

STOP WINTER FUEL CUTS

Nationalise energy and make the super-rich pay

CLARE WILKINS

EAST MIDLANDS NATIONAL PENSIONERS CONVENTION SECRETARY (PERSONAL CAPACITY) AND NOTTINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

The new Labour government continues to face huge anger at its refusal to lift the two-child benefit cap, the winter fuel payment cut, the gifts for access row, and for continuing support for war in the Middle East.

Speakers at the winter fuel payment campaign rally before the National Pensioners

Convention's (NPC) lobby of parliament on 7 October said that the cut is the first of many and called on the government to tax the super-rich rather than attack poor pensioners.

Pressure to reverse the cut continues to grow. Unite and five other trade unions are officially involved in the campaign as well as members of other unions and organisations. Labour Party conference carried a Unite motion to reverse the cut, but Starmer is not bound by this.

The budget on 30 October is a key date. It will determine spending on services and continued underfunding of services – for example to local councils providing vital services for disabled people, young people and others. We need to keep the pressure on. The government has no response other than ‘there is no alternative’ to ‘tough choices’.

Tough choices for pensioners between heating, eating, paying for care and other

costs and the stress and anxiety this causes.

Day centres, community centres, libraries, meals on wheels and other services pensioners need to keep warm, eat and socialise have been decimated by council cuts.

The knock-on effects of ill health and reduced or cancelled care packages will place a huge extra burden on a beleaguered, underfunded NHS.

Living in poverty

Two million pensioners already live in poverty and the number is rising. The state pension is the lowest in Europe and only two million get the full amount. In 2017, Labour said there would be 4,000 more excess deaths if the Tory government cut the winter fuel payment.

Meanwhile MPs get an allowance of £3,400 for energy costs on their second homes as well as huge expenses and £93,762 salaries.

The winter fuel payment costs the government £2 billion a year. The big energy companies are raking in profits something like £1 billion a week, and hiking our bills with the government's permission.

We need to renationalise the energy industry, taking the wealth and control out of the hands of the fat-cat bosses, so that investment can be planned democratically to meet need, not for profit, and so bills can be lowered. We need to fight for socialist change. If you want to be part of that fight, join the Socialist Party.

The Socialist Party says:

- Reverse the winter fuel payment cut
- Decent pensions for all
- Stop energy price hikes - nationalise the energy industry
- We need a new mass workers' party that will make the super-rich pay and fight for socialist change

100 DAYS IN OFFICE AND WORKERS' RIGHTS - BUILD THE SOCIALIST OPPOSITION TO LABOUR >>> p6-7



BUILD THE SOCIALIST OPPOSITION TO STARMER'S WAR AND AUSTERITY AGENDA

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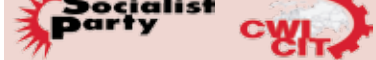
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Editorial staff Scott Jones, Ian Pattison, Paula Mitchell, Mark Best
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“The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.”
Karl Marx

Birmingham’s child poverty emergency a symptom of council cuts

A recent report has exposed child poverty in Birmingham – the impact of over a decade of Tory austerity. In all cases, Labour councils have passed on the cuts, with councillors refusing to stand up and set budgets defending the services people desperately need. Then and today, needs budgets linked to building community campaigns to demand the funding back from central government is vital. Socialist Party members stand as anti-cuts candidates in local elections and organise, with local trade unions and community organisations, people’s budget conferences to place demands on councils for the services we need.

Kevin Greenway, Birmingham Socialist Party, looks at the findings and conclusions of the report, and how we can fight back against child poverty in Birmingham and across the country.

With local and regional journalists facing their own cuts and constraints, over many years, resulting in limitations to investigative journalism, the Birmingham Live report “A Child Poverty Emergency”, released on 20 September, is a very welcome body of work.

The damning report by journalist Jane Haynes “exposes the scandalous impact of social inequality and poverty on our cherished children.” It gives socialists, trade union and community activists a basis in facts to pick up the struggle to end cuts and austerity which blights the lives of the citizens of Birmingham and beyond.

Where there is political will there is a way. Sadly, that will does not exist in the Labour-controlled council, which is now putting all 14 of the city’s youth centres up for sale.

The report starkly details the huge rise in child poverty, up from 27% in 2015 to 46% today. From 68,745 to 104,433 children live in poverty – two-thirds from working families.

Local wages badly lag behind the cost of living, including food and rent, despite the council declaring Birmingham a ‘Living Wage’ city. Where previously Brum had a reputation for its tens of thousands of well-paid manufacturing jobs, their replacement with retail, hospitality and distribution work has led to low pay becoming the norm.

Labour MPs and councillors have been virtually silent on the issue of child poverty. The report puts forward changes it believes could begin to reverse it:

- End the two-child benefit cap – 17,000 Birmingham children are affected by this
- Provide free school meals to every child in poverty – 38.4% of pupils receive free school meals despite over 40% living in poverty
- Protect children and youth services
- Create a permanent, multi-year household support fund and give more discretionary housing grants
- Set up child health and wellbeing hubs in our most deprived areas, impacted by a history of racism and neglect
- Provide free public transport for young people

These actions provide a starting point but would need increased and enduring funding.

The crisis in housing adds to child poverty and poverty for all. There has been an 831% increase in families living in temporary accommodation since 2009. Austerity for the many, while often unscrupulous landlords have grossly enriched themselves.

Infant mortality

The report echoes the seminal 19th century work of Friedrich Engels,



“The Conditions of the Working Class in England”, when it states that children living in the 10% most deprived parts of England are more than twice as likely to die in infancy. Birmingham has one of the highest rates of infant mortality in England with the highest in Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage families.

Couple the above with the fact that children in those deprived areas are “73% more likely to be dragged in to crime and receive reprimands, warnings and convictions” makes it plain that the deprived and forgotten children of our city are in a vicious cycle.

A heart-breaking paragraph stands out in the report:

“In our two-month probe we found Birmingham children stuck in cramped, cockroach-infested B&Bs for months, hospitalised from the effects of damp and mould on their asthma, going hungry and cold in overcrowded homes and exploited by criminals, with poverty the common thread.”

Ten years ago, Birmingham had the eighth-highest level of child poverty in the UK, now it is third.

Birmingham Live says that Birmingham City Council must answer why it has failed so badly compared to other local authorities on this measure. The report’s author Jane Haynes attended Labour Party conference to press the case for the changes the report argues for with ministers, local MPs and councillors.

At the time of writing, it is not known if anything concrete emerged from those discussions.

However, none of us who have campaigned for decades on the impact of austerity and cuts, and who, have crucially pointed to the crisis in working-class representation, have any faith in those who have been complicit in allowing poverty to reach pandemic proportions.

Labour in power now

Birmingham’s Labour council is under a Section 114 notice, after years of passing on Tory cuts. Birmingham council is being run by government-appointed commissioners. And not one Labour councillor is standing up to fight back against the enforced

austerity, not even now there’s a Labour government!

This report is welcome. as is Birmingham Live’s campaign. That campaign, more detailed work and the development of demands which place pressure on councillors, MPs and government to act cannot be left at the level of journalists and community activists alone.

Trade unions have a responsibility to discuss this report in union branches and amongst members in their developing response to those cuts, and consider joining, leading and developing the campaign, as well as widening it to include:

- A massive expansion of real affordable council housing, properly resourced in-house maintenance teams for existing council homes
- A democratically decided cap on rents and enforcement against private landlords
- Free, public, high-quality and flexible childcare accessible to all, from birth
- Extend public childcare provision to include activities for older children and young people. Stop the 50% cuts to Birmingham’s youth services
- Reopen Sure Start centres and council nurseries and expand provision of children’s centres to offer parenting support including for feeding. Bring privatised services such as health visitors back in-house

The Socialist Party says

- No cuts. Kick out the commissioners. Demand the council sets a needs-based budget
- A joint trade union campaign, including industrial action, against job cuts and for fully funded pay rises that address real-terms cuts over a decade
- Demand the money from Starmer’s Labour government to fully fund services – make the super-rich pay
- We need councillors prepared to fight. Build a new mass workers’ party that fights for socialist change

GAME OVER? Tory leadership contest

DAVE MURRAY
ESSEX SOCIALIST PARTY

In the olden days, Tory leaders emerged from a procedure that involved only the grandest of the party’s grandees. Like the Catholic church of old, the Tory Party was an organisation with a membership of millions whose rituals were conducted in a language that was not understood by most of it, and which was ruled by people of higher social rank - something that many of those members found a perverse comfort in.

This is no longer the case; the Conservative Party membership now expects to be spoken to in its own language, to elect its own leader and numbers tens of thousands rather than millions – 147,000 voted in the 2022 leadership contest, and (sorry if this is a little morbid), given the age profile of this group, there will be far fewer of them this time around. The Conservative Party of today is less like the Catholic Church than a weird, inverted version of the Miss World organisation.

In the Tory equivalent of the bathing suit round of the competition, the 121 Tory MPs, survivors of the 2024 mass extinction event, narrowed the choice down to two from a field of six, in a series of elimination votes. It speaks to the character of the party’s upper echelon that the last to be eliminated is said to have hit on the strategy of asking his supporters in parliament to vote for candidates other than himself. The fact that this candidate is called Mr Cleverly, does make you wonder if, as some conspiracists say, we are actually living

in a super-sophisticated computer game.

Bear with me here – the lead character in videogame Grand Theft Auto V, Trevor Phillips, is said by its author to be “purely driven by desire and resentment.” This chimes with what people who’ve worked with final two candidate Kemi Badenoch say about her. During the course of her leadership campaign, she has pined for a time when women had fewer rights, but more babies, asserted that British culture is superior to other cultures and maintains that people with an autism diagnosis have an unfair advantage in life.

Toll

Robert Jenrick, the other contestant, famously insisted that murals of cartoon characters at a detention centre for refugee children be painted out, called for the immediate arrest of people making the Muslim declaration of faith in public and was involved, as housing minister, in a story that involved a large political donation, a disreputable billionaire and an unlawful decision to grant planning permission. As ex-Tory peer Baroness Warsi commented: “He is such a tool!”

The Conservative Party has always been like a criminal enterprise, it’s just that once they were the party of grand larceny, or “The Empire.” Until recently, the most successful capitalist party in the world. It should be no surprise that in the absence of empire it is now a party of petty con artists and political grifters. The pity is that whoever wins, the current alternatives, both in and out of government, are also tools. Let’s change that.



Hundreds of women who worked at Harrods department store (pictured), have accused now-deceased Al-Fayed of sexual harassment and assault SOROKY/CC

Al-Fayed – sexual harassment at work, part and parcel of the capitalist system

JANE NELLIST
PRESIDENT OF COVENTRY TUC (PERSONAL CAPACITY) AND SOCIALIST PARTY

It’s hard to believe that it’s been seven years since the #MeToo movement stormed across the world. It exposed the extent of sexual violence and harassment of women in society following the Harvey Weinstein case. But what has really changed?

The shocking recent exposure of the now deceased Mohamed Al-Fayed as a historic sexual predator has again raised questions about it has had a negative impact on their mental health.

Many of us will have been in situations where a manager behaves inappropriately. I know I have. It can take courage to expose it, especially when your job could be threatened or it would be your word against theirs. That’s why trade unions are so

Powerful corporations, such as the Harrod’s management at the time, conspired to cover-up the crimes perpetrated by Al Fayed with Non-Disclosure Agreements and payoffs to prevent them reaching the public

eye. By all accounts, they were complicit in the grooming and control of the women Al-Fayed sexually abused, raped or threatened.

Let’s be clear though, this sort of behaviour is not confined to just ‘high-end’ businesses. According to a 2023 Trades Union Congress poll, more than half of women in the UK have experienced sexual harassment at work. For women aged 18–24, this number rises to almost two in three. 45% of women who have experienced sexual harassment at work say it has had a negative impact on their mental health.

Many of us will have been in situations where a manager behaves inappropriately. I know I have. It can take courage to expose it, especially when your job could be threatened or it would be your word against theirs. That’s why trade unions are so

58%

of women have been harassed at work

important. To not only give a voice, but the power to fight back!

What’s more, long-standing ideas of gender dominance and subordination, along with ideas of power and control, continue to influence our society. To eliminate sexual harassment and abuse in workplaces and beyond, we must address these beliefs at their core.

A small minority still possess the vast majority of wealth in society. They continue to wield control over the media, fashion, and beauty industries, commodifying women’s bodies for profit. This minority benefits materially from the exploitation of workers, especially women workers, through low-paid, insecure jobs, as well as the unpaid labour that mostly women perform at home.

Over recent decades, important gains for women’s rights have been made as a result of struggle, but the oppression of women still remains deep-rooted in the structure of class society. The only way to eradicate it and create a more equal safer society, not just for women but the whole of the working class, is to step up the fight for a socialist society.

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Unite executive discusses new government

SUZANNE MUNA

UNITE EC MEMBER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The Unite executive met from 7-11 October for the first time under the new Labour government.

At the start of the discussion, the executive agreed that Labour's election is to be welcomed, but they are at risk of squandering their advantage.

Pressure is being applied by Unite to make sure that industrial investment is made. Unite was instrumental in the Labour government eventually agreeing to relax the fiscal rules in order to borrow to invest, particularly in manufacturing. At the moment there are promises but no money assigned on steel, oil and gas, and energy. Unite had also had an impact by making demands on public sector pay.

Workers' rights

It was clear that the New Deal for Working People represents a big battleground. There are some good things included but it is too heavily focused on individual rights and there are still too many restrictions on collective bargaining. Employers are still being allowed to refuse access to trade unions. Some critical things that haven't been won include the lack of a total ban on 'fire and re-hire' and zero-hour contracts.

I raised that we need to continue holding Labour's feet to the fire, and also to keep close watch on which of the New Deal pledges have been implemented, of those that are properly measurable. I also noted that the Trades Union Congress (TUC) had agreed a motion, supported by Unite, which concluded: "If the government has not legislated (to implement the new deal for working people) within the first hundred days, a special TUC congress will be called to discuss next steps."

The Unite leadership's view is that the introduction of changes to employment and trade union rights satisfies the introduction of legislation. However, as a union we must keep an eye on this and still call for a special congress if needed.

Unite is also demanding that local authority debt should be wiped out. These were the points that Unite had particularly pushed on with Starmer and that had stopped us being able to endorse the manifesto. At Labour Party conference, Unite had led on fighting against cuts to the winter fuel allowance.

It was reported that there is quite a serious threat to occupational pension schemes, that would increase the tax paid when lump sums are drawn down. EC members were warned that if this was proposed, there would be action in almost every sector where Unite is active.

It was also reported the blacklist inquiry report was due to be published in July but the investigation had uncovered more allegations of collaboration. The report is now expected within eight weeks.

Prepare for struggles

The EC discussed the danger of increased support for Reform. That is why it is so important to continue to make demands of Labour and get ready to fight for them.

General secretary Sharon Graham has been more vocal than many trade union leaders so far under the new government, pointing out shortcomings and making demands. The Socialist Party thinks Unite should go further with demands for nationalisation, such as of steel and at Grangemouth.

This approach is vital in order to prepare our members for the inevitable struggles that are looming in both the private and public sectors. The question of a political voice for workers will also become increasingly unavoidable.

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NSSN bulletin: shopstewards.net



Haringey Labour council 'behaving like Tories'

Housing maintenance and repair workers at Haringey Labour council have begun an all-out strike over pay. Unite members haven't had a pay rise in over a decade, leaving them over £6,000 worse off. Unite says the council is wasting a huge amount of resources on subcontractors and agency workers, who are potentially being used to break Unite's strikes. Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: "This is a Labour-run council behaving like Tories." PHOTO: ROB WILLIAMS

Stammering is a trade union issue



Gary speaking at the National Shop Stewards Network 2022 conference
PHOTO: IAN PATTISON

GARY CLARK
SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND

22 October is International Stammering Awareness Day, when stammering and stuttering organisations try to raise awareness.

Around 40,000 adults stammer, and 8% of children – over one million – will stammer at some point during their childhood.

There are lots of myths around stammering, including that it is due to lack of intelligence or nerves. But the latest research shows its likely to be a part of the brain not working correctly, which could be a similar part of the brain to that which is linked to dyslexia and Tourette's Syndrome.

Though I am now a fluent and confident public speaker, like many people who stammer I have faced bullying, ridicule and discrimination. There is nothing that can be said to me that I have not heard before. Stammering must be one of the few conditions where it's still viewed by some as OK to ridicule and discriminate against people.

Mass media is full of examples of stammerers portrayed as weak, lacking intelligence, or a bit strange. Many of us are pigeonholed into certain jobs where we don't need to verbally communicate with others, and how we are treated leads to many stammerers pigeonholing themselves. You might not be aware of everyone around you who stammers

as many are in the background trying not to be heard and scared to speak. Many use 'word avoidance', thinking a few sentences ahead to look out for words to avoid, which is very mentally tiring.

Equality at work

But stammering is a disability. As it lasts more than a year and impacts on people's day to day lives, many stammerers would come under the equality at work legislation and could get reasonable adjustments in the workplace.

I started stammering from my earliest memory and really struggled with it growing up. But I got involved in the labour movement aged 17 and I joined with Militant (forerunner of the Socialist Party). Though I went through many struggles, I stopped thinking about my stammer, and I have been determined to be active and take part in the battles in the trade union movement. Now I am retired, I volunteer as the trade union liaison officer for STAMMA, the leading stammering charity, and am raising stammering as a trade union issue.

I have also thought why should people who stammer be pressured to be more fluent? A stammer is only a way over 70 million people speak worldwide, and it's only society which says to 'fit in' you need to speak better. I support the movement 'Stammering Pride'. We should say, out and proud: 'Yes, I stammer, and that's who I am'.

I believe we should be celebrating people who stammer and the role they play in society. We should fight

for a society that welcomes differences without mocking and abuse.

But at the same time we should support those who want to change their own fluency by fighting for workplace adjustments, resources and funding, including for speech and language therapists.

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Napo AGM: Members are angry and willing to fight

ADAM HARMSWORTH

NATIONAL VICE-CHAIR FAMILY COURTS, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Napo's 2024 AGM showed that probation workers cannot tolerate their poverty pay and horrendous workloads any longer.

Napo, the union of probation and family courts workers, is gaining members due to a probation service in the depths of crisis. A significant layer of new members attended the AGM for the first time, with a big portion being younger workers.

The Young Members Network had its biggest fringe meeting since re-launch, with a dozen members at it. The network's motion demanding an immediate £15-an-hour minimum wage, for all ages and rising with inflation, passed almost unanimously.

Crucially, a motion calling for a ballot to strike unless Labour "signals its immediate intent to re-enter pay talks" also flew through without a word against. Many more motions passed demanding urgent changes in how probation and Cafcass (Children and Family Courts Advisory and Support Service) are run.

Prepare for action

The new Labour government is very unlikely to come back to pay talks with a serious offer to compensate probation workers who have struggled through the botched early release of prisoners, and over a decade of austerity, unless they are under pressure. So chances are a ballot for industrial action is on the way, as general secretary Ian Lawrence acknowledged in his address to the meeting.

It is now up to the union's leadership to build the campaign to achieve a decent turnout and raise members'

confidence in a campaign to win. There is absolutely no doubt that if the members turn out to vote, they will vote to strike. The anger and demand for change has been pent up over years.

If Napo leads its membership into the fight, it will emerge a stronger union and bring a crucial layer of activists to the fore. That has been the experience of unions such as the National Education Union that were part of the strike wave.

Fear of strikes has already led the Labour government to award public sector pay rises more than they would have otherwise. Industrial action is the only way to win the urgent change probation needs.

In our conference leaflet, Socialist Party members argued for the need for those members who want to campaign for a fighting union to get organised in a new broad left in the union. Doing that would help build the confidence of members and keep the pressure up on the leadership to build the campaign that is needed.



Unison's retired members in determined mood

ROGER BANNISTER

UNISON RETIRED MEMBER

Unison's Retired Members Conference was held in Llandudno on 8 and 9 October. Over two days, delegates demonstrated their anger at the way pensioners are being treated, and their determination to do something about it.

The conference came just a day after an impressive lobby of parliament by the National Pensioners Convention, Unite the Union, plus other organisations and trade unions, again evidencing the growing anger of older people.

Matters discussed at the conference included compensation for the Waspi Women (Women Against State Pension Inequality – 1950s women hit hardest by the change in women's pension age), pensioner

poverty, ending the difference in the state pension between the old and new levels, privatisation of the care sector, and even the shortage of - and high charges for - public conveniences.

Understandably, the decision of the Labour government to means test the winter fuel allowance led to a good debate, with a great deal of anger demonstrated. Socialist Party members Gary Freeman and myself raised the need to nationalise the banks and to restore public ownership to privatised services in different debates.

It is clear that older people are becoming increasingly militant, and not prepared to lie back and be trampled on by governments of any political persuasion.

Four Socialist Party members attended the conference.

FE workers need a serious national campaign



UCU members in FE on strike in 2022 LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

DUNCAN MOORE

UCU NEC REPRESENTING FE WORKERS, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The Association of Colleges (AoC) has responded to the joint unions' pay claim for further education (FE) workers.

Our pay claim was for 10% or £3,000, whichever is greater, as a first step to restore the more than 40% cut in real pay for FE staff over a decade.

The response from the AoC for the 2024-25 academic year comes well short. Its recommendation to college principals is a pay rise for FE teachers of 2.5% or £750, whichever is greater. This is half the percentage rise which school teachers were awarded this year!

Members will not get a say on this pay recommendation, as last month

UCU's FE Committee narrowly voted against a motion to hold a consultative ballot (see 'College workers will fight for funding, but we need leadership' at socialistparty.org.uk).

This would have given members a chance to have their say, and start to build for potential coordinated strike action if our demands are not met. It is clear that a section of the union leadership, including the president and vice president, are opposed in practice to taking any move forward towards a serious fightback of our members on pay.

The leadership's approach in the 'New Deal for FE' campaign, of petitioning the government and the AoC in the hope they will give us more, is not working. Other unions are securing above-inflation (though still far from adequate) pay deals.

We need a serious fighting strategy

to stop the decline of FE, and if those in our union's leadership continue to oppose that, then they need to be replaced.

Socialist Party activists in the UCU will continue to argue for the members to be given the final say, whether by a consultative ballot or by a special FE sector conference.

Fighting candidates needed

With the NEC elections coming up next year, there is an opportunity for all those who want a campaigning and democratic leadership to collaborate to put forward candidates who stand on a fighting programme.

We want to discuss with all those forces on the left who want that, and will continue to campaign for the fighting, socialist policies needed to win for our members.



The FBU fire and rescue service union held a national rally of over a thousand members on 8 October in central London, before lobbying MPs. The rally demanded that the new Labour government 'rebuild our fire service'. 14 years of Tory cuts has seen 30% of central government funding slashed, leading to fire authorities led by all political parties collectively cutting 20% of firefighter jobs. PHOTO: ROB WILLIAMS

Aerospace workers still striking to restore pay

NICK CHAFFEY

SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Unite members at Eaton Ltd in Fareham, Hampshire, have voted to escalate their strike action. It is set to continue this week, with dates announced through to the middle of November.

Strikers report growing support for the action with more workers signing up to the union. The company is refusing to negotiate. Unite strikers are determined to reject a three-year deal.

Pay at Eaton is below the industry average and Unite members are fighting for a one-year deal that restores what was lost during the previous three-year deal during the sharp rise in inflation.

100 DAYS IN OFFICE - BUILD THE SOCIALIST OPPOSITION TO LABOUR

Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

What do you make of Keir Starmer's first 100 days in office, which came to an end on 12 October?

His Labour Party had a +6 'net favourability' rating upon taking office. 90 days in it was down to -20. Based on what people are telling us on Socialist Party campaign stalls on high streets up and down the country, that comes as no surprise.

Is it any wonder? Since taking office, Starmer's government has cut pensioners' winter fuel payments while increasing the price cap on our heating bills. Starmer has continued to excuse the Israeli state forces' brutal slaughter and bombardment of Gaza and Lebanon. Tata Steel bosses have been allowed to slash 2,500 jobs at the Port Talbot steelworks, at the same time as receiving a £500 million grant from government.

Seven Labour MPs, who days into the new government tried to remove the Tories' cruel two-child benefit cap, were suspended and now sit as independents. Five others, including Jeremy Corbyn, form the Independent Alliance group of MPs - most elected on the basis of mass revulsion against Starmer's support for Israel's assault on Gaza, particularly among

Muslims.

Starmer's 100-day-old government, already with a shrinking majority, rests on the fragile foundations of winning the votes of just one in five eligible voters in the general election. And how many of those are already drawing conclusions about in whose interests this Labour government is governing?

30 October Budget

Exactly what will be in chancellor Rachel Reeves's 30 October Budget is unknown, but it is clear that she will put forward a budget in the interests of the capitalist elite, not the working-class majority. Speculation is rife over what measures will be taken to fill the £22 billion 'black hole' while sticking to pledges not to raise income tax, employees' national insurance contributions and VAT.

Reeves might change the self-imposed rules to allow borrowing for investment. But on day-to-day spending on public services, think tank the Institute for Fiscal Studies says £25 billion of tax rises will be needed for public service funding to even remain at its current too-low level.

Meanwhile, the cost of government borrowing is increasing. The Financial Times describes a "tightrope" the government needs to walk to avoid something like a Liz Truss fiasco. Undoubtedly the ghost of Truss is being conjured up by some investors as a means to threaten Reeves not to raise taxes on the super-rich. She has already watered down on plans to tax non-doms. But such is investors' lack

of confidence in British capitalism, a gilt sell-off cannot be ruled out now or in the future. And further increases in government borrowing costs, which have already risen to pretty much Truss levels since, can further wipe out spending.

Reeves took to the stage at Labour Party conference in September to promise "no return to austerity". In fact, her budget will mean no end to austerity. Public services will remain underfunded - universities facing funding crises or a student fee increase, local authorities facing so-called 'bankruptcy', public sector workers worse off in real terms than they were a decade ago and their recent pay rises not fully funded. Whatever Reeves and Starmer say about austerity, it will feel like austerity.

Workers' rights

With three days to spare, Labour introduced the Employment Rights Bill to Parliament. The Trades Union Congress in September passed the following as part of a composite motion: "Congress notes the Labour Party's 2024 general election manifesto committed to implementing 'Labour's Plan to Make Work Pay: Delivering a New Deal for Working People' in full - introducing legislation within 100 days. If the government has not legislated within the first hundred days, a special TUC congress will be called to discuss next steps." This was moved by PCS union delegates, pushed for by left activists including Socialist Party members, part of the Broad Left Network in that union.



Keir Starmer
PHOTO: NUMBER 10/CC

Employment Rights Bill: What's in, what's not?

MARK BEST

SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Labour's Employment Rights Bill has been presented to Parliament. The content of the law is not yet final - it will face amendments in the House of Lords and the Commons before reaching the statute books.

When Starmer tells big-business bosses, who are creaming billions of pounds of profit off the backs of workers struggling to make ends meet, that they have "nothing to worry about" in the new laws, it will prompt many to think twice about whether or not they are all they're cracked up to be.

The contents are not exactly the same as in 'Labour's New Deal for Workers' policy document. It has already been subject to big business 'consultation' and lots of it faces more too.

What are some of the main points in the bill?



PHOTOS: PAUL MATTSOON

Anti-union laws

Most of the Tory anti-union laws remain, but on its way out is the undemocratic 50% voter turnout threshold for strike action from David Cameron's 2016 Trade Union Act.

Brought in to try and stymie public sector unions fighting back nationally, this, combined with a lack of a fighting lead at top of the unions, meant there was little national industrial action until the cost-of-living crisis exploded into the strike wave. E-ballots for strike action will also be allowed.

This could make it easier for unions to organise strike action against Labour cuts or big-business bosses' attacks on workers' living standards. But only if trade union leaderships take advantage of increased rights to strike, and then organise strong and serious action to win for workers.

The Tories' anti-union Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act will be scrapped. Other pieces of Tory anti-union legislation going back to Thatcher remain on the statute books, including the ban on prison officers taking strike action.

We demand all the anti-union laws are abolished.

Fire and rehire

Firing and rehiring workers on worse pay and conditions - scandalously used by Tower Hamlets Labour council after the pandemic, British Gas, P&O ferries, and others - was set to be banned by Labour's New Deal. However, as it stands, companies would be able to use it if there's 'no financial alternative'.

But who decides this? It should be the workers themselves by opening the books to democratic trade union inspections. When bosses spend years paying themselves dividends, refusing to invest in a company and strip it of its assets, why should workers pay for bosses' failures?

Instead of posing it as a company going bust or workers taking the hit, companies should be taken out of the hands of the capitalist vultures, nationalised and put under democratic workers' control and management.



Rights from day one

The pledge for full employment rights from day one has been scrapped. Plans are to encode into law probation periods of between six and twelve months, depending on if the bosses get their way, in which workers can be sacked if bosses think it isn't working out.

This, like many aspects of the package, including the setting up of new regulators and negotiating bodies, will be dependent on wrangling over secondary legislation.

Zero-hour contracts

The promise to ban zero-hour contracts has also been muddled. "Exploitative" zero-hour contracts will be banned, and workers will have the right to a contract that reflects their hours over a set period.

But who will decide what is exploitative or not? And how will workers stand up to the pressure of management to accept bad contracts if they're threatened with the sack? Only with well-organised unions prepared to take action can workers have genuine flexibility on their terms and not the bosses.



business. That process will continue, large sections of the bill being subject to secondary legislation and further consultation.

Still a fight

Angela Rayner now writes in the Financial Times: "Ultimately, whether you're in government, a FTSE 100 CEO or a union rep, we all want the same things". A business group speaking to the BBC disagrees, it thinks: "There will still be a fight, but the fight has been postponed".

The capitalist bosses are relentless in their fight for their own profit interests, including to make sure there are as few obstacles as possible to their exploitation of workers. Clearly the trade unions need to stay in that fight.

In 2022, P&O Ferries fired 800 workers by video call and tried to rehire them again on worse pay and conditions. Transport Secretary Louise Haigh labelled the company a "rogue operator" in announcing the new laws, which fail to outright ban the practice. But days later, the bosses of P&O owners DP World were guests of honour at Labour's investment summit and Starmer was admonishing Haigh for her comments.

Many trade union leaders will try to use the Employment Rights Bill to shield the Labour government from their members' anger. They will try to use the public sector pay deals in a similar way, although it will be clear to many trade unionists that the level at which the government has made their pay offer was based on how likely it thought they would be prepared

to strike.

However, this will not work for long. Workers have had a taste of their collective strength and power during the strike wave. And for most workers, life under a Labour government will continue to feel a lot like life under the Tories: real pay well below where it was a decade ago, and public services crumbling.

Socialist Party members are fighting in the trade unions, arguing that they should be at the heart of opposition to Starmer's austerity. By being prepared to mobilise members to fight industrially, and by taking steps to establish their own political voice - a new mass workers' party.

The Labour government probably feels like it has been a stormy first 100 days in office, but it has been calm compared to what is to come. Such is the crisis of the capitalist system they defend in Britain and internationally, the storms will just keep rolling in.

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SCOTT JONES

The 2024 hurricane season in the United States and North America has entered the top five worst before it's even over. Hurricane Milton ranks just behind the 2005 hurricane season which devastated New Orleans and the infamous 1935 'Labour Day hurricane' which killed over 400 on the Florida Keys.

Combined, Hurricanes Helene and Milton have killed hundreds in the last month, carving a destructive path across the continent. Roads have been swept away and millions of homes left without power and water.

The scenes of carnage in western Florida are sadly familiar as that stretch of coastline has now experienced three such storms in the past year, flattening homes and carrying boats inland.

Nowhere safe

But this hurricane season has also shown that nowhere is now safe from extreme weather made worse and more frequent by climate change, which it is estimated has caused 50% more rainfall this season. North Carolina has also taken a battering, despite being known as a 'climate haven'. Estate agents promoted the town of Asheville as offering a "reprieve" from "extreme weather".

One resident said: "I never, ever considered the idea that Asheville would be wiped out", but it was, cut off by flooding caused by Hurricane Helene, and its population left without basic necessities. A local official called Hurricane Helene "Buncombe County's own Hurricane Katrina". Rural Tennessee was also hit, including workers at a plastic factory where eleven were swept away by flooding and killed after bosses stopped workers from leaving despite official flood warnings.

The US Federal Emergency

US hurricane: Climate change and capitalist chaos the perfect storm



NASA JOHNSON/CC

Management Agency (Fema) said: "In the past, damage from hurricanes was primarily wind damage, but now we're seeing so much more water damage and that is a result of the warm waters, which is a result of climate change."

More heat helps storms spin faster and causes more atmospheric

moisture that is then unleashed in torrents upon places such as North Carolina, which got a month's rain in just a matter of days. It means millions more are now living in areas at risk of extreme weather.

Trump

Hypocritically, Donald Trump has

attacked the response of rival presidential candidate Kamala Harris and incumbent president Joe Biden by spreading rumours, but the facts speak for themselves.

Harris bragged about how she has promoted fracking during September's debate with Trump and that the Biden-Harris administration is

responsible for "the largest increase in domestic oil production in history because of an approach that recognises that we cannot over-rely on foreign oil."

During Trump's time as president he allied himself with the fossil fuel industry. Over \$107 million was donated towards Trump's inauguration, with companies like BP and ExxonMobil putting forward six-figure sums.

Joe Biden helpfully told people in Florida to "evacuate now" ahead of the destruction, but what about those who didn't have the means to do so? Even many of those who did ended up stuck in traffic jams on the way out.

No plan

No plans were made for a coordinated mass evacuation. Instead of cancelling services and flights, Amtrak passenger trains could have been commissioned to evacuate thousands. Airlines should have had each of their planes in the area requisitioned for flights, and every bus and coach could have been used.

Capitalism is a system in which wealth and resources are concentrated into the hands of a super-rich few. It is incapable of combating extreme weather, mitigating its destruction, reversing climate change and the billions of dollars' worth of rebuilding that needs to be done immediately. Only a socialist programme and transformation of society can do so.

CLIMATE CATASTROPHE: WHAT ACTION CAN END IT?

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Real opposition to Coventry Labour

Dave Nellist wins 18% in St. Michael's

MILA HUGHES

COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

Street lights being turned off by the Labour council. The Labour government taking away pensioners' winter fuel allowance. The Labour council sacking street cleaners, affecting community morale.

All these issues were raised every few doors during the campaign. People were sick of Labour's hypocritical policies, nationally and locally.

We've been campaigning hard in St Michaels in Coventry to get a strong vote for Socialist Party member Dave Nellist, our Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate for the council by-election on 10 October – and we did!

Socialist councillor

Offering a real opposition that Coventry people need, we ended up getting second place in the ward. Almost one in five people voted to get a socialist councillor back in St. Michael's.

Dave's vote could have been even higher had the Workers' Party not stood against him, and taken some votes away.

People continue to recognise Dave Nellist as a former socialist councillor for 14 years, and a socialist Labour MP for nine years. Someone that backed the working class to the hilt.

Fewer people voted Labour over its freebie sleaze. Working people said our anti-cuts and anti-war policies before we even got a chance to.

Labour's promises

This anger towards Labour for its contempt for working-class people will continue to spread. So far, Labour has shown that it's only willing to keep promises until it threatens the pockets of the rich.

With working-class people consistently paying more and more, for fewer services, fewer places to live, and less prospect for a decent future – now is a better time than ever to get involved in the fightback.

Dementia care, libraries, leisure centre

Enfield challenges Labour and Tory politicians over cuts

SAADA MOHAMED

ENFIELD AND LEA VALLEY SOCIALIST PARTY

After a Labour landslide in parliament in the general election, you would think things would improve, especially in places with Labour MPs and Labour councils. However, in Enfield the opposite is happening.

Enfield is the London borough with the most libraries. But the Labour council is closing half of them.

Enfield is the London borough with the most dementia. You'd think that dementia services would be fully funded, and not at risk of being shut down. But the council is selling off a centre used for dementia day care.

Edmonton Green Leisure Centre was scheduled only to be closed for two months for repairs last year. But it has not opened its doors to this day.

Under Keir Starmer's Labour, this is

happening in councils up and down the country, as he continues Tory austerity.

Enfield Trades Union Council organised a rally outside the council. Socialist Party members were present, local people, trade union reps, and Enfield Community Action Group (ECAG) that has brought local people together to challenge pro-war and pro-cuts politicians in elections.

There was chanting, and a petition from the 'over-50s forum' demanding the council reconsider the libraries decision.

We spoke with a Tory councillor, who was going to the council scrutiny committee meeting. He outrageously claimed that in Enfield, the Tories were the only ones who were campaigning for the libraries.

This prompted a Socialist Party member to ask how many libraries the

Campaigners tell Labour councillors

– ‘save our day centre’

CHRIS CORNEY

WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

Labour-run Waltham Forest Council is threatening to close the Markhouse Centre, a day centre that has served disabled adults for over 40 years. Socialist Party members joined 30 people, who rely on Markhouse, at a protest outside the council.

Family members and users of the centre – who came to the protest called by the local trades union council – spoke movingly to the committee of councillors who are reviewing the closure plan. Some were clearly desperate at the prospect of losing the day centre, which provides the only respite they get from full-time care for loved ones with very serious needs. Many said how devastating the loss of the community would be for the 53 adults who attend the centre, some of them for decades.

Addressing the Labour councillors. Socialist Party member Nancy Taaffe said: "Your people are in government, and you rule locally. We urge you to make a stand, and save the Markhouse Centre."

The reason given by the council for



Nancy speaking at the protest PAULA MITCHELL

the closure is a survey report, which claims that the building requires £1.2 million for repairs. We disagree with these figures.

The suspicion is that the site is being eyed up for redevelopment. Sheepish Labour councillors were forced to admit that cost was clearly driving the closure plan.

Later Nancy, who is also assistant secretary of the trades council, told the committee to "grow a spine", stating that "every service that has gone has just become a block of flats". Socialist Party member Paula Mitchell challenged councillors from the public gallery to use the £39 million of reserves they are sitting on, and set a budget based on needs, not on austerity.

Cuts to vital services are continuing under Labour, and the removal of the Tories from office has made no difference. But affected communities are fighting back. The Socialist Party offers solidarity, and gives confidence that if the working class is organised, we can resist cuts.

Anyone who can support this campaign should join the public meeting, called by Waltham Forest Trades Council.

● Thursday 24 October, 7pm

● William Morris Community Centre, Greenleaf Road, E17

Obituary: John Ewers

An unstinting activist who was endlessly optimistic

ROBIN CLAPP

SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

An era has come to a close for Socialist Party members in south west England. It is sad news that our longest-standing member, John Ewers, has died, following a lengthy illness.

John often joked that when other youth were 'dropping out' during the 1967 'summer of love', he dropped into his lifetime association with Militant, now the Socialist Party, having been persuaded to join after discussions with Peter Taaffe and others.

Careerists

He was the first Militant supporter on the Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS) National Committee, fearlessly withstanding and repelling obnoxious personal and political attacks from self-seeking young careerists, who were used to using the LPYS as their stepping stone towards lucrative parliamentary careers.

Over 50 years, hardly a corner of Gloucestershire remained untrodden by John, as he sought to popularise Marxism and offer support to workers in struggle. Never having learned to drive, he went everywhere on foot or



John Ewers (fourth right)

by bus, with a bulging bag of Socialist papers, and an endlessly optimistic demeanour. That was not always easy in a county where socialists were sometimes very thin on the ground.

It was well-deserved when local trade unionists, including some of Gloucestershire remained untrodden by John, and he sought to popularise Marxism and offer support to workers in struggle. Never having learned to drive, he went everywhere on foot or

full every year, saying he would never be a beneficiary of money stolen from the working class.

Beat the council

In 1983, he organised a weekend of action against a plan by Gloucester City Council to sell off an entire council estate to the private sector. Militant supporters from the whole South West region descended on the city, and after hundreds of doorstep

discussions, and over 100 sales of the Militant newspaper, we learned that the council had backed down.

Away from politics – he wasn't absent very often – he was a civil war reenactor, once causing some consternation by arriving in haste to a Socialist Party branch meeting having not had the opportunity to change!

Rock and roll music was another passion. In a raucous Liverpool pub in 1979 – on a weekend away supporting

a member contesting the European elections – John entertained the pub with songs, at one point causing the audience to demand "more Elvis."

In later years, he formed a formidable partnership selling the Socialist with fellow veteran comrade Claude Mickleson. Outside the local supermarket in Lydney, they successfully sold over 20 copies most weeks.

They found it particularly amusing when a rattled manager threatened to call the law on them for intimidating his customers. They were not deterred.

We learned much from John. In our last conversation, he kept repeating that we always have to use the Marxist method to understand what is happening, so we can form perspectives, and determine our tasks.

New generation

Largely unknown to the young generation, who are carrying on his work today, he was a true pioneer in building Militant and the Socialist Party in the south west and beyond. Never wavering, always willing, a champion of the youth.

Your contemporaries particularly, salute you – rest well, old man.

Ealing by-elections reflect disillusionment with capitalist politicians

JASPER CHAPLIN

WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Labour has seriously damaged public opinion of politicians. Nearly half of Labour voters said they expected

good things of Keir Starmer, but are disappointed with his government.

The polls say people think Labour is handling nearly every issue badly, from taxes and inflation, to the NHS and housing. That's because Starmer

is acting similar to the Tories, continuing to fund Israeli state attacks on Palestine and now Lebanon, cutting public spending, scrapping the winter fuel allowance for pensioners.

Under Labour, the working class

has not seen an end to the Tory austerity of the last 14 years. People are losing trust as they see capitalist parties promise one thing, only to deliver the opposite. During our South Acton campaign, one person outside the train station told us: "All politicians are the same. They're all liars."

Turnout was less than 30% in all three Ealing council by-elections on

10 October. In South Acton, where the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) stood a candidate, it was 17%.

The Socialist Party has a programme for ending austerity. Instead of lining the pockets of the super-rich with profits, we say, take the wealth off the super-rich to fund the policies the working class needs.



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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Liverpool PHOTO: LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Oxford freshers - Fighting in the belly of the beast

RAE COX
OXFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

Over three days, Socialist Party members in Oxford hit the campuses to meet the new cohort of students. Oxford's universities may not be the first places you think of when it comes to support for revolutionary socialism but, as we found, the crisis of capitalism has left few stones unturned.

Last year we saw spontaneous protests over the cuts being levelled at students at Oxford Brookes University, with music and maths courses on the chopping block, among smaller cuts to many more. We also saw students at Oxford University launch a Palestine camp that was reported worldwide, getting support from local trade unionists and the trades council.

Anger at the cost of living, lower wages and higher debts, a continuing war in the Middle East, and rising tensions over right populism, were all reflected on the ground at this year's freshers fairs.

This year, students were engaged with the direct issues they face. There was strong support for Socialist Students' campaigning approach to the issues at hand.

At Brookes, we had a good initial meeting, building on our existing base. We are also discussing plans with those we know in other groups such as the University and College Union and Brookes Student Union on how we can continue the campaign started last year around cuts to funding. At Oxford Uni, we made new ground with a group of students who are keen to build on campus.

Now more than ever we need fighting student organisations on campus with a Marxist approach, even in the belly of the beast that is Oxford.

Southampton students' housing anger

NICK DAVIES
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST STUDENTS

A freshers stall and a couple of meetings into the academic year and it is clear that students are fed up and ready to get involved in campaign that fights for free, fully funded education, affordable housing for all, and against the capitalist-created wars and conflict across the world.

In our very first meeting of the year, we had instant support for a campaign on student housing due to the experience of freshers moving in to halls with gas leaks, and rents that take up the majority of maintenance loans. This, combined with existing students dealing with sky-high bills and negligent landlords, has left an overwhelming need for action. Students decided to organise to stop the marketisation of universities and bring funding not fees.

Building a base in Liverpool

DEAN YOUNG
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Liverpool Socialist Students changed its plans for its second meeting of the year to respond to the appearance of a pro-life student society becoming a presence on campus.

We held our meeting on the topic of reproductive rights and how socialists must link the struggle for civil liberties to the wider struggle for a socialist transformation of society. Around 30 came along, about half were new students returning after coming to our first meeting.

The next meeting is on the topic of

the Middle East, amidst Israel's invasion of Lebanon. We will discuss the right to self-determination of all nations in the Middle East, with the goal of a voluntary socialist confederation in the region.

Liverpool Socialist Students is establishing a solid base for the future. Part of that is developing our campaigning skills, giving our members confidence to be able to chair meetings, contribute in political discussions, and lead discussions. We are making plans for a reading group to discuss the history and ideas of the socialist movement to better prepare people for the struggle ahead amidst the Starmer government's attacks on workers and young people.

So let's crack on with our task ahead, and we will share any lessons we learn in the Socialist, so keep an eye out!

York student hospital strike solidarity

JACOB
YORK SOCIALIST STUDENTS

On the morning of 11 October, members of the Socialist Students Society at the University of York, holding placards and banners, stood at a picket line in solidarity with striking workers at York Hospital. After one of the labs at the hospital was shut down, workers from the other lab were forced to do twice as much work with no compensation, leading to a strike.

BBC News turned up to the strike to take pictures and videos. It was filmed live on air, and the Socialist Students Society was thanked for the solidarity shown.

Join the student fightback
JOIN socialist students
socialiststudents.org.uk/join

Students protest in solidarity with Palestine

Queen Mary Uni, East London

Students at Queen Mary University in East London organised a protest to mark a year of brutal attacks on Palestinians by Israeli state forces. **Mihaela Ivanova**, Socialist Students activist and Socialist Party member, gave a speech to the protest:

The student anti-war movement has opened up people's eyes to the complicity of universities in the war, and Queen Mary Socialist Students agrees with the demands for divestment and financial disclosure. But I would like to pose two questions to you all: who decides who we divest from and who gets to control where our money goes? We have absolutely no trust in the rotten management here at Queen Mary which has continuously fought against our interests.

We need a political student voice alongside the trade unions on campus to call an open meeting pushing for bigger protests to maximise pressure on the university for our demands.

Elected trade union representatives alongside students should have democratic control over where our money goes. The struggle is stronger

when we are united and we can fight on every front. The issues students face do not end at university involvement in the war - we are in a cost-of-living crisis and our needs are not being heard. Universities are lobbying the government for an increase in our tuition fees - we demand the scrapping of tuition fees and in its place, a free and fully funded education system.

We must build a mass, nationwide movement to get the wealth and power out of the bosses' hands. Labour's budget is set to land at the end of this month, which could spark mass anger and outrage up and down the country. Socialist Students will be organising a national movement as neither the uni bosses nor Starmer fight for our interests, let alone for a ceasefire in the Middle East. The trade unions must mobilise its over six-million-strong membership for a new mass workers' party. It could take a lead in the anti-war movement and fight for an anti-austerity programme, taking control of our wealth from the bosses.

Alongside the strike wave here in the UK there have been strong and militant union actions across the world that show the strength of workers. In Belgium, the union of transport workers refused to load weapons to Israel. We fight for the self-determination of all people and



Queen Mary's protest PHOTO: QM SOCIALIST STUDENTS

an immediate ceasefire to end the cycle of violence and repression. We have a role to play here in Britain. Mass movements can ignite further action and pressure, such as the encampments in the US, which inspired UK students to do the same here.

It's the ordinary people who must take initiatives. Capitalism fears the unity of the working class. In 2019, workers united in Lebanon and rose up in mass protest against government corruption, which sucked the country into a deeper cost-of-living crisis. In Iran in 2022, a revolutionary movement broke out after protests against the brutal regime's treatment of women. In Israel 300,000 workers went on strike demanding a ceasefire and return of the hostages.

In 1987, Palestinians made gains under the first intifada mass movements demanding self-determination and an end to the depravity faced under Israeli occupation. The power and strength of the workers is evident and we can meet the needs of everyone and end bloodshed by fighting for socialist revolution which ends the interests of the exploiting elite, giving control to the working-class and poor people in the Middle East and worldwide. I'm a member of Socialist Students and because I believe in the need for a revolutionary organisation to fight for these ideas and win.

Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

Hundreds of people from across the West Midlands marched through Birmingham to mark one year of the Israeli military's bombardment and invasion of the Gaza Strip on 13 October. Socialist Party members joined them to discuss the way forward for the movement against the

UK government's support for the war. Unsurprisingly, when we asked people what they think of the new Labour government, their responses ranged from the indifferent to the unprintable!

The end rally heard from local MP Ayoub Khan, elected as an independent in the former Labour stronghold of Perry Barr in July, along with bakers' union BFAWU president Ian Hodson, who pointed out that people in Gaza and Lebanon doing the same jobs as his members in Britain had been killed and displaced.

Among marchers we spoke to, there was strong agreement that as well as an end to the slide to all-out war in the Middle East, plenty needs to change for working-class people in this country. Eight people left their details to find out more about how they can join the Socialist Party and help make that happen.

Brighton

BILL NORTH
BRIGHTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Students at the University of Sussex in Brighton held an anti-war demo, including a march around campus, on Tuesday 8 October. Brighton and Hove Socialist Party members were given a warm welcome; members of the uni's Palestinian Society invited us to join our stall with theirs and students were keen to discuss a socialist approach to the increasingly desperate situation in the Middle East.

Many of those we spoke with felt that the student unions should be doing more, both locally and nationally. For example, there was no National Union of Students speaker at the rally. Students welcomed the Socialist Party's call for the trade union movement to play a central role in the movement.

“The struggle is stronger when we are united and we can fight on every front. The issues students face do not end at university involvement in the war”

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the Socialist

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STARMER'S LABOUR BACKS WAR AND SLAUGHTER

BUILD THE SOCIALIST OPPOSITION

CAS MIDDLEMAS

ABERYSTWYTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Keir Starmer was asked in Parliament if he would consider suspending all arms licences to Israel in light of the tens of thousands of people who have been killed in Gaza in the last year. He answered: "No", without hesitation. That says it all.

We know Starmer has spent the last year watching the same horrific footage coming out of Palestine that we have. We know he has heard the same reports of polio returning to the Gaza Strip. Yet he has chosen to toe the line of Joe Biden and US capitalism by backing Israel's brutal slaughter.

This Labour government, much like the Tories before it, does not represent the interests of the working class. Starmer and the other Labour leaders are not moved by empathy, but by money. It is the desire to look after the profit interests of the super-rich that leads Starmer's government to consistently back the Israeli state's actions in Gaza, while cutting services here.

They have the money for war but not to help heat pensioners' homes this winter. The MP who asked Starmer to consider suspending arms licences to Israel was Zarah Sultana, one of the seven Labour MPs suspended for voting against the two-child benefit cap.

Standing against war and child poverty is enough to get you chucked out the Labour Party - how can it claim to represent working-class people?

We need to build a new mass workers' party, one that represents the interests of workers internationally by standing against war. The trade unions could bring together anti-war campaigners, student and community activists to fight the pro-war capitalist politicians like the ones that currently make up our government.

If you agree, you should join the Socialist Party and get involved in the fight for a better world.



PHOTO: HUGO PIERRE

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



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Student special

Autumn 2024

supporting socialist students 

FUNDING NOT FEES



MAKE THE RICH PAY

Socialist Students says

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

wider working class to fight for the funding our universities need

- **Kick big business off campus!** End marketisation of our education. Open up university finances to democratic oversight and control, including by elected students' representatives and campus trade unions, with the power to terminate all contracts and research tied to war, occupation, profiteering and

exploitation, while guaranteeing jobs and funding

- **Students need a political voice.** Build a new mass workers' party that will stand up for students and workers and fights for socialist policies
- **Fight for socialist change.** For democratic public ownership of the banks, monopolies and major industry to provide us with a future

ISIS SMYTH

LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Students are angry. Socialist Students members in Liverpool have spoken to thousands of new and returning university students since the start of the academic year. All we have ever known is Tory cutbacks and attacks. Now any hope that things might be different under Labour is being transformed into anger at Keir Starmer and his government, including over the possibility of a rise in tuition fees.

With Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader for the 2017 and 2019 general elections, Labour's policy was for free education. Starmer said it best at the recent Labour conference in Liverpool – the Labour Party has "changed". It is no longer a party for working-class and young people. Continuation of war in the Middle East, two-child benefit caps and pensioners' winter fuel payment attacks; life under Labour feels a lot like life under the disgraced Tories.

The cost of a university education is already staggering. Fees alone are £9,250 a year for most students, add to that loans to pay for rent, food and the basic necessities. Every year the threat of a debt mountain deters working-class young people from achieving a higher education qualification. And the Budget on 30 October could include raising fees further.

Already, universities like the University of Liverpool have upped food prices on campus and removed their food pantries, which gave students hit hard by the cost-of-living crisis access to free food if they could not afford to do weekly food shops.

This academic year, 40% of English universities are facing a deficit in their budget. And, as usual, the fat-cat vice chancellors and the government want us to foot the bill.

But at the same time, the rich keep getting richer. As horrific as it is, the capitalist system prioritises profit over young peoples' futures.

University education should be free, fully funded and accessible to all. Maintenance grants should be universal and enough to be able to afford a decent quality of life. Life under Starmer's Labour is making it clearer than ever that we need a party to fight for the many, not the few – a new mass workers' party that fights for socialist change.

Join the student fightback

JOIN socialist students

socialiststudents.org.uk/join 

Uni funding crisis no fee rises, no cuts!

ADAM POWELL-DAVIES
SOCIALIST STUDENTS NATIONAL ORGANISER

The university funding crisis has reached a new level this term. The real value of higher education funding is at its lowest point since tuition fees were trebled to £9,000 in 2012. 40% of universities predict a budget deficit this year.

University bosses and the new Labour government want students and staff to pay for this mess. Vice-chancellors are currently making job cuts at an unprecedented number of institutions (70 and counting), while Labour ministers have called on universities to continue making “efficiencies” – in other words, more cuts.

And now Labour is planning more attacks on students, which could include increasing tuition fees. The rumours of a tuition fee increase have been spread widely by national media outlets this term. Social media videos about potential fee rises, produced by companies like BBC and ITV, have gathered thousands of views.

All of this is posing the question of who should pay for universities? Should it be students paying even higher fees (not to mention the additional cost of maintenance loans and all the hours of low-paid work on top of full-time courses)? Or someone else?

Socialist Students says it should be the government – not students or workers – which directly funds education, by taking the wealth and resources off the big corporations and super-rich bosses. We also say that universities should be under the democratic control of students, staff and the wider community, not the overpaid vice-chancellors who have cooperated with successive pro-capitalist governments to get us into this mess.

The 100 richest individuals in the UK increased their collective wealth by £40 billion last year. That would be more than enough to scrap tuition fees and introduce living maintenance grants for all students. It would also be enough to give all higher education workers a pay increase that at least begins to restore the wages they have lost over more than a decade. Why should students pay any more?



FUNDING NOT FEES

Socialist Students is helping to initiate a new national campaign, Funding Not Fees, with the support of other campus organisations, to bring together students and workers in a movement for fully funded, free education – not more fees and cuts.

The Funding Not Fees campaign will demand that big business foots the bill for education, not students and workers. It calls for fully publicly funded higher education, paid for by taking the wealth off the super-rich, as the means to:

- **Scrap tuition fees and cancel student debt**
- **Introduce living maintenance grants for all students**
- **End low pay, job cuts and the casualisation of higher education workers**



Scan for open letter to
Corbyn and Indy MPs

**FUNDING
NOT
FEES**

What you can do now!

1) Build for a protest on Budget Day (30 October) to launch the campaign at your university, college or school

30 October is the day the new Labour government announces its first budget, with the guarantee of fresh attacks on the futures of students and young people, including the potential announcement of a tuition fee increase.

To build for Budget Day, you could put up posters around campus and organise leafletting sessions, to advertise the time, date and location of the protest among other students. You could also invite other groups on campus, like student societies, trade union branches, or students union representatives, to attend and help organise the protest.

And if you have time, what about organising a pre-protest meeting to discuss the campaign, followed by a banner-making session where you and other students can also plan speeches, slogans and chants for the protest?

For help with organising a protest, contact the Socialist Students national organising team at socialiststudents@gmail.com or text 07515921699

2) Build support for the Funding Not Fees open letter to the Independent Alliance

The Funding Not Fees campaign has produced an open letter to Jeremy Corbyn and the Independent Alliance MPs. When he was leader of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn won huge support from students because of his manifesto pledge to abolish fees. We are asking him, and the other members of the Independent Alliance, to now help build the movement for free, fully funded education, not more fees and cuts.

Could you circulate the letter around your own organisation and/or others on your campus (student societies, trade union branches, the Students' Union etc.) and ask them to endorse it?

END WAR FIGHT FOR SOCIALIST CHANGE

BERKAY KARTAV
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

‘Massive blasts rock Beirut’. Not a day passes without seeing such headlines on the news.

After a year of brutal Israeli onslaught on Gaza, and now bombing and a ground invasion into Lebanon, there is the risk things could escalate into a deeper and wider regional war. This would have even more horrifying consequences than already exist for the working class and poor in the Middle East and elsewhere.

The war in Ukraine, with tremendous cost to human lives and resources, has been going on for over two years with no end in sight.

In Sudan, a revolutionary movement heroically overthrew the hated, corrupt dictator Al-Bashir in 2019. But, because the working class and poor did not succeed in taking and consolidating power, in the ensuing power vacuum different factions of the military are fighting for political power at the expense of the lives of ordinary Sudanese workers and poor people.

What else do these apocalyptic wars prove than the rotten character of profit-based capitalism?

The world's richest five men have doubled their wealth to a staggering £668 billion since 2020. Meanwhile, an estimated two billion people now live in conflict-affected areas of the world.

Capitalism inflicts death and misery upon people all around the world so that those in powerful positions can gain even more wealth and power.

The US alone dedicated \$916 billion to military spending in 2023, a quarter of military spending worldwide. Arms manufacturers are raking in huge profits.

But why do capitalist governments spend billions in military spending when even just a fraction of that could be used to lift millions out of poverty and hunger?

Capitalism means war

Capitalism is an ailing crisis-ridden system where a tiny minority in society own and control the vast wealth and resources that exist. The capitalist bosses that make up this tiny minority compete with each other to maximise their own profits at the expense of ordinary working-class people and the environment.

Even though it is a global system, however, capitalism is based on nation states. These nation states, in particular the more advanced capitalist states, act to try to protect the dominant interests of their own capitalist classes.

Ceaseless pursuit for profit and exploitation of the world's resources by big companies inevitably leads to an unstable world order that is prone to conflicts, including military interventions or annexations.



Wars are not inevitable, they are a product of a system based on profiteering and plunder

Today, capitalism can be characterised by growing inter-imperialist rivalry, conflicts between different major economic blocs, and increasing polarisation.

The US is still dominant – the biggest economy and by far the largest military power. However, whereas in the previous period it had been able to use its dominance to try to ‘call the shots’ internationally, it is no longer able to do so.

It is increasingly being challenged by Chinese capitalism. While in the past the US was in favour of opening up global markets – to strengthen its own position in the world – now it is the one putting up trade barriers.

The multipolar world we now live in – together with economic crisis, environmental crisis, high levels of debt, falling workers’ living standards and other crises – is increasingly volatile.

Warmongering politicians

When politicians like Keir Starmer or Joe Biden call for a ceasefire in the Middle East – something they refused to do for months and months – it is because they are worried about the destabilising effects of the escalation of the war, and the social upheavals it might lead to, not because they care about those who suffer.

While desperately trying to contain the further spread of war however, the US as well as Britain and other European powers continue to supply Israel with arms which are used to indiscriminately bomb Gaza and Lebanon, and kill thousands of innocent



Socialist revolutions can bring an end to the horror and brutality of wars and secure a socialist world based on international cooperation that would be free from wars and oppression

civilians. In reality, they are compelled to try to defend their own strategic and profit interests in the region, and the rigged system they defend. Hundreds of thousands of people on the anti-war marches have been appalled by the hypocrisy of pro-capitalist politicians.

The need for workers’ representatives and new mass parties of the working class has never been so vital, in Britain and the US, as well as in the Middle East. Such parties, based on the organised working class and armed with a socialist programme, can offer a political voice for the anti-war movement, as well as a socialist opposition to all capitalist wars and attacks on living standards.

The working class

The ruling classes around the world fear awakening one force in society: the working class. This is the only force in society capable of overthrowing the capitalist system, because of the collective role it plays in the production and distribution of all the goods and services we use, and the collective consciousness that develops from that. We have had a small glimpse of the potential power of the working class in recent years in Britain, as a new generation has discovered the power of collective strike action.

Fourteen years ago, the ‘Arab Spring’ that quickly spread across many countries in the Middle East and North Africa shook the ruling classes and overthrew corrupt leaders. It

gave a greater glimpse of the potential power of the working class.

Yet despite the mass movements replacing some dictators, the ruling classes’ grips on the economy and society remained.

The conditions for further social upheavals continue to develop and will take on an even broader scope in the future. Out of those struggles, workers’ organisations can strengthen and develop, independent of capitalist interests.

By adopting a socialist programme to wrest wealth and control out of the hands of the capitalist class, and instead developing a plan to meet the needs of all, a path can be found towards working-class collaboration across the Middle East and internationally.

Wars are not inevitable, they are a product of a system based on profiteering and plunder.

Socialist revolutions spreading around the world can bring an end to the horror and brutality of wars and secure a socialist world based on international cooperation that would be free from wars and oppression.

STUDENTS: JOIN THE SOCIALIST PARTY!

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- or call **020 8988 8777**
- or text your name and postcode to **07761 818 206**



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Autumn 2024

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SOCIALISM 2024

A WEEKEND OF DISCUSSION ON SOCIALIST IDEAS



Students need Socialism!

If you are starting university this year, your whole life has been dominated by crisis of the profit-before-all-else capitalist system. A socialist alternative is necessary – and the fight for that includes the opportunity to discuss and debate ideas to change the world at Socialism 2024.

In your lifetime, wealth inequality has accelerated. The richest 100 people in the UK have over £100 billion more wealth than the poorest 8.5 million households.

The average pay of the chief executives of the hundred biggest companies on the London stock market is £4.19 million – 120 times that of the average worker, up from 30 times in 2006!

The Tories were smashed at the general election – hated for 14 years of this wealth transfer to the richest from the working class. Now Keir Starmer and Co continue telling us that they have to make tough decisions like raising student fees, cutting uni courses, freezing pensioners, and maintaining the cold Tory cruelty of the two-child benefit cap.

There is no lack of money. The 350 wealthiest people and families in the UK have a combined wealth of £795 billion. They could fill over 30 of Rachel Reeves's 'fiscal black holes' and still buy her and Keir a new outfit with the change.

Starmer and the rest of the capitalist elites have no solution to the problems, which are a consequence of the crisis-ridden nature of the

system they defend. So war and climate catastrophes ravage lives across the planet.

Today's youth can expect a worse future than their parents – unless they fight back for a society run in the interests of the billions not the billionaires. That means the working class planning society democratically – not capitalist chaos.

Students are right to be angry. They are right to be getting organised – against war, against fee rises and cuts, against low pay and high rents, against racism and all forms of discrimination. They need a socialist alternative to the capitalist system that underlies all of that. They need to come to the Socialism 2024 weekend to discuss with other students, socialists, trade unionists and campaigners.

'Building the socialist opposition' is the theme that will run through the weekend. The Saturday rally, the centrepiece of the weekend, will hear from leaders of the socialist movement, of those building a socialist voice in the trade unions and on campus, of the fight for a socialist political voice, and for internationalism.

Buy a ticket today



socialism.org.uk

Speakers include:

- **Hannah Sell, Socialist Party general secretary**
- **Tony Saunois, Secretary of the Committee for a Workers' International**
- **Fiona Brittle, PCS National Executive Committee**
- **Odunayo Eniayekan, Nigeria Solidarity UK**
- **Nadia Ditta, anti-war socialist election candidate**
- **Mihaela Ivanova, Funding Not Fees student activist**
- **Chaired by: Josh Asker, editor of the Socialist newspaper**



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