

STOP ALL COUNCIL CUTS AND CLOSURES



Make the super-rich pay

MARIAM KAMISH
RHONDDA CYNON TAFF (RCT) SOCIALIST PARTY

Like most councils in Britain, RCT Council faces a funding gap, after years of austerity under Tory and Labour governments. And councillors are plotting cuts.

The Labour council is trying to divide us. The consultation process asks you to explain how a cut or closure would affect you – and where you think they should cut instead.

We say: don't fall for that trick. To win, we need to unite all the fights!

That's how we'll save free school transport;

Ferndale House and Cae Glas residential care homes; Trallwng Infants School; in-house social care and Meals on Wheels.

When we started our campaign, councillors we met told us the money wasn't there. They've stopped telling us that now.

RCT Council has £270 million in usable reserves – the largest in Wales. That's according to the Welsh Labour government's own figures.

We elect councillors to represent us. They shouldn't be making cuts and closures that would devastate people's lives.

Use the reserves, fund services and mobilise a fight for more money from government! By taking a fighting stance, they would win huge public support.

RCT Trades Union Council has agreed to head up this campaign. With the trade union movement in the lead, the local authority can be forced to think again!

● **Read what we think: 'Councils on the frontline - and where the fightback can begin' on page 3**

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

Millions had enough of Labour government already



Labour continues Tory attacks – this time it’s young people!

In its dying days, the Tory government announced plans to hit out-of-work and unwell benefit claimants to save £3 billion a year.

Well don't worry! That policy is living on as Labour's work and pensions secretary, Liz Kendall, will stick to them. But 'nice' Labour cuts instead of Tory cuts. Keir Starmer, writing in the Daily Mail, has even promised not to "call people shirkers". But for those people targeted, what difference does that make when the cost of living bites?

It seems first on the hit list is young people, whose benefits may be cracked down on if they don't take up job offers or training. Young people today face work environments defined by poverty pay, bogus

At the time of writing, over two million signatures have made their way onto a petition calling for a general election as "the current Labour Government have gone back on the promises they laid out in the lead-up to the last election."

Despite being promoted by right-wing Tory and Reform MPs, retweeted by maverick billionaire Elon Musk and lists of postcodes shared to allow people from other countries to add names to the list, there is clearly anger at the Labour government.

This government, elected by just 20% of

the electorate, has already scrapped universal Winter Fuel Payments to pensioners, kept the two-child benefit cap and is continuing with cuts to public spending. The Tories were swept from office because they were so hated, and Labour continuing their policies will face hatred as well.

Socialist Party members organise against any attack on the working class, we want rid of Labour and all pro-capitalist politicians. A Kemi Badenoch or a Nigel Farage-led government would not improve the lives of working-class people. We need our own party, with the organised working-class at its heart and armed with a socialist programme, to provide a real alternative to Starmer's Labour and right-wing opportunists.

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Church scandal system of abuse

MILA HUGHES
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

The resignation of Archbishop Justin Welby amid the Church of England's abuse scandal has revealed a rot that extends way beyond one person. The Makin Report's findings of systemic cover-ups, including decades of no action against the abuse perpetrated by John Smyth, expose the Church as a symbol of institutional decay and elite privilege. These findings demand more than an apology; it requires a transformative shift towards genuine accountability, led not by bishops but by the working class and survivors themselves.

Welby's resignation follows years of institutional failures. Despite being informed of Smyth's abuses as early as 2013, the Church's leadership failed to ensure proper legal action was taken, allowing the former archbishop to live above the law. The report outlines a "conspiracy of silence" upheld by those in power, a clear indictment of the Church's hierarchy.

Welby's exit, though significant,

is not enough. Survivors and campaigners rightly argue that other senior figures complicit in these failures must step down. Yet, more resignations, while necessary, will not address the systemic issues.

In this scandal, as in numerous others, safeguarding mechanisms from the capitalist institutions are either non-existent or implemented only after public outrage – primarily concerned with limiting reputational damage rather than justice for survivors.

Calls from within the Church for further resignations highlight the depth of the crisis. However, figures like Bishop Stephen Conway and Archbishop Stephen Cottrell remain defensive, resisting calls to step down, despite their roles in mishandling abuse disclosures. This division reveals disagreements about what course of action will do least institutional damage.

The Church's failure to act against Smyth parallels the broader capitalist failures in safeguarding the public, from underfunded social services to privatising healthcare. Both are

symptoms of a system designed to protect the few at the expense of the many.

The resignation of Welby should be the beginning, not the end, of a broader movement for accountability and systemic change throughout society.

Survivors of abuse deserve more than apologies and resignations; they deserve a system that is geared towards the needs of all to prevent future harm. That can be achieved by the working class struggling for socialist change, to build a society where institutions serve people, not profit and power.



Partners in crime

"I call now, as before the election, for the politics of partnership", Keir Starmer told the Trades Union Congress in September, "with us in government, with business, and most importantly of all with working people".

But he's not inviting you and me to Downing Street and asking for policy suggestions. He has invited the board of Blackrock, with its \$11.5 trillion of global assets. Comparatively, the UK's total net worth is an estimated \$15 trillion.

Twheeting about his meeting, Keir Starmer said: "I'm determined to deliver growth, create wealth and put more money in people's pockets..." Yeah right, whose pockets is he talking about? Clearly not pensioners' or students'.

If you receive your Downing Street invite in the post, here are some suggestions from us: £15-an-hour minimum wage now, kick the private companies out of our NHS, nationalise the energy companies, free university education... the list goes on. And if Sir Keir says he can't afford it, get the Blackrock bosses to dig out the billions that they have lost down the back of the sofa unnoticed.

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COUNCILS ON THE FRONTLINE AND WHERE THE FIGHTBACK CAN BEGIN

Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

The New Labour government's first budget was just three short weeks ago. The Socialist called it a 'smoke and mirrors budget'. It was portrayed as different from all the recent Tory budgets but behind the charade, it was more of the same.

NHS waiting lists will continue to grow, millions will fall deeper into poverty, schools will have to make further cuts and councils will also struggle.

Chancellor Rachel Reeves's Budget listed an extra £1.3 billion in funding for local councils. But that will not alleviate the crisis. Councils are predicted to have a shortfall of over £4 billion next year. And even that masks the scale of the funding crisis and what has been lost from council services.

Over the last 14 years, councils have lost an average of 26% of their spending power. Many services that are vital, but which councils aren't legally obligated to provide, have been cut and will continue to be slashed.

£1.3 billion

extra money to councils in this budget

Just look at the impact of Storm Bert. Hundreds of homes are flooded and thousands are without power. Alongside the more well-known services that councils are responsible for, such as adult social care, they are also in charge of many roads and clearing drains, which can help prevent flooding. But as austerity hit, these services were some of the first to get cut. Today those cuts are having a disastrous impact on some people's lives. And this is just one example.

Last year, a survey by the Local Government Association predicted that as many as one in five councils could go "bankrupt" and issue section 114 notices. But again, this still hides the real scale of crisis in funding. All the services which aren't legal requirements for councils to provide have already been slashed.

So how can we fight for these services? This is more urgent than ever today as austerity and the funding crisis continues. Council cuts will be a growing arena of struggle, politically and industrially.

For the last 14 years, Labour councils have used the excuse that there was nothing they could do about

disastrous cuts to services because they were not in power in government nationally.

Millions of people have lived life with a cutting Labour council, had a taste of Labour austerity and reject it. It's one reason why, despite the almighty hatred of the Tories, the number of votes for Labour in the general election actually decreased from its 2019 level.

Electoral alternative

A growing layer of people are looking for an alternative voice to Labour and the Tories including in elections.

Therefore, the 2025 May council elections will be an important battle ground. A third of the population will be able to go to the polls, largely for county council elections outside of the major cities. Socialist Party members are preparing to stand as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), fighting for no-cuts people's budgets and on a socialist programme.

These elections are six months away. Between now and then, councils will set new cutting budgets, essentially on the same basis as throughout the last 14 years, with reduced spending power. However, they could face significant opposition from workers and service users who had been told that cuts were as a result of the Tories, and are not prepared to accept more cuts under Labour. The workers' movement in local areas should coordinate opposition, starting by drawing up and fighting for 'needs budgets' that summarise all the services required by the community.

The attack on pensioners' Winter Fuel Payments has showed Labour's true colours. Meanwhile, Tower Hamlets council in east London, controlled by Aspire, has promised a £175 hardship payment this winter for those affected, to make up for some of the £200-300 cut. Other councils have pledged similarly under pressure.

The £175 payment is one of several positive measures implemented by Aspire since it ousted a cutting Labour council in 2022. It also extended free school meals to all students up to age 16. The council also still pays Education Maintenance Allowance for eligible sixth form and college students, cut by the Tories in 2010.

Tower Hamlets council

The pro-austerity character of Starmer's Labour is summed up by the fact that the Labour local government minister Jim McMahon is sending in 'ministerial envoys' to

£4 billion

shortfall faced by councils next year



Unison lobby of Carmarthenshire council against cuts SP/WALES



By passing a no-cuts people's budget, using all its spending and borrowing powers, a council could defend services and mobilise popular support from working-class communities and trade unions to demand the money from the government. That is the approach the Socialist Party and TUSC have been campaigning for.

Tower Hamlets, citing a failure of the council to "comply with its best value duty", but not to the councils that top league tables for closing libraries, youth centres or other vital services.

However, If Aspire is going to play a role in spearheading a struggle against New Labour austerity, it would have to mobilise the local community and trade union movement around an anti-cuts programme, as well as looking to other councils to fight the government collectively for further funding.

Cuts aren't the only option

Councils can absolutely fight back for the funding they need. Despite years of austerity, even just the councils with elections in May 2025 have £7.538 billion in general fund and capital receipt reserves that could be used to resource a fightback. A fraction could be used to extend the Household Support Fund to ensure no one is negatively impacted by the cuts to the winter fuel allowance, for example.

By passing a no-cuts people's

budget, using all its spending and borrowing powers, a council could defend services and mobilise popular support from working-class communities and trade unions to demand the money from the government. That is the approach the Socialist Party and TUSC have been campaigning for.

Council unions can fight back

Unite the Union has already been campaigning for Labour to reverse the Winter Fuel Payment cut and taken action against Labour councils cutting staff, attacking terms and conditions and freezing wages. It, along with other public sector unions, could play an important role in campaigning for proper funding of local government.

The website of the biggest local government union, Unison, highlights the dire state of services. On a local level, many Unison branches are part of campaigns to fight the cuts. But at a national level, Unison's website article about how to fight council cuts simply says people should write to their MPs. And they continue to offer cover for the attacks on services which Labour is complicit in. Unison's own website says: "Labour has inherited a mess, with essential services battered and bruised".

Rather than making apologies for

a much more serious struggle is needed to force Starmer's government to properly fund council services. Local councils employ 1.3 million workers. Collectively they are the second-biggest employer after the NHS, meaning the industrial weight of council workers properly mobilised could force Starmer and Reeves into big concessions. After all, it was a desire to avoid further public sector strikes that made the Labour government offer bigger pay rises than it otherwise would have done in the public sector.

Such a fight will need to be properly organised to ballot members on funding and pay. Despite the fact that, previously, local government union branches struggled to surpass the anti-union law's turnout thresholds, if a new struggle was launched alongside other unions, including mobilising the growing anger against the Starmer government, then it would be possible to win. Given that Labour has promised to repeal the turnout thresholds, they will not have the same power to cow local government trade unionists as in the past. And, of course, one important part of that struggle will be demanding that the government repeals them, along with all anti-trade union laws, not at some indefinite point in the future – but immediately.

Join the fightback JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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to find out more about joining us today!

This scene of chaos underscores the urgent need for action, as rescue teams waded through waterlogged streets to ensure public safety PHOTO: NIKONI WEERAKOON



Storm Bert ravages South Wales: a crisis rooted in neglect

DAN TOWNSEND

RHONDDA CYNON TAF (RCT)

Storm Bert has left communities across South Wales reeling. Streets have turned into rivers, homes are waterlogged, and Pontypridd's lido - lovingly restored after the 2019-20 floods - is once again in ruins. While the destruction may seem natural, the root causes are anything but.

RCT's valleys, historically shaped by industry, now bear the scars of neglect. The extensive mining of Pennant Sandstone, vital for natural water absorption, has weakened the land's ability to manage rainfall (See 'Kids in Glyncoch deserve to breathe' at socialistparty.org.uk).

Combined with widespread deforestation, these man-made changes have left the area vulnerable to flooding. Despite the Welsh government's 2008 woodland strategy to protect and expand forests, tree removal continues to destabilise hillsides and increase surface water runoff.

Coal tip landslide

These environmental challenges were compounded by a coal tip landslide in Cwmtillery in Blaenau Gwent, eerily reminiscent of the 2020 Tylorstown collapse. Both disasters serve as stark warnings about the dangers of ignoring long-standing calls to make these sites safe. Residents feel abandoned, trapped

between environmental degradation and political inertia.

Andrew Morgan, leader of RCT Council, criticised the Met Office for issuing only a yellow weather warning, suggesting an amber alert was warranted. While accurate forecasting is crucial, this deflection fails to address the council's own shortcomings. With £270 million in council reserves, why hasn't more been invested in flood defences and preventative infrastructure?

Local MP Alex Davies-Jones's crowdfunding campaign for recovery efforts has sparked debate. While well-intentioned, it raises difficult questions. Should the public be asked to donate when they already pay taxes to fund such emergencies? Critics argue this highlights a deeper failure of leadership to protect vulnerable communities effectively.

The people of RCT deserve better. As climate change makes extreme weather more frequent, robust flood defences, reforestation efforts, and urgent action on coal tip safety must be prioritised. Storm Bert isn't just a natural disaster, it's a symptom of systemic neglect. Unless decisive action is taken, this cycle of destruction and despair will continue.

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

DAVE REID

SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Thousands of farmers have been protesting at the changes to inheritance tax laws contained in Labour chancellor Rachel Reeves's Budget.

The changes mean that the exemption from paying inheritance tax on agricultural land valued at over £1.5 million is removed, and farms worth over that amount will be liable for 20% inheritance tax when the owners die.

Many workers struggling to pay bills in the cost-of-living crisis and facing the continuation of public spending cuts under this government would be forgiven for not being overly sympathetic to what seems like millionaire landowners complaining about having to pay the same tax as other millionaires. The sight of TV multimillionaire Jeremy Clarkson marching to demand that he should be able to keep avoiding paying tax will have rankled with most people.

However, the situation is more complicated than it appears on the surface.

Most small family farms are passed on from generation to generation, passing on a livelihood as well as financial assets. If the sons and daughters of the farmer cannot afford the inheritance tax then the farm and its land will have to be sold off to other farmers, or more likely to agribusinesses or land speculators.

Reeves and the Treasury say only a small proportion of farmers will be

affected by the change to the tax law, because there are exemptions.

But not all farms in the Treasury's definition are working family farms. The Treasury includes thousands of farms that have been bought as small holdings or second homes often as investments - by what could be called 'recreational farmers', who don't run a farm as their main source of income, but who are wealthy people who buy rural land for enjoyment rather than to earn a living. If they are excluded from the total, then the proportion of 'real' farmers who will be caught by this change in the law is far greater: 49% of working farms, according to BBC Verify.

Millionaire farmers?

But could it be argued that if they own farms worth more than £1 million then they are pretty well off and it's just tough - working-class people have to pay high levels of tax, why not millionaire farmers?

The top 49% of farms do include large estates owned by the rich, but small farms can still be worth over £1 million. Small farmers are asset-rich but cash-poor - their land wealth is high but their incomes are not. The wealthier farmers represented by the National Farmers Union (NFU) have often understated the profits made by rich farmers and agribusiness. But many small farmers are operating on small margins, with a yield in earnings about the same as the average wage, unstable and insecure.

Agricultural land values have risen even faster than house prices in recent years, which has driven up the



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

Farmers' protest exposes capitalist crisis in agriculture



value of a small farm, without adding to its weekly income. Rich land speculators have bought up huge chunks of land as investments to avoid inheritance and other taxes, exploiting the loophole and rapidly forcing the price of land up.

People like Clarkson, who have openly admitted they have bought farms and land as a way of avoiding paying inheritance tax, are now whingeing that their tax loophole has been closed. According to the Financial Times: "Private and institutional investors and lifestyle buyers bought half the farms available in 2023, more than twice as much land as farmers."

"There is a massive difference between me, earning less than 20k a year, and somebody who has made their money outside farming, retired to the country at 45, bought a farm for £5 million, has two horses, five sheep and a set of accounts that says they are a farmer," said a Somerset farmer.

And these speculators are further exploiting tenant farmers by renting out the land at high prices, or avoiding taxes by outsourcing farming without tenancy agreements.

Land speculation

The crisis caused by land speculation has exacerbated the rest of the crisis in agriculture, reflecting the wider crisis of capitalism. Small farms find it very difficult to survive competing with the agribusinesses.

Farms that are viable economically vary in size according to the geography and type of farming. The NFU claims that an average farm is

Rich land speculators have bought up huge chunks of land as investments to avoid inheritance and other taxes, exploiting the loophole and rapidly forcing the price of land up

217 acres - on average anything over 80 acres will incur the tax. And land values vary widely from cheaper hill land in Wales to more expensive arable land in east England.

Farmers are not one homogenous group. Most are small-business people, but with a huge variation in living standards. Arable farms tend to be richer than dairy or sheep farms, and there is a mix on most farms.

There are giant landowners and agribusinesses worth billions which operate several very big farms or many small ones. There are also tenant farmers who rent their farm and land from big landowners. Most farmers employ workers - agricultural labourers and skilled workers - in an industry that is notoriously low paid.

Small farm owners are a middle layer of society operating on small margins to make a living but also employing workers themselves. They are exploited by big business: sandwiched between banks, which charge high rates of interest to invest in new equipment and techniques to compete in the food market, and supermarkets and the food industry, which force down prices as low as they can get away with (not for the benefit of consumers but to boost their mega-profits). Small farmers are competing against the increasingly rapacious agribusinesses who can invest more cheaply and take advantage of economies of scale.

And farmers have also been affected by a fall in exports following

Brexit, rising supply costs, and green measures to decarbonise agriculture that have not been compensated - like workers in polluting industries, they are expected to carry the cost of decarbonisation. The income of dairy farmers, for example, fell by 68% in the year to February. A bigger issue has already arisen in Wales and is likely to develop in England - agricultural subsidies being phased out. And like everyone else, farmers have been hit by the cost-of-living crisis.

The perceived threat from the changes in inheritance tax has acted as a focus for all the problems facing small farmers. Farmers are protesting these issues as much as the tax increases.

Clown Clarkson

The protests by farmers have included all layers. Many richer landowners have headed up the movement, but the main body of the protests is made up of small farmers who are already struggling. Land speculators like Clarkson and the big farmers are happy to mobilise the small farmers but have interests completely separate from them.

Closing the inheritance tax loophole for speculators has threatened some small farms but, unlike the family farmers, the rich can afford expensive accountants who will find new ways to avoid tax. As another Somerset farmer told the Financial Times: "They say they're going after landed industrialists who employ people like me to farm their land. But

they have already sewn it all up in off-shore funds and trusts."

There is no protection for tenant farmers and agricultural workers from being evicted if the speculators decide to sell off the land to avoid paying the inheritance tax.

Starmer's Labour is governing in the interests of big business and is continuing austerity for the working class. Closing the land inheritance tax loophole used by millionaires to avoid paying tax merely equalises one of the lowest tax burdens on the wealthy in the western world.

The Labour government has avoided taxing the super-rich or the profits of corporations, like the energy companies that make hundreds of billions of pounds profit from high fuel bills. It showed its true colours towards the working class by cutting winter fuel payments for poor pensioners and refusing to lift the two-child benefit cap. It has no sympathy for small farmers either.

Socialists should support the legitimate concerns of small farmers and aim to win them away from the farming industry establishment and the NFU, dominated by big farmers and corporations, to the side of the working class. The trade unions representing agricultural workers should call for a Trades Union Congress-led inquiry into the effects of the tax, involving representatives of small farmers, tenant farmers, agricultural workers and trade unions in the food retail industry, and support a fight for those small farmers in genuine need for mitigation from the tax.

The Socialist Party calls for measures to protect the incomes of small farmers: the banking and finance industry should be nationalised and run under democratic working-class control, so that interest-free loans can be made to the small farmers. They should be encouraged to form voluntary cooperative organisations to share resources between farms and benefit from economies of scale.

The food corporations, agribusinesses, large landholding and supermarket chains should also be nationalised, with compensation only on the basis of proven need, and a plan drawn up by workers from those industries, independent farmers and trade unions to plan the industry.

Planning would also allow green measures, like some rewilding of farming land and the reduction in use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides, and movement away from intensive farming and towards soil conservation and animal welfare. Such measures would be drawn up by farmers, agricultural workers and working-class people in rural areas, and representatives of the wider working class, looking at society's needs overall, including ensuring jobs and livelihoods are secure.

Unison young members conference: 'We are the fighters of the future'

EVE MILLER

UNISON YOUNG MEMBERS OFFICER, PERSONAL CAPACITY

We're well over 100 days into Keir Starmer's rule, and we are seeing the continuation of austerity, taking from one mouth to feed another.

Rachel Reeves's October Budget consisted of smoke and mirrors - but we can see clear as day that the cuts will not stop. We can still see that the £22.6 billion 'extra' for the NHS works out than a less-than-average 3.4% increase over the next couple of years. That doesn't even scratch the surface to repair the damage done in cuts by the Tories. Local government, even with the £1.3 billion 'extra' pledged by Reeves, is left to figure out where the other £3 billion will come from to stop council service closures.

In Unison, the public sector union, this means that our members, and particularly young workers, are hit by the double burden of providing services with unsafe staffing levels and less provision, while receiving a low wage which needs to spread further in a world that costs more.

This is why it's important for Unison to stand up to the Labour government, alongside our sister unions. Concessions have been won before from the Tories, so there is no reason why they can't be won from Labour. Look at the recent strike wave, the biggest since the 1980s.

Young workers step forward

So how can we continue to build our unions for the challenges lying ahead? One of the most important things is to get new and young members and reps recruited. Over half of union reps are over 50 years old,



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSOON

which is very scary - not because I'm ageing, but because that means in the next 15 years or so, if we don't get moving, over half of our reps will have retired and we'll be left in a weakened position.

In the strike wave, many young workers went on strike for the first time. It is vital that we, as young

workers, take responsibility and step up for the generations of activists before us to pass over the torch. We are the unions of the future.

Many of our union leaders praise Starmer's government, pushing the idea that this is what we should expect, this is the 'sensible' approach and is all that we should ask for.

But we won't stand for attacks on the working class. Young members getting into the regional forums and to conferences allows us the opportunity to debate the issues with thousands of reps. The resolution I proposed on council cuts - for no-cuts budgets - has gone through the West Midlands young members

forum to go to the young members conference.

We're all new at some point. But working together as socialists and young trade unionists, we can campaign for the fighting trade unions we need. We are the fighters of the future!

Socialist Party young members' leaflet for the conference adds:

Young members still face a lower minimum wage for the same amount of work - far short of the £15 minimum wage that is this union's policy. Yet the Budget was celebrated and paraded by Unison's general secretary.

Many of our young members are crippled by the burden of student debt and soon, under Labour, we will be paying back thousands more in fees and interest. Alongside this, we are paying disproportionate rent and bills whilst earning less money in our pay cheques.

For most workers, life under a Labour government will continue to feel a lot like life under the Tories: real pay well below where it was a decade ago, and public services crumbling. Starkly, most Unison members have received poor pay offers. This has especially been the case in local government in England and Wales.

The trade unions must be at the heart of opposition to Starmer's austerity by being prepared to mobilise members to fight industrially, and by taking steps to establish their own political voice - a new mass workers' party.

● Unison young members conference takes place 29 November - 1 December

Unite sector conferences: Industrial and political strategy essential

KEVIN PARSLAW

UNITE BRANCH SECRETARY

Unite the Union sector conferences take place every two years and are a chance for reps to discuss issues pertinent to their industries and services, and decide campaigning priorities. This year, they were the first conferences of the union since the election of the Labour government.

Socialist Party members took part in many of the 19 sector conferences. Len Hockey was a speaker at the health conference on how Unite members won being taken back in-house from privatisers Serco, after winning their strike at Barts Hospital Trust.

Industrial militancy

Delegates were addressed in a plenary session by general secretary Sharon Graham. Since Sharon became general secretary, Unite has called over 1,000 disputes, winning 80%. Those disputes have won £450 million for members. £42 million has been spent on strike pay in the last two years, compared to an average of £1 million in the previous 14 years. Sharon said, if the union cannot support its members on strike, what is the point of the union? The union is currently involved in 192 disputes and is growing for the first time in its 14-year history.

Sharon argued that Unite fought with other unions to get commitments put into Labour's manifesto for the general election, but the small wins were not enough, and Unite was the only union to vote against the manifesto. Since the general election, it has been engaging with the Labour government, but Sharon said Unite would keep the feet of any

government to the fire. "We will not offer unconditional support to Labour if they fail our members." At Labour's conference, Unite had tabled and won the motion opposing the cuts to winter fuel payments.

Sharon also called for the energy grid to be put in public hands. This is important but the whole of the energy sector should be nationalised, under democratic workers' control and management, which could provide cheap energy and fund the workers' transition to environmentally friendly energy, without loss of jobs and pay.

Unite could not allow the Labour government to create working-class wastelands, Sharon stated, referencing the attacks to the Grangemouth oil refinery and Port Talbot steel-works that would devastate their local communities. Socialist Party members have argued that it was a mistake for Unite not to have called on Labour to nationalise both.

Sharon argued that previously the union's political fund had given millions of pounds to the Labour Party as well as its affiliation fees. Now, the political fund will be used for the benefit of working-class people to campaign on these issues.

Political strategy

She pointed to the 50 richest families in the UK, worth a combined £500 billion. A wealth tax on these fortunes, she proposed, could wipe off the debts of government and local councils. And she pointed to the re-election of Trump in America and the gains for Reform in Britain as warnings of what could happen if Labour fails and workers look for an alternative. "We are here to hold Labour to account," she stated.

Sharon has been one of the trade union leaders most critical



Unite members fought Labour councils under a Tory government (here in Newham, east London) and the same will have to continue under Labour. FERRY LYONS

of Starmer's Labour. However, it is not a question of 'if' Labour fails to deliver. As demonstrated in Rachel Reeves's budget, leaving council and NHS services grossly underfunded and facing even more privatisation, working-class people will face continued austerity under this pro-capitalist Labour government. Recognising that workers could look elsewhere for political representation puts a responsibility on trade union leaders to take steps to build a working-class political alternative.

Sharon suggested that the next Rules Conference in 2027 might not be as simple a debate as in 2023, when the union's continued affiliation to Labour was reaffirmed. However, two and a half years is a long time to wait!

Unite's opposition to attacks from

Labour should include putting demands on its sponsored MPs to voice that opposition. Seven Labour MPs were suspended from Labour for voting against the two-child benefit cap, and six of those are Unite-sponsored MPs.

Calling on the sponsored MPs to back Unite's demands, and similarly approaching Jeremy Corbyn and the independent MPs, would be important steps towards developing a bloc of MPs in parliament that fights in workers' interests. That would also raise sharply the question of supporting candidates in council elections who back Unite policies, whether in Labour or outside.

Developing the industrial and political strategy of Unite is the best answer to the opponents of Sharon Graham's leadership organised in the mis-named United

Left. Their 2021 general secretary candidate, Steve Turner, said in his campaign that Unite's general secretary needed to work with a Labour government. If Unite was under their leadership now, they would be seeking 'partnership' with Starmer's Labour government, muting criticism on all issues (including those they hypocritically champion now, such as Gaza), and holding back on industrial action.

The coming period will not be a quiet one for Unite members, and if genuine socialist fighters are elected to important positions in the union in the next two years, and a fighting strategy agreed at Unite's policy conference next July, then Unite could be at the forefront of important political developments in the next period that would take working-class representation forward.

Hard-working Swindon hospital staff take combined union action

ROB PETTEFER

SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY

A second strike took place on 11 and 12 November at Swindon's Great Western Hospital (GWH) in an ongoing dispute over pay, conditions, and the Covid bonus that was paid out to most hospital staff.

The strikers are bolder and more determined than ever, with the GMB union joining Unison for combined action. The striking workers are porters, housekeeping, catering and security staff.

Workers who keep the hospital functioning - and who worked grueling hours during Covid with inadequate protection - have been underappreciated by management, withholding both pay rises and the

Covid bonus, and bullying and harassment of staff.

Serco, with projected profits of £270 million this year, runs these services on an outsourcing contract. It has been estimated that the whole dispute would take £25,000 to resolve!

GWH was the first hospital built using Tony Blair's Private Finance Initiative (PFI).

Talking to workers on the picket, it became clear that the management of GWH are not above retaliation or bribery to discourage striking workers. We were told that plenty of overtime was offered to workers willing to cross the picket line, while being revoked for up to three weeks from those who participated in the strike. Serco moved workers in from other sites to cover those shifts too.

One striker told me how she and one other housekeeper were given eight hours to clean two entire departments. When one of them was signed off long-term sick, the

remaining housekeeper had to do the same two departments in the same eight hours!

The union rep that the housekeeping staff relied on to challenge management was dismissed last year. It's suspected that this was because he stuck up for the workers. Now they say they are too scared to come forward to take up the role of union rep, in case it happens to them. Since his departure there have been around 16 lay-offs, with short notice, for minor rule infractions.

We in the Socialist Party stand with these health workers. The privatised contracts in the NHS need to be ended and work brought back in-house. The experiment with privatisation has clearly failed. The NHS should be fully publicly owned and democratically run, so that workers are respected and paid well, and patients' needs come before the business interests of the large contracting companies that suck the lifeblood out of our health service like ticks.



PHOTO: ROB PETTEFER

Sixth form teachers strike for funding for a decent pay rise

SIXTH FORM TEACHER

Members of the National Education Union (NEU) who teach in 32 sixth form colleges in England will take part in strike action over pay on Thursday 28 November, Tuesday 3 December and Wednesday 4 December.

Academised sixth form colleges have received some funding to implement the same 5.5% pay award as announced for school teachers. However, non-academised sixth form colleges have not received the same - they will have to fund any additional pay award through existing funds.

Clearly, teachers need a pay rise, not only so their salaries keep up with inflation, but also to make up for the pay freezes and below-inflation pay rises under previous Tory governments.



PHOTO: ELAINE BRUNSKILL

Members at 40 colleges took part in the union strike ballot on a disaggregated basis (college by college), achieving a 62% turnout overall and a 97% vote in favour of action. When given a lead, teachers are determined and ready to take action to defend terms and conditions. They are prepared to strike for fully funded pay claims.

This is in stark contrast to the 'snap poll' that the NEU Executive Committee organised in response to the partly funded pay offer of 5.5% for teachers in schools. In that poll, the leadership recommended that members accept the offer: 95% voted in favour of acceptance, on a 41% turnout. Socialist Party members had argued to reject on the basis that it was not fully funded and not enough.

● The list of 32 colleges taking part in strike action is available on the NEU website

Join the fightback

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

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Lessons from the 2010 student movement

Keir Starmer's New Labour government has announced its plans to raise tuition fees for the first time in nearly ten years. And such is the depth of crisis in university finances, this will not be enough to solve the funding crisis in higher education. Uni bosses will still go ahead and attempt to make cuts and redundancies, and the government has plans for widescale uni funding reform. Socialist Students has initiated the Funding not Fees campaign, opposing the fees rise and demanding free, fully funded education. **Joe Fathallah**, Cardiff West Socialist Party, looks back at the 2010 student movement and its lessons for today.

The latter part of the year 2010 saw a mass uprising sweep across university and college campuses in Britain, in response to David Cameron's Tory-led coalition government increasing the cap on tuition fees from £3,290 to £9,000 per year. The movement is rich in lessons for upcoming struggles over the future of higher education.

The 2010 general election took place in May, against the backdrop of the 2007-08 financial crash and subsequent recession. The New Labour government, which had been in power since 1997, led by Tony Blair and subsequently Gordon Brown, was initially responsible for the introduction of university tuition fees and the abolition of the student grant as one of its first acts.

As the impacts of the recession started to bite, Brown was thrown out and Tory leader Cameron became the new prime minister. To govern, the Tories needed to form a coalition with Nick Clegg's Liberal Democrats, who had toured university constituencies signing pledges not to increase fees and subsequently won large numbers of student votes. The 'Con-Dem Coalition' was born.

Austerity

The Con-Dems aimed to restore profitability to British capitalism by driving down the living standards of the working class through austerity. One of the first measures targeted higher education funding. It pushed students into the vanguard of resistance against austerity.

The initial trigger came when former Chief Executive of BP, Lord Browne, who had been appointed by the previous Labour government to conduct a review into university finances, released his 'findings' on 12 October. These included recommending the complete abolition of the cap on tuition fees, and the ending of almost all state funding for universities.

A week later, the Con-Dems published their spending review, which included increasing the cap on fees to £9,000 per year, while also scrapping the Education Maintenance Allowance grant of up to £30 a week for 16 to 18-year-old college students.

At this time, the leadership of the National Union of Students (NUS) was comprised of Blairites and political careerists. Yet, such was the anger from below at the government's proposals, the NUS bureaucracy had to be at least seen to be organising a fightback. A national demonstration was called in London on 10 November. President Aaron Porter and those around him, who were in privileged positions and largely distanced from the mood of the students, had

envisaged this as just a steam-letting event. No proper stewarding was organised, and the NUS website stated that the march would only last for half an hour!

The reality on the day was very different, reflecting the rage across the campuses. More than 50,000 turned up, with coachloads from students unions, and many college students organising independently to attend. The mood was electric. The streets were awash with homemade banners, many with choice language aimed at the Con-Dems, and especially the Lib Dem leader Clegg, who was seen universally as a traitor for abandoning his election pledge not to increase fees.



The mood was electric. The streets were awash with homemade banners, many with choice language aimed at the Con-Dems, and especially the Lib Dem leader Clegg, who was seen universally as a traitor for abandoning his election pledge not to increase fees

Without proper stewarding organised by the NUS, the demo split half-way through. One section finished up at the rather lacklustre closing 'rally' outside the Tate Modern gallery. A more combative layer headed for Millbank, where the Conservative Party HQ was located. Spontaneously, hundreds of students moved to occupy the building and hundreds more protested outside.

Police moved inside and set upon the students. The crowd of protesters congregating outside the building were 'kettled' by the police until at least 6:30pm, and many missed their transport home as a result. Over 50 students were arrested. One of those was Edward Wollard, who dangerously dropped a fire extinguisher from the top of the building, missing those below, but for which he was sentenced to 32 months in prison. The judge decided to make an example of him, aiming to strike fear into future protesters.

Compare Edward's treatment by the courts to that of PC Andrew Ott, the only police officer to be convicted of any offence in relation to the 2010 student uprising. In 2015, Ott was convicted of actual bodily harm for

knocking out a student's tooth with a blow from his shield at the protest and was sentenced to only eight months. Other officers who used violence against the protesters got off scot-free.

At a later protest on 9 December, officers pulled disabled student Jody McIntyre out of his wheelchair, hit him with a baton, and dragged him across a road. Another almost killed student Alfie Meadows with a truncheon blow to the head on the same day. The Metropolitan Police closed ranks on these assaults, and nobody was ever held to account. Alfie was taken to hospital suffering from bleeding to the brain and required an emergency operation. The Met settled with him out of court.

Pro-capitalist police

These events clearly exposed the pro-capitalist character of the police and the legal system to the students, and to workers who were following the events. Lecturers at Goldsmiths University put out a statement which included: "The real violence in this situation relates not to a smashed window but to the destructive impact of the cuts and privatisation that will follow if tuition fees are increased and massive reductions in higher education funding are implemented."

Many students commented that the biased reporting of the media on the protests meant that only the occupation of Millbank Tower gave the protest the coverage it warranted. Occupations of buildings can be an effective strategy as part of a wider struggle. But this requires democratic discussion over tactics and strategy, as well as a clear demands, something the NUS leaders did not do. In fact, they helped contribute to the Tory attempts to demonise student protesters. Aaron Porter appeared on Newsnight on the evening of the demo to describe the protesters as "despicable", failing to put a position of opposition to fees.

Socialist Students put forward a clear strategy on the demonstration, handing out over 10,000 leaflets outlining steps to take the movement forwards. The demand for student walkouts nationwide on 24 November was enthusiastically taken up.

On the day, an estimated 130,000 took part across dozens of towns and cities, college and uni students organised walkouts and protests - 3,000 marched in Brighton, 2,000 in Bristol, 3,000 in Manchester. These took place alongside another protest in London, during which the police kettled a large crowd outside Whitehall. Police numbers were beefed up from two weeks before, intent on taking the students on, and protesters retaliated. Police on horseback charged at the crowd and 41 students were arrested.



Protesters outside Tory HQ, police brutality and young protesters (clockwise) PHOTOS: TU SEMAN



At a third London protest on 30 November, police blocked the route of the march and the students were dispersed through the streets. It was snowing, and many students got lost in the cold, with some being targeted by officers. It was on this day, however, that the movement scored its first victory. The Welsh government announced that it would pick up the tab for any increase in tuition fees for Welsh students studying in Wales - although students coming to Wales to study would still be affected by any increase implemented by the UK government.



From the very first protest, the Socialist Party had been raising the need for the student movement to link up with the developing anti-cuts movement and the trade unions

Plans were made for 'Day X', when the vote was to take place in Parliament. The Socialist Party argued the case for the trade unions, in education and beyond, to send delegations to the protest.

From the very first protest, the Socialist Party had been raising the need for the student movement to link up with the developing anti-cuts movement and the trade unions. In the editorial of the Socialist following the first fees protest we wrote: "The students need to continue to develop their own democratic and mass movement, including building anti-cuts unions in all the colleges, sixth forms and schools as well as the universities... But it is particularly important that students link up with the trade union movement and the working class to build a movement powerful enough to stop the Con-Dem cuts." We raised the demand for a national trade union-led demo as soon as possible, to oppose all cuts and as a step towards a 24-hour public sector general strike.

Students could see the need to link with workers. Socialist Party members who took part in the demos as students at the time recall marching past building workers on scaffolding, thousands chanting: "Students and workers - unite and fight!" with the workers shaking their fists in solidarity.

Day X came on 9 December. Two more protests took place in London on this day, again with clashing and kettling, over ten students were treated for head injuries.

Police brutality and victimisation of individuals was a key feature of the movement. Greater organisation and stewarding on the protests would have gone some way to preventing this, and was something Socialist Students had argued for through, including for the involvement of the trade union movement in organising stewarding. Socialist Students initiated the Youth Democratic Rights campaign, aimed at defending the right to protest and calling for the release of those facing criminal charges because of the protests.

After 9 December, the lack of coherent organisation and strategy coming

from the NUS leadership resulted in students gradually losing heart and drifting away from the movement. Also crucial in this was the lack of action from the leadership of the trade unions in organising support for the student movement.

Nevertheless, occupations of hundreds of students continued in universities like Manchester, Leeds, Warwick and Birmingham. These occupations, whilst committed and courageous, did not hold out. They were largely organised on a 'horizontalist' basis, without an official leadership. In practice however, this resulted in the crystallisation of an unofficial, unaccountable leadership of those activists with the loudest voices and the most time on their hands. Socialist Students and Youth Democratic Rights argued for democratic structures based on an elected, accountable leadership without material privileges, and for space for full discussion on programme and strategy on how to take the movement forward.

Student organisations

The NUS today is even more undemocratic and has even less authority than it did - in part because of the role it played then. But the lessons of 2010 show the need for student organisation, locally and nationally, with a fighting programme and accountable leadership. Socialist Students aims to be a key part of developing that - through transforming existing students union structures and, where necessary, developing new ones.

Finally, the political lessons need to be learned. The Lib Dems, a party representing the interests of capitalism just like the Tories and New Labour, were able to win the support of a layer of students in the 2010 general election by dishonestly pledging to keep the cap on tuition fees. But the capitalists wanted a generation of young people to shoulder the burden of the cost of higher education.

To stop this, we need to build a new mass party of the working class, armed with a socialist programme to abolish tuition fees, and to end and reverse all cuts and privatisation in higher education. Student organisations could play a role in founding such a party.

Socialist Students up and down the country continues to build links with trade unionists, including supporting lecturers and other university workers fighting to defend their living standards and against cuts and privatisation. The Funding not Fees campaign is a key part of this.

By doing so, we're confident that student struggles in the future can go hand-in-hand with mass movements of the working class, with a programme to end capitalism and bring about a socialist transformation of society, where education is a means to expand horizons and experiences, not just a production line for next generation of exploited young workers.

Join the student fightback: join...

socialist students

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

Why I joined ‘The Socialist Party can make a difference - never thought I would say that about a political party!’

ALAN NORRIS
SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Why did I join the Socialist Party? I’d never been interested in politics before, and always thought that before a general election all parties promise this and that and deliver not a lot once in. The same old crap.

A short time before the 2024 general election, walking around Swindon, I stopped by the Swindon Socialist Party campaign stall and struck up a conversation with one of the members.

My word did I say what I thought of governments, MPs and how the country was being run. How the rich are getting richer on the backs of the working class. The conversation I had certainly made more sense about things, and definitely opened my eyes even more to how bad things are run under capitalism.

I ended up leaving the stall with a copy of the Socialist newspaper and details on the next Swindon Socialist Party meeting, which I attended. At the meeting there was a lot of



Swindon Socialist Party members at Socialism 2024 PHOTO: SWINDON SP

interesting conversations by a lot of knowledgeable people which opened my eyes even more.

Afterwards it made me realise things have to change for the better. After a few more meetings I got hooked on socialism and now I’m a member of the Socialist Party.

I now believe 100% that the Socialist Party can make a difference to everybody. Never thought I would say that about a political party!

The most important thing I believe is everyone has a voice. But individual voices are not heard enough. Collectively, our voices can be heard. Let’s bring everyone together so that we can change things. Let’s stop this capitalist system failing us. Let’s say enough is enough, capitalism is creating the problems that we face. The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer and we end up paying for it.

Let’s put the working class in power to run this country for the better. Let’s say enough is enough, let’s make people’s lives happier and save this planet, which can provide everyone’s needs under socialism.

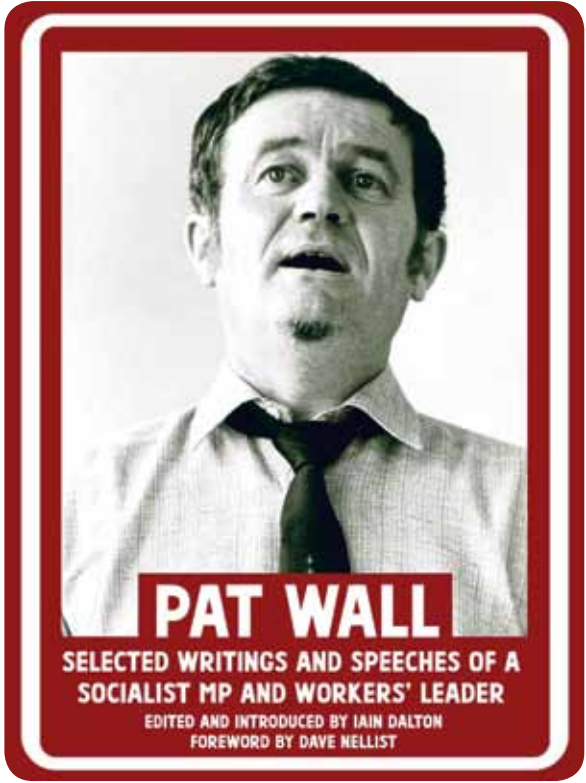
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to find out more today!

Pat Wall book launch A spotlight on the legacy of a workers’ MP



TOM GIBSON
BRADFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

Over 20 people attended the launch of ‘Pat Wall: Selected Writings and Speeches of a Socialist MP’, hosted by the Bradford and Shipley Trades Union Council, many of whom had known Pat personally.

Pat was the Labour MP for Bradford North from 1987-90, and a supporter of Militant – the Socialist Party’s predecessor.

Socialist Party Yorkshire Regional Secretary Iain Dalton introduced the discussion with a biography of Pat’s life. He explained how Pat got involved in the labour movement and in Trotskyist politics, his selection as Labour’s Prospective Parliamentary Candidate in 1983, the horrendous attacks made against Pat by the right-wing media and the right wing of Labour, his successful 1987 election campaign, and finally his work in parliament before his untimely death in 1990.

Afterwards, many attendees contributed to the discussion by talking about their experiences with Pat. During the discussion, there were comparisons made between Pat’s clear loyalty to the working class and his principled fight for socialism, and the current crop of ‘Labour’ MPs that seem only to care about power and preserving capitalism.

Pat’s internationalism, such as his support for the Hungarian revolution of 1956 and protests against Pinochet’s coup to bring down Allende’s government in 1973, was another major part of the discussion.

Speakers highlighted what a warm, intelligent, dedicated and decent man Pat Wall was, his personality was fondly spoken about in personal stories.

As someone who was born and still lives in the constituency Pat represented, I am utterly inspired by his work not only in parliament but across his career. We sold around 14 books overall on the night. 34 years on and Pat’s legacy lives on, and the book is a wonderful way of shining a spotlight on it. Pat fought for the working class, in Bradford, in Britain and across the world.

● You can buy ‘Pat Wall: Selected Writings and Speeches of a Socialist MP’ at leftbooks.co.uk £12+pp

Reply to a Uni spin doctor

LEICESTER SOCIALIST STUDENTS

The Socialist has received an email from a spin doctor: De Montfort University (DMU) Press and PR Manager, Chris Thundow. They complain that our article ‘Leicester uni students and staff plan fight against cuts’ was inaccurate and that there are no direct threats of redundancies.

They object to us stating: “If voluntary redundancies are not forthcoming then there would be ‘formal’ i.e. compulsory redundancies”. Apparently it is ‘voluntary severance’ not ‘redundancy’. To argue the toss is semantics. DMU management is proposing a cut in the workforce to be achieved one way or another.

Chris asserts that because of a decline in the number of students, there has been a decline in the number of seminar groups and options, therefore reducing the number of staff needed. But less students could mean more input and support from hard-working academic staff, who already suffered job cuts two years ago. Reducing the number of options means fewer choices for students.

Can Chris’s bosses guarantee that there won’t be an increase in workload for staff?

Our article reported “DMU has also invested in Cambodia and Kazakhstan”. Chris claims this is not the case, and that in fact the uni is making money by running degree courses in these countries. So the DMU badge is being used to boost the prestige of the Cambodian government? A US State Department report says: “Forces under [president] Hun Sen and the Cambodian People’s Party have committed frequent and large-scale abuses, including extrajudicial killings and torture, with impunity”. The prime minister attended the campus opening ceremony. In Kazakhstan, freedoms of speech and assembly remain restricted and punished, and corruption is endemic.

Socialist Students will continue to fight to defend every job, and against any rise in tuition fees. We demand fully funded universities, paid for by the super-rich – and student and workers’ democratic control over how money is spent, as well as where it comes from.

Join the student fightback!

JOIN socialist students

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

Fight for a socialist alternative to fear and violence

ISIS SMYTH
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST STUDENTS

On the 29 November, a ‘Reclaim the Night’ march will be led by student unions across Liverpool. Inspired by the Reclaim the Night movement from 1977 to the 1990s, the march calls for an end to gender-based violence.

Important demands such as the extension of Liverpool’s night bus routes and affordable and safe transport in Liverpool at night have been raised. Liverpool Socialist Students will attend this demonstration, as well as hosting our own event before,

putting forward our ideas.

Sexual violence is a problem all too familiar to women. 71% of women have experienced sexual harassment in a public place. This shocking figure rises to 86% of young women. Over one in four women have experienced domestic abuse since they turned 16. One in 30 women in England and Wales are raped or sexually assaulted every year.

Violence against women was put on the back burner by the Tory government. When Sarah Everard was brutally raped and murdered by police officer Wayne Couzens while walking home alone at night, women across the country joined arms

Fighting fund: Brummies back bold socialist policies

CLIVE WALDER
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Party branches in Birmingham have recently noticed a distinct change of mood amongst people while out campaigning, and a pick up in our fundraising too.

In the period immediately before the general election, reaching our quarterly fundraising target seemed like a daunting task. Lots of workers we spoke to felt disengaged from politics and ignored by politicians, with many just counting down the days to the general election and defeat of the Tories.

Starmer’s early announcement of austerity policies shook a layer of workers who are now looking for a way to fight back. Linking, as we do, the need to build a socialist opposition to Starmer as the best way to defeat attacks on the working class began to resonate. Few people who sign our petitions question the need for a new mass workers’ party.

We have also been consistently active in the fight against the barbaric cuts that Birmingham City Council is

planning in response to their ‘bankruptcy’, and have intervened in every anti-war demonstration.

We have had very positive responses from people on both of these issues because of our clear demands. We have demanded that the council set a needs budget and demand adequate funding from the government, and on anti-war demos we call for workers’ unity and mass struggle as the way forward.

The most politically aware people gravitate towards our campaign stalls and our ideas. We have received a number of substantial donations in support, and a steady stream of people expressing an interest in our activities.

Working-class people donate to our fighting fund because of support for our clear socialist ideas. Workers are angry and want to fight back.

There is nothing special about people in Birmingham and I believe that all areas can increase their fighting fund by campaigning on all the issues that affect workers, and by explaining our socialist solutions to them.

Fund the fightback

DONATE TODAY

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- or make cheques payable to Socialist Party, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT

AREA	& RECEIVED	& TARGET	Q4: OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2024	DEADLINE: 2 JANUARY 2025
West Midlands	1,484	2,700		55%
North West	640	1,200		53%
Yorkshire	1,234	2,650		47%
London	2,123	5,000		42%
South West	844	2,100		40%
Wales	933	2,400		39%
Northern	269	800		34%
Southern & SE	597	2,400		25%
East Midlands	477	2,050		23%
Eastern	118	1,300		9%
Other	453	2,400		19%
TOTAL	9,172	25,000		37%



Northampton march PHOTO: NORTHAMPTON SP

Fund domestic violence services fully

KATIE SIMPSON
NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

“Women unite! Reclaim the night!” was the prevailing chant roaring down the road as women of Northampton took to the streets to protest against sexual and domestic violence on Friday 22 November.

The march occurred just a week after the discovery of the body of Harshita Brella, 24 years old, from Harshita’s. Keir Starmer’s Labour government claims to want to tackle violence against women and girls but has promised peanuts in extra funding to councils.

Harshita’s story was told to the large crowd that gathered in the market square. The sad reality is that she is one of many women killed by a current or former partner every year.

Northampton’s politicians of all parties are happy to blame misogyny for these instances while overseeing cuts and closures to women’s refuges across the county.

In fact, numerous services relied upon by vulnerable women are under increasing pressure. Last week I

attempted to call the National Refuge Hotline on behalf of such a person. After being in a phone queue for over an hour, I called police who said they would come to meet us and investigate the issue. They never arrived and she returned home to her partner.

Until services are fully funded, staffed and equipped to handle the ongoing crisis of violence against women there will be no reduction in cases like Harshita’s. Keir Starmer’s Labour government claims to want to tackle violence against women and girls but has promised peanuts in extra funding to councils.

Until these services are fully funded and democratically controlled, with good-quality council housing and liveable benefits and wages so that women can rebuild their lives, people will continue to slip through the net with dire consequences.

Women can only truly be liberated when the economic and social conditions that have continued their oppression are dismantled and a socialist society is built.

Bosses’ dangerous ‘Ask for Angela’ neglect

JESS EVANS
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Around pubs and bars, there are often posters for a scheme known as ‘Ask for Angela’. It is there so customers who feel unsafe can go up to the bar, ask for Angela, and be taken out of the situation by staff. If it functioned, it could be a crucial part of making nights out safer for women. However, undercover BBC journalists found that, when asked, over half the venues they visited in London did not even know the codeword, despite displaying posters for the scheme. Big pub chains such as JD Wetherspoon and Greene King were among those who failed.

This is a scary finding. Many women may have decided where to go on a night out based on the scheme, but

how many have needed help and failed to get it? Staff failing to have the training put women at risk. But this is part of a broader problem. In a survey, 54% of female students said they had experienced sexual harassment on a night out. In cases of spiking, women make up around 74% of victims. And instances of sexual assault in bars and clubs are at an all-time high. It is clear the night-time economy is not safe for women, so too in many other areas of life.

Bars and clubs are cutting costs. Fewer staff, including bouncers and security, means fewer eyes open to the risks in clubs. Pink washing is also an issue, whereby businesses appear sympathetic to women’s issues and sign up to schemes like ‘Ask for Angela’ as lip-service.

But schemes to improve women’s safety need to be given full attention. Councils could enforce compliance by making venue licensing dependent on implementing women’s safety measures and fund training for staff, for example. Committees of working-class and young women, elected from the trade unions and community organisations, could be given responsibility for administering the schemes and carrying out inspections. Other services such as night time public transport need real investment, with increased frequency, as well as improved safety too.

For women to be able to enjoy our right to a safe night out, we need properly enforced and resourced schemes to improve our safety. We also need to fight against sexist and misogynistic ideas and attitudes in society, and to fight for socialist change.

COP29: Climate conference fails again to plot a way forward



Keir Starmer with other world leaders at the event PHOTO: NUMBER 10/CC

CALLUM JOYCE
OXFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

COP29 - the annual United Nations climate conference of over 200 countries - held this year in Azerbaijan, ended on 23 November after 12 days of discussion aimed at agreeing new targets to help tackle the growing threat of climate change.

After the recent devastating floods in Valencia, you would expect a particular sense of urgency to the talks this year, with the consequences of further stalling on serious measures to combat global warming plain for all to see. Not plain enough for the major capitalist powers though apparently!

The final days of the conference have been mired in controversy, as negotiations over where the money for a new climate fund will come from have dragged past their deadline, with numerous capitalist countries refusing to pledge the amount of money needed. The aim was to raise at least \$1.3 trillion, which it is estimated will be needed by 2030 to help poorer countries mitigate the effects of climate change and speed up their transition away from fossil fuels.

However many of the more developed countries are unwilling to stump up the cash. The UK, EU, and US originally pledged only \$250 billion between them, later raising this to \$300 billion after backlash from the governments of poorer countries. The rest of the money is set to come from vague 'innovative sources

of finance', relying on more private investment and funding from the poorer countries themselves - neither of which are guaranteed.

That leaves just a meagre \$1 trillion to be cobbled together from unspecified sources then - good luck! No doubt the leaders of these capitalist governments will claim they cannot afford to pledge funding of that level themselves. But the money is there. From 2023-24, Shell and BP - neither exactly known for being environmentally friendly either - made over £20 billion in profits and have combined assets worth over half a trillion pounds. In the last year, just the three biggest companies in the US made profits between them of over \$1 trillion.

The need to take this colossal wealth off the super-rich is obvious. But the capitalist governments of the world won't let the fate of the planet get in the way of their own corporations making a tidy profit. The struggle against climate change and all the other issues in society demands the developing of mass workers' organisations and parties - in Britain and internationally - as vehicles for working-class action to bring about socialist change, taking the wealth out of the hands of the polluters and exploiters and to employ it for the benefit of all instead.

New Zealand: Mass Maori protest against bill that would take away rights

JOE FATALLAH

42,000 demonstrators took over the streets of Wellington, the capital of New Zealand/Aotearoa, on 19 November, in protest against the Treaty Principles Bill. This law, proposed by the right-wing ACT party, aims to undermine what limited protections exist for the rights of the indigenous Maori population. The protest was the culmination of a nine-day hiko, or traditional Maori march. When the bill was introduced for its first parliamentary reading on 14 November, Maori MPs disrupted proceedings by performing a haka (traditional war or ceremonial dance) inside the chamber. While it is highly unlikely that the bill will pass and become law, it has nevertheless become a focal point for the anger of the Maori community on the issue of national rights more generally.

The bill aims to 're-interpret' the terms of the Treaty of Waitangi, an agreement signed in 1840 between

Maori tribal chiefs and British imperialism. ACT is a minor party in a government coalition with the conservative National Party and the right-populist New Zealand First. This government, which has been in power since November 2023, already has form on attempting to undermine Maori national rights. A law guaranteeing Maori tribes a say in environmental decisions has already been repealed, and in February the government abolished the Maori Health Authority.

The Maori were the only native population anywhere in the world that the British Empire failed to fully conquer. Instead, the Crown agreed to the treaty, which on paper guaranteed a certain level of self-governance and land rights to the Maori. In fact, there were significant differences between the English-language and Maori-language versions of the documents. In the latter part of the 19th century, Maori tribes suffered from land seizures, enforced 'purchases' and forced cultural assimilation. This was necessary for British imperialism to establish a capitalist economy in New Zealand, as this

required land, as well as a supply of cheap labour to perform the lowest-paid and most menial jobs.

As a result of this process, which involved New Zealand achieving independence from the UK in 1947, a layer of Maori tribal chieftains became integrated into the capitalist class. It's vital for socialists to oppose any measures that undermine what few remaining national rights the Maori have. But we also need to point out that rules such as quotas for Maori on company boards or political bodies do nothing to assist poor Maori starved of their land, resources, and culture. To end and reverse the dismantling of Maori society, it would be necessary to nationalise the seized land, seabeds, fisheries and natural resources, under democratic control of the mass of the population.

New Zealand isn't immune from the crises in the world economy. In this context, the capitalist elite will always try to create division within the working class, to weaken our ability to defend ourselves from attacks on our rights and living conditions. Workers in New Zealand need their own new mass party, with a socialist programme and the right for Maori workers to organise independently inside it, making a clean break with the Maori ruling elite. Such a programme would guarantee self-government and economic prosperity to the Maori, and fight for a socialist New Zealand free from poverty, racism and national oppression.



The protest on Lambton Quay, Wellington PHOTO: BALLOFSTRING/CC

Mozambique 'revolutionary atmosphere' as mass protests challenge ruling elite



Protests have rocked Mozambique since 'preliminary' results of presidential and legislative elections held on 9 October declared the ruling Mozambican Liberation Front (Freliimo) the winner. Mozambique can be added to the growing rollcall of neocolonial countries where the population has taken to the streets in open revolt.

Read more by Sean Figg, CWI International Secretariat at socialistworld.net

National People's Power wins Sri Lanka's general election - revolution, reform, or rhetoric?

PRASAD WELIKUMBURA

UNITED SOCIALIST PARTY (CWI SRI LANKA)

Sri Lanka's general election, held on 14 November, marked a breaking point in the country's political history. The National People's Power (NPP) secured an extraordinary 159 seats, achieving a two-thirds majority in parliament. This result shocked political observers and, most likely, the NPP itself.

The campaign, markedly subdued compared to its vigorous presidential bid, featured fewer rallies, diminished grassroots mobilisation, and seemingly less enthusiasm from supporters. Yet, the NPP won an additional 1.2 million votes and achieved landmark victories across the country, including the north and east, traditionally dominated by Tamil and Muslim parties. This is the first time in Sri Lanka's history that a mainstream political party has swept these regions during a general election.

Low turnout

The voter turnout of 68% - below the historical average of 75% - was the third-lowest since Sri Lanka adopted the proportional representation system. Previously, similarly low turnouts were recorded during the 1989 JVP (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna) insurrection (63.6%) and the immediate post-war 2010 election (61.26%). This drop reflects a deep disappointment among voters, particularly those who had supported the dominant right-wing parties in previous elections.

At the presidential election just two months ago, the SJB (Samagi Jana Balawegaya), Ranil Wickremesinghe, and the SLPP (Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna) collectively garnered over 52% of the vote. In the general election, their combined share plummeted to 25%. This dramatic decline underscores the public's rejection of these parties, their neoliberal programmes, and the entrenched political class. The SLPP now has three seats in the parliament. The traditional capitalist party Ranil Wickremasinghe's group, UNP and NDF, has five seats.

The NPP capitalised on this sentiment among the masses and tied it up with their call to 'clean up parliament', striking a chord with voters fed up with political corruption and inefficacy. '225 out' was one of the popular slogans during the election, as well as demanding the resignation of all the parliamentarians. What is expressed at the ballot box is an expression of anger and rejection of right-wing elites.

This election also delivered a scathing indictment of Ranil Wickremesinghe's IMF-driven economic agenda. None of the previous members of his cabinet secured their seats, including Kanachana Wijesekara, a prominent proponent of austerity measures. This result does not necessarily signal a nationwide rejection of IMF policies, but it reflects growing discontent with the hardships



Aragalaya protest movement in 2022 PHOTO: ANTANO/CC

these measures have imposed on the working class. It also highlights a readiness among the public to explore alternatives.

The NPP and minority support

One of the election's most striking outcomes was the NPP's unprecedented success among ethnic and religious minorities. The party won decisively in the north, east, hill country, and urban areas with significant minority populations. This shift reflects a growing disillusionment with regional ethnic-based parties, plagued by internal divisions, policy ambiguity, and a perceived betrayal of their constituents' interests. But we cannot call this a clean sweep, as all nine polling divisions the NPP lost were from the minority-dominated areas.

Despite this success, it is premature to declare an end to Tamil nationalist politics, as some NPP supporters claim. Just two months ago, a third of voters in the Jaffna District supported Ariyanethiran's presidential bid - a Tamil 'common candidate' created by several civil groups - grounded in Tamil nationalist principles, even though he had no realistic chance of winning. This partly demonstrates that ethnic identity and self-determination remain critical issues for Tamil voters. It would be childish to believe all that has changed during the past two months.

The NPP's success among minorities was likely driven by

dissatisfaction with the regional political parties caused by infighting, unreliability, not having proper political positions, or clarity on economic policy and so on. Within this chaotic background, the NPP appeared to give a broader appeal as a party capable of addressing systemic corruption and inequality. However, this support presents both an opportunity and a challenge. To sustain it, the NPP must deliver tangible progress on the national question, including meaningful devolution of power as a start, and a recognition of the right to self-determination.

Opportunities and challenges

The NPP's landslide victory grants it a historic opportunity to reshape Sri Lanka's political and economic landscape. With a two-thirds majority in parliament and a public mandate for change, the NPP has no excuse not to pursue bold reforms that benefit the working class. It should begin implementing an emergency economic programme that could ease the situation of tens of thousands who are going through economic hardship.

They should also deliver on all democratic demands, including that of the Tamils and Muslims. They should immediately start demilitarising the north and east, release all the political prisoners held under the 'Prevention of Terrorism Act', and put an end to the government-sponsored colonisation effort disguised as the restoration of religious and cultural

sites, which has created unnecessary tension among the community. This is the only way they can build trust among the minority communities who have been treated differently for decades.

Furthermore, this would prevent the right-wing liberal parties such as SJB and NDF, from exploiting minority issues to mobilise them against their political opponents as they have in the recent past.

But the key is to implement a programme focusing on public investment, social welfare, and industrial development that could address the pressing needs of the working class and marginalised communities. The business elites who manipulated the prices of necessities and the market for their own benefit at the expense of everyone else should not be able to do the same in the future.

However, internal contradictions within the NPP pose significant challenges. The presence of a right-wing faction within the party could hinder efforts to implement leftist policies. These tensions could become a battleground for the soul of the NPP, determining whether it can be seen to evolve into a genuine vehicle for genuinely radical, pro-worker policies and even as a vehicle for socialist change, as many of its voters hope for, or succumbs to the pressures of so-called capitalist 'pragmatism' and compromise.

The left and organised labour

In this new political landscape, the traditional right-wing parties appear unlikely to mount an effective opposition. Their ideological rigidity and inability to address the material concerns of the working class have rendered them obsolete. The rise of a populist right-wing movement cannot be ruled out but is also very unlikely, given the failures of the Gotabaya Rajapaksa administration.

This places the responsibility of resisting anti-worker policies and advancing the interests of the masses squarely on the shoulders of left-wing parties, trade unions, and socialists. The left must unite not just to provide a consistent critique of the NPP but to put forward a positive programme to advance workers', peasants', and young people's interests. Trotskyists, in particular, have a critical role to play in organising resistance to neoliberalism and building a movement capable of achieving genuine social change.

The 2024 general election reflects a profound yearning for change among the Sri Lankan people. The NPP's victory, while historic, is only the beginning. Not only should all the democratic demands of the masses be delivered but must go further to far-reaching long-lasting economic changes. There should be a public debate in terms of what socialist policies are and how that can be achieved. Workers must play a key role in terms of determining policies. We must oppose any attempt to curtail workers' actions or union rights. And at the same time we must fight to bring more power into the hands of workers by establishing workers' committees in workplaces and bringing them together nationally. Such a body would be a powerful tool for change.



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

- For united working-class struggle to end discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice and oppression.
- Repeal the anti-trade union laws and all others that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest and to strike! End police harassment. For the police to be accountable to local committees, made up of democratically elected representatives of trade unions, local community organisations and local authorities.
- For the right to choose when and whether to have children – for the right to access abortion, contraception and fertility treatment for all who need it.
- For the right to asylum – with democratic community control and oversight of emergency funding resources. No to racist immigration laws.
- Expand democracy - inside the monarchy and the House of Lords. For all MPs to be subject to the right of recall by their constituents at any time, and to only receive a worker's wage.

- For proportional representation and the right to vote at 16.
- For the right of nations to self-determination. For an independent socialist Scotland and for a socialist Wales, both part of a voluntary socialist confederation of Wales, England, Scotland and Ireland.
- Oppose the dictatorship of the billionaire owners of the media. For the nationalisation of newspaper printing facilities, radio, TV and social media platforms. Access to these facilities should be under democratic control, with political parties' coverage being allocated in proportion to the popular vote at elections.
- For a new mass workers' party, based on the trade unions, and drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplaces, and community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, socialist political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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A vital role over many decades

HANNAH SELL

SOCIALIST PARTY GENERAL SECRETARY

The tributes in this week's Socialist can only give a very small glimpse of the vital role that Lynn Walsh played over many decades.

Among his many attributes was his ability to 'patiently explain'. Personally, I particularly remember when, at 18, as the Young Socialist rep on the Labour Party National Executive Committee, I faced a two-day 'policy review' meeting, which shifted the party's programme decisively to the right. Panic-stricken at the number of betrayals to be argued against, I asked for help. Lynn met me in Waterloo station at 7am and spent hours talking through the main points. He played the same role for me, and many others, countless times over the years.

Especially crucial was Lynn's contribution, alongside others - Peter Taaffe in particular - in the hard years after the collapse of Stalinism. They were able to clearly explain why socialists were temporarily so isolated, and more importantly why capitalism's inability to take society forward would inevitably lead to that changing. In the debates of the nineties and noughties against those moving away from Marxism, Lynn's clarity helped arm us all for the fight. Sadly, he is now gone, but his wealth of written material remains an incredibly valuable resource for the battles ahead.

Outstanding contributions as Socialism Today editor

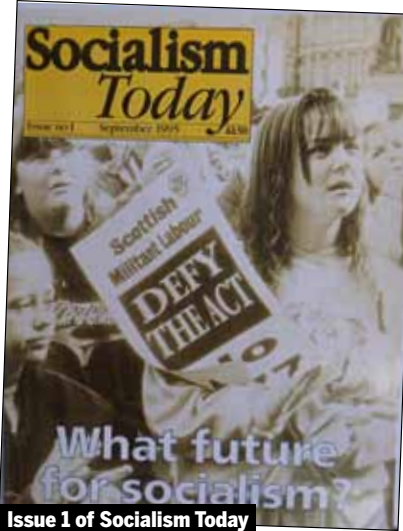
CLIVE HEEMSKERK

SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Lynn was appointed by the Socialist Party's Executive Committee as the editor of our monthly magazine, Socialism Today, from its inaugural edition published in September 1995. He continued in that role until declining health led him to stand down in May 2019.

Lynn was a polymath of the Marxist movement and in future editions Socialism Today will reprint some of his outstanding contributions. This will be an integral part of our celebration in 2025 of thirty years of the magazine he did so much to sustain.

The series will start in the next edition with the founding statement of Socialism Today, written by Lynn for our first issue, arguing that socialism, far from being 'finished' - as was the 'established wisdom' of the 1990s even among those on the left - will once again become the idea that guides workers and youth in the struggle for a new society.



SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

December-January issue will include the founding statement of Socialism Today written by Lynn for the first issue.

socialismtoday.org/subscribe // **020 8988 8777**

- Paper subscription £3 a month, e-subscription £2.50

A passion for knowledge and a dear friend

MANNY THAIN

It was a privilege to know Lynn, as his secretary/researcher for over 20 years, on the Socialism Today team, and as his friend for 30. Transcribing his articles was always a fascinating journey - Lynn was never linear, each article made up of sections to be ordered and pieced together at a later stage. He cared about his work.

His close collaboration - and friendship - with cartoonist Alan Hardman resulted in some of the most striking covers for the Militant International Review and Socialism Today. And Lynn, one of the leading Marxist theoreticians and practitioners of his time, never talked down to you. He always wanted to hear your opinion, thoughts and ideas.

When Lynn stepped back from full-time work for the party and international, I was charged with archiving his research material. The depth and breadth of his work was breathtaking, including his forensic dissection of the political economy of the Stalinist Soviet Union, his comprehensive analysis of post-second world war capitalism, and his understanding of Marxist economic theory, alongside a colossal range of historical, social and cultural issues.

Lynn had a passion for knowledge, and a love of life, art, music, literature. That made the last few years so hard to witness. We can be comforted, however, by the fact that he was supported by his son, Daniel, and a very close-knit group of friends. Lynn, goodbye, dearest friend.

OBITUARY: LYNN WALSH - A MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO TROTSKYISM

CLARE DOYLE

Lynn Walsh died on 15 November aged 79. Born and brought up in the south of England, he began studying at Sussex University in 1964. Lynn soon joined our small but growing group of revolutionary Marxists - in the Brighton Labour Party, in its youth section and in the university's socialist club. Our newspaper, Militant, was launched in October of that year.

Lynn showed great enthusiasm for our ideas and those of the great teachers - Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. He had considerable talent. This he had shown early on when, via Sussex University, he was voted into the national leadership of the Revolutionary Socialist Student Federation - an organisation that had mushroomed under the impact of the May 1968 revolutionary events in France. The Revolutionary Socialist Student Federation's existence was short-lived, but it was initially sizeable and, as Bob Labi recalls, Lynn played a prominent role arguing for our views and cut his political teeth in what were sometimes fierce political debates.

After leaving Sussex, Lynn spent time based in London, developing the work of our growing organisation. In the early 1970s he moved to Manchester to work as one of the first regional full-timers for Militant. When revolution broke out in Portugal in 1974, Lynn was sent by our newly founded organisation - the Committee for a Workers' International - to build a base there for our ideas, with almost no knowledge of the country's language! Back in London, Lynn became an invaluable writer and editor of Militant's publications. He was also involved in important legal battles,

working closely with friend and solicitor, Mike Fisher. This included the Labour Campaign for the Defence of Brixton, set up in response to the 1981 'riots', and later several others. Lynn lived with his partner, Vivien Seal, and son, Daniel, just at the top of Brixton Hill, in a house often used for local Militant meetings.

Along with the other four of us on Militant's editorial board - Peter Taaffe, Keith Dickinson, Ted Grant, and myself - Lynn was 'put on trial' by Labour Leader, Neil Kinnock, and the party's National Executive Committee. At the 1983 Labour Party Conference (in Brighton, as it happens), we were expelled from the Labour Party. The following year, 1984, Lynn's son, Daniel, aged seven, was presented with a prize by Neil Kinnock for a drawing he had done about the health service. Daniel promptly asked him why he had expelled his father from the party!

In the 1980s, our organisation in Britain had grown to beyond 8,000 members and we held a major rally in Alexandra Palace. At this time, Lynn was an important contributor to the major debates we had nationally and internationally. Lynn also provided important advice and a Marxist theoretical grounding for our student members, as Militant grew in strength nationally in that field of activity in the 1980s. He took a clear position during the split in the CWI in the early 1990s and was the key editor of our theoretical journal - Militant International Review - and then of its successor, Socialism Today.

Committee for a Workers' International (CWI)

Increasingly involved in the CWI's activity, Lynn visited a number of countries on its behalf, including South Africa, with Tony Saunois, as well as

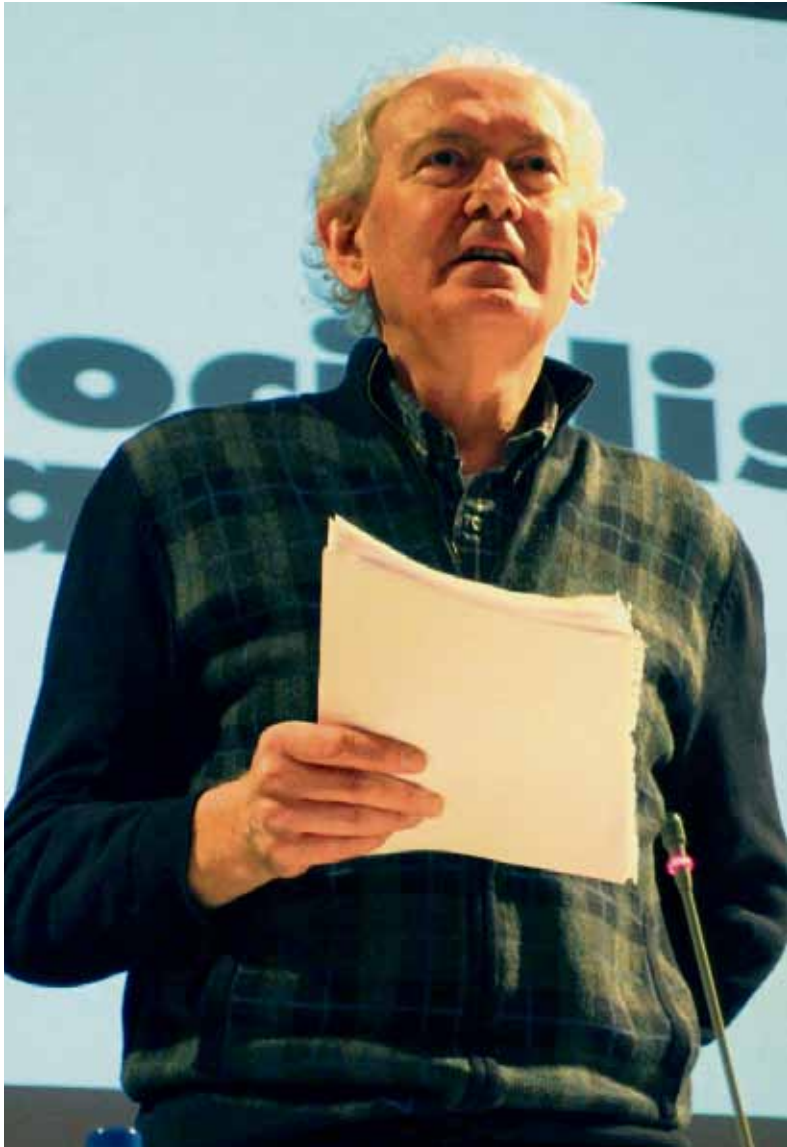
India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and, many times, the US. He spoke at numerous debates and meetings on behalf of the CWI. I particularly remember when he visited the USSR in its turbulent dying days. He addressed a meeting in the capital, Moscow, and then a gathering of 50 people in Leningrad, in the very same ballerina's house that the Bolsheviks used in April 1917.

The new period that then opened, as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union and other Stalinist states, saw wide-ranging debates amongst Marxists, in which Lynn prominently participated. Lynn also covered the work of the Southern region of the Socialist Party during this period.

Not long into the 21st century, Lynn's life moved all too rapidly from sheer delight in his partnership with Lorraine Dardis, who had moved to London from the US, into the tragedy that ensued with her terminal illness and untimely death. Lynn suffered increasing serious health problems, including failing eyesight, becoming increasingly dependent on the unstinting help of friends and, in particular, that given by his comrade-neighbours, Roger and Elizabeth Keyse.

During Lynn's last years, when he was once more in Brighton, where Daniel was living, Lynn was no longer able to be active politically. He had visits from family and close friends, like Nick Chaffey from Southampton, and on one last occasion in 2023, Jagadish Chandra from Bangalore, India.

Those of us who knew Lynn well for many decades - who worked with him, visited the theatre and concerts with him (and very occasionally clashed with him) - will never forget Lynn or his contribution to the building of the forces of Marxism and Trotskyism nationally and internationally. Many newer members of our party and the CWI who never met Lynn nonetheless gain enormous benefit from his written material.



Lynn speaking at Socialist Party Congress 2013

'Expert witness on Marxism and Trotskyism'

GLENN KELLY

A key part of the fight to defending the Socialist Party's four from being witch-hunted in Unison, was our legal battle.

Given that it was clear we were being targeted because we were Socialist Party members, we lodged a discrimination claim based on our political beliefs, a rare legal precedent at the time.

Throughout this period, Lynn and Peter Taaffe were constant supporters and advisors. Lynn even testified as our 'expert witness on Marxism and Trotskyism'. Despite the union barrister's attempts to undermine the ideas of socialism and show that the ideas were 'not worthy of respect in a democratic society', he could not fluster Lynn, and soon wanted him out of the witness box.

Lynn's calm, insightful words always commanded attention. His passing is a great loss, but his writings will continue to strengthen Marxist ideas within our party.

Strikingly profound understanding of science and dialectics

PETE MASON

Lynn had a strikingly profound understanding of science and dialectics. Lynn was never a rigid or dogmatic thinker. He excoriated my early naive view that science simply develops according to discovered 'facts'. No, he told me, the progress of science could only be understood through the Marxist, historical materialist method: that science is a human process of cognition bound by historically developed constructs, even while discovering results that defy our comprehension.

Once, when I mentioned in discussion Engels's three laws of dialectics, Lynn astonished me: "Lenin described 16 'laws', not three". They were not laws in the sense of fixed, scientific laws, he explained. They are a guide to understanding.

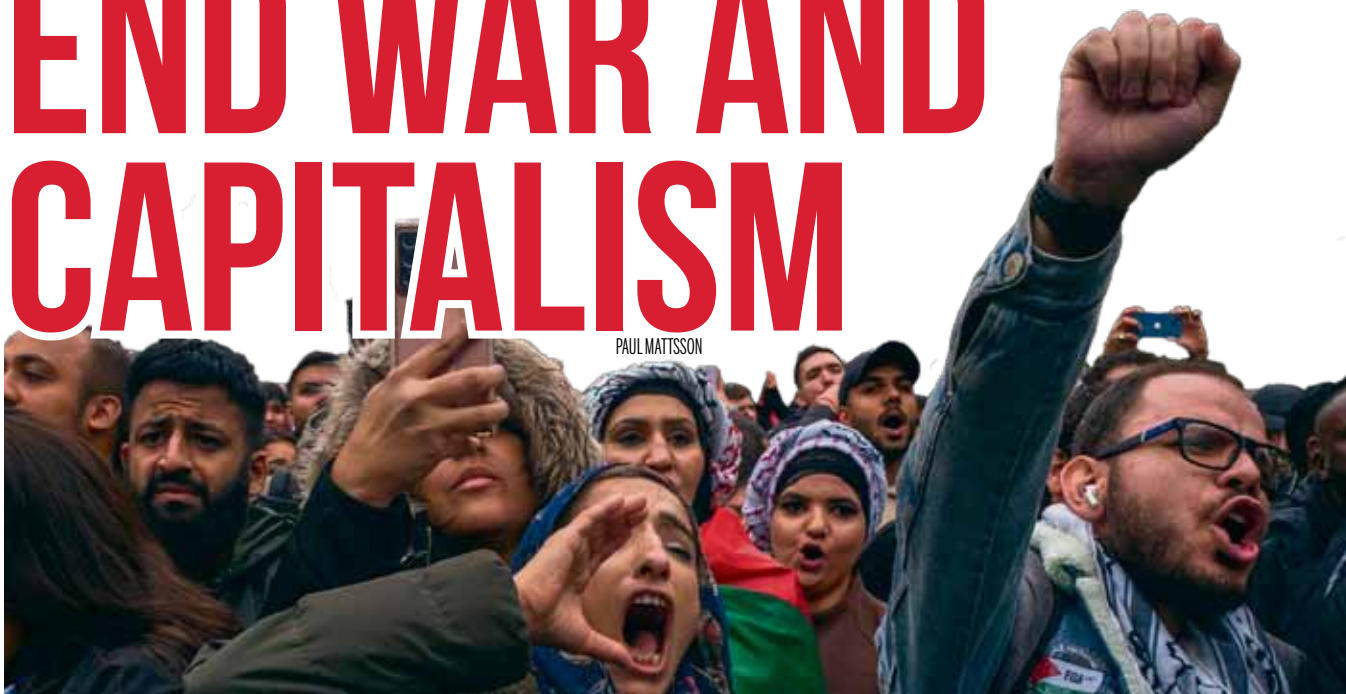
Lynn explained how science is just such a 'unity of opposites' - perhaps 'disunity' is a better word in English - of conflicting theories. Eventually the old 'unity' bursts asunder in a revolution of new higher level of understanding. Quantity turns to quality. The results of decades of discussion and investigation with Lynn formed the book, 'Science, Marxism and the Big Bang', which Lynn not only guided and edited, but even provided the opening paragraph, which, typical of his thinking, warns against dogmatism: "Marxism does not provide a ready-made key for making judgements about scientific ideas. It cannot substitute for a detailed knowledge of the appropriate scientific material." But what the dialectics of Marxism does do is provide a framework for understanding what science is and how it operates.



THE SYSTEM IS GUILTY

MASS WORKERS' STRUGGLE TO END WAR AND CAPITALISM

PAUL MATTSSON



OSCAR PARRY

SOUTH WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Israeli forces are tightening their brutal medieval siege around northern Gaza, implemented with modern weaponry. Aid is almost entirely blocked from entering, while hospitals and schools are bombed and fleeing civilians shot down, to try to force Palestinians to permanently abandon the area. This new depth of unimaginable horror is taking place alongside the IDF invasion and bombing of Lebanon.

There seems no end to the Israeli government's intensification of its bloody warmongering. For prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, escalating the war is in part a means to try and remain in power as long as possible, and to attempt to reshape the region in Israel's interests. The claimed justification, however, is the drive to destroy Hamas, supposedly in order to bring peace to the Israeli Jewish population.

The horror has lasted for over a year, but this has not been achieved. Nor will it be. On the contrary, IDF brutality will inevitably have the opposite effect. Israel's actions are fuelling a profound rage which, at a certain stage, will erupt in volcanic lava flows throughout the region, shaking the Israeli capitalists, the elites in neighbouring Arab states, and the imperialist powers across the world.

This is understood by a large section of the capitalist class, who want to see Netanyahu gone and replaced by a less reckless representative to act more reliably in their interests. Globally, governments are feeling great pressure from their own citizens against the war. So they are increasingly resorting to largely symbolic gestures to appear to be doing something to uphold 'humanitarian law'. This is what lies behind the arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for Netanyahu and other top Israeli officials. Netanyahu, however, has said he will ignore the court's ruling and continue with his relentless assault.

It is not just Israeli officials who are complicit in the slaughter, it's the capitalist system and all its representatives, including Keir Starmer and Joe Biden, keeping the arms flowing and doing nothing to stop the slaughtering of civilians.

So what force in society does have the power to put the whole capitalist system on trial? It's the potential superpower of the working class and poor masses. The Socialist Party is fighting to build a mass movement that can overthrow not just Netanyahu, but bring an end to capitalist rule across the Middle East and internationally, the only way to achieve a lasting peace.

The Socialist Party fights for

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