

STOP COUNCIL CUTS

Defend the Winter Fuel Payment Make the super-rich pay

Alistair Tice, Yorkshire Socialist Party member, delivered a speech presenting a petition to Sheffield City Council - run by an unofficial coalition of Labour, Lib Dems and Greens - on 6 November. It called on the council to fund Winter Fuel Payments for pensioners in the city.

Despite the new Labour government saying that there will be no return to austerity, their cold-hearted decision to cut the winter fuel allowance of up to £300 to nearly 10 million pensioners in Britain is a callous austerity policy.

Pensioners in Britain already get the lowest state pension in western Europe, and with the government allowing the gas and electricity prices charged by the privatised energy companies to go up by another 10%, many pensioners really will face the choice of heating or eating this winter.

These cuts to the winter fuel allowance will only 'save' £1.5 billion, yet if all the pensioners eligible for Pension Credit actually claimed it, it will cost the government £2.2 billion! So why are they doing it, other

than for Starmer and Reeves to prove to the establishment and the money markets that they will make the 'tough decisions' and 'hard choices'? Tough and hard on pensioners that is!

I've heard some Labour councillors say: "We shouldn't be paying it to rich pensioners who don't need it." To which I say: if you're so bothered about the rich getting what they don't deserve or need, why doesn't your Labour government take the wealth off the super-rich, like the 50 richest families in the UK who own £500 billion between them, as much as the poorest 50% of the population?

An estimated 75,000 pensioners in Sheffield are affected by this cut. This petition is calling on Sheffield City Council to use and, if necessary,

extend its Household Support Fund or similar funds, to restore the £200 or £300 to those pensioners who've lost it.

To my knowledge, a few councils have already announced such schemes, including Barnsley, and now Rotherham has just announced a winter hardship fund. So it can be done.

Don't say you haven't the money. Despite all the Con-Dem and Tory government austerity cuts, Sheffield City Council still has £500 million in reserves.

If you really want to protect the people of Sheffield like you say you do, then you will make the 'hard choice' of refusing to carry out any more government cutbacks and can start by restoring the winter fuel allowance.

The Socialist Party fights for:

- Councils to set needs-based, no-cuts budgets. Build a mass working-class movement, bringing together trade unions and communities to demand the funding needed from the new Labour government
- If councillors aren't prepared to fight for us, then we need ones who will! Build a new mass workers' party that fights in our interests against the bosses
- Make the super-rich pay. Take wealth and resources out of the hands of the big-business bosses and put it into the hands of the working class, to run society democratically for what we need, not for profits

the Socialist

formerly **Militant**

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

Government to miss cladding target Fight for safe homes for all - make the super-rich pay!

PAUL KERSHAW
UNITE HOUSING WORKERS BRANCH AND SOCIALIST PARTY

Since the terrible fire at Grenfell Tower in June 2017 it has been clear that other buildings with similar cladding represent a serious threat to people living in them. Landlords and government have bickered while progress removing the dangerous cladding has been painfully slow.

Now it has emerged that £500,000 has been stolen from the fund that was supposed to speed up works, according to the National Audit Office (NAO). Another report commissioned by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government found that reliance on self-certification meant it had little control, and the fund carried an inherent risk of misrepresentation and collusion in "an industry with known historical integrity issues".

As the recent report of the Grenfell Inquiry concluded: "One very significant reason why Grenfell Tower came to be clad in combustible materials was systematic dishonesty on the part of those who made and sold the rainscreen cladding." The inquiry had already pointed to the role of cladding in its 2019 report.

Now the NAO has found that the problem is significantly bigger than previously reported. Up to 60% of buildings with dangerous cladding had still not been identified by the government, and at its current rate of progress it was due to miss its own estimated completion date of 2035 for the works. Safety work has only started on half of the 4,771 identified buildings.

People living in blocks known to have unsafe cladding have campaigned for rapid action. Many have been held financially responsible by housing associations and other landlords and live with the threat of huge bills to correct their buildings as well as the fear of fire.

Government to blame

Fire Brigade Union general secretary Matt Wrack commented: "The facts that thousands of residential buildings remain wrapped in dangerous cladding is a national disgrace. We stated from day one that this was a failure of government due to the obsession with deregulation."

"The developers and construction firms must be made to pay the costs of remediation, and the process needs to be speeded up. Tenants, residents and firefighters should be part of the oversight of the work."

Residents are organising to fight for action through a range of organisations. Housing association residents have come together on affected estates in SHAC (Social Housing Action Campaign, initiated by Unite housing workers) groups to make their voice heard.

The failure of the state, builders and landlords to ensure basic safety and to act with urgency is directly linked to deregulation, privatisation and cuts under both big parties.

We can't let Labour get away with acting like the Tories and kicking the can down the road. The construction industry, which has made massive profits from unsafe buildings, must be made to pay the price so residents can live in safe housing.



MARY FINCH

Stop £1.3 billion NHS privatisation in Wiltshire

WILTSHIRE UNION HEALTH ACTIVIST

Just three months after the election of the Labour government, it was announced that all community health services in Wiltshire will, from next April, be provided by private company HCRG, a subsidiary of Virgin, in a contract worth £1.3 billion.

This demonstrates that, under this government, the dismantling of the NHS will continue.

The decision made by the Integrated Care Board (ICB), the unaccountable regional organisation that runs health care, was of course signed off by Labour health minister Wes Streeting. He, it should be noted, has received huge donations from private health companies.

One thing that you can say about not only Wes Streeting but also the Labour government is that they are consistent. They said before the election that they would encourage private provision of health care, they said it during the election, and now they are carrying it out.

There are 42 ICBs covering the country which, as in Wiltshire, can and will award contracts to private companies. Indeed, no new legislation is required to create a market-based health service.

In fact, privatisation is much more prominent in the provision of community services than in the acute sector. Hence Labour's desire to move these services out of hospitals.

That does not mean privatisation is not occurring in the big, acute hospitals. Increasingly, planned operations and other services are being provided by private companies. No publicly provided service is safe, especially if it is potentially profitable.

The only conclusion you can draw is that the Labour government will complete the destruction of the NHS, as continued under past Tory governments and under Blair's New Labour with the proliferation of Private Finance Initiatives (PFIs).

Health workers will of course fight back, supported by local communities. What we also need is a political voice, an organisation that represents the interests of workers. A party that stands unequivocally in support of the NHS.

Such a party would need to fight for the complete nationalisation of the NHS under democratic workers' control. To kick out all the private profiteers from our NHS, and use the wealth and resources of a socialist society to invest in our health service.

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Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

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- Trade union unity - lessons of support staff struggle
- Unite and the Labour Party
- Germany - crisis in Europe's heartland
- Climate deadlock at COP29

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Water bills set to rise again Nationalise now!

ALEX SAMPSON
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

The government's water regulator Ofwat has announced proposals to allow water companies to raise bills by up to 21% on top of inflation over the next five years, which could potentially add nearly £100 to the average household water bill by 2030. Water companies have argued that the increases are necessary to fund £88 billion worth of repairs needed to bring the water and sewerage system up to date to cope with the current and future demands on the system.

While the water companies attempt to play down these increases, by presenting them as an average increase of only £19 a year, research done by the Consumer Council of Water has shown how much of a strain this increase will put on an average household. Of the 9,500 respondents, 40% said that they would struggle to pay the increased bills, with 54% saying they would have to cut back in other areas of spending.

While wages have been stagnant or pay rises, hard-fought for and won through strike action, have in many cases not kept up with the increased cost of living, this comes as another blow to already squeezed pay packets. Millions of households, who are already having to choose whether to heat or eat, will now have to ration another basic essential.

It is undeniable that the water system is quite literally broken, with

54%

of households surveyed said they would have to cut back on other spending if these bill rises go ahead

3.6 million

hours spent dumping sewage into rivers and seas last year

millions of gallons of water lost daily through leaks in the pipes. Sewage was dumped into our seas and rivers for over 3.6 million hours in 2023 alone. But it should not be the people of this country that pay for those repairs. Since privatisation by Margaret Thatcher's Tory party in 1989, water companies have extracted tens of billions of pounds in dividends for their shareholders, while neglecting to invest in the system to keep it safe and functional. It is not right that the water companies now pass on the burden of their neglect to us.

Privatised water is a perfect example of how the capitalist class is totally incapable of running a company for anything other than making maximum profits. They have brought more than one of these privatised companies to the brink of bankruptcy and now need help to bail them out. They must be removed from the hands of these corrupt capitalists and run by the working class, for the working class.

The Socialist Party calls for the immediate renationalisation of the water companies, under democratic workers' control with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need. The billionaire fat cats and hedge funds have squeezed more than enough out of the public purse, and they should not be given a penny more. Join the Socialist Party and join the fight to bring the essential utilities under workers' control for the benefit of us all, not just for the greedy profiteers.



Water companies should follow their own advice
LIZ DAWSON/CC

Join the fightback

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

to find out more about joining us today!



COP climate conference shows limits of profit-driven capitalism

We need socialist change to fight climate change

ALASDAIR COOK
DORSET SOCIALIST PARTY

If you were hoping for action on climate change to come out of the UN's 29th Conference of Parties (COP) meeting, the history of past conferences are not a reason for optimism. COP 29, as the name suggests, is the latest of almost 30 attempts to halt climate change, so what progress has been made?

The first COP happened in 1995. At that point there were 23.52 billion metric tonnes of global emissions. In 2023, that has risen to 37.55 billion metric tonnes, according to Statista. Given this dramatic increase in emissions, the COP meetings have been a dramatic failure. But why is this? Surely a body that seeks to meet with representatives of 197 governments would have the capacity to combat such a catastrophic threat to humanity?

Deals on emissions that get systematically ignored, appeals for big business to invest in combating climate change that amount to nothing – the 'attempts' at COP show despite the pressure on politicians attending COPs, they are unable to take the action necessary to combat climate change. The capitalist system and its representatives are incapable of overcoming the limits of the nation state and to allow for the genuine international cooperation needed to stop environmental destruction.

The estimated costs of fixing climate change range from \$300 billion to \$50 trillion over the next two decades. But national governments exist to represent the dominant interests of the capitalist class in a given country. These capitalist nation states are in competition with other nation states to maximise profits and access markets. None are interested in doling out the amount of money needed to fix climate change, as it would leave them at a competitive disadvantage.

Protectionism

A further illustration of the competitive nature of capitalism is the protectionist measures that US President Joe Biden implemented in 2022 on solar cell production. With China leading on the production of solar cells due to lower labour, materials and electricity costs, Biden's administration set high tariffs on imported cells to protect the profits of American capitalists. When Barack Obama



ROBERT THOMAS AND IAEA IMAGEBANK

imposed tariffs for solar cells for the same reason, demand fell by 17% as costs dramatically increased.

The situation isn't set to improve as Donald Trump is even more vehemently protectionist. He has stated he wants to implement a 60% tax on Chinese imports. This will further push costs up and reduce the number of solar cell installations.

Trump is also an ardent climate change denier, referring to it as a "mystical hoax". Clearly this is not a man who will take a green transition seriously. Especially given how in the election he had the backing of oil and gas giants, and tech companies reliant on cheaper energy, regardless of the pollution supplying it creates.

Wars – the antithesis to international cooperation – are also dramatically increasing. How can climate change be solved while the dash for

short-term profits and increased conflicts means there is so much instability?

As if COP 29 wasn't already going to be a fruitless venture, leaders from multiple key economies including European countries, Brazil and most likely the USA will not be attending this year.

Climate change is not something that can be ignored. The justified fear and concerns that many people have are not being taken seriously by world leaders. No number of COPs will save us.

Capitalism will always put profit over the long-term habitability of this planet. It's clear this system is not fit for purpose. The world and future generations need socialism, with the working class across the world taking the wealth and resources of society into our hands. By nationalising big businesses and the banks, and placing them under the democratic control and management of workers, we could plan production for what we need not what makes a profit. Only then can genuine cooperation be used to repair the damage done to our ecosystems.

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

editors@socialistparty.org.uk



Campaigning against tuition fees at Liverpool Hope uni

On 8 November, Liverpool Socialist Students organised a campaign stall at Liverpool Hope University as part of the national Funding Not Fees campaign against the Labour government's recent increase in tuition fees.

Our message clearly resonated with a lot of people, as we got an excellent reception. Students and staff alike took great interest in our stall, with many people signing petitions and taking leaflets. Multiple people also expressed interest in starting a Socialist Students society at the university - so we have organised the first meeting for next week! A brilliant stall all round, and inspires great hope for the future.

HANNAH PONTING

I wasn't sure what to expect from my first campaign stall but we had lots of interest! Clearly there's an appetite for the Funding Not Fees campaign on campus, and I'm looking forward to organising more campaigning in the future.

ROSE KALLENBERG-PIERCE



Socialist Students at Liverpool Hope uni LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST STUDENTS



On 8 November, Socialist Party members and Nigeria Solidarity UK activists lobbied the Nigerian embassy in London to demand the dropping of charges against protesters in detention and on trial, particularly Adaramoye Michael Lenin and ten others, whose trial for treason commenced at the Federal High Court in Abuja the same day.

We, along with other campaigners, demand that the charges are dropped



#EndBadGovernance protesters in Nigeria DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

against all #EndBadGovernance protesters, who have faced violence, detention and prosecution for daring to protest against the anti-poor policies of the Tinubu government. A recent report said that, on present trends, the number of 'food insecure'

Nigerians could increase from around 25 million now to over 33 million by the middle of 2025.

The Nigerian people and youth have the right to resist the anti-poor capitalist policies of the Tinubu regime.



CLARE DOYLE

BSix college strike

On 5 November, teachers at BSix Sixth Form College in Hackney, east London, started a series of strikes over pay and conditions.

"Teachers in schools recently got a 5.5% salary increase and ours was just 2.5%", one striker explained. "We suffer intolerable workloads and a new top-down management since the college has been merged

into the New City College conglomerate". Staff complain that they are constantly working "for free" in the evenings and over weekends, marking and preparing.

In the second week of their action they were striking for two days and, if no improvements are offered, they will be out for three days the next week. As one of the striking teachers at BSix put it, they are prepared to suffer "short-term pain for long-term gain".

CLARE DOYLE, HACKNEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Vote TUSC for a socialist alternative in Sefton



Conor O'Neil (second left) out campaigning LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

CONOR O'NEILL
LIVERPOOL AND MERSEYSIDE SOCIALIST PARTY

As Keir Starmer's Labour government continues its vicious attacks on working-class people, Sefton Labour has consistently done the bidding of big business with full control of the council chambers for 12 years. Over that time, residents of Sefton have seen massive cuts in both investment and public services, leaving libraries closed permanently in 2012, and public areas left in complete decline. At the full council meeting back in September, all sitting Labour councillors in attendance voted against a motion condemning Starmer and

Reeves's scrapping of the pensioners Winter Fuel Allowance in a vile attack on the elderly.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) has consistently put forward opposition to the cuts. I myself have stood multiple times in the neighbouring St Oswald Ward and achieved a respectable vote share on an explicitly socialist alternative, putting our ideas firmly back on the agenda again.

Anyone interested in protecting our pensioners, our young people and the working class as a whole would be best placed to vote for Conor Anthony O'Neill, the TUSC candidate, on 21 November.

• We will be holding a public meeting on 14 November at 7pm in Hallie's Hub, the L21 Community Centre, Litherland, L21 0GH

TRADE UNIONIST AND SOCIALIST COALITION



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

• Find out more visit: tusc.org.uk

No-cuts budget needed to save Dewsbury services

IAIN DALTON
LEEDS AND WEST YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

At short notice on 5 November, dozens of people gathered outside Dewsbury Sports Centre for a protest ahead of Kirklees Council's executive taking a decision on the future of the centre.

Dewsbury Sports Centre has been shut since September last year after Reinforced Aerated Autoclaved Concrete (RAAC) was found in the building.

This provided a convenient reason for the council to include the sports centre among others it wished to close, along with town halls, care homes and more. Due to public pressure, the council was forced to U-turn on a number of these closures, but Dewsbury Sports Centre has remained shut.

But campaigners haven't given up. They have continued to lobby the council, 5,000 people signing a petition calling for the centre to be re-opened. A few months ago, campaigners held a well-attended public meeting addressed by the town's independent MP and independent councillors, elected in recent electoral revolts against Labour locally for the cuts, alongside its position on the war on Gaza.

It has since emerged that the RAAC issue only affects the 'wet side' of the sports centre and campaigners say the council's own report recommended that the ceiling be propped to allow for continued use. But instead of reopening a well-used community facility, the council wants to instead turn it into a car park. As campaigners quipped to us: "What's the point of another car park when there isn't a leisure centre or other things to come into Dewsbury for!"

On the protest, people told us about how much farther they now

have to travel to access sports facilities, to the point that many go less often or not at all.

After extra, but inadequate, funding was given to schools and hospitals for upgrading facilities, some of which are affected by RAAC in Labour's Budget, then people asked: 'Why hasn't the council gone and lobbied central government for funding for our sports centre as well?'

There are other campaigns ongoing over Kirklees Council wanting to now privatise the care homes it tried and failed to close last year. Unison, the largest trade union representing council workers, is involved. It has a policy calling for the council to set a no-cuts budget and demand the necessary funding off the government.

A conference of local community campaigns, fighting trade unions, independent councillors and the MP, and other campaigns could debate an alternative policy that could be put to the upcoming council budget setting meeting instead of further cuts.



YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Protesters fight closure of Birmingham day centre



Harborne Day Centre protesters BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

CLIVE WALDER
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

About 30 people protested about the closure of Harborne Day Centre in Birmingham on 6 November. The centre caters for 80 adults with learning disabilities and enables their unpaid carers to take some time off, knowing that they will be looked after by caring and experienced staff.

The centre provides its users with a routine and a reason to get out of bed in the morning. Some see it as a lifeline. Although the council has promised that they can attend alternative centres, they have no understanding of the importance of certainty and

stability in the lives of their service users. Additional travel and getting used to new surroundings and staff will cause great stress.

The council is citing reduced usage and difficulty in recruiting staff as the reason for closure. As the sister of one of the long-term service users said: "This isn't about transformation of services, this is about cutting costs, selling off land and generating money due to the financial mismanagement of the council - none of it the fault of the city of Birmingham's citizens". The closure will save less than £2 million, which will hardly make a dent in Birmingham Council's colossal debts.

The commissioners currently running the council have undemocratically refused to allow the decision

to close this and other day centres to be scrutinised by elected councillors. The site is large and would be attractive to a property developer. The likely negative health effects of the closure may well prove to be false economies as further demands would be made on the NHS.

It was encouraging that one of the local councillors joined the protest. He has already been suspended from the Labour Party for opposing these closures.

The protesters are determined to stop the closure. The placards attached to the railings declared that they will not give up their campaign and some were even prepared to occupy the centre in the event of closure.

Hackney Council forced to admit children's centre changes consultation unlawful

PRESS RELEASE

Parents, carers and the community are celebrating a huge win as Hackney Council concedes children's centre judicial review. This means that Hackney Council will need to consult again before making any changes to childcare provision in their children's centres.

The Labour Hackney South and Shoreditch Women's Branch, Liberal Democrats, Green Party, and Socialist Party, as well as Hackney Unison, are all standing in support of the campaign, which is seeking to save 129 subsidised childcare places which are at risk because of the proposals.

Natalie Aguilera, a parent with a child at Fernbank Nursery, who was also involved in the last

campaign to stop the closures of Fernbank and Hillside in 2021, said: "We welcome that Hackney Council has finally accepted that it has acted unlawfully in this matter. The truth is that closing Sebright and Fernbank children's centres and reducing services at Hillside and Oldhill is a political choice, made at the expense of the youngest members of our community who cannot yet speak for themselves.

"We urge the council to recognise the clear strength of feeling in the community and commit to not cutting or closing its children's centres, and instead recognise and promote the fantastic service the highly experienced and dedicated staff provide, especially for those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds."



Save Hackney children's centres protest HACKNEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Brian Debus, Chair of Hackney Unison, commented on the council's retreat from the Judicial Review Hearing. "This is great news and the parents who have led this campaign exposing the council's flawed consultation process are to be congratulated for a long and tenacious battle against Hackney Council's shortsighted policy.

This is the second time that the council has attempted to close children's centres in three years, with Fernbank and Hillside being involved on both occasions and Sebright and Oldhill this time. This has caused massive distress and disruption to staff and parents throughout. Hopefully the council will take an alternative path and not put staff and parents through any more unnecessary trauma and stress in the future. They should also stop wasting council money on legal cases that are not in the community's interest."

Unite sector conferences: Debate essential to sharpen industrial and political programme

ROB WILLIAMS
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL
ORGANISER AND FORMER VISTEON (EX-FORDS)
UNITE CONVENOR

Unite the Union stages biennial conferences for its industrial sectors, and retired members' and Community sections from 18 November. It is the first time that a significant layer of activists have met together since the election of the Keir Starmer-led New Labour government, and just a few weeks after chancellor Rachel Reeves's first Budget, that has set out grinding austerity for the next five years.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham has been more prepared to challenge Starmer's government than most other union leaders. But in this new period, it is essential there is a real debate within the union on how it sharpens its industrial and political programme to ready its members for the struggles ahead.

The week of conferences is also the last big event before the Unite electoral cycle begins in January, with elections for workplace reps, including shop stewards, and branch officers, then for regional and national industrial sector committees and regional committees. In 2026, there are elections for the Executive Council (EC) and general secretary.

Sharon was elected in 2021 after defeating the right-wing, boss-backed candidate Gerard Coyne, and the candidate of the United Left group (UL), assistant general secretary Steve Turner. Turner had announced himself as the candidate who wanted Unite to seek partnership with a likely Starmer government. Yet Starmer's leadership represented a clear shift back to a Labour Party for the capitalist elite, not the working class.

'Partnership'

And that Starmer government is now in office. At the Trades Union Congress in September, Starmer peppered his speech to delegates with the need for "partnership" between the unions, his government and the employers. This was necessary because of the "difficult choices" his government will have to make as it adheres to Tory spending limits after a decade and a half of brutal austerity. This has now been confirmed by Reeves's first Budget.

Many of the union leaders are only too happy to sign up to such a trilateral agreement. This is indicated by the approving sounds made in response to Starmer's rail and public sector pay offers, and his Employment Rights Bill, welcomed as a 'historic' gain for workers.

But in reality, Starmer and Reeves have consciously sought to buy time, by giving what are actually minimal concessions. Reeves admitted that there was a cost to not settling the long-running pay disputes that Labour inherited from the Tories - the cost of continuing industrial action. This is the priceless legacy of the strike wave of the last few years, the highest level of sustained workers' action for three



Sharon Graham standing alongside Coventry bin workers striking over pay and against union busting in 2022 - one of many groups of Unite members forced to fight Labour councils. Under Starmer, the cuts continue. COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

decades. It has left an indelible imprint of the consciousness of workers, as well as the bosses and their political representatives.

Unite under Sharon Graham's leadership has been in the forefront of the upturn in workers' struggle. The union has built upon the fighting tradition developed under Len McCluskey. This industrial militancy will be even more necessary now, given the austerity intent of Starmer and Reeves.

Demands on Starmer

The Employment Rights Bill, heralded by most of the union leaders, in reality strengthens individual rights of workers more than collective. Indicative of this is that, despite commitments to repeal the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 (MSLs) and Trade Union Act 2016, which enshrines the undemocratic 50% ballot turnout thresholds, the main tranche of Tory anti-union legislation will remain intact. This leaves Starmer in the position of Tony Blair in 1997 when, in his own words, he rejoiced in presiding over the most restrictive anti-union laws in the Western hemisphere.

And even they may not actually be repealed until as late as autumn 2026! Scandalously, this year's pay ballots in the public sector took place under the 50% thresholds, undermining the

possibility of national action in the NHS and local government. The unions, and Unite in particular, should demand that Starmer immediately repeals the MSLs and Trade Union Act, rather than wait for the Employment Rights Bill to progress through Parliament. There is precedent for such rapid progress of employer-friendly legislation in the past. But Unite should go further in setting such demands, and others, into the form of amendments to the Bill, and present them to the union's parliamentary group. It must also demand that the real-terms funding gap for local government, already wracked by Section 114 bankruptcy notices, that was confirmed by the Budget, is filled by the Labour government. Unite should have demanded that Tata Steel be nationalised by the government, after Tata was forced into talks following threatened action by Unite members in Port Talbot.

Political welcome

It is welcome that Sharon has led opposition to the cut to the pensioners' winter fuel allowance, including organising protests and now launching a legal challenge through a judicial review. Unite also defeated Starmer on the issue at Labour Party conference, but he made it clear that this will be ignored, further exposing the

working-class people was grudging, and the lack of enthusiasm can turn into anger and frustration, as it is already amongst a layer of workers. The far-right riots are a warning that if the unions don't attempt to fill the political vacuum with fighting socialist organisation and policies, other sinister forces can try to turn workers' heads.

Hypocrisy

Such an approach, exposing Starmer's role, is essential for militant members attracted to Sharon's general secretary campaign, in taking on the United Left. In Unite, the UL represents the trend within the trade union movement which seeks to cover up for Starmer. Unable to argue against the industrial record of the union since Sharon's election, the UL is hypocritically seizing on her insufficient response to the Israeli regime's murderous assault on Gaza and its seeming intent to threaten a wider Middle East war.

Unite should, along with the rest of the union movement, put itself at the head of the anti-war movement, as it should the fight against the far right. It should convene a national meeting of its reps in the defence, logistics and docks sectors to debate and discuss a workers' response to the war, including the defence of any worker who refuses to carry out duties that aid the Israeli war machine. Such an act would pit Unite against Starmer's shameful support of Netanyahu's government and military.

Unite's role as a militant union, challenging Starmer, and potentially giving a lead for a political alternative for workers, is at stake in the electoral cycle due to begin in the union.

Build a fighting left

In this, it is essential that a real fighting left is built in Unite. Socialist Party members have been to the fore in establishing the Unite Broad Left. It is still at a formative stage, but it has brought together those who campaigned for Sharon's election and the implementation of her manifesto. But it must continue to discuss and set out an independent industrial and political programme that it fights for within the union, to oppose any retreats that would be threatened by a UL recovery, and to act as a lever on Sharon's leadership.

Such a struggle has never been so important as in the period heralded by the defeat of the Tories and the government of Starmer's New Labour Mark 2.

- Socialist Party public meeting: how can unions build an alternative to Starmer? 7pm Monday 18 November at South Wing 2, Community Base, 113 Queens Road, Brighton BN1 3XG (10 minutes from conference venue)

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PCS NEC majority again try to win a fighting strategy and an accountable leadership

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS ON THE PCS NEC

The National Executive Committee (NEC) of the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union met on 7 November. PCS is the union for civil servants and workers on privatised government contracts.

The majority of NEC members were elected on a platform of building a serious national campaign and democratising PCS. Socialist Party members play a role in the Broad Left Network, which forms part of the left majority. But the national president and general secretary positions are still held by the 'Left Unity' grouping which was voted out of its leading role on the NEC.

Presidential veto of call for SDC

The left majority on the NEC proposed a motion to demand steps be taken to rebuild the union's national campaign on pay, pensions, jobs and rights, urging the calling of a Special Delegate Conference (SDC). Scores of branches, representing tens of thousands of PCS members, have written to the general secretary, Fran Heathcote, demanding an SDC be called. Branches are seeking to break the deadlock created by president Martin Cavanagh's repeated vetoes of NEC majority motions. But even this motion was immediately vetoed by Cavanagh.

Magnificent strike action in the private sector part of the union, against employers such as G4S, OCS and ISS, who hold facilities and security contracts with the government, has not been matched by strike action in civil service departments. This is despite the rejection of pay awards of around



Outsourced workers striking at the Cabinet Office. ROB WILLIAMS

5% across civil service areas. It was revealed that the general secretary has stated that the NEC had decided not to permit action to take place using the strike mandate won by 20,000 members in a ballot in May 2024. The NEC took no such decision - in fact, quite the opposite.

Heathcote and Cavanagh have already stated that they are unwilling to call an SDC because they fear it will be used to "attack" them. What they actually fear is exposure of their unwillingness to fight and the undemocratic techniques they have used to reduce the NEC to virtual paralysis.

Distortions on the levy

Before they lost their majority on the NEC, Left Unity supporters pushed through the relaunch of a strike levy on PCS members, an additional amount of money paid each month to create a pot of money to support members taking strike action.

The current majority of NEC members has called for a review of the levy, aiming to reduce the burden on the lowest paid while looking at what money would be needed to support effective strike action in the near future. This was voted on at the NEC in early July, but was then deliberately ignored in the Record of Decisions (minutes). Every other time it has been raised, the call to review has been met with a veto.

But then Left Unity supporters began clamouring for total cancellation of the levy, arguing that members cannot afford it. In fact, each time the question of national strike action comes up, they argue that members cannot afford it. In reality they are arguing that members cannot afford a serious campaign.

There is a discussion to be had about the levy. But blanket cancellation without any serious industrial strategy would send a powerful signal to the government, at a time when it is determining how it wants cuts to fall in the civil service, and when the current pay campaign hasn't been resolved yet. Groups that are rejecting the pay offers include DWP, which is led by Left Unity!

Accountability on finance

Another issue at the NEC was a finance paper from the general secretary that binned the recommendations of the union's elected Finance Committee (FC) regarding the PCS budget for 2025.

The FC recommended a starting assumption of 0% increase in members' subs, the staffing budget, and all other costs. All variations to this should be scrutinised by the elected FC, before a final picture is presented to the NEC.

Instead, Heathcote proposed assumptions of a 5% increase to members' subs and staff budgets, and an assumption of 2.5% increases on all general expenditure. In a caricature of a debate, Left Unity supporters argued that the majority is calling for "austerity" in PCS, and does not want to pay staff fairly. Not true! But in a context where the general secretary has created new highly paid posts and appointed her supporters to them, the elected majority wants to be able to scrutinise decisions.

The campaign for an SDC goes on. A renewal of democracy in PCS is vital if we are going to successfully fight our battles with the new Labour government, which has already turned towards cuts.

London bus drivers fight for safety

ANDY BEADLE
RETIRED BUS DRIVER

Bus drivers and road safety campaigners marched through central London on 5 November to Transport for London (TfL)'s posh head office. This wasn't without incident. From the start, police officers tried to get us to walk on the pavement rather than the planned route through London streets, though we stood firm.

Outside the TfL HQ, drivers spoke about the dangers of tired and overworked bus workers being pressurised by their bosses and controllers to 'keep going', 'carry on driver'.

One driver, James, explained that he defied an instruction to drive his bus further when a red light appeared on the dashboard warning that the brakes were defective. He later was told to sign a piece of paper promising to obey such dangerous and illegal instructions in future. He refused. He had also refused to drive a bus when the exit doors remained open.

I know these weren't isolated incidents because I have personally faced similar things. If only the police were as quick to point to the real law-breakers as they were to try to restrict our demo!

Management bullying is rife in

bus garages. Only a strong union can give drivers the confidence to resist these shortcuts, knowing they will be backed up by the union. If anything went wrong, not only passenger safety but the driver's licence and livelihood would be in jeopardy.

Road safety campaigners and a speaker from the London cycling campaign unsurprisingly were also against tired bus drivers working on our streets.

Privatisation

Safety campaigner Tom Kearney was not the only speaker to point out the TfL bosses are not incentivised to make safety the main priority. He said that TfL documents going back years speak of safety, but seem to exist mainly for public consumption, rather than management guidance. TfL is the overall transport authority, but the services are run by private companies. Tom said of private firms, "money is made on headway and mileage", and "safety is not a priority".

Almost invariably, the management of TfL come from (and sometimes return to) the private transport firms - they are not safety campaigners, passenger representatives or elected trade union reps.

It says in Unite the Union's rulebook that public transport should be



Andy (right) on the march. BERKAT KARTAV

publicly owned. That is the only way we can begin to make our industry democratically accountable to workers and those who rely on buses and road safety.

Only workers' organisation can ensure safety. Under capitalism, even when safety laws are enacted or regulation enforced, it will always be subject to constant undermining by big business. That is why we need strong unions. That is why we need socialist nationalisation.

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!

SOCIALISM

Hannah Sell Socialist Party General Secretary

At last year's Socialism event, we predicted Keir Starmer would be swept to power on a tidal wave of apathy, thrust into office by the collapse of the Tories.

The Tories got their worst result in two centuries, and Labour were elected by just 20% of the electorate. And they've gone down in the polls since!

But we can already hear the faint drumbeat of Labour's next election campaign: 'Grit your teeth, vote Labour. Because if you don't, it'll be your fault if we get racists and right-populists like the Tory Party or Reform.'

We got the answer to that lie in the United States election. The working class had no dog in the fight. It was an election between two capitalist candidates, backed by billionaires.

Bernie Sanders, who a decade ago engendered huge enthusiasm for the idea of a political revolution, for 'Main Street not Wall Street', blasted the Democrats. He said: "It should come as no great surprise that a Democratic Party which has abandoned working-class people would find that the working class has abandoned them."

But unfortunately, Bernie was campaigning down the line for Joe Biden and then Kamala Harris, as the 'lesser evil'.

We did see – without exaggerating its significance – a glimpse of the effect a workers' party could have.

Dan Osborn, a sacked leader of a strike at Kellogg's, stood for the Senate in Nebraska, a solidly Republican state. He stood on a limited programme that included increasing the minimum wage and improving trade union rights. In a seat considered completely safe for the Republicans, he took 46% of the vote.

That gives an idea of the only way to effectively combat racists and right populists – both here and in US. An independent party of the working class, standing clearly against racism and division.

Many people, terrified at what Trump will mean for migrants, women and trans people, did grit their teeth and vote Harris to try to stop Trump. But that was not enough to win the election.

Not because those issues are unimportant to majority of Americans. Last week a majority in eight states, five of them Republican, voted to enshrine abortion rights in state law.

But the central question in this election was the economy. Harris launched her campaign asking people to "feel the joy." It's difficult to think of a phrase that jars more with the experience of the majority, when real average hourly wages have fallen for 25 consecutive months.

Trump promised to fix it. There's no prospect of that. Last time he presided over huge tax cuts for the rich – meaning that the 400 richest families pay less in tax than their servants.

But Harris beat him on the number of billionaires backing her campaign, 83 to 52. This reflects that the US capitalist class does not speak with one



PHOTO: JASPER CHAPLIN



PHOTO: GAGE SKIDMORE

voice.

The oil industry is very happy with Trump's victory. But the majority of capitalists wanted Harris to win.

Trump is too reckless – both in his approach to international relations and domestically.

He is going to provoke huge social conflict in the US. That will include mass opposition from the working class, not least those who voted for him in the hope he will improve their living standards.

The mass of people will learn through brutal experience – including defeats – what is necessary to take power from the billionaires and build genuine socialist democracies.

We can play a vital role in speeding that process up. That includes fighting for the working class to have its own party.

The Labour government in Britain is a government for the capitalists. When the IMF and ex-governors of the Bank of England and European Central Bank unite to praise a budget, you know which class it is in the interests of – and it isn't ours!

We know that some supporters of the Socialist Party are thinking, why isn't there already a revolt against this government for the rich? Why aren't working-class people chucking mud at Starmer, the way they did at the Spanish king after the floods Valencia?

Without such a horrific catalyst, many workers are still hoping things are going to be a little bit better than under the Tories.

But today, Labour is an out-and-out capitalist party. It is going to take organised struggle to force concessions. Just as the little bit given on public sector pay is because of the threat of strike action.

Right now, the trade union leaders are leaning into the faint memory of Labour's past as hard as they can. They are acting, in reality, as a cover for Labour's pro-capitalist policies.

'PASSION AND SOCIALIST ACTION'

SOCIALISM 2024: BUILDING THE SOCIALIST OPPOSITION



Hundreds of working-class activists, trade unionists and students poured into the workshops and rallies of Socialism 2024 on 9-10 November to discuss how a fighting socialist opposition to Keir Starmer's war and austerity government can be built. We met just four months after Starmer was elected, with attacks already raining down on working-class and young people, far-right riots, war, and the election of Donald Trump in the US, all stirring up questions, fears and the desire to fight back. Over 700 bought tickets in advance, and many more turned up on the day. With a choice of 37 workshops and four rallies, it's impossible to report on it all! Workshops ranged from Marxist economics and philosophy to AI and climate catastrophe. How is a Palestinian state realisable; is society becoming more misogynist; what will life be like for disabled people under Starmer; struggle in Sri Lanka and Nigeria; the US after Trump's election. How we can win fighting trade unions, and young people and students fighting back, were key themes. First-time attenders, young leaders and organisers, talking with experienced trade unionists and activists – the corridors and bars buzzed with discussion. The big Saturday rally pulled all the themes together. Far from feeling doom-laden in the face of the 'age of monsters', the hall was brimming with optimism in the potential for working-class and young people to organise and fight back, armed with socialist ideas. The optimism was reflected in the financial appeal, which raised a huge £49,474. £30,670 of that has already been paid in – make sure you redeem your pledge as soon as you can. And if you missed the chance to donate at the rally please make up for that now! Can you help us get over £50,000? Attendees were all encouraged to take out a subscription to the Socialist paper, and to join the Socialist Party – if you're yet to do those things, do them today!

PHOTO: JASPER CHAPLIN

But there are enormous limits to that. The deep-rooted support for the Labour Party in the past was because it established the NHS, mass council house building and welfare. Even Tony Blair, back in 1997, increased NHS spending – combined with privatisation. But that was at a time when British capitalism was growing. Then came the Great Recession, from which capitalism, especially in Britain, has never recovered. According to the IMF, in 2024, UK Gross Domestic Product per head will be 29% below where it would have been. So hope in this government is going to evaporate and the ability of trade union leaders to hold back struggle will prove very limited indeed. The strike wave was just the beginning.

Workers now have more confidence to fight because they see an obstacle has been removed. So where Labour gives a few crumbs, we don't dismiss that, we demand more. Take the anti-trade union laws. They have said they will repeal some – still leaving the most repressive anti-union laws in the Western world – but it is likely they will still be on the statute books by next year's public sector pay battles. So our members in unions are demanding immediate action. In the end, it is not capitalist laws that are decisive, but the confidence and cohesion of the working class. The workers' movement killed the minimum service levels legislation, refusing to be cowed by it.

Nonetheless, a voice in parliament fighting for their demands can help give confidence to the working class to act. It is clear that there is going to be a battle in the trade union movement, with the majority of leaders continuing to attempt to protect the government, and behind them the capitalist class, from workers' anger. Our job is to cohere that anger – to act as a lever to organise all those trade unionists who want to fight. In the first place through industrial action but also on the political plane. We fight for every step forward in struggle. But our task is not only for the next step forward. In the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels explained: "The communists fight for

the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future." Powerful movements can force the capitalist class to make concessions. But those victories are temporary and partial. There is no way out of the blood and filth of this society while we live under capitalism. To stop war, to halt and reverse climate change, to end racism, to create a world where everyone has enough to eat and a secure home, requires taking the major corporations and banks into the hands of the working-class majority, to begin to build a democratic, socialist, planned economy to meet the needs of all.

in the Middle East are the Palestinian workers and masses of the Arab world, linking together and reaching out to Jewish workers as well, to overthrow their existing leaders and regimes, form a socialist confederation of the area, with the rights of all guaranteed. The same applies to Ukraine. The working class coming forward with its own independent solution. No illusion or collaboration with the rulers of capitalism, who will only offer misery, despair, and conflict. No ruling class will surrender its power and privilege without a fight. And it will fight to the end, using all methods that it has at its disposal. Therefore we have to look to the working class to establish its own organisations. Mass parties of the working class, with a revolutionary socialist programme, which are prepared to stand up and challenge capitalism, and fight for its overthrow. It's possible, if we look at the world, to see two things. On the one side, the prolonged death agony of capitalism is demonstrating objectively the conditions for socialism to be formed on a world scale. But, on the other side, the protracted nature of this crisis, the lack of leadership from workers' organisations, from the alleged leaders of the working class, it's easy for many to fall into despair and despondency. We can't have that approach. When Spain colonised South America, they slaughtered the Inca population. As one of its leaders, Tupaq Amaru, faced his execution, he made a bold declaration: "I will return, and I will be millions!" In the last years, we have seen millions mobilised – Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Chile, Sudan, Ecuador. The list is almost endless. You've seen the masses move into struggle. We have to be confident this is a pointer to what the future brings, further upheavals and struggles. What is necessary is building socialist organisations to give those struggles an organised form, a programme and a leadership that is able to break with capitalism, and open the prospect of building a new socialist world.

SOCIALISM



PHOTO: JASPER CHAPLIN

Tony Saunio Secretary of the Committee for a Workers' International

Capitalism came onto the scene of history dripping in blood. We face, in 2024, a social system of capitalism in a protracted death agony. It's preparing to exit this stage of history in the same manner by which it entered. In 2024, what do we see? The meat grinder of the war in Ukraine, the genocidal war against the Palestinian peoples by the Netanyahu regime. We see environmental meltdown. We see famine returning. Stagnant and collapsing living standards. We see unprecedented inequality.

The demand has been taken up for the leaders of capitalism to be tried for war crimes. We have a right to go further, to put the entire system of capitalism in the dock. We accuse it of blighting the life of humankind, of jeopardizing the future of humankind. Remember the words of Italian revolutionary Antonio Gramsci: "The old world is dying, yet the new is struggling to be born. Now is the time of monsters." And don't we have monsters ruling the world.

Trump's victory has struck terror into millions around the world. It is a cry of despair from sections of the American population and working class.

But there's another side. The other face of the American working class was revealed in the magnificent strike of the Boeing workers, the magnificent dock workers, which moved into battle.

If you want to look to the future for the US, look at what we've seen in Argentina. Right-wing Javier Milei came to power with 60% support. Within six to eight months, it's down to 40%, he's faced two general strikes and has just had to back down on his proposal to attack transport workers.

There is no solution to the problems facing the world on the basis of capitalism – in relation to the economy, environmentally or war. The hands which can solve war

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SOCIALISM

Fiona Brittle PCS National Executive Committee (personal capacity)

We in PCS are in a battle against the remnants of the former leadership, for the democratic control of our union.

Shifting ever rightwards to cling to the last positions of power that they still retain - those of the president and the general secretary - the so-called 'Left Unity' faction, who now form a minority on the National Executive Committee (NEC), are acting to block the fighting socialist programme voted for by our members at the last leadership elections and again at our conference in May.

The fight mirrors the divide in the labour movement as a whole, between unions on the one hand which recognise that we must fight Starmer's austerity government and the cuts it is already making, and those unions and the TUC leadership which are content with fawning over the bare minimum offered by Labour.

The pressure of organised workers that could be exerted by trade unions with fighting socialist leaderships to initiate and sustain struggle is immense.

Trade unions must use strike action to push Labour further left than they want to go. This means forcing centrist union leaderships to tack left until we can properly oust them. And this will be done not just by arguing with them in the NEC meetings, but crucially by winning the support of rank-and-file activists to apply class pressure.

Contrary to this, the TUC's uncritical support allows Starmer to rest on ancient laurels of Labour as a workers' party. A fig leaf it would be impossible for him to use, if union members were out on the streets, demanding a real left alternative for all workers.

We fight for that by building broad left coalitions in our unions and maintaining accountability to our class.



Nadia Ditta anti-war socialist election candidate (Southampton Bevois ward in May 2024 local elections)

I come from a family who have voted Labour for 40 years. My journey here started when I saw a placard on an anti-war protest for Palestine.

During my campaign I realised that the war in the Middle East may have brought me to the doors canvassing, but the people I was speaking to were fighting a war within their own homes, a war against the cost of living, struggling with the basics - food on the table and a roof over their heads.

We deserve to live in a country where we don't struggle for basic necessities. We live in the fifth-richest economy but we still see people who are homeless, we still see children that are hungry.

In May this year, we showed Labour what we are made of, gave them a run for their money and took 33% of the votes. To me this shows that people are ready for a change. They want people who will fight for their rights and say no to cuts.



Jared Wood RMT London Transport regional organiser (personal capacity)

What is the new deal for workers going to amount to? What we are facing on TfL and London Underground, with a Labour London Mayor Sadiq Khan, is not a new deal for workers at all. It is a programme of attacks on pay and conditions, to try and meet stringent funding restrictions that TfL operates under.

When this year's pay talks came about, London Underground undermined the very concept of collective bargaining and our ability to negotiate pay and conditions for our members.

We couldn't accept that. We put down a week of strike action, and at the last moment we won assurances that the bosses' programme would not be extended.

We suspended the action. We've now got an offer on the table that the union is considering.

Looking ahead, there is little prospect of more constructive industrial relations on London Underground. At the moment, TfL is expected to find 2% real terms cuts, year on year for the foreseeable future. It's impossible and is triggering attempts by management to drive job cuts and pay cuts.

Our members are in no mood to accept that. The fight in London Underground, the fight in TfL, will go on. Solidarity!



Odun Eniayekan Nigeria Solidarity UK

In Nigeria today, large parts of the economy are imploding, and society shows signs of disintegration.

This is occasioned by the IMF and World Bank-inspired neo-liberal, anti-poor policies of fuel subsidy removal, devaluation of the currency, electricity tariff hike, fees hike in schools, amongst others. The cost-of-living crisis has taken on a new dimension, where families now have to decide which kid goes to school. Individuals are now beginning to consider resigning their jobs as a result of the cost of transportation now eating up a sizeable portion of their income.

To the chagrin of the masses, but the praises of international capitalist institutions including the World Bank and IMF, the current regime of president Tinubu has gone far and above all his predecessors in unleashing a neo-liberal offensive on the mass of working people.

The comrades in Nigeria are playing a Herculean role - despite the huge risk of arrest, harassment and brutalisation - with the understanding of the necessity in this new era of capitalism, while also putting forward the need for a mass working people's party, armed with a socialist programme to challenge capitalism and rebuild Nigeria.

In Nigeria, Africa and the rest of the neo-colonial world we require a socialist revolution, to break free from the stranglehold of imperialism and its local capitalist ruling elites, to utilise the immense natural and human resources for the benefit of all.

Cas Middlemas Funding Not Fees and Socialist Students activist

Like most students right now, I'm angry. We are required to take on tens of thousands of pounds of debt to receive a university education, an education that politicians like Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves never had to pay for.

After paying ridiculous amounts, we enter into university and are faced with budget cuts and course closures.

Like many other young people, until this July, a Conservative government was all I had ever known and all I could remember.

This July, despite my best efforts, I deep down had a little bit of hope that maybe things could get better. But let me be clear, my hopes, and hopes of all students across this country, were shattered. Not three months into power, this government broke their election promises and raised tuition fees.

We don't just stand against this latest rise in tuition fees, we call for all tuition fees for both university and college students to be scrapped, and for student debt to be cancelled immediately.

We call for the reintroduction of living grants not maintenance loans, and for them to rise properly with inflation each year.

We also stand in solidarity with university workers to end low pay, job insecurity, and bad working conditions.

At the end of the day, what we call for and what students need is for universities to be properly and democratically funded, paid for by taking it from the super-rich, not by raising the bill for students.

While we carried out excellent work protesting on Budget Day across the country, the campaign for funding not fees has just begun!

Fight racism with working-class struggle



Deji Olayinka, the Socialist Party's Black and Asian group coordinator, opened the 'Fight racism - Oppose the far right' closing rally, which was chaired by Mila Hughes from Coventry.

Deji highlighted the grim reality under capitalism: of racism, xenophobia, and anti-Muslim hatred, as well as the risk of these trends worsening during Trump's rule. But we all left the rally heartened by the potential for the working class to unite and defeat racism. "Don't mourn, organise!"

Nancy Taaffe of Waltham Forest Socialist Party spoke passionately about the strength of working-class solidarity against the far right. She helped with mobilising thousands to scare them off in Walthamstow and it was a powerful example of what we can achieve.

April Ashley, Black Women's rep on public sector union Unison's National Executive

Council (speaking in a personal capacity), argued that we must push the trade union movement to fulfil their role in defeating racism, with a 'Jobs and Homes not Racism' campaign. Not just by mobilising for counter-demonstrations, but by taking steps towards a new mass workers' party that can stand on the side of the working class, opposing all oppression and austerity, with a socialist programme that can cut across the appeal of populist right politicians.

The rally was brought together by Phil from Hull, detailing success fighting for a political intervention from the labour movement. Hull Trades Council launched a Jobs and Homes, not Racism campaign during far-right violence in August. Trade unionists leafleted, putting forward a politics for the working class that has the potential to cut across support for the far right, and then stewarded a counter-demonstration that outnumbered them.

Labour has come for students and young people - and we're fighting back!

The 'Funding Not Fees' closing rally, hosted by Socialist Students, was full of young people getting organised - against the tuition fee hike, and all the issues blighting young people's lives.

Robbie Davidson from Manchester Socialist Students outlined the dismal living conditions facing university students. But students in Manchester are fighting back: this term, Socialist Students has set up official societies at two Manchester universities.

Mihaela Ivanova from Queen Mary Socialist Students highlighted how the university funding crisis has also incentivised managements to make money off arms companies that fuel war in Gaza and internationally. Mihaela argued that what students need is not just full public funding for education, but also a democratic say, alongside staff, over where that funding goes.

The need for resources and democratic student-staff control was

reinforced by Isis Smyth, from Liverpool Socialist Students, as the way to tackle the epidemic of sexual violence on campuses. Students in Liverpool will be joining Socialist Students groups protesting around the country on 25 November, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

How all these issues are also playing out internationally, often in an even more acute form, was underlined by Tom Porter-Brown from Birmingham Socialist Students. Tom raised the inspiring examples of students fighting back in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nigeria.

Capitalism can only offer young people falling living standards and a future wrought by uncertainty. Summing up the rally, Socialist Students national organiser Adam Powell-Davies pressed home the need for students to get organised now to fight for a socialist future.

Rally chair Adam Gillman, Socialist Party youth organiser, ended by calling on everyone to build the Funding Not Fees campaign - to stop next year's tuition fee hike, and fight for free education with living grants for all.



'We are the unions of the future'

Anyone who was flagging by the end of a packed weekend would have been inspired by the fantastic, youthful 'Building Fighting Trade Unions' closing rally.

"It is vital that we, as young workers, take responsibility and step up, for the generations of activists above us to pass on the torch," said Eve Miller, a Unison rep and youth officer. Eve has succeeded in getting a resolution calling for no-cuts council budgets onto the agenda of Unison's upcoming young members conference.

Chaired by Adam Harmsworth, Napo probation union national vice chair, the rally speakers all highlighted the big numbers of young workers joining trade unions, and the role young Socialist Party members are playing to campaign for fighting

democratic trade unions, up to the tasks ahead in the struggles to come under Starmer's government.

Sheila Caffrey, Executive member of the National Education Union, inspired the rally with the description of the thousands of young teachers who had joined the union looking for a fight, and the demands those young workers need to campaign for now.

Young workers are part of the struggle to win the leadership of the civil service union PCS, and PCS member Reece explained the battle at the top of that union between the old leadership and the new - an essential battle in order that PCS can fight. It was the same fighting policies that meant that Duncan Moore was elected to the NEC of the University and College Union, where members are up for a fight but have been let down by leaders.

Everyone on the platform spoke in a personal capacity

What you thought of Socialism 2024

Feeling the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, long work hours and the general sense of hopelessness you get from the completely uninspiring return of Labour, Socialism 24 was a moment of respite as well as an opportunity to build.

To see so many new faces acting with boldness in sessions filled me with joy. As I go into a new week aware of the fight that lays ahead, I have a renewed confidence in the ideas that will win. ELLEN

It was incredibly informative and a good experience that all young people should have as we are the next generation of socialists. USRA

The event provided an environment where I felt comfortable and confident to share my views, ask questions, and be involved in thought-provoking discussion. LOTTIE

As a first-time attendee, I wasn't exactly sure what to expect. I'm therefore happy to report back that Socialism 2024 was informative, inspiring, and interesting! ALEX

As one of the old-timers, I

was extremely impressed by their being so many young activists with the ability to explain the case for socialism.

That they came from all over the country with such confidence, but also keen to learn and exchange ideas. It gave me and other more long-standing comrades I spoke to even greater conviction that we are on the correct road. KEITH

A shoutout to the crèche! As a mum of a young child, I struggle to get to many meetings. It was really good to get the opportunity to take part in the discussions while my son had fun playing with all the other children. TANIS

The Saturday night rally was very inspiring. The drive for subscriptions to the Socialist was in full force and the fighting fund target smashed!

Now let's go and build for the socialist future that we know is possible! MELANIE

It was wonderful to be among passionate supporters and to hear their speeches. I should also mention the display of books for sale, which was quite noteworthy. ADEEL



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

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

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Ireland is heading to the polls in a snap general election scheduled for 29 November. The governing Fine Gael and Fianna Fail coalition leaders are looking to capitalise on opposition party Sinn Féin plummeting in opinion polls. **Ciarán McKenna, Militant Left (CWI Ireland)**, looks at the crisis in Sinn Féin, and what that means for the upcoming general election.

After years of riding high in the polls, Sinn Féin [‘Ourselves Alone’ – a republican party historically linked to the Provisional Irish Republican Army] is mired in a deep crisis. Just a few weeks from a general election, Sinn Féin president Mary Lou McDonald is subject to intense media scrutiny over the internal regime within the party.

Two TDs [Teachta Dála, members of the Dáil Éireann, the lower house of the Oireachtas (Irish Parliament)] have resigned in the past number of weeks. Kildare South TD Patricia Ryan resigned after objecting to the way in which the party controlled what she said in public. More damaging is the resignation of Laois TD Brian Stanley, who was Chair of the influential Public Accounts Committee. His resignation seems clouded in innuendo, with further developments expected.

In the North, there have been deeply damaging revelations about senior members of the party, including a former Sinn Féin leader in the Seanad and a former press officer. All of this comes on the back of declining poll numbers in the South. While Sinn Féin's local and European election performance was respectable, it fell short of expectations of a breakthrough. Under present circumstances, the long-anticipated Dáil election breakthrough for Sinn Féin looks increasingly doubtful.

In a capitalist democracy it is assumed by the establishment that political parties aspiring to govern must be vetted and approved by the capitalist class. This is the precondition for them being permitted to

govern. Where a political organisation with mass support puts forward a programme that conflicts with the interests of the capitalist class, from key economic to constitutional issues, that party is generally destroyed or severely damaged and hampered.

The ruling capitalist class is adept at exploiting the political weaknesses, mistakes and scandals of parties or figures. Some recent examples of this are Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the British Labour Party between 2015-2019; the Scottish National Party; and Bernie Sanders's US presidential campaigns in 2016 and 2020.

Courting capitalism

Sinn Féin, however, had been meticulous in its preparations to govern. It had made a point of developing close relations with influential sectors of the capitalist class. In April, it held an investor meeting facilitated by arch-capitalist Davy Stockbrokers. Its record of support for austerity in the Stormont Assembly has established its credentials as a 'serious party of government.' That is, one that will not make any fundamental economic or political changes to benefit the working class. In terms of economic policy, Sinn Féin's programme presents few difficulties for the capitalist class.

But in the South there is a very significant added complication. As an organisation rooted in armed republicanism, Sinn Féin is hated by key pillars of the Southern state and establishment, who will clearly never regard it as a legitimate political party, no matter how many votes it gets. Influential elements within the



Ireland: Sinn Féin in crisis as general election looms



Sinn Féin leader Mary Lou McDonald
SINN FEIN/CC

civil service, the Gardaí [police], the officer class of the defence forces, the print and broadcast media, all remain deeply hostile to any idea of a Sinn Féin-led government.

Border poll instability

Perhaps more importantly still, the ruling elite fears that a Sinn Féin government would push strongly for a border poll, thereby destabilising governing structures, north and south, and exacerbating sectarian tensions. This in turn risks undermining the security of US multinational capitalism, which holds

huge investments in - and exercises strong political influence over - the state. Indeed, the wider economy has, since the 1960s, been built around, and remains substantially dependent on, continuing US inward investment.

What does all this mean for the working-class majority in the South? Since the 2016 election, Sinn Féin has been the vehicle for hopes that the century-long domination by the corrupt capitalist parties (with their roots in the 1920s civil war) could be decisively broken. The housing crisis and the effective ending of home

ownership for ordinary working people are just the latest examples of how the two civil war parties continue to shape society in ways that compromise the lives of millions of ordinary people.

A decade of extremely uneven post-austerity 'recovery' has radically worsened social and economic inequality. While the number of millionaires in the South grows every year, 400,000 workers remain permanently mired on poverty pay. Layers of society are condemned to lives of deprivation despite the colossal wealth made every year. The brutality of the hybrid public-private health-care system, which the treatment of children with scoliosis, for example, exposes, never seems to end and is the enduring example of stark social inequality.

Sinn Féin's growing crisis also calls into question the idea of a Sinn Féin-led 'left' or 'progressive' government. This, in any case, was always unlikely. Not least because it has been clear, to those looking closely enough over the past ten years, that Sinn Féin itself was extraordinarily lukewarm about this idea, while being nonetheless prepared to politely indulge the delusions of those on the socialist left who regarded it as a serious proposition.

More tellingly, the party has repeatedly demonstrated that it not only has no orientation to building working-class struggle, but that it views powerful social movements with distrust and concern.

Sinn Féin prospects

On current polling, and with an escalating crisis that will dominate media coverage of Sinn Féin for weeks, Sinn Féin will not be in a position to lead the next government in the South. Mary Lou McDonald will not be Taoiseach. The Irish political establishment have found a formula that they believe can prevent a Sinn Féin government; and they are likely to stick with it.

So, the next government will probably be a continuation of the current coalition based on Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil. The Green Party will repeat the pattern of losing most, or all, of its Dáil seats after a stint in government, and the Social Democrats, Labour and assorted Independents will replace them to make up the numbers. There will be no significant change in the Dáil.

What then? Militant Left has always called out many of the grand claims made by and for Sinn Féin. But we have also always recognised that, for hundreds of thousands of working-class people, this party was seen as the force that had the potential to decisively change things for the better. That it would right many of the fundamental wrongs that afflict the working class in the South. That it would break apart the political cartel who have for over a century enriched themselves and their

buddies, regardless of the consequences for the majority. That prospect is receding.

Far-right threat

A potentially dangerous political vacuum might open up for many in the working class, particularly those most oppressed by Irish capitalism. The prospect of the far right, including its fascist elements, filling that vacuum must be openly reckoned with. The establishment thinks it can contend with, and at times utilise, a rampaging and violent far right, so long as there is no repeat of events like last November's riots in Dublin. If a radical spike in racism, anti-LGBTQ activism and anti-asylum seeker violence is the price to be paid to stop a Sinn Féin government, then many in the Irish political establishment would regard that as a bargain.

The socialist left must soberly assess matters. The case for a mass party of the working class, based on an unapologetic socialist programme, is now incontestable. While still comparatively small, socialist forces have a basis to build such a party to challenge not only the mainstream right-wing parties and the far right, but also Sinn Féin itself.

Working-class representation

Such a party cannot just be an electoral vehicle, it must be a campaigning and organising force that puts a socialist programme front and centre of all its demands. These demands include ending the housing crisis with a mass public housing programme, at genuinely affordable rents; free healthcare; cheap public transport; a living wage for all and decent workplace conditions – all tied to the need for the fundamental socialist transformation of society.

Sinn Féin's many political contradictions are the root cause of its present difficulties. A party of austerity in the North presenting itself as a party of economic and social justice in the South. A party always eager to hobnob with US presidents while proclaiming solidarity with the Palestinians and other oppressed groups. Its present crisis may abate in time but right now it will without a doubt severely cut across Sinn Féin's ambitions in the imminent general election campaign.



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Capitalist state repression - lessons from the 1984-85 Miners' Strike

DAVE GORTON
CHESTERFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

This was the worst manifestation of evil I ever witnessed; four or five police officers bullying a man and enjoying it. Sheer sadism. 'We'll have this bastard next, give him the special treatment.' Two or three police officers coming up to me casually, grinning. They frogmarched me to the rear of the van. They put me on the ground, with my arms out in front of me, my hands handcuffed tightly. My head and torso were then levered up with a truncheon [across the bridge of my nose]. Some kind of foreign body was inserted into each nostril. I was lowered back to the ground and my back was jumped on several times. Finally my head was turned sideways to the ground then someone jumped on my head.' (State of Siege: Miners' Strike 1984 - Politics and Policing in the Coal Fields)

Not Chile under Pinochet, or Guantanamo Bay at the beginning of this century. This was Rainworth, a village in Nottinghamshire with a population of around 7,000. It was May 1984, a few hours after a large demonstration in nearby Mansfield to support National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) members during the momentous year-long strike against pit closures.

Mining villages weren't idyllic places. Life was hard. Violence in the form of a punch-up after too many beers or the occasional clash with the police while following your football team was not totally absent. Miners didn't expect to see a jolly, laughing policeman on their street every day.

But most did view the police as upholders of 'law and order' in what was thought a 'democratic country'. That was shattered during the Miners' Strike in a way that could never be fixed. The role of the state was laid bare to tens of thousands, who suffered and witnessed countless similar incidents.

State violence

To some, that the police could resort to violence and chicanery was no longer news by 1984. The outright racism of so many officers and their delight in handing out punishment in working-class Black communities, specifically by the hated Special Patrol Group (SPG), had been prevalent for years. Other minorities too experienced state violence. The corruption, particularly in the London Metropolitan Police, reached such staggering proportions in the 1970s that even the ruling class realised it would have to start clamping down and being seen to clean up the state forces.

Many in Northern Ireland had been experiencing extreme state repression and occupation for 15 years.



Miners weren't the first group of organised trade unionists to experience new tactics that became much more widespread during the strike. The Stockport Messenger Group dispute in 1983-84 was the first real try-out of Thatcher's anti-union laws alongside state forces using maximum violence to implement them. Six months prior to the start of the Miners' Strike, I witnessed (and felt!) the levels of violence meted out by 2,000 police at the Warrington printworks in what became known as the Battle of Winwick Quay.

The 1981 Brixton riots led to Lord Scarman's inquiry blaming the "racial disadvantage that is a fact of British life". He found loss of confidence and mistrust in the police and their methods of policing. The outcome was the opposite of what many expected - police powers continued to be ramped up behind the scenes. By the time the miners struck in March 1984, Britain's separate police forces were in a position to be used as one force, controlled centrally.

The Tory government wasn't just seeking revenge for the electoral defeat suffered by a previous Tory

administration at the hands of the NUM in 1974. It was part of a much more orchestrated plan, 'launched' in the US under Ronald Reagan and the UK, to reassert capitalism as the only workable economic system.

Part of the plan was to push the social democratic parties in Europe - such as the Labour Party in Britain - and their acolytes in the unions, to the right and away from being dragged into any revolutionary fervour of the masses. Thatcher's later claim that her biggest victory was 'Tony Blair and New Labour' was not a lie, nor had it been accidental.

'Worse than murder'

There was, however, unfinished business for the police force in the form of revenge for the humiliating defeat the organised working class had inflicted on them in the infamous Saltley Gate struggle of 1972, during another national miners' strike. Then, the working class of Birmingham had united in solidarity with the miners, with thousands walking out to picket the fuel storage depot based there. There were 800 police on duty but, as a police officer interviewed

later recalled: "We heard that some pickets were coming over the Saltley viaduct. The plan was to block off the bridge, steer them away. But... he made a helpless, sweeping gesture across the café... 'I can still see it now, them coming over the hill...'"

In 1977, Robert Mark, Commissioner of the Met, had said: "I do not think that what we call crimes of violence are anything like as severe a threat to the maintenance of tranquillity in this country as the tendency to use violence to achieve political or industrial ends. As far as I'm concerned, that is the worst crime in the book. I think it is worse than murder."

State repression increases

Leader of the Russian Revolution Vladimir Lenin, writing on Friedrich Engels's *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, famously used the phrase "special bodies of armed men" in relation to the development of state power to protect the ruling classes' interests. In fact, Engels had written: "[The state] consists not merely of armed men, but also of material appendages, prisons and coercive institutions of all kinds", which stretches beyond just the police and army.

These other tools of the state were honed during the early years of Thatcher's reign, with the intention of being used in the struggle against the organised working class.

The media were a crucial part of the state machinery during the Miners' Strike, and remain firmly wedded to the maintenance of the capitalist system today. From the blatant bias of the BBC swapping newsreels around to show, at Orgreave, police 'retaliating' to stones being thrown at them by charging horses into the pickets (an original denial was proved false when closer examination clearly determined the correct order of events by the path of the sun and shadows!) to more subtle subterfuge, almost every media outlet and publication lined up behind Thatcher.

On the day Nottinghamshire's

miners were being balloted by their area NUM about joining the strike, a letter appeared in the Nottingham Evening Post from a woman claiming Yorkshire miners had been paying £2 a week into a strike fund since 1972. Now, she claimed, they were drawing £70 a week in strike pay. Blatantly untrue, but very likely to have had an effect.

The early days of the 'drift back to work', several months into the strike, were reported with massively inflated numbers, all later proved wrong from the National Coal Board's own figures.

Ken Loach's pro-strike film *Which Side Are You On?* was banned from our screens in November 1984 as being too political. It was subsequently shown on Channel 4 (very new at the time and with much fewer viewers) but then 'balanced out' by a programme with an opposing view of the strike.

The government revealed in 1985 it had spent £4,266,000 on national advertising about the strike (the equivalent of nearer £20 million today) plus a further £300,000 locally. (The cost of actually policing the strike was nearer £200 million at the time!)

In his autobiography, Norman Tebbit, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry during the strike, wrote: "I do not think that anyone has properly assessed the skill with which the dispute was foreseen and then managed by the government."

Powers of arrest were extensively misused, as a means of collecting intelligence and also as police detention without trial. "The latest figures suggest that of all those arrested under emergency powers about 80% are subsequently not charged with offences. They are released after spending up to seven days in police custody."

The Thatcher government attempted to use hunger to undermine strike action by removing the rights to benefits for non-married strikers in the Social Security Act 1980. £15 a week (increased to £16 during the strike) was also removed from benefits for

families on the deliberate misinterpretation miners were getting strike pay (they weren't).

Alongside these state interventions, phone tapping was rife. When the Post Office Engineering Union sought an enquiry about abuses, its members and staff were threatened with the Official Secrets Act, which carries penalties of imprisonment and unlimited fines.

And, during October 1984, the High Court ordered the complete sequestration of all NUM assets in an attempt to starve miners back to work.

Kent miners were stopped from driving through the Dartford Tunnel because the police said they were going picketing in Nottinghamshire, 150 miles away, where a breach of the peace 'could' occur. The same restrictions were placed on supporters trying to get to the port of Wivenhoe in Essex, and other ports. Huge efforts were made to keep pickets away from the Orgreave coking plant near Rotherham, except on 18 June 1984, when police waved through vehicles instead of trying to stop them on motorways and surrounding roads. It was a trap which led to some of the worst instances of police brutality.

Sadly, though, the NUM leadership failed to fully realise the Tories' change of tactics - using mass criminalisation of miners and their families - also meant they needed another tactic than just mass picketing. This became all the more prevalent after the defeat at Orgreave.

Mass picketing alone was not going to win the dispute. It needed the coordination from below of solidarity strike action from other workers. NUM leader Arthur Scargill should have used his unprecedented standing amongst ordinary workers to go

over the heads of reluctant union leaders and demand a 24-hour general strike as the first weapon towards more concentrated action.

The state is not invincible

Socialists must understand what the state machine is capable of, in times of acute repression or in less volatile periods where it is used, more subtly, by the ruling class.

It is more important we don't make the mistake of believing even the most well-armed states are invincible. In Egypt and Tunisia in 2011, seemingly all-powerful autocratic states were brought crashing to their knees by the movements of workers. But workers' political parties with a clear programme, strategy and tested leadership were sadly lacking.

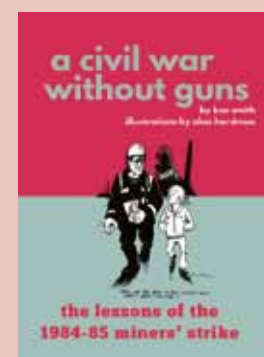
The state forces reconstituted under different leaders and the opportunity for a revolutionary overthrow of capitalism passed. What was missing during the 'Arab Spring' was exactly what had been present in the Russian revolution of 1917, which removed capitalism for the first time and installed a workers' government.

The vast majority of the participants in the Miners' Strike - the miners, their families and supporters - didn't set out to overthrow capitalism. They were seeking to protect their jobs, communities and futures. But over the course of a year, the role of the state became clearer to tens of thousands involved in the titanic struggle. If the Labour and trade union leaders - with a few honourable exceptions - had led their class, rather than seeking compromise with the ruling capitalist class, those futures could have been very different indeed.

A 'long shield' Police Support Unit, equipped with protective riot gear and acrylic shield at Orgreave
PHOTO: WMP/CC

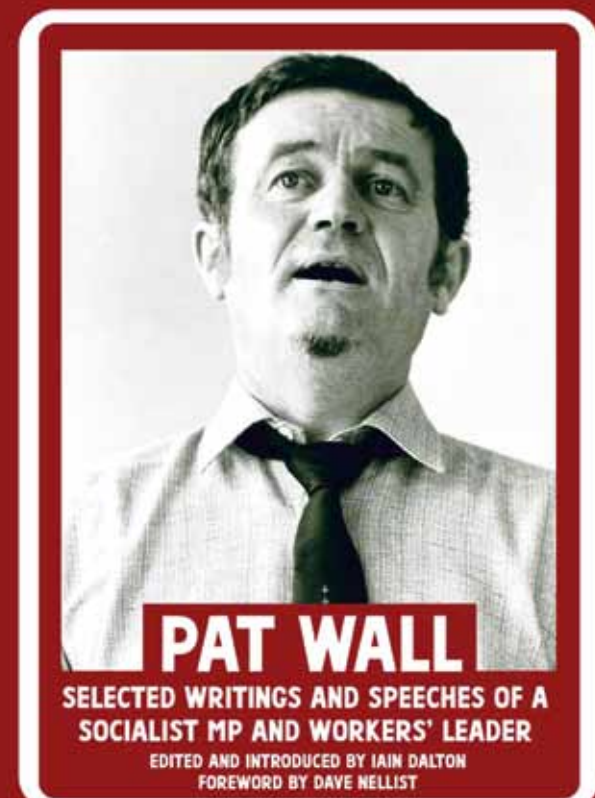


Lobbying the TUC for a 24-hour general strike
PHOTO: DAVE SINCLAIR



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WE CAN STOP UNI FEES HIKE

FUNDING NOT FEES



ADAM GILLMAN

SOCIALIST PARTY YOUTH ORGANISER

Just days after the budget, the so-called Labour government announced a rise in tuition fees to £9,535, coming into effect in the 2025-26 academic year. This will not only affect students starting university in 2025, but also returning students.

The fee hike will anger many already stressed, outraged students. Young people are already facing a cost-of-living crisis, massive debts, and cuts to their services and courses.

Some people say that if you're low paid after studying you won't have to pay it back, but if you are a graduate working full-time on just next year's minimum wage you will still have to start to pay it off.

The budget had already contained attacks on young people, such as the increase in the bus fare cap to £3, making it more expensive for students and young people to travel.

The Labour government is testing to see what it can get away with without triggering a mass movement.

This is why Socialist Students has initiated the 'Funding Not Fees' campaign with other groups on campus. To fight to scrap tuition fees and cancel student debt, for fully funded education, with living grants not loans. To fight for rent controls in student accommodation, to end low pay and unstable contracts for staff, and to stop all cuts and closures on campus.

Socialist Students groups will be writing to student unions and trade union branches to ask to speak at their branch meetings and to ask them to support the campaign.

Funding Not Fees will also be lobbying MPs to see if they are on the side of students or of rotten university managements and a government that wants to make students pay for the university funding crisis rather than the super-rich.

We have ten months till this fee rise will be implemented, so we have to get out there and fight back to show the government that students will not just accept attacks.

It's not just on the universities where young people are angry. We face the devastating effects of cuts to our public services, such as youth services and schools, which are making life harder for millions.

If you are interested in campaigning for funding not fees, if you want to fight back against cutbacks and for socialist change, then join the socialists today!

Socialist Students says

- **No fee increases** – get organised on campus to **fight for free education!** Cancel student debt, replace student loans with living grants tied to the rate of inflation. Make the super-rich pay!
- **No cuts and no closures!** Build democratic student organisations to link up with campus trade unions and the wider working class to fight for the funding our universities need
- **Kick big business off campus!** End marketisation of our education. Open up university finances to democratic oversight and control, including by elected students' representatives and campus trade unions, with the power to terminate all contracts and research tied to war, occupation, profiteering and exploitation, while guaranteeing jobs and funding
- **Students need a political voice.** Build a new mass workers' party that will stand up for students and workers and fight for socialist policies
- **Fight for socialist change.** For democratic public ownership of the banks, monopolies and major industry to provide us with a future

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

