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the Socialist

Issue 1295

24-30 October 2024

formerly **Militant**

Labour's austerity budget

MAKE THE SUPER-RICH PAY

BUILD THE SOCIALIST OPPOSITION



The NHS is on its knees from 14 years of Tory starvation rations. Local government services like adult social care and special needs education are reeling from relentless cutbacks, in many cases carried out by Labour councillors talking of 'tough decisions'.

We don't know exactly what will be in this Labour government's first budget on 30 October. But we do know that it won't go anywhere near giving the funding needed for public services, devastated by Tory austerity.

It won't stop the rich getting richer at our expense.

Labour chancellor Rachel Reeves might change the rules to spend a bit more on future investment - itself proof that rules are there to be broken. But what about the urgent need for funding now? For NHS services facing another bleak winter? For social care services facing closure in the next few months?

Hundreds of community and trade union campaigns are already under way to save services from cuts and privatisation under

Starmar's Labour government. Workers are already being forced to strike, like the London Underground workers facing down attacks overseen by Labour London Mayor Sadiq Khan.

Independent Alliance MPs, including Jeremy Corbyn, as well as Green MPs and others, have signed a letter to Labour chancellor Rachel Reeves asking her to introduce even just a 2% tax on wealth over £10 million, pointing out that this could raise £24 billion a year.

Hundreds of billions could be raised by even modest taxes on Britain's biggest companies, filling Reeves's 'black hole' many times over. But by nationalising the top companies and banks that dominate the economy, a plan could be drawn up democratically by the

working class to meet our needs, not those of the bosses.

There is already growing working-class opposition to Starmer's Labour. It is vital that the trade unions take the lead in organising it, by being prepared to fight industrially, by campaigning for policies in the interests of workers, and by taking steps towards building a new mass party of the working class to fight for them.

That is the best way to undermine attempts by far-right and right populist forces to spread their divisive hateful ideas. It's the capitalist bosses, not migrants, who are getting richer at our expense.

We need to build the socialist opposition. If you agree, join the Socialist Party

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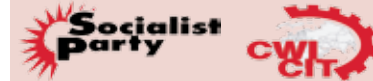
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."
Karl Marx

'Tory boy' vs 'Tory woman'

You might have missed it but the two contenders for leadership of what was once the historically most successful pro-capitalist party were grilled by GB News on 17 October. The choice for Tory members is between two horrors - competing to win the competition for who can divide and rule the most brutally.

Big business bosses can rely on Starmer's Labour to act in their interests. But doing so won't endear an already unpopular Labour Party to the masses of working-class people struggling to make ends meet. Who's going to go to the polls and gleefully vote for the party that has cut winter fuel payments, kept the two-child benefit cap and looks likely to increase tuition fees?

But the bosses will need an alternative, and the fact is Robert Jenrick or Kemi Badenoch - like Trump or Farage - will probably be unstable,

unreliable representatives for the capitalists' interests. There are even some Tory bigwigs, like the former West Midlands Mayor Andy Street, who say they might not vote, such is the dearth of choice on offer.

There are probably some capitalists worrying while eating their gold-plated cereal, thinking about how they are going to make sure they have their men and women in Parliament at the next election. For working-class people, the farce of the Tory leadership seems removed, but it's only happening because the Labour Party in power is looking out for the interests of the rich, not our own.

We need a mass party that will fight for our interests against the bosses. A party armed with a socialist programme to fight back against the profit-hungry bosses and their ghoul in Parliament.



Water reform should be nationalisation



In July, government water regulator Ofwat said that bills would be capped at 21% over five years. Now, months later, it predicts bills from about half of water companies will rise even higher, with one as high as 44%. And that's at a time when every water company is under investigation for pollution.

The biggest overhaul of the water

industry since privatisation in the 1980s should be reversing it and nationalising the entire industry under democratic workers' control and management, with compensation only on the basis of proven need. Then prices could be set at an affordable level and investment made to stop pumping waterways full of sewage and pollution.

'Boris bike' wheelchairs - coming to a hospital near you?

If you go to A&E in Kings College Hospital in London and require a wheelchair, you'd best get your credit card out! At this hospital, and coming soon to others, a private company will provide wheelchairs free of charge ... for the first four hours! And how many people unfortunate enough to end up in A&E are seen within four hours? After that you will be charged £2 an hour for the 'privilege' of using a wheelchair in hospital.

Is this the sort of thing we can expect from health secretary Wes Streeting's increased involvement of big business in our health service? Big businesses profiting by providing a basic service we all would expect to be free of charge.

The first 'reform' for the NHS should be kicking out all the private health vultures and running it for the good of us all.



WHY SOCIALISTS FIGHT FOR NATIONALISATION
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● We reserve the right to shorten and edit letters.
For legal reasons, we need your full name, address and phone number - but confidentiality will be respected if requested

THE SOCIALIST INBOX

● **Triple whammy**
Let me introduce the triple whammy. One: a heating allowance snatched away. Two: mounting debt caused by dental treatment costing £8,000, and not available on the NHS. Things can't get worse can they? Three: Stonewater housing association has increased the rent by £50 a week. The council will not offer a thing because they say it's service charge not rent. Can socialism be introduced this year?
MICHAEL MARX
SOUTHAMPTON

● **Shitty water bosses**
Congratulations to the bosses of Britain's water companies. They achieved
DEREK MCMILLAN
WEST SUSSEX

3.6 million hours of sewage flows into our rivers last year.
They obviously richly deserved the £9.1 million in bonuses this record earned them.
Some fines were levied. Who paid them? We did, in higher water bills! Makes you so proud!
MIKE CLEVERLEY
WALTHAM FOREST

● **Assisted suicide vote**
Politicians will vote for assisted suicide because they will not spend the money on palliative end-of-life care. Call them worthless. Make them believe they are a burden. Then offer them assisted suicide.
DEREK MCMILLAN
WEST SUSSEX

Labour launches NHS 'national conversation' We don't need a chat, we need public ownership and decent funding



Labour already has a means to have a 'national conversation' with staff in their hundreds of thousands - though their trade unions!

Wes Streeting claims the NHS is "broken but not beaten" and looks set to prescribe the health service with increased privatisation. His diagnostic test was provided by a former health minister under Tony Blair, Lord Darzi, whose report laid bare the NHS crisis. Just the NHS would need an additional £38 billion a year by 2030 if patient outcomes are to improve, according to the Health Foundation. If this Labour government was to match NHS spending increases from the Blair era it would need an extra £477 billion by 2030.

Samantha Erin, Tower Hamlets Socialist Party, looks at an important omission from the report:

I want to talk to the lack of focus on social care in the report - this is an area which has and continues to experience chronic underfunding by Tory and Labour governments.

The report shows that, despite spending over half the health budget on hospitals, the government hasn't invested in creating a healthy system for them to operate in. There is a lack of investment in primary, community and social care services that keep people out of hospital and allow them to be discharged safely when they are ready to leave. The report makes a few references to shifting care 'upstream' and closer to home, close partnership between health and social care is key for meaningful change.

The scope of the investigation was decidedly focused on the NHS, highlighting only at a high level the impact of social care not having been

additional funding is needed in 2024-25 to meet the same level of need as the previous financial year".

Adult social care is in a vicious cycle, where needs escalate into more severe problems. But councillors do have a route to fight back. They must fight for the funding needed to meet rising demand, and pay and treat staff fairly, which would improve the quality of care. By setting budgets based on objective, social need, then using reserves and borrowing powers to implement this, huge support could be harnessed to build a campaign for the funding required from central government. Care should be brought back in-house, stopping greedy private interests siphoning off profits and to give workers, service users and communities democratic control.

In a socialist system, based on the nationalisation of the key industries, the vast wealth that exists in society could be harnessed to fund quality services, reduce the working week, and fund decent living conditions. In such circumstances, workers may choose to spend more time caring for friends, relatives and those in the community. This would reduce the epidemic of loneliness faced by disabled people, those with mental health issues, and older people. The Socialist Party fights for a fully funded NHS and social care system run democratically by workers and service users.

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

The government has launched an online platform to receive ideas for a 'ten-year plan' to fix the NHS. Members of the public and organisations, including private medical companies, can take part in a 'national conversation' and submit ideas for reforms to the NHS. Reading the press release and the Guardian expressing his supposed love for the NHS, you wouldn't have any idea there had been a change in government.

Funding is mentioned, but as an afterthought following a dozen buzzwords we've heard from the Tories for over a decade. There are plans to create a 'patient passport', improvements from modern technology, and creating neighbourhood health centres. These would be welcome if implemented properly instead of increased avenues for companies to make profit from our ill health. But none of this will resolve the urgent crises of massive waiting lists, dangerous understaffing and under-resourcing. Neither the press release nor Streeting's article deal with what is actually needed to reverse the horrendous state the NHS is in.

Instead of a sham 'national conversation' with the public, Labour could look at the 6.3 million patients on NHS waiting lists, or the thousands of unnecessary deaths of those waiting for treatment.

Labour already has a means to have a 'national conversation' with staff in their hundreds of thousands - though their trade unions! The NHS unions have made absolutely clear

that the health service needs an urgent massive rise in funding to bring staff pay back up to at least where it was in real terms before 2010. Funding is also urgently needed to recruit staff and end the workload crisis, and to ensure they have the equipment and resources needed to do the job properly.

NHS unions have also consistently backed ending privatisation of the NHS, while Streeting and the rest of Labour are championing further private sector involvement. Privatisation, directly and through PFI (private finance initiative) schemes, is leeching money from the NHS. Money that should go towards healthcare instead goes to profit margins and shareholders' pockets.

University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire is a sickening example. A hospital built under PFI that now pays out over £80 million a year - an eighth of its entire budget - to a private firm. Additionally, the hospital car park has its own PFI scheme raking in £7 million profit for a different private firm.

We don't need a 'national conversation' to know private firms should be booted out and the NHS should receive far more funding to ensure it returns to a world-class health service. But whose voices will Labour listen to? Workers and people who need the NHS, or big business wanting to maximise their profits? Streeting and the rest of Starmer's Labour have been clear they want more private involvement, and have insisted on 'reform before funding'. The working class will have a real voice in this 'conversation' if the NHS unions return to the picket lines to fight for the health service we need.



Labour's Renters Reform Bill Mass council house building programme needed



Campaigning for renters' rights SOCIALIST PARTY WALES

BEN GOLDSTONE
CROYDON AND SUTTON SOCIALIST PARTY

The Renters' Rights Bill, initially proposed by the Tories back in 2019, now called the Renters (Reform) Bill, is back in the House of Commons. This time, alongside banning Section 21 evictions, Labour claim that several measures in it will "decisively level the playing field between the landlords and tenants". But, with people paying through the nose for substandard and dangerous housing, will it solve the housing crisis?

This bill includes a ban on Section 21 'no-fault' evictions where landlords could evict tenants with two months' notice without reason, which will apply to both new and existing tenancies. Landlords will have to use other measures to kick tenants out.

Awaab's Law will be extended. This law, named after the toddler who tragically died following exposure to mould in his family's socially rented home in Rochdale, initially said that landlords would have to investigate hazards within 14 days, fix them within seven, and enact emergency repairs within 24 hours. Labour has extended this law to cover privately rented homes too. But now these timescales are up for consultation - big property businesses and social housing operators are likely trying to push these back.

A new 'Private Rented Sector Ombudsman' is to be introduced to help deal with complaints from tenants quickly, and there is to be a ban on

mid-tenancy rent increases, meaning that landlords will only be able to raise rents once a year at market rates.

Bidding wars between potential tenants are to be eliminated, as landlords will be banned from asking for, encouraging, or accepting any bids above the original price. However, landlords already plan to get around this - advertising a high monthly rent and encouraging people to make offers 'below' this!

The Bill will take away fixed-term assured tenancies. Instead, all tenancies will be periodic, meaning the tenant can stay in their home until they decide to end the lease by giving two months' notice. However, tenants can still be given four months' notice to end their tenancy if their landlord's circumstances change.

End the housing crisis?

Renters, especially those who live in substandard accommodation, or those anxious that their tenancy will be terminated for no reason, will no doubt hope that these changes will help to end their housing misery. But Labour's propositions do not go far enough.

Although the proposed changes will prohibit some abuses from landlords and letting agents, people are already spending too much on rent! A recent study by Shelter found that tenants in England are collectively paying an extra £473 million every month on rent this year, with each household on average paying an extra £103 per month compared to 2023.

We need councils to implement rent controls to limit what capitalist landlords can charge. With increasing numbers of people homeless or living in temporary accommodation, the bill also proposes nothing that will answer the current housing crisis.

Labour is relying on private developers to build more homes to help solve the housing crisis but, driven by profit, they cannot be relied upon to build the high-quality, affordable homes we need. Labour councils across the country could stand up for their residents facing homelessness, mould and slumlords and build council houses now. Then send the bill to the new Labour government.

The Socialist Party fights for privately owned large building companies, land banks, and estates to be nationalised to implement a mass building programme of affordable, quality and environmentally friendly council houses.

A NEW ERA FOR THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALISM IN BRITAIN

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Labour's welfare reforms – same level of cuts as the Tories

SAM MORDEN
NEWCASTLE SOCIALIST PARTY

The government is reportedly planning to cut £3 billion from the welfare bill in the upcoming budget. This figure came from Tory proposals to tighten up the Limited Capacity for Work (LCW) and the Limited Capacity for Work and Work-Related Activity (LCWRA) sections of Universal Credit (UC). This is likely to expose more people with disabilities and long-term illnesses to the sanctions-based system that UC is built upon. Forcing people, under the threat of loss of benefits, into work at a massive cost to our health.

The original proposals released in 2023 by the then Conservative administration included the short-term tightening of the Work Capability Assessment (and its eventual scrapping); the aforementioned attacks on LCW and LCWRA; and replacing Employment and Support Allowance and LCWRA with a new health component of UC only available to those eligible for the draconian and bureaucratic Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

What reforms does Labour plan?

Liz Kendall, the Blairite Work and Pensions Secretary, spoke recently that trials of employment advisors giving CV and interview 'advice' in hospitals to those suffering mental health crises produced "dramatic results" (although anyone outside of the government has yet to see the evidence). As if sending work coaches into mental health hospital wards will help people suffering acute crises.

Health Secretary Wes Streeting has said it's "not dystopian" for chronically obese people (who usually have a host of underlying conditions) on benefits to be offered the latest anti-obesity 'wonderdrugs' in order to get them back into work! Before the election, Labour hinted that they would, under the right conditions, stop the managed migration of the LCW and LCWRA groups then planned by the Tories.

We didn't trust Labour then, and we have no more reason to trust them now, especially after the callous decisions to keep the two-child benefit cap and cut winter fuel allowance for pensioners.

We need a fully funded, democratically organised social security system that works alongside health and social care to provide a good standard of living for all, regardless of capability for work. We need a party that will fight for all sections of the working class against a new era of austerity and capitalist instability - we need a new socialist mass workers' party.



PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY

SOCIALISM: THE PODCAST

New episode: Fighting the far right

The Marxist podcast from the Socialist Party

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WE CAN'T WAIT! BUILD THE SOCIALIST OPPOSITION TO STARMER'S AUSTERITY NOW

WHAT WE THINK

Things will get worse before they get better. "The Tories left an even bigger mess than we realised."

"There's a £22 billion black hole" - or is that £40 billion now?

How many more ways are there of telling us the same thing: this Starmer-led Labour government is preparing further privatisation and austerity, forcing the working class to continue to pay for successive capitalist crises, while riches continue to flow into the pockets of the bosses.

Workers had to wait 97 days for Labour's Employment Rights Bill - only to learn that we're expected to wait another year or two as its already watered down content goes through a process of 'consultation' before an even more watered down version is implemented.

We've had to wait almost four months for Labour's budget. But whatever Starmer and chancellor Rachel Reeves say about 'no austerity', one thing we do know about the 30 October budget is that it will be austerity by any other name. Once again we will be told we have to wait for things to get better.

Now we're told there's a big plan for the NHS - a ten-year plan!

But it seems it's only the working class that has to wait. Starmer didn't wait to slash the winter fuel payments. Enfield Labour council isn't waiting to shut down half its libraries. Leeds Labour council isn't waiting to sell-off its nurseries. Wiltshire NHS bosses haven't waited before handing over all their community health services to a private subsidiary of Virgin.

Repeal anti-union laws immediately

Many trade union leaders greeted the Employment Rights Bill with gushing enthusiasm. RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said, "This is the most significant set of reforms in workers' rights that we've seen in decades," in a tweet that "strongly welcomed the Labour government's pledge to rapidly introduce legislation aimed at restoring workers' rights".

But the plan is very far from "rapid"!



Build mass pressure PHOTO: HUGO PIERRE

Repeal of the 2016 trade union legislation is the most significant element in the bill, as it would remove the undemocratic 50% turnout threshold. The 2023 Strikes (Minimum Services Levels) Act, also to be repealed, has already been made unworkable by the action of train drivers union Aslef.

The bill goes nowhere near the demand agreed at this year's TUC, in a motion moved by the Fire Brigades Union, to repeal all Tory anti-union laws introduced by the Tories in the 1980s and 1990s, all of which were left in place by Tony Blair's Labour government, which he approvingly declared were among the most restrictive in Europe. The bill also leaves in place the ban on strikes by prison officers.

And most outrageously, all the restrictions remain in place while this bill is consulted on.

But there is no reason the 2016 Act cannot be repealed straight away - and could have been on 5 July.

Emergency legislation can be passed very quickly. The Tory

government in 1971 famously nationalised Rolls Royce in just a few days. In fact, there have been 211 'expedited' bills since 1979 - bills that have had their second and third reading in parliament in just one day - ranging from single issues such as dangerous dogs and badgers, to major legislation such as on Brexit and coronavirus.

With a big parliamentary majority, the government would have nothing to fear. What stops them is not whether or not it is possible, but their fear that workers would gain in confidence from such a measure.

And the price paid by workers is huge. Unison members in local government have just been balloted over action against their measly pay offer but, as last year, they have only managed to exceed the thresholds in a small number of places. Those members are told by their general secretary not to worry - the repeal of trade union legislation is planned to be quicker than the implementation of the rest of the bill, so it may be done by next year's pay round!

The worst thing trade union

leaders can do is to prettify, and provide a left cover for, the actions of Starmer's government. His Labour Party is a pro-capitalist party that has ruthlessly purged Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity policies from its programme and the MPs who argued for them from its ranks.

Pressure

It is the fear of mass action, experienced in the 2022-23 strike wave, that has forced them to make above-inflation pay offers and to propose a modest step forward in workers' rights down the road. It is a big mistake for trade union leaders to collude with what Starmer, Reeves and the rest are aiming for: to allow those meagre measures to be used to hoodwink and hold back members.

Instead of praise, the trade union leaders should demand immediate repeal, and at the same time warn workers of the need to get ready to fight the further austerity measures that are coming.

And they should use every lever open to them to apply pressure.

Trade union executives should call on the Independent group of MPs, headed by Jeremy Corbyn, and the seven Labour MPs suspended for voting against the two-child benefit cap, to move a private members bill for immediate repeal.

The same approach could be taken to anti-austerity amendments to the budget on behalf of workers - to expose the reality of Starmer's policies and demand funding for public services instead of increased privatisation, for example.

The best pressure being applied to Starmer right now comes from the strike action announced on London Underground by the RMT and Aslef unions, and the vote to reject the 5.5% pay offer by members of the Royal College of Nursing.

That pressure would be all the greater if it was allied with building a bloc of MPs in parliament to champion policies in the interests of workers. That would be an important step in building the mass action and workers' party that are needed to win socialist policies in the interests of working-class people.

Fight the far right by fighting for the working class

And that task is vital. The Socialist Party has consistently warned of the danger of far-right, racist forces stepping into the vacuum as anger with the Labour government grows.

On 26 October, a counter-protest has been organised against the far-right Tommy Robinson, who has called a rally in central London. Several trade unions and their general secretaries have put out the call for the counter-demo.

The Socialist Party has called for the trade unions to take a serious approach to leading the fight against the far right, including mobilising numbers and providing democratically controlled stewarding.

But we have been clear that that is not separate from preparing a serious fight for the pay, jobs, homes and services we all need.

Calling on members to attend the counter-protest is, at best, only a partial job, if calls like that are accompanied by minimising or even covering over the austerity being prepared by this Labour government.

Leading a strong fight on those issues would both enable the mobilisation of bigger numbers when needed, and help to undercut potential support for far-right ideas.

If you agree with the need to build the socialist opposition to Starmer now - join us!

Unison NEC: Stand up to Starmer - and his supporters at the head of our union

APRIL ASHLEY
UNISON NEC, PERSONAL CAPACITY

The first public sector union Unison National Executive Council (NEC) since the general election recently met and the discussion concentrated on the Labour government's Employment Rights Bill.

The Keir Starmer-supporting general secretary, Christina McAnea, gave an upbeat assessment about working with the new Labour government as the NEC welcomed the demise of the Tories. The meeting reported that there are now 127 Unison-backed MPs.

The NEC welcomed the Employment Rights Bill although it was confirmed that many of its provisions would not be in place for two years, for example a fair pay agreement in adult social care. There is a dominance of individual rights compared to collective rights and there are still many shortcomings. These include specifying a ban on 'exploitative' zero-hour contracts rather than an outright ban, which will be exploited by employers.

It was clear there will be a battle with the employers as they try to water down some of the provisions, and

the trade unions need to strengthen our rights such as trade union access to workplaces.

Repeal anti-union laws

I raised the timetable for repeal of the Strikes (MSL) Act and the Trade Union Act 2016 which brought in the 50% turnout threshold for ballots. This has affected Unison's ballots in local government and health and prevented action. At the NEC we were awaiting the outcome of the local government national pay ballot, but we now know the threshold has again not been met in the majority of places.

It was reported to the NEC that the 2016 Act was expected to be repealed in May-July 2025, immediately following Royal Assent. But there is no reason this repeal cannot happen straightaway and we should campaign for that - particularly when many pay anniversary dates, including in local government, are in April.

Fight for council funding

The NEC also debated the dire situation of local authority cuts, with many councils facing Section 114 notices - effectively bankrupt as they can only spend on statutory services - like Nottingham City Council and



PHOTO: LONDON SP

Birmingham, which have Tory commissioners running Labour councils. Councils across the UK are falling over with services destroyed and hundreds of jobs being lost.

Unfortunately, although declared a priority for Unison, there is no industrial or political strategy, leaving Unison leaders to just plead with the Labour government for more funds. Like Oliver Twist, they are reduced to begging for 'more please, sir' instead of building a militant campaign to fight for emergency funding.

Demands for Labour councils to set no-cuts budget and organise industrial action have been wrongly ruled out of order at successive Unison conferences.

However, Labour's first budget in the autumn will show clearly if Rachel 'no more austerity' Reeves really will bail out local government with higher funding. If not, the left 'Time for Real Change' grouping that leads the NEC needs to stand up to the general secretary and mount a fight to stop the collapse of local government services and jobs.

Get all the latest union news



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Tube strikes are back: 'No union could possibly agree'

RMT and Aslef unions on London Underground have announced several days of strike action from 1-16 November, over pay. Jared Wood, regional organiser of the RMT, was interviewed by LBC radio.

"We're fairly confident that we could sit down with London Underground and

thrash out an agreement on the size of this pay award. What has caused the strike action is a ridiculous insistence by London Underground that whatever award is agreed between us, they will then, as management, take a unilateral decision on who is and who isn't eligible to receive it.

"This is an absurd approach to negotiation, which no trade union could possibly agree. We're negotiating for over 10,000 members right across all grades of London Underground, and when we negotiate a deal in good faith, we expect that to be applied to all of our members.

"What they want to do is impose a system of pay banding across all London Underground grades, where at the moment that doesn't exist. And they want these 'pay families' to determine wage levels for different grades.

"There's already banding in certain parts of London Underground and we've dealt with that over many years. But what they're now saying is that banding, and any rules that they apply, are now sitting outside of any

negotiation between the trade unions and the employer.

"They will have the final say. They will be able to limit whatever a pay rise is. They will be able to determine whether an individual, who perhaps moved jobs in the previous 12 months, is going to qualify for the pay rise.

Good faith

"And we're not going to accept that. We think that when we sit down to negotiate for 10,000 members, that's exactly what we're doing. Whatever agreement is reached in good faith should be applied to everyone.

"The pay offer from London Underground is 3.8% plus a flat-rate element of £450, which is something we have always argued for. We always try to structure offers so that they address our members who are on lower pay, because most of our members earn much less than a train driver. We do represent a great many train drivers, but we represent even more people who are not. And so we look to protect those people from the effects of inflation. We think we've made a bit of progress with London Underground in that respect, but we can't accept this clause that they will then go away and decide who gets it.

"Members are looking at their bills every month. They're looking at what they're paying in gas, electric, food, like everyone else out there, and they're saying we're not prepared to take another real-terms pay cut."



RMT strike at Victoria station LONDON SP

Offshore bosses and training providers: 'A conveyor belt of greed'

AN OFFSHORE WORKER WRITES

In today's energy sector, workers are finding themselves caught in a web of exploitation, as training providers take advantage of a growing demand for certification.

After years of deindustrialisation, the UK does not have the skills to support the industry and build a green economy. Training providers charge scandalous prices for essential courses, pushing workers to shoulder the financial burden of training just to maintain their jobs. T3 Training is the main player, with some courses costing up to £10,000, with no guarantee of a job at the end of it.

Meanwhile, oil companies are undermining qualifications like NVQs (National Vocational Qualifications). Why go to the trouble of employing workers and putting them through NVQs, when the workers can pay for themselves and then compete with each other in the job market, giving the opportunity for bosses to drive offshore workers' wages down.

Industries such as oil and gas are highly dangerous, no matter how many incidents get brushed under the carpet. They demand a workforce that is skilled. But do the oil and gas companies really care if you're skilled, when they look at the balance sheet? No, they care about profit. For skilled workers, this means one thing: a constant driving down of skills.



PHOTO: LINDSEY G/CC

NVQs are no longer considered a standard of competency in many industries. They are being sidelined in favour of cheaper, faster alternatives that require less training. This allows companies to reduce wage costs and investment in workers. Less skilled workers can be taken on to fill roles that once required highly trained workers with four-year apprenticeships under their belts.

Strong trade unions needed

The strong trade unionism of the past, that insisted on a skilled workforce, has been reduced over the years. It is workers being organised and having control that protects the skills and keeps things safe.

The last time I was on a job offshore, four welders came to the job, all self-employed and 60 years of age, the only ones with NVQs. Sadly those workers are a dying breed. The younger generation are struggling to find good apprenticeships so they are turning to the training providers and paying for the training out of their own pocket.

Workers whose NVQs demonstrate their skills now find themselves competing with a workforce that is, by design, less skilled. Regulatory bodies come up with some nice booklets to explain how that's a good thing for us. It's like the government and big oil are working together to deskill historical trades. In the long run, this

undermines not only job security but also the quality of work across the sector - and, dare I say it, the safety of oil platforms.

The last time I was at the training provider, one of the trainers said that some workers looking for employment are camping outside in nearby fields and sleeping in cars, asking for extra meals from the canteen onsite, as they have spent the last of their funds seeking employment.

This is nothing more than a conveyor belt of greed and the working class is the meat that keeps feeding it. Training providers have become key players in exploiting the precarious position of workers today.

Join the fightback

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

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

- Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join
- or call 020 8988 8777
- or text your name and postcode to 07761 818 206 to find out more today!

DO THE TRADE UNIONS NEED TO FIGHT UNDER LABOUR?

Come and discuss at **SOCIALISM 2024**
London, 9-10 November
tickets and info at socialism.org.uk

PCS: Prepare the fight on DWP pay now Who runs PCS? Support the call for a special delegate conference

PCS MEMBER IN DWP

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) pay offer was finally published to all DWP staff on 14 October. The Labour government set an overall civil service pay remit of 5% and then each department makes offers within that remit. Incredibly, in DWP the lowest grades have been offered only a 4% increase, with an additional 1% as a one-off, while some higher grades have higher increases.

The offer does little to address over a decade of real-terms pay cuts. Whilst it is above inflation, the difference is marginal. The lowest grades - Administrative Assistants and Administrative Officers - are likely to find themselves on the minimum wage in April for the third year in a row.

This award will also lead to worse terms and conditions if we do not mount a serious campaign for more funding, as 3% of the pay bill is unfunded and so will come from other areas. For DWP members, this directly translates to continued understaffing and therefore increased workloads on an already stressed workforce. There is also the risk of more office closures.

Correctly, this pay offer was rejected by the PCS union DWP group



PCS DWP strike SOCIALIST PARTY

committee. The majority on the DWP committee is held by the 'Left Unity' grouping, the same group which was ousted from its majority on the National Executive Committee (NEC) at the last elections, but which still holds the general secretary and president positions. Many members want to know whether there is any bite behind the bark.

It's not enough to symbolically reject something. The Left Unity leadership should now be urgently preparing DWP members for a campaign, leading to a statutory ballot on pay, staffing and other PCS demands. DWP is the biggest group in the union - a strong fight could reinvigorate the national campaign which the general secretary and president are blocking nationally.

The new NEC majority, which includes Socialist Party members and Broad Left Network supporters, has consistently advocated that we use our industrial strength to maximise the pay award, rejecting the 5%, with plans drawn up for a serious campaign. The national president (who is also DWP vice president) has undemocratically blocked every attempt to do this at the NEC, unconditionally supported by the DWP group president who also sits on the NEC.

The way to break the logjam is to back the call for a Special Delegate

Conference (SDC). See 'Rebuild a fighting union: Support the call for a special delegate conference' at bln.org.uk.

Under pressure

The call for an SDC is gathering support from branches reps across the civil service. The general secretary and president are clearly feeling the pressure. In a blatant abuse of their positions, they have sent an email to every member of each branch that has passed the motion calling for an SDC, arguing against the points contained in the motion. An answer to this attack can be found at bln.org.uk.

Meanwhile, PCS HQ has also asked each branch that has submitted the motion to provide information on the number of members present at the meeting (specifying 'Emergency General Meetings'), and a copy of the minutes. Neither of these are required by the union's rules, nor that the meetings should be EGMS - though the NEC majority is keen to hold EGMS to ensure maximum participation of members in discussion.

This is a sure sign that the pressure is building, and that we need to continue speaking to reps and members to ensure the threshold to call an SDC is met - that is with motions from branches that represent 25% of the membership.

WHAT BROUGHT AN END TO SOUTH AFRICAN APARTHEID?

DEJI OLAYINKA
SOCIALIST PARTY BLACK AND ASIAN GROUP

30 years ago, the inspirational movement of the South African masses brought an end to the horrific apartheid regime, the process concluding with elections in April 1994. The Black majority was finally able to vote, and the African National Congress (ANC) was elected into government.

Apartheid was introduced from 1948, codifying and developing 300 years of segregation and exploitation used by British, and before that Dutch, colonialism and imperialism. It started when colonialists used force to dispossess the indigenous population from the land. The colonial 'reserves' system assigned at least 87% of land to white owners, while the original inhabitants were forced into brutal exploitative work on the colonialists' stolen land, and to live confined to the reserves.

Especially from the 1880s, the ruling class in South Africa made its wealth through the exploitation of cheap labour to extract gold and minerals, which brought in the capital later used to create manufacturing industry. This migrant labour system was fundamental to South African capitalists' wealth. A pool of cheap, precarious and temporary workers in the reserves could be drawn on to work in mines and urban centres.

The separation of workers from their families, who were stuck in the reserves, meant the capitalists had less pressure to concede housing and amenities, and provide welfare to the sick, unemployed and elderly. One South African Marxist described the reserves as "vast rural slums which served as concentration camps for the unemployed."

Capitalist division

The capitalist class in South Africa was always too weak to maintain its rule alone. As capitalism developed, it created an extremely polarised society with a tiny and insignificant middle class, too small and weak for the capitalist class to lean on as a social basis, like it could in other older capitalist countries of Europe. Instead, it had to deliberately harden and enforce racial divisions, and concede privileges to white workers to cultivate a white labour aristocracy that could form a social and political base for their system.

A broad range of measures were brought in to maintain this system and to prevent the working class from organising. An internal passport system called the pass laws, succeeded by the influx control laws, restricted the movement of Africans. This kept the workers in the reserves but was also used to break up organising efforts. Thousands of strikers and workers' leaders were banned, "endorsed out" of towns and forcibly deported to reserves.

Despite many great hurdles, the South African masses were able to

build a revolutionary movement with the aim of overcoming the double oppression they endured - both the national oppression by the white-minority regime and ruthless capitalist exploitation.

The African masses had fought bravely against colonial conquest from the very start, for example the Xhosa and Zulu peoples have a heroic history of struggle. There was no period without rebellion, but they were brutally suppressed. In 1960, there were struggles against the pass law that were savagely suppressed. 69 people were murdered by police during the Sharpeville Massacre, most shot in the back as they fled.



The 1980s was a period of mass struggle that doomed the apartheid regime. The regime desperately turned to repression to stop the movement, but that only strengthened opposition

A state of emergency was called and the ANC, the main political body in the fight against apartheid, was banned. Although it was not a socialist programme, the ANC's core principals outlined in the Freedom Charter included the demand that "the mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole" and that land is "redivided amongst those who work it".

In the face of brutal repression, it was the strength of the movement of the South African working class which was decisive in overthrowing the regime.

The 1960s was a period of global economic boom but also of working-class revolutionary movements, which in turn inspired other workers internationally.

Trade unions

Mass trade unionism had attempted to grow in South Africa previously, only to be crushed: the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union in the 1920s, the Confederation of Non-European Trade Unions in the 1940s, South African Congress of Trade Unions in the 1950s. But from the struggles and repression of the 1960s, independent trade unionism flourished again on an unprecedented scale.

The Durban dock strike of 1969 was a major step in raising the confidence of workers, leading to national strike action which peaked with the 1973 Natal strikes. A number of activists who would, later in the decade, go on to form the Marxist Workers' Tendency (MWT), the Socialist Party's sister organisation in South Africa, played

an important role in this struggle. This experience showed the power of organised labour and in 1974-75 Black trade union membership doubled and tripled.

In 1976, the apartheid regime over-estimated its control and mandated that Afrikaans - a language associated with apartheid and Dutch colonialism - be taught to all children. High school youth in Soweto bravely rose in strikes and protests against this policy and apartheid. Around half of South Africa's Black population was younger than 16, so it was a key moment. Responding to the appeals of their children, workers across Soweto and the wider region took repeated strike action in the first political strikes since the banning of the ANC. This was brutally cracked down on, and over 1,000 workers and youth were killed in 1976.

There was a brief lull before the working class and its organisations - most importantly the trade unions - rose in mass struggle again. The apartheid regime attempted to make concessions to limit the aspirations of the union movement. In 1979, it accepted Africans' legal right to form trade unions. Coloured, Indian and African workers united together in action. Importantly, for the first time since the 1940s, amongst the new union members was a small number of white workers who had recognised their class interests were in line with those of the masses, not of the white bosses. Between 1979-1983 union membership had risen from 70,000 to 300,000. Momentum was building. In 1979, 1980, and 1981 there were 101, 207, and 342 strike days.

In the wake of the Soweto uprisings, the Congress of South African Students was formed. Importantly, the youth and workers united in struggle. By 1982 they had adopted the theme of 'student-worker action'. The youth campaigned with a revolutionary aim on broad social issues of high rents and transport costs etc, explaining that these struggles can only be sustainably won by uniting them with the political battle for the socialist transformation of society. They had instinctively used Trotsky's transitional method.

The 1980s was a period of mass struggle that doomed the apartheid regime. The regime desperately turned to repression to stop the movement, but that only strengthened opposition. In May 1985, a state of emergency was called again but the workers' movement defied it and formed the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

Socialism

In 1987, COSATU held a congress under the slogan "Socialism means freedom" and it adopted the ANC's Freedom Charter as the political manifesto of the trade union movement. COSATU united 2 million workers, Black and Coloured, together in the factories and workplaces. With this strength, the masses could ultimately end the apartheid regime.

The ANC leadership pointed to four



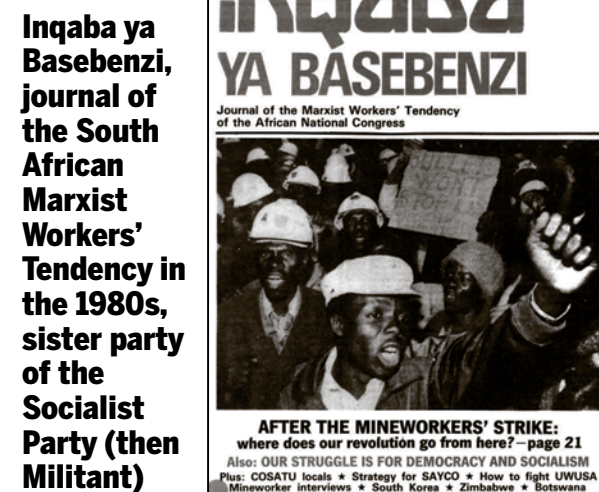
Black women demonstrate against pass laws, 1956 PHOTO: ANEFO/CC



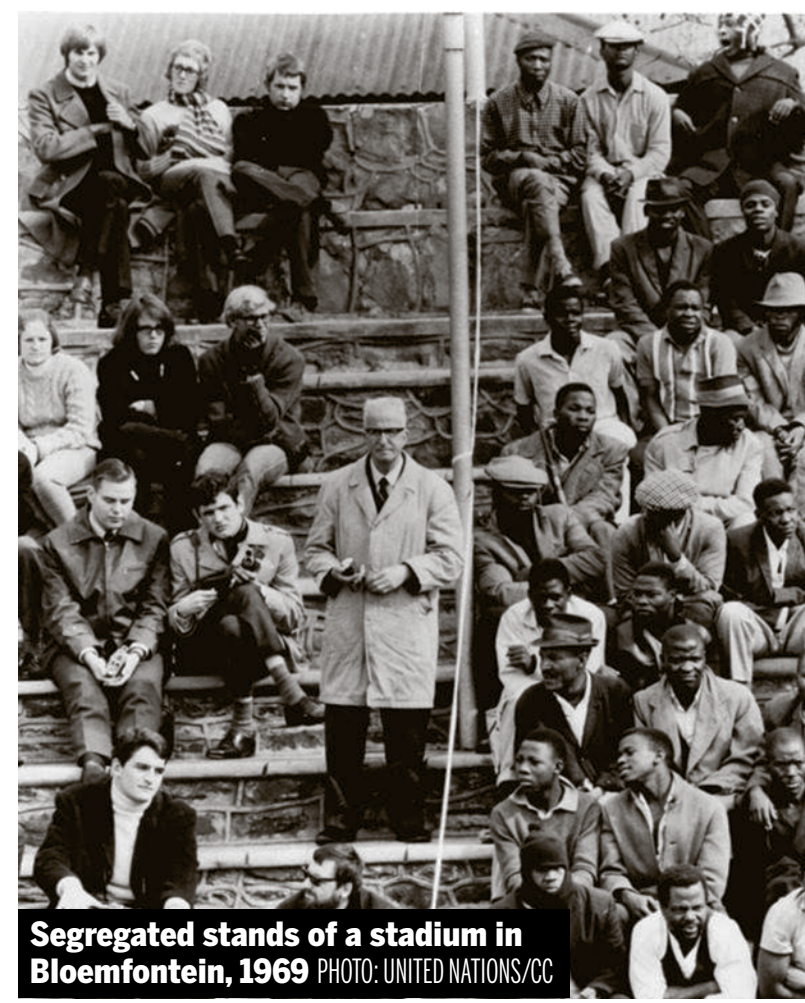
Sign in Durban, 1989 that states the beach is for whites only under section 37 of the Durban beach by-laws PHOTO: GUINNOG/CC



Bigger storms brewing over South Africa Mandela release
Soweto • Natal • Railworkers • Garment workers
Plus: World economy • Crisis of Africa • Burma • Yugoslavia • Namibia



Inqaba ya Basebenzi, journal of the South African Marxist Workers' Tendency in the 1980s, sister party of the Socialist Party (then Militant)
AFTER THE MINERWORKERS' STRIKE: where does our revolution go from here? - page 21
Also: OUR STRUGGLE IS FOR DEMOCRACY AND SOCIALISM
Plus: COSATU leads • Strategy for BAYCO • How to fight UJWSA
Minerworker interviews • South Korea • Zimbabwe • Botswana



Segregated stands of a stadium in Bloemfontein, 1969 PHOTO: UNITED NATIONS/CC

pillars of struggle: diplomatic isolation (which included economic and arms embargoes), the sports and cultural boycott, the armed struggle, and the struggle of the masses inside the country.

While all of these had an effect, it was really the last of these, specifically the action of the working class, that was decisive in ending apartheid. The ANC leadership were and are fearful of the independent initiative of the working class as a class, and so downplayed its critical role.

For much of the ANC leadership, the armed struggle was understood as a means to apply pressure to the regime to bring it to the negotiating table. The ANC's paramilitary even killed Black civilians through its shootings and bombings.



It was the working-class masses that brought an end to apartheid, and it will be the working-class masses that are the driving force to bring about a socialist transformation

There was clearly a role for democratically organised and armed self-defence of the movement, particularly on strikes and demonstrations to protect against state terror, police raids, pass law arrests and forced removals etc. But it was the mass struggle itself, not simply armed struggle, that could end the apartheid regime.

The South African workers' brave mass struggle and strike action attracted the support of the international workers' movement. In Britain, the Socialist Party (at that time named Militant) called for workers' sanctions and direct links with the trade unions to support the workers' struggles - factory-to-factory links, exchange visits between workers' representatives, and the forming of international combine committees.

Union workers based at Heathrow Airport helped smuggle literature into South Africa. In shopfloor meetings, workers agreed methods to support the movement against apartheid, in many cases workers' boycotts were organised to stop the handling of South African products. This was important as South African capitalism was supported by imperialist powers.

In contrast, many of the capitalist classes internationally supported the apartheid regime until they felt assured that their economic interests would be protected by the ANC leadership. British prime minister Margaret Thatcher and US president Ronald Reagan vetoed UN imposition of economic sanctions on South Africa.

Sanctions

The capitalist class in Britain and the US had the most economic

involvement, and so it wasn't until very late in the 1980s that they applied sanctions. Even then, they made sure the sanctions were light enough to not seriously harm their multinational companies' investments.

From the early 1980s the capitalists, faced with a growing mass movement that looked likely to make apartheid untenable, worked to deradicalise the ANC leadership, attempting to ensure their capitalist exploitation could continue.

Leaders were pulled into secret talks to isolate them from rank-and-file members and activists. Nelson Mandela's wife, Winnie, recognised he had been moved from Robben Island to Pollsmoor Prison in 1982 to disconnect him from the rest of the movement.

Even before the ANC were voted into government in 1994, the Freedom Charter was abandoned in favour of the watered-down social-democratic Reconstruction and Development Programme. This was in turn abandoned as soon as 1996, replaced with a fully neoliberal programme for government. The party leadership, including Nelson Mandela, did not want to enact anything that broke with capitalist interests. It was clear that the ANC would get a landslide victory because of that popular programme. And so, in an attempt to reduce the pressure to enact it, the election results were manipulated to give it a lower majority.

The end of the apartheid era took place against the background of collapse of the Soviet Union and other Stalinist states. With that came a period of ideological triumphalism from the capitalists, and an ideological setback for the working class internationally.

The Stalinist states weren't socialist, they were ruled by a privileged totalitarian elite running things in their own narrow interests. But the regimes did rest on nationalised planned economies, the existence of which were proof of an alternative to a capitalist economy.

Stalinists in the South African Communist Party and others in the movement called for a two-stage approach, limiting the anti-apartheid movement to the struggle for democratic rights and reforms within capitalism and opposing the socialist change, that was widely recognised among the working class and youth as necessary, until South African capitalism could be fully developed. The MWT argued against this approach, recognising that capitalism, leaving wealth

and power in the hands of the capitalist elite, could not bring about the change required.

Writing in his 1994 pamphlet 'From Slavery to the Smashing of Apartheid', Socialist Party Political Secretary Peter Taaffe asked: "How long will it be before an ANC government sends in police and army units against striking workers or rebellious inhabitants of the African townships?.. The coalition government, with the ANC as a majority, will be subject to remorseless contrary and counter-class pressures. Mandela and the right of the ANC have already bent the knee to capitalism, both within the country and on an international scale" (See 'The Negotiated Settlement and the 1994 Elections' at marxistworkersparty.org.za).

Peter's prediction was confirmed in the most horrific way with the Marikana massacre in 2012, when 34 striking miners at the Lonmin platinum mine were killed by the police. Cyril Ramaphosa, the current ANC President of South Africa, was then a major shareholder in Lonmin. Today it's clear to see that the issues experienced under apartheid have not been resolved under capitalism. The 'official' unemployment rate among Black South Africans is 37.6%, the Black masses remain excluded, with white people holding 65.9% of top management-level posts and a large but precarious Black 'middle class'.

In May this year, the ANC lost its majority for the first time, to be replaced by a Government of National Unity - an attempt to bring political stability in a country still wracked by huge inequality and brutal capitalist exploitation.

It was the working-class masses that brought an end to apartheid, and it will be the working-class masses that are the driving force to bring about a socialist transformation of society in South Africa and around the world.



The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the international socialist organisation which the Socialist Party is affiliated to. The CWI is organised in many countries. We work to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against capitalism, and to fight for a socialist world.
socialistworld.net

YOU CAN'T HAVE CAPITALISM WITHOUT RACISM

Come and discuss at **SOCIALISM 2024**
London, 9-10 November
tickets and info at socialism.org.uk

Book launch of Militant and Socialist Party cartoonist Alan Hardman's works

Alan Hardman was the first printer of the Militant (the Socialist's predecessor) and produced hundreds of political cartoons for publication in our party publications. Sadly, Alan passed away in January (see 'Obituary: Alan Hardman 1936-2024 Militant cartoonist and printer'). A book, 'Need Not Greed', has been published of his cartoons and artwork and is available for a discounted price at 1854.photo/SocParty. Linda Taaffe, representing the Socialist Party, spoke at the book launch in London on 17 October. We print an edited extract of her speech:

I am pleased to be here as the representative of the Socialist Party, formerly the Militant, and in a venue that is not far from Cambridge Heath Road [where Militant had offices] where Alan not only installed the printing press, but actually helped to organise and carry out the building work.

The main point I want to emphasise in my contribution is that Alan was with the Socialist Party and its forerunner the Militant, heart-and-soul,

“Alan points out in the foreword that one of the three things needed to be a good cartoonist is a strong political idea, which was Marxism and Trotskyism

from the very beginning of his political life. He was as strong in more recent times as he was earlier.

His cartoons were an outstanding feature of the [Socialist] newspaper.

They were part and parcel of the paper, they added a powerful visual impact not only to the arguments and policies against greedy capitalism that we waged, but also against the mistaken ideas of the right wing, who are still with us today, and even some on the left where we have occasional arguments.

But each cartoon was not drawn up by an artist, in an artist's attic, on his own. Alan was in the midst of campaigning at every level. Whatever was going on, Alan was part of that too.

The most important thing, which I want to emphasise, is that he yearned, he sought out political discussion about everything. If he had an idea for a cartoon, he wanted to discuss.

Alan points out in the foreword that one of the three things needed to be a good cartoonist is a strong political idea, which was Marxism and Trotskyism. He was ours down to his bootlaces and we were very proud of him, and he was very proud of us.

The chapter in the book on the miners' strike shows Alan's family connection with mining. Hundreds of miners were buying the Militant during the strike and beyond. Hundreds and hundreds were buying our paper and Alan's cartoons.

There's a saying "You only live once but you die twice, firstly when your body physically passes away, shuffles off the moral coil, but secondly when the last person utters your name for the very last time". We're confident that Alan's name will be uttered by many thousands of young working-class fighters coming into struggle and his name and his socialist ideas will live on through this book of his drawings for a very long time.

The Socialist Party recommends 'Need not Greed', and will continue to work energetically in every way possible to turn society upside down. And to the workers, so graphically depicted in these drawings as downtrodden, oppressed, exploited and slaughtered in wars, we say: "We've got some scores to settle", and that can only be done through the socialist revolution, Alan's ultimate aim.



Linda Taaffe speaking at the book launch

Why I'm coming to Socialism 2024

Discussions to change our conditions

ALEX GILLHAM
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

This will be my third visit to Socialism. I have found the weekend an ideal opportunity to deep-dive on topics I want to know more about and hear socialist perspectives from across the country and elsewhere. While I have seen the Leicester Socialist Party branch grow over the years, it is also a fantastic reminder of our national presence. I love catching up with other members from across the country, and hearing about our

efforts on a local and national level.

So much has happened in the last year and I am looking forward to taking part in discussions in the context of our changing conditions. I am interested in the discussion around the role of police within our current state, as I believe the Socialist Party has a unique position on the police which I want to get a better grasp on. I also want to attend the session on capitalism and Islamophobia. As someone from Leicester, which has a large Muslim population, I feel very aware of the rise of anti-Muslim sentiment and want to ensure I am best equipped to struggle alongside others when they face it and understand why the capitalists are using it now.



PHOTO: IAN PATTISON

Why I'm coming to Socialism 2024

Meeting hundreds of other socialists is a real boost

NIVEN DAY
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

I first went to Socialism last year, when I had only been a member of the Socialist Party for a few months. I didn't expect to be in a room of 1,000 socialists for the Saturday rally, all collectively singing the Internationale, the anthem of international socialism. The experience was inspiring for me, and I'm sure others too.

This year I am attending Socialism again and am the Socialism organiser for the Liverpool branch. Socialism is a great way to meet socialists from all over the UK and further to discuss socialist ideas. Seeing the work that other Socialist Party branches have done was brilliant.

This year's workshop lineup is

promising, with the variety of topics that will be discussed. With the riots that took place in August, a number of workshops centre on how the far right can be combated. There are workshops regarding international affairs, such as the US election and the war in Gaza.

Finally, Socialism is a way to fully see that while our party is relatively small compared to the vast size of the working class as a whole, we have links within trade unions, and a history of working-class struggle. Workshops and the rally will have speakers that have senior roles within trade unions such as the PCS and the NEU, together with activists in the workplaces and communities.

I am going to Socialism 2024, and I recommend that you do too.

Socialism 2024 fighting fund appeal

Help us build the socialist opposition to Starmer

ISAI MARJERLA
SOCIALIST PARTY TREASURER

We live in a world facing multiple crises, where wars claim the lives of thousands of innocent people. It is estimated that two billion people reside in conflict-affected areas, with many more still recovering from conflicts that have torn their families apart. This is the harsh reality of profit-driven capitalism: war, poverty, and unending misery.

In Britain, nearly one-third of all children - approximately 4.3 million - live in poverty. Over the last 14 years, our essential services have been starved of funding, resulting in an acute housing crisis and an NHS on the brink of collapse. We cannot continue down this path! If capitalism cannot provide a decent standard of living for the majority of people in the world, we can no longer afford it. Capitalism has long outlived its historical usefulness. It is now a system that destroys the hope and aspiration for a peaceful and fulfilling life, and it needs to be replaced.

From its inception, the Socialist Party, formerly known as Militant, has been clear about what is needed to fight for the rights of workers and

young people: socialist policies. In the first issue of our paper, we stated: "Drive out the Tories, but Labour must have socialist policies." We have successfully removed the outdated Tories; however, Starmer's Labour government has made it clear that it serves big business and the bosses.

This year, the Socialist Party celebrates 60 years of campaigning for the socialist ideas necessary to change the world. We fight for every gain for workers and young people - better pay, improved conditions, free education, and healthcare. We also, ultimately, fight for a different way of organising society so that the world's vast resources are taken out of the hands of the big capitalists and instead are nationalised, as part of a democratic workers' plan, to be used to meet the needs of the billions and not the billionaires. A world with socially beneficial innovations and increased productivity, where jobs, homes, and services are guaranteed for all, free from exploitation, oppression, and war, while also protecting our environment and planet. The wealth does exist - just the five richest men in the world have doubled their wealth to an astonishing £668 billion since 2020.

It is becoming increasingly clear that what we need is socialism! The

Socialist Party has a proud history of following the programmes, traditions, and methods of revolutionaries like Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky. Throughout history, what has succeeded in defeating repressive regimes and right-wing governments have been the actions of workers leading movements and uprisings.

This is what the Socialist Party is fighting for. We have confidence in the working class to get rid of capitalism, and we need your help. A part of the upcoming Socialism rally will include a finance appeal. This year, we have set a target of £30,000 to build the socialist opposition to Starmer, to produce materials with socialist ideas that challenge him, make anti-war placards and for a new party for the working class - one that boldly states that capitalism means war and fights for socialism. All the money donated to us will be used to fund the socialist fightback needed, with 25% of everything raised going towards the fight for international socialism and the work of the Committee for a Workers' International - the international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated.

• Pledges can be sent to isai@socialistparty.org.uk
• Donate to the appeal at socialistparty.org.uk/S24donate



PHOTO: IOANNIS/CC

NEED NOT GREED

ALAN HARDMAN 1936-2024

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JEREMY CORBYN



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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

Cas Middlemas, Funding Not Fees student activist

Chaired by: Josh Asker, editor of the Socialist

Stop Southampton nursery closure

CATHERINE CLARK AND ALI HAYDOR
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY AND
SOUTHAMPTON GMB BRANCH SECRETARY,
PERSONAL CAPACITY (RESPECTIVELY)

StartPoint Sholing nursery and pre-school in Southampton is under threat of permanent closure by the Labour council.

The nursery looks after a high proportion of children with special educational needs and disabilities. The staff are highly trained and demand for places has always been very high.

The nursery was opened as a Sure-Start centre in 1998 and became a centre of excellence in 2003, as a specialist preschool providing training and sharing good practice with other nurseries in Southampton.

At the beginning of this academic year, the council closed the nursery. It had closed new registrations throughout the previous year.

The council will meet to decide the fate of the nursery on 29 November and has been paying staff until the council meets after the consultation closed on 12 October.

The council uses the excuse that it cannot afford to run the nursery. It treats vital services as if they are businesses that need to break even or make a profit. But access to affordable and flexible childcare is a necessity for families so parents and carers can work.

With the support of trade unions Unison, GMB and Southampton and South West Hampshire Trades

Council, staff and parents organised an event in Bitterne precinct on Saturday 19 October. Campaigners informed the local community of what is happening, and how they can support the fight for the nursery to remain open.

Four Socialist Party members were among the campaigners, the secretary of the Southampton GMB branch, the chair of the trades council, the women's rep for Unison district branch, and a Unite Community member.

I have sent in a freedom of information request to the council in relation to the nursery. Trade union officers, staff and parents will have further meetings to plan their approach to save the service. The manager of the nursery will be speaking at the Southampton march and anti-cuts conference taking place on Saturday 2 November 2024.

A Socialist Party and Unison member, who works at the StartPoint nursery in Northam, reports members feeling like the council has already made up its mind over the Sholing site.

But the fight continues. We have fought off service closures by this Labour council before and we can do so again.

We demand that the council keeps the nursery open, and stops all cuts to local services. It should follow the policy of Unison in local government, for councils to set "legal



Southampton Socialist Party campaigning against cuts

no-cuts budgets? Taking such a stand can be part of mobilising the community and trade unions to fight Keir Starmer's government for the funding councils need.

• Join the Southampton Trades Council march and anti-cuts conference on 2 November, assembling at noon Bargate, then march to Friends Meeting House, SO15 2AZ for conference at 1PM

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Leeds Labour council votes to privatise nurseries

IAIN DALTON
SAVE LITTLE OWLS NURSERIES AND SOCIALIST PARTY

At short notice, 15 parents, children and supporters gathered outside Leeds Civic Hall on Wednesday 16 October, as the Labour-run council executive voted to privatise council-run Little Owls nurseries.

Following closures of three nurseries at the beginning of this school year, the council now wants to find other operators for 12 of the remaining 21 nurseries.

The only information made available in the report they voted on was that it was proposed that neighbouring schools take on four of the 12. No information was given about who is in the running to take over the other eight, nor the criteria which the council is using to judge their suitability as providers.

Given the council's past record, parents are bracing themselves for the worst: that any new providers will come with increases in charges, or cuts to hours. The council has refused to rule any of these out.

For fourteen years the council told us the cuts were the fault of the Tory government; now that government has gone but the same proposal to close and privatise nurseries remains! And this at a time when the Labour government professes to want to expand nursery provision.

A few Labour councillors took copies of the letter from parents addressed to the executive restating our opposition to their proposals. However, one executive board councillor, Jess Lennox, originally elected to council backed by Momentum, refused to take it outright.

Like with other aspects of the cuts, they are hiding behind the fact that many of the services they are cutting are not things they have a statutory duty to provide.

When I spoke at the rally, I explained how the very first pioneering Labour councillors in Bradford over 100 years ago used their position to fight for services for working-class families that Liberal and Tory councillors refused to provide, such as free school meals. These services eventually became nationally funded. We need political representatives who fight to advance workers' interests, not throw our services to the profiteering bosses.



Save Little Owls council lobby IAIN DALTON

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



Wakefield: Campaigning to defend winter fuel payments

JOHN VASEY
WAKEFIELD AND DISTRICT SOCIALIST PARTY

At our Socialist Party campaign stall in Wakefield on Saturday 19 October, we leafleted and petitioned, to publicise the upcoming NSSN rally that Socialist Party members are helping to organise.

The rally is set to protest against the Labour government cuts on Budget Day 30 October, in Wakefield precinct. We are lucky to have Sarah Woolley, Bakers' union (BFAWU) leader as a main speaker, with the key issue being the battle to keep the winter fuel allowance, by galvanising

mass pressure to force Keir Starmer into a retreat.

Out campaigning, it was noticeable how the ears of a number of passers-by pricked up as we shouted slogans to defend this lifeline for pensioners. Even a few who were not too sympathetic to all of our socialist demands were outraged enough to sign our petition.

People's comments revealed how support for Starmer's government is nosediving dramatically, highlighting the crying need for a new genuine mass workers' party, something the labour movement urgently needs to address.



Soweto speaking after being released

Nigeria: Activists arrested and brutalised for marking fourth anniversary of Lekki killings

DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST MOVEMENT NIGERIA REPORTERS

On the early afternoon of 20 October, 22 'End Bad Governance' protesters - arrested in Nigeria for marking the murder of 'EndSARS' protesters - were released by the police.

The EndSARS struggle of October 2020 was a watershed moment in the history of Nigeria. The Nigerian ruling elites were shocked by the massive protest of young people across the country to demand an end to a rogue unit of the Nigeria Police Force called SARS. Despite the state sponsoring of thugs to attack protesters and the shooting of protesters by the police in various locations, for two weeks young people demonstrated resilience and unity of purpose.

Hassan Taiwo Soweto, organising committee of the End Bad Governance Movement, Lagos State and National Spokesperson of the Youth Rights Campaign, gave this message when he and the others were released:

"We have just been released after the Commissioner of Police came down to the Panti police station pleading hypocritically. The whole brutalisation, assault and arrest happened in his presence. He ordered it. Obviously the last has not been

heard of this. Many of us are injured. One comrade had blood gushing from his nose. Two comrades, a male and female, were sexually molested. A male comrade was stripped naked - we had to find a rope to hold his trousers to preserve his dignity. Many are still in shock. "I had my cloth torn by Officer Nnadi James at Panti police station. This violation of our rights and brutalisation on a day set aside to commemorate a brutal massacre four years ago cannot be tolerated. "We want justice. We won't stop until we have it. "As for the struggle against Tinubu's anti-poor policies, this assault won't dissuade us. The struggle continues until victory."

Recently, Adaramoye Michael Lenin and Mosiu Sodiq were released after almost two months in the captivity of Bola Tinubu's government. Also freed was Elejo Opaluwa, a regional officer of the National Union of Electricity Employees. Their abduction and subsequent detention were part of the vicious clampdown on the #EndBadGovernance protests across the country, especially in Abuja and the northern part of the country.



Nigeria Solidarity UK

Organising action in solidarity with the movement in Nigeria against President Tinubu's anti-poor policies and a devastating cost-of-living crisis.

HOW CAN THE #ENDBADGOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA MOVEMENT WIN?
Come and discuss at **SOCIALISM 2024**
London, 9-10 November
tickets and info at socialism.org.uk

Socialist Party
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.

ENVIRONMENT

- 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.
- 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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Damp, mould and rip-off rents

FRANKIE SELL
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST STUDENTS

From the extortionate rates charged by both university and private student halls to omnipresent mould and botched renovations, it feels as if the crisis of student housing is inescapable.

Student halls in particular can cause tremendous headaches as many students' first experience of living away from home. For instance, in my first year I lived in the cheapest ensuite room stocked with just a single bed and desk. This now costs £6,646.92 for a 41-week contract (an increase of about £500 since 2022). When you consider that the maximum student loan is just £9,672.00 per year, this leaves students with just £250 per month after rent.

This is clearly unsustainable. Like many students, I opted for cheaper student housing with a private landlord going into my second year; however this came with its own problems. The only bathroom and shower I had access to was a converted storage closet under the stairs, it was

barely large enough to stand in and had constant issues with damp and mould that were never dealt with. The ceiling in the living room would occasionally start pouring water. The landlords attempted (unsuccessfully) to fix this problem but eventually gave up trying towards the end of the tenancy.

Then, the following year, there were large cracks in the walls (an external consultant informed me these were likely caused by structural damage) which took over three months to repair. There is also heavy staining in the carpets and walls, which have still been largely ignored four months into the tenancy.

Unsurprisingly to any students reading this, these examples are common in the industry of student housing, and are by no means the worst that I have heard in my time as a student.

Why should students be paying more than 50% of their income on rents? Rents should be capped, and maintenance standards regulated, including with maximum time frames for repairs.

End the student housing crisis



PHOTO: SUSANA SECRETARIAT/CC

CHARLEY LINCOLN
NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY
AND SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Student rents have risen more than inflation. Student loans have not. There is a massive gap. The average monthly rent for a student in 2024 is £689.43, 16.5% higher than the year before. In London the average is a whopping £1,032 a month. A student getting the maximum maintenance loan and living away from parents outside of London can borrow £10,227 a year, £852 a month.

No wonder 69% of students now work alongside their studies, according to the National Union of Students. The negative impact is not limited to academic achievement but also health and social outcomes. 78% of students surveyed say they are suffering 'significant stress' over money.

Most students with more wealthy parents willing and able to pay don't face the same stress. Increasingly, access to higher education is becoming the privilege of a wealthy few, deepening economic inequality as working-class and poorer young people are forced to forego education and take low-paid jobs with little chance of long-term progression.

Socialist Students fights for free, fully funded education for all. Rather than being saddled with a lifetime of debt, student loans should be replaced by living grants that rise with the cost of living.

Students are a 'captive market' for landlords - be it the university itself, private halls or private renting. All know the level of student maintenance loans, and all hike rents to maximise income. Student housing has become even more competitive than the housing market in general.

University halls

Around one in five students live in university-owned halls of residence. Increasingly, access to this is limited to first-years, postgraduates and international students. These three groups typically bring in the most cash and unis are motivated to get students enrolled (and paying fees) with as few hurdles as possible.

Halls typically have very limited provisions for students who have families, or for disabled students. Often when attempts are made to accommodate disabled students, it is not as thought-through. There are problems such as push-door buttons on one side only, or even behind non-accessible internal doors in the way of the accessible one, or needing an able-bodied person to place a ramp down.

Licensing for halls is viewed in the same way as for residential homes. Each room is treated as an individual dwelling, instead of looking at the whole building. Therefore halls do not have to meet the same fire safety standards as other high-rise residential buildings. In England, more than one residential hall has been found to use the same flammable cladding as Grenfell.

The Socialist Party demands

- End rip-off rents - give students and university workers democratic control over rent levels, maintenance and repairs
- Invest to provide high-quality, safe, and accessible accommodation, including to meet the specific needs of disabled students, and those with families

Private halls

Building private student halls is big business. The largest provider, Unite Housing, is listed on the FTSE 100 biggest companies on the London Stock Exchange. Unlike traditional housing, when halls of residence are sold, they are sold as a whole building, not as individual flats. Since 2013, the 'block' selling of student halls has increased.

That marked the start of a student accommodation investment boom, and led national and international investors to build new property portfolios. As investors sought to consolidate scale and drive down operational costs, England has seen levels of investment steadily at around £3.2 billion a year. The selling of IQ student accommodation company to Blackstone in 2020 was for £4.7 billion, which is the highest seen in England so far.

Investment isn't planned to meet the needs of students. Instead, private hall owners invest in what they think will be profitable.

It's also worth mentioning that this building type is difficult to repurpose when it needs to be sold (normally due to oversupply). The standardised nature of typical purpose-built halls, along with small room size, makes changes to residential use difficult.

Some cities have attempted to use the rise of co-living integration in the workplace, living environment, and social space as a product for students and young professionals. Still, reports of negative experiences living in this set-up are rampant. People have felt unsafe and forgotten.

Socialist Party member Marcelin shared her experience of a co-living

accommodation: "The entrance to the building did not lock even when pushed closed; it was on the street with heavy footfall. Random non-residents would let themselves in, and there have been issues that led to police turning up. The property was meant to be pet-free, but one neighbour had six dogs that would be allowed to roam unsupervised in the hallways." When both issues were raised, she was told nothing could be done. Previously, she had lived in halls and a shared house, but was priced out.

£4.7 billion how much IQ made in 2020 selling student accommodation

Student accommodation does not have to comply with affordable housing requirements. At the same time, any housed student can count towards meeting a local authority's housing targets. In other words, each rented bedroom can be counted as a single home, misrepresenting reality. This means councils can claim they are tackling homelessness while not actually taking action, and instead exploiting students.

Socialist Party demands

- Stringent council licensing of student housing providers, with the direct democratic involvement of students
- For democratic rent controls, quality and safety standards in-line with university-owned halls
- Bring private hall providers into public ownership, and to form part of a planned provision of student housing. No compensation for the fat-cat investors

Private-rented accommodation

Second-years and beyond are largely left to fend for themselves securing housing on the private market in competition with groups of other students. Landlords and agents exploit the shortage of housing (and using fearmongering about scarcity too) to charge maximum rents and get contracts signed months in advance. To maximise income, bedrooms are crammed into homes designed for a single family.

Similar to the boom of landlords looking to profit through Airbnb in tourist hotspots, in student areas landlords buy up family homes to convert into student accommodation, further reducing the supply of available housing for families, this drives up the cost of rent for everyone.

Housing contracts for students are not fit for purpose. They often do not provide year-round accommodation, assuming you have a family that can support you during the holidays. They are also not flexible enough to account for the realities of student life. If a student has to drop out, they will no longer have the student loan to pay rent, putting themselves and often their housemates at risk due to them being locked into their contract.



Invasive landlords often take advantage of the inexperience of student tenants

Invasive landlords often take advantage of the inexperience of student tenants, often turning up unannounced for inspections, maintenance and property viewings for the next tenants. This creates a lack of privacy as well as emphasising how replaceable tenants are.

The requirement for guarantors and security deposits, often on a yearly basis, assumes again that the student has a family that is able to provide this support, excluding poorer students from a working-class background from this kind of housing, as well as excluding those with complicated home lives. Students often lose hundreds of pounds every year to landlords manufacturing reasons to take security deposits.

Socialist Party demands

- Compulsory licensing for all landlords, including subject to quality and safety inspection from local council authorities and student representatives, and to end security deposit theft
- Democratic rent controls for all rental properties, student or otherwise
- Access to secure tenancies, including flexibility that accounts for student term dates and other issues. Include Student Finance England as guarantor for students excluded or forced to leave courses early
- A programme of mass council house building to meet the needs of all

FUNDING NOT FEES

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

- Scrap tuition fees
- Introduce living grants, not loans
- Stop all cuts and closures on campus

If you agree, get involved in the Funding Not Fees campaign!

Join the student fightback: join...

socialist students

- Visit socialiststudents.org.uk/join
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the Socialist

Issue 1295

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formerly **Militant**

FUND SERVICES NOT WAR

BUILD THE SOCIALIST OPPOSITION TO STARMER'S LABOUR

SCOTT HUNTER

SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY

It cannot escape anyone's notice that the world is increasingly unstable and conflict-ridden. Even before the intensification of the war in Gaza over the last year, the United Nations was already warning that the number of violent conflicts worldwide was at its highest level since the Second World War.

Now, with the expansion of war in the Middle East and the threat of full-blown regional war, stability and peace can seem increasingly out of reach.

The horrors in Gaza and Lebanon – seen by many in graphic detail on social media – have exposed the brutality of the Israeli state forces. Western governments' support for the slaughter has exposed the complete hypocrisy and moral bankruptcy of establishment politicians from all the capitalist parties.

While Keir Starmer warns of 'tough decisions' on public spending and Rachel Reeves talks about a 'black hole' in the public finances, we are left wondering why there always seems to be enough money to spend on foreign military adventures.

Britain's defence budget has already grown by £4.4 billion in real terms since 2021-22, with the government committed to raise spending to 2.5% of GDP by 2030. Meanwhile, Starmer has decided that pensioners need no 'defence' against freezing winter temperatures.

But there is another side to the story: the massive anti-war movement in Britain and worldwide. We have already seen huge demonstrations which saw off hated Tory Home Secretary Suella Braverman, as well as the election of five independent MPs on an anti-war platform. Now, many who have marched over the past year will ask themselves what more can be done, how can the nightmare in Gaza and Lebanon be ended?

There is a superpower that can bring an end to war, and the profit-driven capitalist system that fuels it – the working class. We have already had a taste of its power, in Britain during the strike wave. Recently, Greek dockers have blocked shipments of ammunition destined for Israel and Italian dockers did the same in 2021.

Socialist Party members in the trade unions have raised the need to bring together workers from across the arms manufacturing and distribution industries to discuss what workers' action can be taken to stop shipment of arms for use by the Israeli state forces.

The trade union and workers' movement has a crucial role to play politically too. To take steps towards developing a mass, working-class political party that fights for socialist change – bringing an end to war internationally and to meet the needs of all.

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on p12



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