued to also demand that the proposals are withdrawn and that instead the council joins with us to demand the funding necessary to continue to provide high-quality childcare in the city.

This is especially the case given the Labour government's announcement of £15 million to create 300 new state-run nurseries in schools - we are calling for such funding to be used to keep the state-run nurseries in Leeds that already exist open, rather than trying to start again from scratch. Leeds City Council should back us up, withdraw the proposals and bill the government for the money needed to Save Little Owls nurseries!

‘Warehouse of Horror’ Solihull Farmfoods workers strike

NICK HART
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Workers at the Farmfoods warehouse in Solihull have taken two days of strike action for the first time, against low pay, unsafe working practices, and management’s refusal to recognise the union.

GMB members working as reach truck operators are paid minimum wage, while pickers get barely 12p more than that! This compares to £16 an hour at the company’s Bristol warehouse.

As the chain has rapidly expanded, more and more work has piled onto the site in Solihull.

Workers told some shocking

stories about working conditions there, including dead rats and mould surrounding stock left on the floor during flooding; workers left unattended after strokes and head injuries; timesheets being manipulated to allow 80-hour working weeks; trucks and forklifts sent into the public road without insurance or number plates; and management favouritism with racist bias shown.

The workers know they are the ones who keep the business running, and are determined to get what’s owed to them.

As one told Socialist Party members as soon as we arrived at the picket line: “We made this a billion-pound company”!



DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

- Send your news, views and criticism, in not more than 150 words, to editors@socialistparty.org.uk
- We reserve the right to shorten and edit letters.

For legal reasons, we need your full name, address and phone number - but confidentiality will be respected if requested

THE SOCIALIST INBOX



● Unpopular with who?

Sir Keir Starmer talked again about ‘unpopular’ policies at Labour conference. Wouldn’t it be great if he really was prepared to implement ‘unpopular’ policies? Like an immediate tax on wealth? That would be unpopular ... with the wealthy.

Nationalisation of the water companies and energy companies? Unpopular ... with the shareholders

currently getting money for nothing, that is. Nationalisation of all properties with dangerous cladding? Very unpopular...with landlords refusing to take responsibility. As well as repealing the Minimum Service Levels Act, how about repealing the rest of the Tory anti-union laws? Unpopular?

In a class-divided society where the interests of the working class and owning class are in direct conflict, it’s always good to ask, unpopular with who?

UNITE THE UNION MEMBER

● Hypocritical, devious Labour

After signing the petition against the Labour Party’s disgraceful and devious decision to stop the Winter Fuel Allowance for millions of pensioners, I wanted to let you know about the actions I have taken over the last month or so.

I have informed my local Labour MP Ruth Jones that, after listening to the excuses trying to defend this outrageous and wicked decision, I will never again vote for Labour.

I first voted for Labour in 1979, and have been a member of the party alongside my father for a number of years, attending meetings, plus actually helping Neil and Glenys Kinnock in his bid to win the 1992 election. I am absolutely gob-smacked at the arrogance and contempt which Keir Starmer, Rachel Reeves and Liz Kendall seem to be showing for the people who voted for the party in July.

I am awaiting Ruth getting back to me. I have also written to Liz Kendall about the way she and the party seem to be following the Tories and vilifying anyone who happens to be claiming benefits, threatening vulnerable and disabled people that they may well have their benefits reduced or in fact ceased, as they try to force already struggling people to return to work when they are in no fit state.

My reasons are personal. I have been forced to give up work after being diagnosed with diverticulitis. I am a very fit and healthy 64 year old in most other aspects. I am sick to death of first the Conservative Party and now this lying Labour Party patronising me and many others by insisting we are fit to work.

As I explained in my letter, I used to work in the Job Centre. I have worked all my life. My condition has forced me to basically retire at 61 and struggle on benefits, which has been very difficult.

Thankfully I am someone who can stick up for myself and challenge authority in the right manner, but others cannot. Many of these

people who are disabled or on long-term sick, with all kinds of conditions, will end up sinking into a more serious mental health condition.

Ruth Jones mentioned me in the House of Commons a few years back as I wrote seven letters to Boris Johnson demanding an apology. She is now back as my MP because of boundary changes and I am hopeful that she will soon take up the matter with Liz Kendall’s office; she already knows I have turned my back on Keir Starmer and Labour.

Quite how my father would have felt about this decision to stop the winter fuel allowance is beyond me. He is probably turning in his grave.

We were members of the Labour Party because it was the political party which looked after the working class, that helped others who were not so fortunate. It was a party that stood up for the weak and helpless, stood up for its fellow man, woman and child, and always kept an eye on its elderly neighbours and people who could not have a voice.

Well it has certainly changed now.

It has lost its soul and it appears that they are all prepared to accept the gifts and hospitality, clothes, holidays etc. They are just as bad as the Conservative MPs who took the public for fools and treated us with contempt. If Keir Starmer has to go into a hospitality box at Arsenal matches, he could do what others have to do and bloody pay for it!

Listening to the speeches at the party conference left me wondering whether Starmer, Reeves, Kendall, Rayner and many others have the same type of principles as the clowns who the country voted out in July? Mark my words, the country wasn’t impressed with Starmer. We were all just fed up of the lies and hypocrisy from the Conservative government. Well, it appears Labour are just as hypocritical and devious as them!

WILL FOLEY
RISCA, SOUTH WALES



Sri Lanka: Anura Kumara - president of crisis

UNITED SOCIALIST PARTY (CWI SRI LANKA)

In the presidential election held on 21 September 2024, Anura Kumara Disnayake won the presidency by receiving 5,740,179 votes, or 42.3%. He will go down in history as the only president who failed to secure 50% of the valid votes cast in the presidential elections since 1982. In this presidential election, Anura Kumara was able to win 14 of the country’s 22 districts, while Sajith Premadasa of the United National Party won eight.

Anura Kumara’s victory is one outcome of the struggle that took place in 2022, which ousted then President Gotabaya with the slogan ‘Gota Go Home’. This struggle popularised the idea of sweeping away the corrupt capitalist families that had plunged Sri Lanka into the most serious crisis in its history. The struggle not only got rid of the president but also sent all 225 Members of Parliament home.

The people’s struggle was an expression of the aspirations of the public against the destruction caused by neoliberalism. However, there are serious contradictions between the policies of Anura Kumara’s National People’s Power (NPP) and the policies demanded by the people’s struggle. The aspirations of that struggle will not bear fruit under the government of the National People’s Power. Nevertheless, another important factor highlighted by this election result is that the people are now rejecting the old traditional capitalist politics.

The Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP, the main force behind the NPP) has repeatedly asserted in the past that it stands for socialist policies. It made promise after promise, surpassing the commitments of other capitalist candidates. But very soon, the people will come to understand that the government formed by Anura is not capable of fulfilling the promises made to the people. It raises serious questions about whether Anura’s government will be able to at least punish the politicians who

committed corruption and theft. Will they recover the stolen money? While Anura may have a short honeymoon period of a few months, he will ultimately fail to move beyond capitalist measures to implement even basic socioeconomic reforms that the country demands.

It is no secret that Anura Kumara has made agreements with imperialist forces to continue the neoliberal agenda, including deals with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. During negotiations with the main capitalist business community during the elections, he openly promised that the IMF programme would continue. In Anura Kumara’s own words, he stated that he is ready to “walk the rest of the ropeway that [former president] Ranil Wickramasinghe started with the IMF”. Ranil announced after his defeat that he would hand over the responsibilities to the new president, to cross the rest of the bridge. Anura Kumara is going to rule the country to serve the needs of the IMF, against the wishes of the people who put him in power.

Anura Kumara has come to power by presenting a huge series of promises to the people, and when he fails to fulfil those promises, the mass anger of the people will erupt in a significant way against his rule. In such an environment, the oppressed people, including the working class, are bound to engage in class struggle to win their demands. It is the responsibility of the trade union movement and the genuine left to provide leadership.

The United Socialist Party (USP) presented a series of clear solutions to the socioeconomic and political crisis facing the country in the last presidential election. The USP advanced demands such as non-repayment of debt, full nationalisation of key sectors such as banks and insurance under democratic workers’ control, stopping the process of selling local resources to neoliberal capitalists, and resolving the



Anura Kumara Disnayake
PHOTO: MEVINDU MOONASIGHA/CC

national question based on the right to self-determination. Additionally, employers’ provident funds should be controlled by trade unions and workers. A series of proposals were made, including the immediate abolishment of the executive presidency and the establishment of a workers’ government to implement a socialist plan.

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to the voters who chose us. We received 8,954 votes, approving the programme presented by the United Socialist Party. It should be specially mentioned that we extend our warm greetings for the good response received from the people of the north, where we received 1,221

votes, and the response from the people of the east is equally encouraging, with 710 votes. We also request that you join hands with us to face the deep crisis that is about to emerge and build a serious fightback for the forces of socialism.

● Read more at socialistworld.net: ‘Presidential elections in Sri Lanka - AKD, a hollow win’ and ‘AKD wins 2024 presidential election, the turning point of Sri Lanka?’

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

Obituary: Joe Simpson POA deputy general secretary

The Socialist Party is shocked and saddened by Joe Simpson’s passing. We send our deepest condolences to Joe’s partner Emma and all his family. We also stand in solidarity with his union, the Prison Officers’ Association (POA), and its general secretary Steve Gillan.

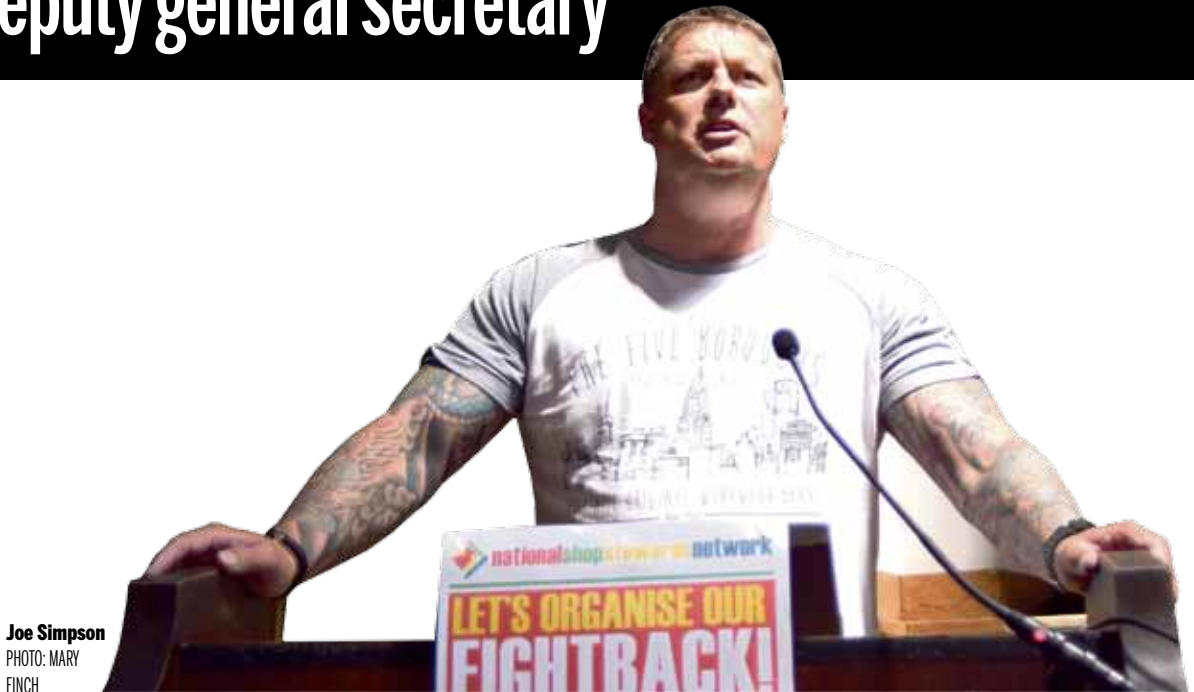
Joe was a fighting socialist trade unionist, who came to the Socialist Party because of New Labour’s role in restoring the Tory ban on prison officers’ right to strike and its refusal to end prison privatisation. In this, he was following the tradition of former POA general secretary Brian Caton, who also had joined the Socialist Party. Both spoke at our Socialism rallies.

Joe was an implacable opponent of the policies of Blair, Brown and now Starmer – supporting Corbyn’s

Labour leadership as well as sitting on the national steering committee of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

Joe was a proud member of the POA leadership over this whole period, when the union has fought relentlessly against prison cuts, never afraid to defy the outrageous attacks on their trade union rights. Their motion calling for the 2012 Trades Union Congress to consider a general strike was passed after a huge lobby by the National Shop Stewards Network, which the POA is affiliated to. Joe, like Brian and Steve, spoke at NSSN conferences and rallies, arguing for mass action to take on the Tories and for the unions to fight for socialist policies.

We salute a friend and comrade – rest in power brother.



Joe Simpson
PHOTO: MARY FINCH



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

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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.

US presidential election Why the working class should vote for Jill Stein and Cornel West

INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST GROUP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Working-class people in the US need an alternative to the two pro-corporate political parties. We have to build opposition to the Biden-Harris and Trump administrations' support for the war in Gaza, the cost-of-living-crisis, and attacks on workers' and immigrants' rights. Despite claiming to be against the attacks on LGBTQ+ people and women by the Supreme Court and Trump administration, the Democratic Party has failed to deliver national protections for either group.

Neither the Republicans nor the Democrats plan to reverse the massive, ever-increasing military budget or the invasion, occupation, and continued genocide in Gaza. Furthermore, the Republican and Democratic parties continue to pass cuts to social services that many workers rely on and fail to fight for a federal minimum wage increase, universal healthcare, debt forgiveness, or any real solutions to the housing crisis. Historic numbers of voters (63%)

think that the Republican and Democratic parties do 'such a poor job' representing the American people that 'a third major party is needed.' (Gallup, Oct 2023)

The Independent Socialist Group believes it is necessary for working people to break free from the corporate duopoly. Uniting behind the strongest independent left candidate with a programme we can support, and the greatest potential visibility and likelihood for gathering a significant number of votes is a necessary first step. A strong independent left election result can be used as a launching pad to win immediate demands raised in the campaign platform, and for efforts to organise a workers' party.

Jill Stein of the Green Party and Cornel West as an independent are running for president. They put forward strong platforms including opposing the invasion of Gaza, and ending military aid to Israel. Both campaigns call for a wide range of progressive demands. There are many similarities in their platforms which include standing for a higher federal minimum wage, nationalised



Jill Stein PHOTO: GREENGRASS/CC

healthcare, free childcare, national jobs programmes, and serious cuts in military spending. Stein and West have been active in protest movements for decades - Stein most notably for environmental justice and West for civil rights and racial justice.

The ballot access of the Green Party, built up over decades, is one of the main reasons that various left candidates have used its ballot line, including former Black Panthers. While it is a significant missed opportunity that West did not run on the Green Party ballot, we urge these two campaigns to find ways to practice tactical unity now and in the post-election period, including joint events and sharing of resources and information. A unified effort could help to bring together progressive and left activists and voters.

After a series of internal discussions and a formal vote, Independent Socialist Group is calling for critical support for the Jill Stein Green Party campaign and the Cornel West independent campaign for president.

Our critical support includes urging all working people to vote for the Stein and West campaigns. We call for a vote for Stein where her campaign is on the ballot. In states where the Stein campaign isn't on the ballot but West's is, we call for a vote for West. In states where neither is on the ballot, we call for a write-in for the Stein campaign.

Build a mass workers' party

Crucially, we urge both campaigns, their supporters, and their voters to continue organising after election day with union activists, progressives, and left forces to build a movement for a mass left workers' party in the US. We call for other left and workers' organisations to take similar steps to support and get involved in these campaigns.

In calling for a vote for Stein, where both Stein and West are on the same state ballot, we recognise that the West campaign's biggest political weakness is that it is not committed to the construction of any independent political party at all. Our critical support for West's campaign is based on positive programme demands from his campaign, his role as a left activist in anti-racist and other struggles, and his self-identification as a socialist. It is excellent that West has broken from the Democratic Party to run independently. West has a history of supporting the Democratic Party, such as during Obama's 2008 and 2012 runs, he also supported Bernie Sanders' campaigns in 2016 and 2020. We hope that West has made a permanent break from the confines of supporting the Democrats. But this does leave in question whether he will be susceptible to lesser evil pressures and could possibly end his campaign prior to election day.

In contrast, Stein and the Green Party have a strong record in standing completely independent of the Democratic Party. The Green Party is an organised party with active members in state and local party groups which has a small but consistent presence in public political activity outside of electoral campaigns. For nationwide elections in recent decades, the Green Party has been on the ballot for far more voters than any other party or independent candidate to the left of the two corporate parties.

We also need to qualify our support as critical because neither

campaign stands for organising a workers' party. For the Green Party campaign or West's campaign, that would mean explicitly stating they are in the process of supporting and helping to build a mass workers' party that would go beyond the limitations of the Green Party and West's individual efforts, both in terms of programme, organisation, and also activity beyond election day. Additionally, neither campaign has a strong connection to organised labour, which has the resources and membership to make any campaign much more of a serious challenge to the corporate duopoly. Neither campaign promotes a clear socialist programme or the need for socialism, although the Stein platform does mention "ecosocialism".

Beyond the election

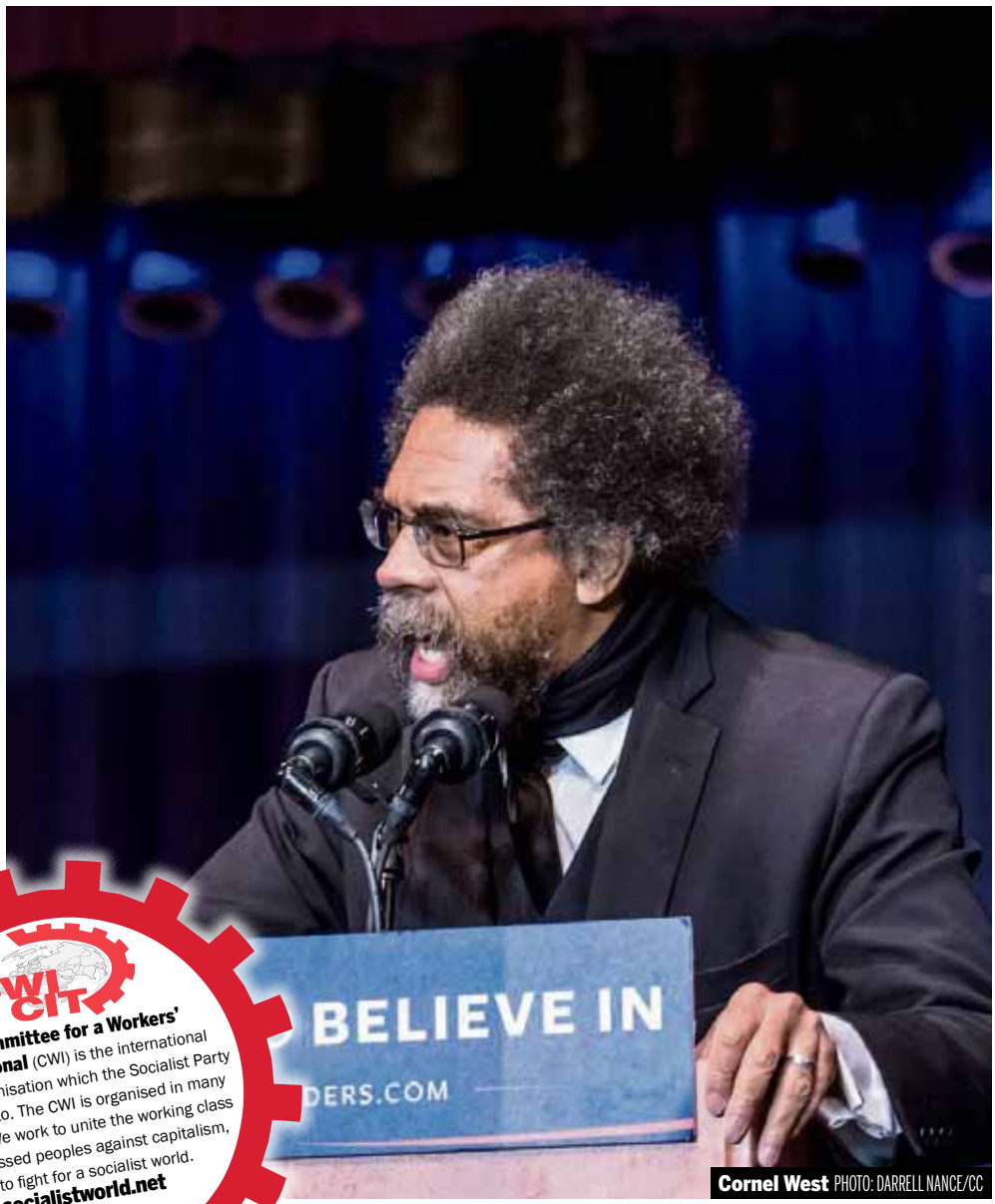
For most working-class people, elections and the question of 'who should I vote for?' is the entry point for political action. This is a necessary starting point, and requires an answer as to how to best use your vote. That answer should also raise the bigger question: "How can we organise, during the elections and afterwards, to build political power independent of the rich and corporations?"

The Democratic Party often taps into the understandable fear of - and hate for - the far right among large sections of the working class to convince them to 'vote blue no matter who.' However, Biden-Harris's 2020 presidential win has not eradicated Trump and Trumpism as the Democrats promised. Instead, it arguably increased the Trump campaign's popularity.

We need to show an alternative by voting for independent left or progressive candidates or parties. While lesser-evilism is frequently thought of as a phenomenon of voting Democrat in opposition to Republicans, it also works the other way. The failure of Biden and the Democrats to meet the expectations of the working class can result in a backlash where Trump and the Republican Party are seen as the only alternative to four more years of the Democratic Party. The relentless corporate propaganda reinforcing the 'two-party system' inevitably results in a lot of back and forth 'lesser evil' voting for two parties that both represent the capitalist class.

The real conditions that working-class people experience won't be fundamentally different under a Democratic or Republican administration unless there is mass struggle. An election of Harris as a continuation of the Biden administration will present opportunities for the far right to grow as an 'alternative' to liberal capitalism. A Trump re-election will likely embolden the far right to organise openly and test its strength. The only counter to the threat of the far right is to build the left, including a visible show of support for a left programme through a strong vote result and continued organising of supporters of left electoral campaigns even after election day.

In some races, a good enough vote can qualify a progressive or left party for future ballot access, public funding, or other tangible benefits for future campaigns that could become



Cornel West PHOTO: DARRELL NANCE/CC

part of a workers' party effort. Vote results can be used as measure of support. Demands are popular and that working people are looking for a political alternative. While the capitalist parties are normally elected by a minority of eligible voters, if there is not a decent result for any visible independent left political alternatives the capitalists are able to claim an unchallenged 'victory' and a mandate for corporate politics-as-usual.

A better-than-expected vote for a left candidate becomes a problem for the ruling class to try to explain and lends credence to the ideas raised by that campaign. If an independent left or progressive campaign becomes known for a few key demands and draws a significant vote, it can put pressure on the capitalist class and its parties to make concessions. For example, the 'New Democratic Party' is a left party in Canada that campaigned for and won universal healthcare in 1964, despite never being the majority party. In the case of the 2024 elections, there is an opportunity to campaign for independent left, anti-war candidates to demonstrate our opposition to the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

The lack of a mass workers' party in the US is also a major factor in the lower rate of union membership and the much more limited scope of social benefits and workers' rights in comparison to other wealthy countries. A workers' party would be a huge step forward in terms of the level of organisation of the working class. Each election cycle presents the potential for unions to

enormously increase workers' power by helping to organise a political party for working people. The labour movement has the money and membership to make the foundation of a mass independent workers' party an immediate reality.

The labour movement's one-sided relationship with the Democratic Party has happened alongside a historic decline in union density over the last 60 years. Unions deliver money, volunteers, and legitimacy to Democrats in exchange for promises of pro-labour legislation. The Democrats never deliver on their promises due to their greater loyalty to the corporations. When labour does hedge its bets with occasional support for the Republicans, the capitalist class still wins.

The Independent Socialist Group calls on all working-class people, left groups, and unions to support and campaign for the Stein and West campaigns, as well as state and local independent left campaigns, as a step towards launching a real effort to build a workers' party.

- See also 'USA: Who is Kamala Harris and what does she stand for?' at socialistparty.org.uk

AFTER THE US ELECTIONS: PROSPECTS FOR CLASS STRUGGLE

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MARIAM KAMISH

SECRETARY CAERPHILLY TRADES COUNCIL (PERSONAL CAPACITY) AND SOCIALIST PARTY

“The Manic Street Preachers come from Blackwood”, a woman beside me was telling a reporter. “We might not even have the Manics if not for Blackwood Miners Institute.”

Behind us, three burly teenagers led the chanting: “Save our ‘Stute! Save our ‘Stute!”

Over five hundred people marched in Caerphilly against the latest round of cuts. They were a confident crowd. For years, these same marchers had kept the council axe off our leisure centre - the issue is still in the courts.

All across England and Wales, councils have passed on millions of pounds of cuts - vital services and venues have been decimated.

Labour in power in Caerphilly have nothing to offer us but defeat. Close it. Sell it. If it's worth anything, privatise it.

Yet this is a council with £184 million in reserves it could dip into. There's no need to make these cuts. Councillors can use reserves and borrowing powers, link up with other anti-cuts councils and build a mass working-class movement to get back the money we need.

We tell councillors, if they fight, they'll be local heroes. They won't be fighting alone - they'll have the whole area behind them.

When the Tories were in power, councillors blamed Westminster. Post-election, Labour, nationally and locally, has no place to hide.

Everyone we meet on the streets is furious that Starmer is cutting winter fuel payments. They're disgusted by MPs taking gifts from rich supporters.

But Starmer's New Labour sees no problem with cosyng up to big business. Or watering down plans to crack down on 'non-doms' - people who live in Britain, but register a permanent home abroad to avoid paying taxes.

It's essential unions lead a fightback. In Caerphilly, the trade union Unison branch has organised a march, lobbies of the council and public meetings against the planned cuts and closures. Now, councillors have been begun to bend under the pressure. They've agreed not to end Meals on Wheels - a massive victory - though they still want to reduce subsidies, meaning users would pay more. We need to fight this. And the fight is still on to stop the other proposed cuts and save the 'Stute.

Imagine the impact a national trade union-led campaign against the cuts would have. And how much more powerful such a movement would be if the unions backed a mass party that would fight for the working class, not attack their living standards like Starmer's Labour is trying to.

We say

- **Build a mass campaign to defend our local venues, services and jobs**
- **Councils should use reserves and borrowing powers as temporary measures. And band together with other councils to demand adequate funding**
- **Councillors should fight for those who elected you or stand aside for genuine socialists!**
- **End austerity - take the wealth off the 1%**